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Pedagogical Practices and Digital Tools Used by Online Tutors with Students in Grades K-5

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

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by

Alison Parker

MS Ed, Early Childhood Education, 1998

BA, Elementary Education, 1996

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Educational Technology

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February 2022

Abstract

Little was known about the experiences of K-5 online tutors. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of online tutors regarding their pedagogical practices and digital tools used when tutoring students in Grades K-5. The community of inquiry model served as the conceptual framework. Data included online tutor profiles, websites, and one-to-one interviews with 16 participants. Data were coded and analyzed using NVivo. Findings were interpreted within the contexts of the conceptual framework and the literature. The study revealed five themes: K-5 online tutors as educational entrepreneurs, rewards of being a K-5 online tutor entrepreneur, challenges of being a K-5 online tutor entrepreneur, pedagogical practices of an online tutor, and using digital tools to enhance online tutoring. This study adds to the body of literature by providing insight about the experiences of K-5 online tutors and online tutor entrepreneurship where previous research only revealed online tutoring practices related to instruction, curriculum, and digital tools. The negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to interfere with students' learning. The data revealed a range of pedagogical practices and digital tools used by K-5 online tutors who may inform K-5 online tutoring policies and/or a model of research-based, synchronous, online tutoring to reach more learners. Positive social change in K-5 online learning environments can result in communities of inquiry designed to help K-5 students improve academic outcomes.

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Dedication

I dedicate my doctoral dissertation to my beautiful daughter Nia Imani! This is the longest and most arduous journey I have ever been on. Your faith in me helped make it more palpable. Thank you to my husband, who through all the ups-and-downs you managed the many household tasks so I could focus on conducting research. To my parents and grandmothers, thank you for instilling in me a strong sense of self-discipline, determination, and deferred gratification. A great big thank you to my private practice clients. Since 2012, it has been my deepest pleasure spending over 10,000 extra work hours outside of my full-time job supporting you! Being able to apply research in my own 'educational lab' site tutoring you has also helped me deepen my knowledge of pedagogical practices. A big shout-out goes to my sisters, friends, teachers, Walden colleagues, and literacy coaches I have shared many pedagogical practice discussions with as we problem-solved ways to close achievement gaps. Thank you for engaging me in such rich discourse over the course of my 20 plus years' career. To all of you…..without your love, trust, highest of expectations, and belief in me, I would have given up a long, long, time ago and this goal would not have been achieved! ☺ Mom, now I can finally stop and smell the tulips! ☺ Dad- you were so right…….slow and steady wins the race!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Poor reading and math score data plague the American education school system. Sixty-five percent of fourth grade students and 29% of eighth graders in American schools do not read proficiently (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019). Continuing to read below basic level, particularly during a global pandemic, puts a nation at risk and perpetuates an achievement gap (Kuhfeld et al., 2020). ExcelinEd Report (2018) informed that after launching several U.S. educational reforms such as the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and the Race to the Top (2016) initiative, educators acknowledged that our nations' reading data remains stagnant across racial, ethnic, and social class subgroups. These data suggest that closing the reading achievement gap is a challenging and daunting task that needs a new approach to ameliorate this societal problem. One approach used to help students improve their reading outcomes is differentiated personalized learning.

According to the U.S. Department of Education's (2017) national educational report on reimagining the role of technology in education, schools must be more competitive, meet the diverse needs of all learners, and keep students actively engaged to close achievement gaps. This report recommended that instructors offer students a personalized learning approach. One way to do this is by providing online tutoring, either one-to-one online or with one instructor and a small group of students.

Synchronous online tutoring is a process in which a tutor instructs learners in a virtual environment (M. Wu & Gao, 2020). The tutor and the students participate in real-time interactions, in separate physical spaces. Online tutoring is live teaching with the

tutor and student engaged in face-to-face, networked sessions simultaneously engaging in multisensory learning, text chatting, and videoconferencing (Hrastinski et al., 2019; Yeh & Lai, 2019). The instructor uses live screen/file-sharing, whiteboard demonstrations, and modeling for presenting content to the student(s) (Fisher et al., 2016).

Asynchronous tutoring is a mode of distance learning or remote teaching in which the student and the teacher participate in the tutoring process separated by time and space (Denton, 2017). They do not meet online together at specified times. The tutor prepares pre-recorded video content and presentations for the student, retrieved through a shared learning management system where they communicate with each other via discussion board forums. Online tutors offer feedback through video or written text (Bissell, 2017) on graded assignments and/or respond to students' questions via email (Denton, 2017). Asynchronous and synchronous tutoring involve a more expert person, the online tutor, using pedagogical practices to guide a less expert person, the tutee. Scaffolding instruction for students helps them complete tasks and gain knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978).

The focus of this dissertation is on synchronous, live online tutoring, whereby online tutors choose and adopt a particular pedagogy or a set of pedagogical practices to tutor students in grades K-5 (O'Brien & Blue, 2018). *Pedagogical practices* are defined as the set of methodologies, which are used by instructors to help students reach their fullest socio-emotional, cognitive, and academic potentials. O'Brien and Blue (2018) asserted that the quality of students' learning experiences, self-perception, and academic success are determined by the relationship with the instructor and the pedagogical practices used in the learning sessions. In their qualitative, action research study at a

suburban primary school in Australia, O'Brien and Blue analyzed live classroom observations: teacher, student, parent, and administrator interviews; recorded videos of classroom teaching; and teacher reflection journals. They found that the pedagogical practices that were most impactful were scaffolding the learning process, using classroom management techniques, and using transitions, as well as responding to students' questions, concerns, and comments.

Pedagogical practices vary depending on the instructor's level of expertise (Rido, 2020; Sasson et al., 2020). Rido (2020) conducted a phenomenological study to explore the pedagogical practices of five teachers. The data from the 28 classroom observations revealed that these experienced, veteran english language arts teachers consistently relied on a plethora of pedagogical practices to yield high-impact learning results, including varying lesson preparation and content design based on student needs/differentiation of instruction; using learning resources, hand-outs, and technology integration; embedding goal setting and progress monitoring; and setting up furniture with a traditional classroom arrangement of desks, and applying strong classroom, behavior, and time management skills. Other pedagogical practices included (a) scaffolding directions, content, and processes; (b) implementing classroom discussions, (c) playing games; (d) providing students the opportunity to draw/write; and (e) utilizing varied student groupings (1:1, pairs, triads/small groups).

In a quantitative study, Sasson et al. (2020) investigated pedagogical practice use among 300 novice teachers, in which 61 of them previously participated in a professional development school program. They found that novice teachers' pedagogical practice use

directly correlated with their level of self-efficacy, self-perception, attitudes towards the teaching career, and the relationships they forged and maintained with other school-wide colleagues. Sasson et al. administered their open-closed questionnaire to 300 novice teachers and identified these pedagogical practices: helping students construct new knowledge, collaborating with other teachers for lesson planning and instructional delivery support, and utilizing school-wide academic resources through collaborative efforts with other human resources at the school/community level (i.e., librarian).

Chia and Lim (2020) analyzed the pedagogical practices of teachers' instruction by examining video camera recordings of mathematics lessons taught by 24 primary school teachers across 12 schools. The findings indicated that these teachers used two distinct sets of pedagogical practices: (a) individual seatwork with the teacher perusing the room assessing students' understanding and answering students' questions or (b) focusing instructional time on lecturing and explaining mathematical concepts to help build students' conceptual knowledge (Chia & Lim, 2020).

Researchers are interested in instructor pedagogical competency, monitoring instructional progress, shifting paradigms, and altering pedagogical practices through collaborative efforts like peer coaching/mentoring (Insuasty et al., 2020). Researchers examined the pedagogical barriers that interfere with classroom students reaching their fullest academic potentials (Dorofeeva et al., 2020). Some studies focus on the pedagogical practices used by elementary school teachers that teach in face-to-face capacities and studies of online tutors who tutor college students (Chia & Lim, 2020;

Gehret et al., 2016). However, studies on the pedagogical practices used by online tutors to tutor K-5 students are lacking.

In this chapter, I present the existing research and a discussion of the gap found in the literature as it relates to the pedagogical practices of online tutors who tutor elementary students. I follow up with the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the conceptual framework that serves as the context for this study. I also present the definitions, the nature of the study, my assumptions, the delimitations, the limitations of the study, and an analysis of the significance of this research.

Background

The vision of the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) is that all educators are empowered to harness technology that accelerates innovation in teaching and learning so that learners reach their greatest potential (Trust, 2018). ISTE suggested that teachers use educational technologies to create, adapt, and personalize learning experiences that foster independent learning and accommodate learner needs. Further, educational stakeholders and political decision-makers envision schools as places where students are educated to be more college and/or career ready to be able to meet the demands of the 21st-century workforce (South, 2017). The idea of a more rigorous and challenging education grew out of the Common Core State Standards Movement and now its revised version, the New York State Next Generation English Language Arts Standards (2017) which was designed to ensure that students are more

prepared to globally compete and thrive in science, technology, engineering, literacy, and mathematics.

K-5 students are increasingly participating in online tutoring sessions (Burdina et al., 2019; Choi & Walters, 2018; Vasquez & Straub, 2016). Online tutoring is remote, personalized, synchronous assistance led by a teacher or tutor designed to help with academic development. Tutoring students, face-to-face, at the elementary school level is an effective pedagogical practice associated with supporting elementary school students' development in reading, writing, and math (Beach et al., 2018; Lindo et al., 2018). Limited research has been done to explore the tutoring process when delivered online with students in grades K-5. In this study, I examined synchronous online tutoring at the elementary school level. Specifically, I explored the perceptions and experiences of online tutors of students in grades K-5 to understand the methods and techniques used to support student learning during online reading, writing, and math tutoring sessions.

Synchronous online tutoring allows students to log on to a session from their computer or another digital device by inputting a username and password or by clicking on a link to join an online session so that they can interact with a tutor and get focused instruction in a particular subject area, topic, or strategy (Valverde-Berrocoso et al., 2020). Vasquez and Straub (2016) cited the efficacy of online tutoring in helping students with learning differences, learning disabilities, and academic deficits develop their listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities.

Burdina et al. (2019), along with Choi and Walters (2018), supported Vasquez and Straub's (2016) reporting that online learning benefits children by creating a more

intimate learning environment for them to communicate their academic concerns in either one-to-one or small group sessions. However, none of these studies examined the perceptions, lived experiences, opinions, or attitudes of online tutors concerning how they present, deliver, and assess their instruction. Previous studies also did not examine how online tutors decide on the content to be taught, nor how they engage the learner before, during, and after the tutoring session.

There is little evidence or research in the field of educational technology that informs educational practitioners about the lived experiences and hands-on, pedagogical practices that online tutors use when tutoring students in grades K-5. The field is limited to the pedagogical practices in online tutoring with college students (Bean et al., 2019; Johns & Mills, 2020) and information on tutor styles (Sembiring, 2018). Other peer-reviewed research focused on online tutoring with hard-of-hearing college students (Gehret et al., 2016), unique ways to scaffold instruction for college students (Feng et al., 2017), and the benefits of explicitly labeling the instructional strategies being used in the online tutoring session with college students (E. Wu & Yang, 2016). At the high school level, M. Wu and Gao (2020) presented the pedagogical practices that kept high school students actively engaged in large classes attending live online tutoring sessions to hone their math skills.

At the elementary school level, online tutoring has been primarily focused on using intelligent tutoring systems/or virtual tutoring systems (Hautala et al., 2018; Hickey & Flynn, 2019; Madden & Slavin, 2017). Another focus has been on web-based systems (Wijekumar et al., 2017), and the use of Facebook (Annamalai et al., 2016) and

FaceTime (Fisher et al., 2016) as learning management systems to tutor elementary school students in both reading and writing. These studies are significant because they can help identify the processes used for tutoring elementary school students.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed in this study was a need for more research on elementary school online tutors' pedagogical practices and digital tools utilized while tutoring. Specifically, knowledge is needed about how K-5 tutors perceive their online tutoring experience. There is limited information regarding online tutors' self-reported experiences using pedagogical practices and digital tools to build K-5 students' academic capacities. The process, planning, design, and execution of K-5 online tutoring, from the perspective of K-5 online tutors is absent from the literature. In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, and how it has disrupted educational school systems at the local, regional, national, and global levels, this knowledge could potentially provide information that schoolteachers, private tutors, interventionists, instructional coaches, and school building leaders can use in their efforts to improve students' learning outcomes. This new information may also help parents understand the experience of K-5 online tutoring, should they decide to obtain an online tutor to help their children advance academically.

Conducting this study helped close this gap in the field of educational technology and provide a lens with which to better understand elementary school online tutoring from the lived experiences of the tutors. Online teachers, online learners, and online tutors might benefit from the knowledge gained from this study regarding the art and

science of tutoring young children online, and the methods, strategies, and techniques used to help elementary school students become stronger readers, problem solvers, and writers. The knowledge gained through this study has the potential to provide more information for educational stakeholders to help them better understand the experiences and practices of K-5 online tutors.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of online tutors regarding their pedagogical practices and digital tools used when tutoring students in grades K-5. Participants in the study were tutors who provide online tutoring in reading, writing or mathematics to elementary school students needing remediation or enrichment to gain an understanding of the perceptions of elementary school online tutors, and the phenomenon of K-5 online tutoring.

Research Questions

I collected data to answer the following questions:

RQ 1: What are the lived experiences of tutors when tutoring elementary school students in online synchronous settings?

RQ 2: What pedagogical practices and digital tools do online tutors use when tutoring elementary school students online and why were those tools selected?

Conceptual Framework

Garrison et al.'s (2000) community of inquiry (CoI) model served as the foundation for this study. The CoI framework is a model that represents a process of designing optimal online learning environments in the context of presence (Garrison et

al., 2000). The CoI model identifies three types of online presence needed for deep, conceptual online learning: social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence. Social presence relates to the participants' ability to project themselves as "real people" while engaging in open communication, emotional affect, and group cohesion. Cognitive presence relates to the extent to which online learners immerse themselves in making connections, meaning making, drawing conclusions, and constructing new knowledge through sustained self-reflection and rich discourse. Teaching presence is the primary focus of this study because the target population is online tutors. Teaching presence is the design, facilitation, and direction of students' cognitive and social processes in learning environments (Anderson et al., 2001).

Teaching presence has three categories: (a) design and organization; (b) facilitating discourse; and (c) direct, explicit instruction. These three categories have indicators such as setting curriculum and methods, shaping constructive exchange between course participants, and focusing instructional time on differentiated modeling of content and/or processes using clear terms and unambiguous methods. Instructors plan engaging lessons for learners using a specific set of direct, explicitly modeled steps, providing guided practice, independent practice, and feedback to students until they reach mastery (Pilonieta et al., 2019). Garrison et al. (2000) recognized the critical importance of the socioemotional relationship between instructor and learner. They posited that in the online learning environment, the frequent teaching presence of the instructor, as well as the instructor's interpersonal skills, unique teaching style, use of effective teaching methodologies, level of expertise, and ability to nurture a culture of high expectations and

academic rigor, are all key in providing optimal online instruction. Garrison (2009) added that for learning to take place, social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence must be operating simultaneously within the online learning environment.

Teaching presence in online tutoring environments is manifested by the application of direct instruction, an approach used to provide clear, systematic directions during teaching that avoids practices that require project-based learning and discovery learning (Pilonieta et al., 2019). Direct and explicit instruction puts the tutor at the core of accountability for student learning. Teachers think about the concepts they need to teach, the academic needs of the students, devise a plan, model instruction, and provide feedback to the learners (Robinson-Kooi & Hammond, 2020).

Teaching presence involves the use of direct and explicit instruction to divide concepts into manageable, smaller pieces of content presented sequentially, in a clear, concise manner eliminating any guesswork. This approach has been used by highly effective general education and special education teachers (Hughes et al., 2017) to improve students' mathematical skills (Ghobari Bonab et al., 2018), writing skills (Lopez et al., 2017), and reading skills (Stockard et al., 2018). It is important to note that teaching presence bridges the gap between social presence and cognitive presence (Garrison et al., 2000). Teaching presence was the most useful for this study. This study examined how online tutors use pedagogical practices and digital tools to tutor elementary school students in synchronous online tutoring sessions.

Nature of the Study

To describe the perceptions and experiences of K-5 online tutors, I used a phenomenological approach (Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2018). This approach allowed me to understand the participants' human behavior and motives, and bring meaning to their interpretations (Umanailo, 2019). During the data analysis phase, I analyzed the similarities, differences, patterns, and themes embedded in elementary school teachers' experiences with online tutoring (Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2018). Using this approach was the best fit over other qualitative approaches such as a case study or an ethnography as it allowed me to interview participants to gain knowledge about their lived experiences to capture what they say and do based on their opinions (Umanailo, 2019). The phenomenological approach provided detailed, personalized insights and rich descriptions in first person point of view. The study participants were online tutors who tutored students in reading, writing, English, or math in grades K-5.

The goal was to be able to interview at least 15 online tutors. Creswell (2014) recommended interviewing 5–25 participants so that the researcher has enough information about the participants' common attributes to be able to share their "what" and "how" of the phenomenon as they experienced it. Ultimately, I continued to interview participants until I reach a point of saturation (Vagle, 2018). NVivo, a qualitative analysis software used by educators (Schmieder, 2019), was chosen to analyze the data. The trends, patterns, and themes were noted. Then I bracketed my thoughts to help reduce researcher bias and decrease threats to internal validity.

Definitions

Digital tools: devices (computers, tablets, smartphones, interactive whiteboards), computer programs, websites, applications, and online resources that make online learning easier (Dhawan, 2020).

Pedagogical practices: techniques and methods carried out in the classroom or learning environment (Chia & Lim, 2020).

Synchronous tutoring: online tutoring that is occurring at the same time, in distinctly different places with the tutor and tutee sharing a virtual, platform as their means of online- communication (Hrastinski et al., 2019; Yeh & Lai, 2019).

Teacher presence: the design, facilitation, and direction of social and cognitive processes to support students' learning outcomes (Garrison, 2009; Garrison et al., 2000).

Assumptions

Vogt (1993) defined an assumption as a statement that is presumed to be true. In qualitative research, inquirers make specific assumptions about the data collected from participants (Creswell, 2003). Assumptions must be stated and justified (Simon, 2013). The researchers' assumptions stem from their own unique set of personal and professional experiences and are based on the research paradigm. Simon stated that, "A qualitative researcher contends that reality is subjective and multiple as revealed through the perspectives of the participants in a study" (p. 277).

To understand how online tutors tutor K-5 students, I relied on the participants to provide thorough responses that represented their lived experiences. To do this, I first assumed that the participants would respond openly, honestly, and candidly to each

interview question. My second assumption was that because participants have at least 1 year of K-5 online tutoring experience that they have had enough hands-on tutoring time with children to be able to answer the research questions with substantial depth and breadth. My third assumption was that the teaching, tutoring, training, and/or educational background content in the online tutors' profile was accurate and represented true information. My fourth assumption was that the pedagogical practices reported by the online tutors aligned to their actual online tutoring instructional practices. My final assumption was that during their online tutoring sessions with children, the online tutors formed communities of inquiry during their one-to-one and/or small group tutoring sessions.

Scope and Delimitations

Participants were limited to online tutors who provided online tutoring in a private practice/business virtual environment and who were either self-employed, independent contractors, or working for a tutoring company such as Wyzant, VipKid, Kaplan, Kumon, Varsity Tutors, and/or other similar tutoring providers. The scope of this phenomenological study captured 16 online tutors (Creswell, 2014) providing their own distinct experiences and perceptions in interview sessions of up to 2 hours. The study was delimited to investigating the pedagogical practices and digital tools used by online tutors who tutor elementary students.

The phenomenological tradition allowed me to gain insight into online tutors' interpretations of the processes, barriers, challenges, and/or successes of their experiences. Limiting the study to fewer than 25 participants allowed me to focus more

deeply on the one-to-one tutor, what their experience was like, and to better understand their system of online tutoring through their unique lens. The goal was to interview up to 15 online tutors. Creswell (2014) recommended interviewing 5–25 participants in order to have enough information about the participants' common attributes to be able to share their "what" and "how" of the phenomenon as they experienced it. Creswell expressed that the researcher of qualitative studies should collect extensive details from a few individuals. Merriam (2002) emphasized that in qualitative studies, having a large number of participants should not be the focus; rather, the focus should be an examination of the quality of the data in terms of the participants' responses to the interview questions. Miles and Huberman (2013) argued against having a large sample size for qualitative studies, advocating for no more than 20 participants. The sample size of this study did not exceed 16 participants. Certainly, the number of participants was ultimately decided based on the number of participants who agreed to volunteer for the study and granted me permission to interview them. I collected data until the point of saturation had been reached (Vagle, 2018). Saturation is reached when the responses become redundant and repetitive (Merriam, 2002). Because of the limited scope of this research study, additional research would need to be conducted to confirm or expand on the findings of this study before informing large-scale educational policy at the elementary school level.

Limitations

The limitations of this study were sample size and the nature of qualitative studies. Creswell (2014) defined a limitation as a weakness in a research study. In order

to understand a phenomenon, a researcher should obtain a plethora of rich, thick descriptions from a significant number of participants. The study included 16 online tutors who participated in in-depth interviews of up to 2 hours. I spent sustained and focused time asking questions from the interview protocol (see Appendix A), listening closely so that I could immediately follow up with clarifying and probing questions to help prolong my time with each participant, which helped me to gain access to more data. Although the sample size was relatively small, I continued to interview until I reached a point of saturation.

Another limitation of this study was the nature of qualitative studies. The data gleaned from participants was subjective, based on their accounts, opinions, and lived experiences. The interview protocol was created to assess the extent to which the data were consistent. Some questions were written to verify whether the answers to other similar questions would yield the same type of response. The online tutors volunteered for this study. Participants were invited to participate in the study based on the following criteria: (a) having at least 1 year of K-5 online tutoring and (b) currently working as an online K-5 tutor. However, purposive sampling could be viewed as another limitation of this study.

Significance

The results of this study may catalyze social change. The ISTE standards include the expectation that K-5 students have more engaging, personalized learning experiences. Two-thirds of students in the fourth grade do not read on grade level (NCES, 2019). Online tutoring is one tool that may enhance their literacy skills (Fisher et al., 2016).

Educational stakeholders might use the data from this study to create K-5 online tutoring best practice policies (Serdyukov, 2017). The policies may outline a model of research-based, live, online tutoring to be able to help more K-5 learners catch up, get ahead, and enjoy reading, writing, and/or math more due to the increased attention received in one-to-one and/or small group online tutoring sessions with online tutors. Online tutors may benefit emotionally after having the opportunity to share their self-reflections and experiences (ChanLin, 2016). They may want to shed light on how it might be possible to make K-5 online tutoring more prevalent, impactful, and engaging for young learners. Elementary school building leaders may consider creating professional development programs and/or extended day online tutoring programs to better support students who are performing below grade level.

Summary

Online tutoring at the elementary school level is an educational technology innovation that has not yet reached critical mass (Anderson et al., 2017; Serdyukov, 2017). However, the results of this study add to the body of literature in both the educational technology and elementary school tutoring fields and help create a clearer understanding of K-5 online tutoring through the lens of the online tutors. I examined the experiences of elementary school level online tutors in the context of teacher presence as defined in the CoI conceptual framework (Garrison et al., 2000).

In March 2020, the COVID-19 virus spread rapidly and infected thousands of people (Kuhfeld et al., 2020). This required schools nationwide to shut down forcing the transition from face-to-face teaching to online, emergency remote teaching (Trust &

Whalen, 2020). In their effort to provide sound pedagogical practices in online learning environments, educational researchers are seeking research-based solutions and best practices to help guide instructors in the right direction during this pandemic (Johns & Mills, 2020). The data from this study may help inform both the work of K-5 teachers and K-5 online tutors.

In Chapter 1, I explored the problem, gap, purpose, research questions, conceptual framework, qualitative tradition, and the nature of the study. The CoI framework (2000) provided the context to ground this study. In Chapter 2, I present a review of the literature and provide an in-depth exploration into the conceptual framework.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

There was a gap in the educational technology literature as it related to how online tutors tutor elementary school students. Specifically, there was limited information regarding online tutors' self-reported experiences using pedagogical practices and digital tools to build students' academic capacities. Conducting this study helped ameliorate this absence in the educational technology narrative.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of online tutors regarding their pedagogical practices and digital tools used when tutoring students in grades K-5. Participants in the study were tutors who provided online tutoring in reading, writing, English, or mathematics to elementary school students needing remediation or enrichment to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of elementary school online tutors, and the phenomenon of K-5 online tutoring.

The COVID-19 virus caused a global pandemic, which forced school closings and abruptly changed the nature of K-5 teaching and learning (Kuhfeld et al., 2020). Now, more than ever, elementary school students need academic support in the form of tutoring (Kier & Clark, 2020). As the need for online tutoring continues to grow worldwide, elementary school educators must be equipped with the knowledge and skills of the most effective pedagogical practices, digital tools, tutoring methodologies, techniques, and instructional strategies used to tutor elementary school students (Barbour, 2019; M. Wu & Gao, 2020).

In this chapter, I provide the literature search strategies, the conceptual framework underpinning this study, and major themes in the literature concerning how online

instructors design instruction, coach learners, and teach students concepts across content areas as well as a chapter summary. The CoI conceptual framework (Garrison et al., 2000) guided this study.

Literature Search Strategy

Google Scholar and Walden University's Library databases were the primary search engines used to find peer-reviewed articles and reports written between 2015 and 2020. The databases that I used for my search included ERIC, Education Source, Teacher Reference Center, Academic Search Premier, Psych Articles, and Computers and Applied Sciences Complete. The search terms that I used included *elementary school students/K-5 students* and *online tutoring*, *online tutors*, *online tools for learning*, *community of inquiry*, *teacher presence*, *tutor experiences and perceptions*, *remote tutoring*, *synchronous tutoring*, and *primary students and community of inquiry*. Other search terms included *online tutor practices*, *online tutor pedagogical practices*, *online communication tools*, *collaborative learning tools*, *pedagogies and private online tutors*, and *strategies for online learning*. Some bibliographic references at the end of printed articles were also used as sources for this study.

I searched Walden University's Library for doctoral dissertations published within the last 5 years on the topic of online tutoring although one was found focused on a hybrid or blended tutoring program of at-risk high school students (Johnson, 2019). A dissertation outside of Walden University was found which focused on the interpersonal relationship between online instructor and college student participation and engagement (Forker, 2020). Stephens' (2020) dissertation focused on elementary educators'

perceptions of virtual learning environments (VLEs) and special education students' personalized learning pathways.

Google Scholar alerts were created using search terms such as *virtual learning*, *K-12 online tutoring*, *K-12 e-learning*, *virtual tutoring*, and *K-12 synchronous learning*, which yielded many articles but none on the topic of K-5 online tutors' lived experiences tutoring elementary school students. This study filled a gap in the research, as there were no peer-reviewed articles on the experiences and perceptions of online tutors teaching elementary school students virtually using pedagogical practices and digital tools in one-on-one and/or small group synchronous tutoring sessions.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework helps researchers examine, analyze, and explain a social phenomenon. The CoI, a widely accepted and often cited (Valverde-Berrocoso et al., 2020) framework, is a model that describes how teaching and learning take place online with learners through shared academic experiences (Garrison et al., 2000). This model has three interdependent dimensions: social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence. Figure 1 is a visual display of the CoI conceptual framework which brings life to the theory (Yin, 2011) and helps represent the framework in a more simplified way (Verdinelli & Scagnoli, 2013).

Figure 1

Elements of an Educational Experience

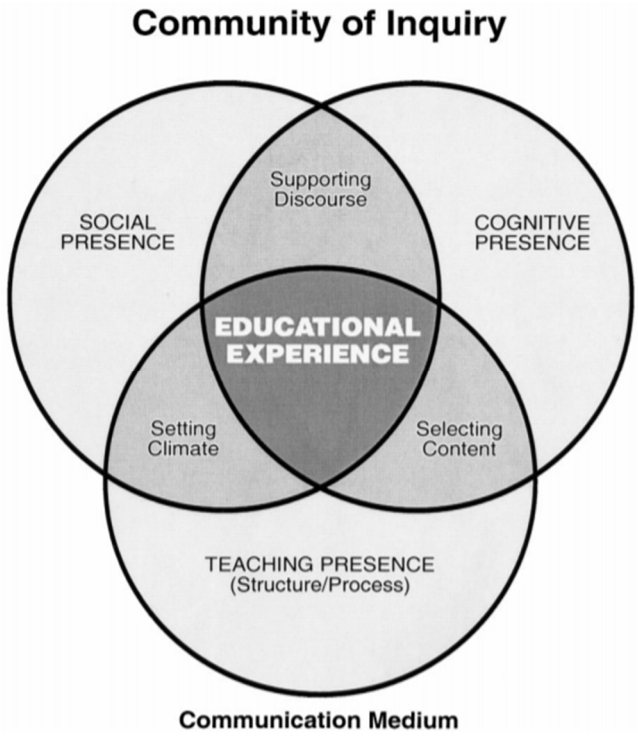

Figure 1. Community of inquiry framework. From "Critical Inquiry in a Text-Based Environment: Computer Conferencing in Higher Education," by D.R. Garrison, T. Anderson, and W. Archer, 2000, *The Internet and Higher Education*, 2, p.88. Copyright 2000 by Elsevier Science Inc. Reprinted with permission.

A *conceptual framework* is defined as a network or a "plane" of interlinked concepts that together provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon or phenomena (Jabareen, 2009). The CoI conceptual framework, as illustrated in Figure 1, is rooted in the seminal work of Pierce (1965, 1966) who was motivated by an interest in scientific inquiry and how a community of scientists could work together to answer research questions. Dewey (1959) expanded the term to focus on educator inquiry and CoI in an educational context where academic problems are examined, analyzed, debated, and solved. Garrison et al. (2000) further expanded on the idea of an inquiry with the CoI

model. This model explores online learning designs in higher education to meet college students' need for deep, engaging, meaningful online knowledge acquisition, by learning that social presence, teacher presence, and cognitive presence all have an impact on online educational experiences.

Social presence, cognitive presence, and teacher presence may influence the function and role played by online tutors of students in grades K-5 (Garrison et al., 2000). The CoI model was well suited as a conceptual framework for this study because it served as a lens to examine the accounts, experiences, interactions, and relationships between the online tutors and the tutees. The digital tools selected, the educational methodologies chosen, and the synchronous communications between the learning participants all connect back to the point of view and mindset of the online tutor. How the online tutor prepares the virtual environment, delivers the instruction, and interacts with the learners all directly relate to the sense of community established by the online tutor (Garrison et al., 2000).

Social Presence

Social presence involves the projection of individual identities by participants in a group to relate to others and interact with members of a learning community, with the instructor maintaining cohesion between the participants, offering opportunities for discourse and collaboration (Garrison, 2009; Garrison et al., 2000; Lee & Huang, 2018). The instructor initiates social presence, for example, taking the lead by introducing themselves and sharing facts about their personal and professional life (Garrison, 2009). Members interpret the instructor's communications and feel a sense of group identity

(Armelli & DeStefani, 2016). Armelli and DeStefani (2016) explained that social presence is a major force acting as the catalyst for active engagement, meaning-making, peer support, and exchanges of information among online learners where they can express their honest emotions in a risk-free zone. Having social interactions in the learning environment is not enough as instructors should differentiate instruction and respond to the unique linguistic, academic, cognitive, and socioemotional needs of all learners (Leseax et al., 2016). Otherwise, students feel isolated and disconnected from the rest of the participants in the VLE (Phirangee & Malec, 2017).

Cognitive Presence

Cognitive presence occurs when the instructor creates and maintains rigorous instruction that invites students to partake in sharing predictions, making inferences, drawing conclusions, analyzing problems, theory building, and knowledge construction by way of discourse and continued reflection (Garrison et al., 2001). Turula (2018) stated that in a hybrid learning environment, an instructor's social presence and cognitive presence act in an inverse relationship, each reinforcing and compensating for the other as the instructor helps students foster problem-solving, analysis, and self-reflection skills.

Teaching Presence

Teaching presence relates to the design, facilitation, and direction of social and cognitive processes to support students' learning outcomes (Garrison et al., 2000). Instructors must offer consistent explicit instructional guidance, support, and data-driven feedback to help students understand concepts, stay motivated, and achieve their goals (Garrison et al., 2000). Hersman and Schroeder (2017) explained that teacher presence

includes two main constructs: design and facilitation. Hersman and Schroeder noted that online instructors must provide a learning environment that is interactive, engaging, and motivating with specific practices, procedures, and policies that solidify social and cognitive presence as the three elements work together simultaneously. However, a strong teacher presence does not guarantee academic excellence, nor does it guarantee that students' learning outcomes and grades are positive (Wendt & Courduff, 2018). Wendt and Courduff (2018) suggested that factors other than teacher presence might contribute to students' learning outcomes and grades, such as a lack of academic, emotional, and social support outside of the course confines.

Course design, structure, and organization have implications for the students involved in the learning environment. Teaching presence is complex as it influences curriculum choices, teaching methods, modes of communication between participants, and assessment type options (Anderson et al., 2001). Vasquez and Straub (2015) found that both general education and special education students respond favorably to online writing process instruction when they are taught to write a paragraph using acronyms. Cox et al. (2015) noted that when instructors promote a CoI and provide students with effective feedback, their writing significantly improves in terms of both grammar and content. They recommended that online writing instructors offer group feedback based on trends of the participants, pre-recorded differentiated individual feedback, no feedback to allow participants to give each other feedback, and to provide individual student conferences through questioning, commenting, and with the use of writing rubrics.

The CoI model empowers teachers and tutors in online environments, emphasizing a need for a collaborative and constructivist-based approach in these three interdependent components (social presence, teacher presence, and cognitive presence). According to Garrison et al. (2000), if these three presences are not simultaneously occurring in the learning environment the effect would be an unsuccessful educational experience for the student. Not all researchers agree that the three CoI presences need to be operating together for an optimal online learning experience. Zilka et al. (2018) did not emphasize social presence, as they believed that the main concern is teaching presence with learning environments that support student autonomy and self-confidence. Other researchers have asserted new presences to the field of education, including emotional presence (Majeski et al., 2018; Sarsar & Kisla, 2016; Stenbom et al., 2016) and learner presence (Gregory & Bannister-Tyrrell, 2017; Pool et al., 2017; Stenbom et al., 2016).

A COI Model for Online Learning Environments

Garrison et al. (2000) recognized the critical importance of the socioemotional relationship between instructor and learner. They theorized that in the online learning environment, the instructor's presence, teaching style, effective teaching methodologies, level of preparation and expertise, and ability to nurture a culture of high expectations and academic rigor are key to providing optimal online instruction for learners. For deep learning to take place, certain elements called presence(s) in the online learning environment should be present and operating simultaneously (Garrison et al., 2000). These elements are teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence.

Social presence relates to the connectedness and academic intimacy between the instructor and the learners (Garrison et al., 2000). Social presence, fostered by the instructor, in an online environment where shared communications are digital, open-ended, valued, and debated. It is through these series of interactions that a socio-emotional bond between the participants and the online instructor is formed (Garrison et al., 2000).

Cognitive presence relates to the use of active communication between and among all participants in their effort to understand concepts, make meaning, construct new knowledge, and connect prior knowledge to acquired knowledge (Garrison et al., 2000). Teaching presence relates to course design, delivery of instruction, leadership and management of pedagogical practices, instructional strategies, and the selection/use of the digital tools for curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Garrison et al., 2000). Frequent and consistently high levels of teaching presence and social presence enhance cognitive presence. The consistent use of all three presences leads to elevated levels of course satisfaction, instructor satisfaction, and a strong sense of belonging (Anderson et al., 2001; Garrison et al., 2000, 2001, 2009).

Teaching presence is at the heart of studies involving online tutoring and elementary school students. When students require supplemental math and/or reading support, teachers, and tutors readily support them instructionally by integrating educational technology. Clark and Whetstone (2014) found that based on quantitative state math achievement data, results from teacher surveys, and usage analytics data from the online tutoring platform, in over 3 years, K-5 students from 15 schools improved in

mathematics achievement, both computational and story problem solving, after using the online tutoring computer-based instruction program, Math-Whizz.

Similarly, in a quantitative study of four learning-disabled Grade 4 students reading below the 20th percentile, data showed a significant improvement in word recognition, oral reading rate, and oral fluency after being synchronously tutored online by four online tutors using a systematic supplemental online reading program via Adobe Connect (Vasquez & Slocum, 2012).

The focus of this study was online tutors who create a learning environment to support academic skill and content knowledge development in elementary school students. The CoI model, with its three interacting spheres–social presence, cognitive presence, and teacher presence–illuminated the core tutor-tutee relationship through an examination of perceptions and experiences of tutors with students in an online tutoring environment. This relationship served as the framework for the analysis of the lived experiences of online tutors working with students in grades K-5.

Review of Tutoring Literature

The next section of the literature review is an examination of existing research on the key variables in this study. Topics include research focused on face-to-face and online tutoring interventions. Also included is existing research on the pedagogical practices used for online tutoring and studies examining the digital tools that online tutors use.

Face-to-Face Tutoring

Private tutoring benefits children because it helps improve their reading, writing, math, oral language, vocabulary, critical thinking, and overall academic performance

(Zhang & Xie, 2017). Initially students are assessed so that tutors can determine the gaps in their learning and to observe the instructional strategies used by students. Private tutors support students in one-to-one or small group sessions providing students the academic attention they need to catch up with their peers and to help students perform on grade level (Guill & Spinath, 2014). My research study focused on the pedagogical practices used by K-5 online tutors both in one-to-one and small group sessions.

In a case study, Stover et al. (2017) celebrated the literacy development and growth of one first grade, male student. Pre-tests revealed a significant achievement gap in phonological awareness, phonics, and written expression skills, scoring 0% in all categories. He lacked phonics knowledge of short vowels, digraphs, blends, long vowels, diphthongs, and decoding multisyllabic words. Conversations with the student revealed his love for trucks and tractors. The instructor used the students' love for vehicles to pique his interest. The post-test revealed 80% increases in both short and long vowel word reading and significant gains in all the other phonics categories. The face-face-tutoring sessions were comprised of the following pedagogical practices: using familiar texts for review, repeated readings for practice and fluency building, embedded word work to develop phonics, teaching decoding and encoding strategies, providing feedback on reading comprehension strategy use, teacher read-alouds for enjoyment and vocabulary building, and technology integration for game-based literacy practice and for developing writing skills. It must be noted that the one-to-one tutoring sessions included shared reading, and independent reading with special attention focused on using materials

and books related to trucks and tractors to keep the student motivated, actively engaged, and interested in reading.

Some instructional decisions are not sound pedagogical practices. In his analytic essay, Paige (2018) warned against district level and school building leaders purchasing "quick fix" small group literacy tutoring materials that are not research-based or whose literacy potency "dissolves" before students enter third grade where they need to take high stakes accountability exams which assess their higher-order thinking and reading comprehension skills. The major issue tends to be that whole class instructional programs are weak if the curriculum is not grounded in the five pillars of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Therefore, whole-class instructional programs must be rooted in pedagogical practices that enable students to make significant, annual reading gains and not rely solely on a small group test prep tutoring program. Hughes et al. (2017) found that what matters most both for whole class and small group learning is explicit instruction.

Implicit bias about what students from low socioeconomic levels know and what they are capable of achieving coupled with their own negative self-efficacy interfered with literacy tutors (undergraduate students/pre-service teachers) providing struggling early childhood readers with the data-driven, differentiated, explicit instruction they needed to become motivated, proficient and confident readers (Brodeur & Ortmann, 2018). Brodeur and Ortmann (2018) found that some of the literacy tutors unknowingly wasted hours of instructional time "helping" students by insisting that students mirror back predetermined answers to literacy questions. Researchers also found that literacy

tutors engage in an overproduction of "hinting" at one correct answer. Also, an analysis of tutoring video data revealed that too often tutors concerned themselves with providing far too many pacified verbal compliments to keep the "struggling reader" motivated rather than maintain high teacher expectations, data-driven skill-based instruction, and sufficient instructional time dedicated to literacy-based expressive language development (Brodeur & Ortmann, 2018).

In another study of video-recorded literacy tutoring sessions, D'Abate et al. (2018) found results similar to Brodeur and Ortmann (2018). Data revealed that teachers must use pedagogical practices such as scaffolding and modeling which are designed to help early readers gain skills in decoding, and encoding, not merely base instruction on students answering basic recall reading comprehension questions. One pedagogical practice that the pre-service and in-service teachers could have used is retrospective miscue analysis while conducting reading conferences to help the students attend to, analyze, and learn to self-correct their reading errors (Wang & Grieve, 2019).

For pedagogical practices to positively affect student-learning outcomes, tutoring sessions must be consistently attended by the tutees and they need more than three weeks over the summer to ameliorate reading comprehension gaps (Nicholson & Tiru, 2019). This qualitative study included 36 students from low socioeconomic households who were compared to 36 students who did not attend tutoring sessions since they were part of the control group. University students enrolled in a summer literacy course served as their tutors. They provided explicit phonics, sight word, syllabication, and phonemic awareness instruction with guided support from their professor. Data indicated that

students in the tutoring group made literacy gains in real-word spelling, invented spelling, sight word reading, decoding, and syllable division, with only slight gains in reading comprehension. However, at the end of the 3-week tutoring program, it was clear that the literacy support did not close the achievement gap (Nicholson & Tiru, 2019).

A similar study conducted a year prior proved that minimally trained, non-elementary education major, university students that received literacy coaching from a mentor, equipped with a highly structured, explicitly taught phonics program, could have a positive impact on students' learning outcomes (Lindo et al., 2018). Lindo et al. (2018) found that providing two after-school tutoring sessions per week, over the course of an entire school year helped students make significant gains, with effect sizes as high as 0.78, 0.99, and 1.02 for letter-word identification, decoding, and reading comprehension as compared to the students in the control group. Researchers found that training and coaching after-school tutors, having them forge weekly communication sessions with students' classroom teachers, plus consistently assessing the after-school tutors' knowledge base, skill levels, and acquired content helped keep them sharp so that they are proficient in meeting the diverse, academic needs of elementary school students (Pai et al., 2017).

One trend that is consistent in the data is the use of university teacher candidates that work as literacy tutors to close achievement gaps of students from low-income, mostly, single-parent households. A study of 40 kindergarten through Grade 2 students that attended a community-based after-school organization were tutored for 15 Tuesdays within a semester. The teacher candidates co-taught and focused on how to differentiate

instruction to meet students' letter-sound, sight word, phonics, reading comprehension, and writing needs. Data were collected in the form of parent and center director interviews, focus groups of teacher candidates, and observations of students' work samples. At the initial meeting, parents expressed their concerns, tutors made a note of the information, used that data to drive their tutoring instruction, and then used their own assessments (phonics and sight words) to gauge students' academic growth. This study was the only one found in the body of literature that did not contain any formal pre-and-post-data, so the claim that the tutoring worked or helped would need to be repeated to be able to state that the data is valid/accurate. Researchers used parents' assessment of student growth and literacy development to inform the study. Tutors also used their own phonics and sight word assessments to determine students' literacy growth, but their study lacked any pre-assessment data to compare it to (De La Cruz & Guerra, 2019).

Student teachers serving as literacy coaches, tutors, and afterschool teachers while attending a college, pre-service/in-service class being mentored by university professors, with time to self-reflect in their journals, increased their feelings of self-efficacy. Children were able to make gains in reading with the utilization of pedagogical practices such as explicit instruction and data-driven instruction (Cerruto & Moroney, 2020). English language learners and students with a learning disability benefit most from instruction in (a) the five pillars of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension), (b) use of graphic organizers, (c) computer-assisted instruction, (d) drill and practice, (e) peer tutoring, (f) repeated readings with teacher

feedback, and (g) reading programs rooted in phonemic awareness (Boon & Barbetta, 2017).

History of Online Tutoring

Online learning, originally termed distance education (Ferriman, 2020; Kentnor, 2015) has evolved. It began as an emerging, specialized niche serving the needs of the underserved and poor citizenry who had physical challenges with traveling to local college campuses or who opted to use the non-traditional mode of learning due to its lower financial costs (Ferriman, 2020; Kentnor, 2015). Distance education allowed adult students to learn remotely by simply using the U. S. Postal Service to place an order for a correspondence course, receive their printed learning materials at home, study the academic resources, and then mail their completed work to the instructor to show proof that the independent study work was completed (Anderson & Simpson, 2012). Written correspondence courses evolved into radio instruction, which led to television instruction, followed by large networked broadcasted instructional shows offering the masses the opportunity to learn from home (Anderson & Simpson, 2012). Historically, as technologies emerged, evolved, and diffused through the culture, a positive impact in the field of educational technology resulted (Ferriman, 2020; Kentnor, 2015). There was a shift from network broadcasting with one instructor to the creation of the Internet. The Internet brought about networked personal computers that later helped launch distance learning programs within and on college campuses. Online teaching led to online tutoring as online tutoring filled the need for one-on-one scaffolded support to diverse adult

learners who struggled to meet the demands of college coursework (Anderson & Simpson, 2012).

Initially, tutoring online began with email (Turrentine & MacDonald, 2006). College students posed questions to college tutors and waited for their responses via email. In a year-long qualitative study of two urban community colleges, Turrentine and MacDonald (2006) found that professors of online courses created electronic resources and web pages featuring frequently asked questions to clarify concepts and guide students in the acquisition of course content and to support adult learners with resolving technical support issues. Email exchanges resulted in the creation of academic support services (study guides, practice application pages of course concepts, online chats) for online learners. Academic support services brought about the advent of hybrid small group tutoring and online learning platforms that offered cyber tutoring to support the academic learning outcomes of at-risk and disadvantaged adult learners (Turrentine & MacDonald, 2006) in both community colleges and bachelor's degree yielding institutions. Turrentine and MacDonald found many best pedagogical practices of online tutoring at the college community level. These pedagogical practices range from setting parameters about what online writing tutors could do and could not do during tutoring sessions. They also included creating a climate of high expectations, ensuring instructor social presence of the online tutors by greeting students by name, posting their pictures, biographies, and work schedules for students, helping students get acclimated with the course platform and content, utilizing a whiteboard and visual content as well as providing sufficient feedback to students.

Tutoring is an intervention designed to help improve student-learning outcomes (Ediger, 2017). Ideally, instructors must be caring, knowledgeable in the content they teach, and skilled in assessing and choosing the approaches most suited for yielding optimal academic results (Bean et al., 2019; Ediger, 2017; Garrison et al., 2000). Tutors must also be knowledgeable about diagnosing and remediating students, as well as differentiating and scaffolding instruction (Ediger, 2017). The goal of online tutoring is to create a virtual tutoring environment that can provide scaffolding to help a student achieve success (Bean et al., 2019; Feng et al., 2017). To date, there is a gap in the area of live online tutoring with elementary school students. Kennedy and Ferdig (2018) created a handbook of research that serves as a compendium of synthesized information on K-12 online and blended learning. Bean et al. (2019) provided information on implementing effective practices for online tutoring programs. However, Bean et al.'s research addressed the need for remediation through online tutoring at the community college level.

Similarly, Barton and Maness (2017) added to the body of literature by presenting their recommendations for online pedagogical practices at the college level. These recommendations include posting a welcome video for course participants while also updating the instructors' weekly schedule, assignments, and their due dates along with announcements, use of rubrics for scoring student work, and keeping students abreast of their grades, by informing them as early as week one. Other recommendations included providing ongoing and consistent feedback and communication to students with updated reminders via email, posting instructions on how to complete assignments, posting work,

and using the discussion board (Barton & Maness, 2017). Barton and Maness also recommended providing students with instructor office hours, indicating instructor response time to engage learners via email, and scoring student work within the universities' standard response timelines as well as notifying students when teachers were absent. Other key pedagogical practices recommended to tutor college students online include accountable talk, analysis of student work, peer teaching, and peer collaboration. The current body of knowledge provides rich data about online tutoring at the college level but there is limited research on the pedagogical practices used to tutor elementary school students online (Barton & Maness, 2017).

Pedagogical Practices for Online Tutoring

Private tutoring for K-5 students is a supplement to their formal public, charter, or private elementary school experience. According to one tutoring market report in 2016, there were more than 8.5 million private tutors with about 16% of them also employed as regular schoolteachers (Guo et al., 2020). Private tutoring for both low- and high-performing elementary school students strengthens their instructional core and helps them better understand their homework, which leads to higher results on teacher-made quizzes, classroom tests, and high stakes assessments (Ömeroğulları et al., 2020). However, in two longitudinal quantitative studies, Ömeroğulları et al. (2020) performed a regression analysis of over 8,000 students in Grades 4–9. Data indicated that there was weak evidence to support the hypothesis that private tutoring leads to positive academic outcomes. They found that other variables such as the tutor's level of background

knowledge, length of time students received tutoring, and tutor's formal qualifications were better predictors of student success.

In their quantitative study using a difference-in-difference model and propensity score matching, Sun et al. (2020) focused on students' socioemotional well-being and found that there were positive psychological benefits to being tutored, which reduce students' levels of anxiety associated with learning. In addition, Sun et al. noted that these rural area-residing students' english language arts skills significantly improved because of private tutoring. Actively participating in private tutoring can give students a competitive edge (Sun et al., 2020).

One-to-one and small group tutoring are remedial approaches used to help students who need extra academic support, and tutoring can be effective as an intervention for helping students to close achievement gaps (Cheung & Slavin, 2016). Tutoring by paraprofessionals, such as teaching assistants, can be as effective as tutoring by teachers and volunteer tutoring is often less effective than tutoring by either paraprofessionals or teachers. Additionally, having substitute teachers provide children one-to-one tutoring is not effective, and whole-class/whole-school approaches work for struggling readers, particularly if the pedagogy and instruction are direct and explicit (Cheung & Slavin, 2016).

Pedagogical practices should include educational methods that yield high levels of student achievement (O'Brien & Blue, 2018). O'Brien and Blue (2018) asserted that sound pedagogical practices include teacher talk, providing social and emotional resources for students, the supplementation of lessons with resource building materials,

and the development of individualized learning goals that target positive cognitions, emotions, and experiences. Whether students are in a small group in their classrooms with their teacher working on content that is difficult for them, working individually with a tutor to problem solve, or working online with an online tutor, online learners benefit most when the learning environment has three elements operating simultaneously: social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence (Garrison et al., 2000).

Private tutoring can be offered to students asynchronously with students engaged in completing academic assignments on their own schedule (Denton, 2017). Online tutoring that does not involve a tutor providing instruction for the student at the same time is asynchronous. Instead of live tutoring, instructors coach learners via pre-recorded video, text chat messaging, email, social media, and/or discussion boards. Students' instructors design pre-recorded videos of the academic content for students to view at their convenience. Students are required to complete various assignments remotely and then submit them to a learning management system for instructor review and grading which could be either text-based feedback or video-based feedback (Thomas et al., 2017). Asynchronous feedback from the instructor helps the student by clarifying concepts; dispelling myths, correcting miscues, and helping students connect prior knowledge to acquired knowledge (M. Wu & Gao, 2019).

Online tutoring can also be synchronous, which is live tutoring occurring online in real-time. Synchronous tutoring involves an instructor with one student, a small group, and/or several students connected online via the internet using a collaborative website (M. Wu & Gao, 2019). Students click a link to log in to access direct, explicit, data-

driven instructional support in mathematics, phonics, language, reading comprehension, and/or writing. Generally, with instructors' pedagogical practices, instructional strategies, and digital tools, students' engagement is piqued and as a result, they grow as readers, writers, and problem solvers (Shoepe et al., 2020; M. Wu & Gao, 2019). While the literature provides information on peer tutoring (Moliner & Alegre, 2020), web-based tutoring (Clark & Whetstone, 2014), and online public schools (Molnar, 2019), it fails to provide the field of educators with evidence of the learning techniques, instructional decisions, and design strategies used to tutor elementary students online.

The role of the online tutor of elementary school students is multifaceted, requiring the tutor to facilitate, motivate, mentor students, make curriculum, and design adjustments for students to be academically successful (Burdina et al., 2019). In a two-stage, diagnostic, and formative quantitative study, Burdina et al. (2019) found that online tutors improved the quality of the tutoring session by conducting on-the-spot teaching to both clear up misconceptions and to improve the quality of intimate discourse between the tutor and the Grade 4 students. Researchers also found that communication with the teacher and the class participants positively affects student's motivation to learn; academic progress made, and group assimilation.

Ersoy and Bozkurt (2015) noted that instructors must consider their role as facilitators and support themselves and students with dealing with technical issues and challenges to provide an optimal learning experience for children. Online tutoring is an intervention designed to help improve student-learning outcomes of K-5 students (Vasquez et al., 2017). Ideally, tutors must be caring people, knowledgeable in the

content that they teach, skilled in assessing, diagnosing, and remediating students as well as differentiating and scaffolding instruction, and choosing the methodologies (building background knowledge, critical thinking, and questioning, reciprocal teaching) best suited for yielding optimal academic results (Ediger, 2017). The goal of online tutoring is to create a virtual tutoring environment for students that emulates components of a face-to-face learning experience, which can help a student achieve success (Bean, 2019). To date, there is a gap in the literature on live online tutoring with elementary school students.

Kennedy and Ferdig (2018) created a 700-page plus anthology on the research on K-12 online and blended learning. The text presented the historical perspective of online learning in America and worldwide. It included research on personal learning environments, professional development for teachers to ready them for online teaching, online learning across various subjects and disciplines, and ways to support students emotionally, behaviorally, socially, and academically.

Bean et al. (2019) presented effective pedagogical practices associated with online tutoring for students at the college level. Similar to face-to-face tutoring, online tutoring benefits students. It proactively creates opportunities to engage students in their own communities by using a plethora of modalities such as phone, email, text, and videoconferencing to help them succeed with processing, dissecting, planning, and completing assignments across subjects.

Barton and Maness (2017) presented their recommendations for online course design strategies at the college level. These recommendations included posting a

welcome video for course participants while also updating the instructors' weekly schedule, assignments, and their due dates, along with announcements, use of rubrics for scoring student work, and keeping students abreast of the learning management grades by starting to inform them as early as the first week. Other recommendations include providing ongoing and consistent feedback and communication to students with updated reminders via email, post instructions on how to do the assignments, and how to use the discussion board. They also recommended providing students with instructor office hours, indicating instructor response time to engage learners via email, scoring student work with the universities' standard response timelines/turn-around times, as well notifying students when instructors might be attending a conference or dealing with an illness. Key pedagogical practices include accountable talk, analysis of student work, peer teaching, and peer collaboration. The current body of knowledge lacks adequate information on the pedagogical practices used to tutor elementary school students online. However, current research exists on pedagogical practices used in online tutoring sessions in other educational environments such as college, high school and middle school.

College Students

There is a lack of understanding about the pedagogical practices online tutors use when tutoring K-5 students. However, the field of online tutoring is well documented, providing a rich narrative on participant perceptions, pedagogical practices, instructional strategies, and digital tools used to tutor college students. Bean et al. (2019) and Stone (2017) produced an executive report, which outlined key best pedagogical practices in

online tutoring to be able to better support learning outcomes for diverse, underrepresented college students. These findings included building strong interpersonal relationships between instructors and students. Building such relationships would make it easier to provide a comprehensive, collaborative, and holistic approach to online tutoring across various departments. This would also help to establish quality standards for online education, early intervention to close academic gaps of at-risk students before engaging in core learning, and it would provide ample teacher presence to keep students feeling connected, motivated and satisfied. In addition, researchers discovered that online instructors must have a digital online curriculum with content, specifically crafted for interactive, engaging, and supportive sessions for all students. Researchers indicated that university instructors must set up and execute regular check-ins with students using an institutional framework of academic interventions. The check-ins would occur based on the learning analytics within the course that allows instructors to monitor student performance and engagement.

Sembiring (2018) found that most respondents felt that the online tutors' style and instructional strategy usage most influenced the students' level of motivation & class participation. Gehret et al. (2016) conducted research to assess synchronous, online tutoring with students who are deaf or hard of hearing. They found that using sign language and the instructors' lessons learned from prior knowledge or previous face-to-face and online tutoring experiences with non-hard of hearing students in 1:1 online tutoring helped students make gains in chemistry and biochemistry. Some of the pedagogical practices used were providing live instruction in the late evenings or during

students' work hours, careful curriculum pacing, providing scientific journal articles for reading, solving the class science/mathematics problems together, reviewing the homework problems, using an integrated system of document sharing, and scaffolding instruction. In fact, scaffolding content for learners is among one of the most used pedagogical practices.

Feng et al. (2017) revealed that there must be different levels of scaffolding intensity during the different stages of online tutoring and concerning the main three parts of a tutoring session (beginning, middle, and end). They found that online tutors must provide a high intensity of scaffolding early in the learning phase & then gradually release more responsibility to the learner. The level of support from the instructor should be adaptive, never fixed. Some of the pedagogical practices used include asking thought-provoking questions, assigning student roles, using rubrics and protocols for learning, and providing clear expectations for learning and participation, tuning in to students' socio-emotional well-being as well as being actively present and supportive in the discussion board area. E. Wu and Yang (2016) added to the narrative by sharing that when online tutors of low achieving college students explicitly label the tutoring strategies used for learners, they perceive online tutoring as an effective academic support strategy. Some of the pedagogical practices utilized by online tutors were scaffolding, confirming strategies, direct instruction, and asking higher-order thinking questions.

High School Students

There is limited knowledge in the literature about online tutors tutoring students in grades K-5 and the pedagogical practices they use. M. Wu and Gao (2020) conducted a

large-scale study with 189 high school students enrolled in a live video streaming online tutoring class. They discovered that even with over 100 students there was a sense of community and belonging among the instructor and the students. In addition, their data indicated that the live video streaming learning management system allowed the instructor to use facial expressions, variable pitches in voice, and humor to develop an enjoyable learning atmosphere. This study adds to the body of research by clarifying that with such a large class, the following pedagogical practices should be included to provide more student-to-student interaction and collaboration: cooperative learning, gamification, and engagement through avatars, badges, and leveling up.

Middle School Students

There is a gap in the literature about the pedagogical practices used by online tutors who tutor K-5 students. However, in a quantitative study of 376 seventh to ninth graders, researchers found that devoting time to training the more proficient middle school students in the "pause, prompt, and praise" technique benefited struggling middle school math students (Moliner & Alegre, 2020). Moliner and Alegre (2020) implemented a tutoring program that took place directly following the teacher-directed math mini-lesson. They facilitated and monitored short bursts of daily 20–25-minute math problem-solving time to reciprocal peer tutoring sessions. Data revealed that struggling students improved in both self-concept regarding math as well as in their math performance across content areas including algebra, geometry, statistics, and probability.

In a mixed-methods study, Chappell et al. (2015) found that low-achieving middle school students' math learning outcomes increased with support from synchronous math

online tutors. Intensive one-to-one response to intervention (RTI) math tutoring was implemented to help improve the learning outcomes of 119 students residing in rural areas in Virginia and Kansas. High-stakes data from the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) state math exams and post-test data indicated that students made significant gains in both conceptual understanding and problem solving.

Data included quantitative math score data as well as qualitative data of student and tutor perceptions of the intervention. Students expressed positive feedback with comments such as, "Now I get irrational numbers and rational numbers," "Now I feel more confident in math!" and "He made it seem so easy because it is!" My doctoral study examined the lived experiences and perceptions of K-5 online tutors and the pedagogical practices they use to tutor. The online tutors in this study shared their lived experiences and pedagogical practices, which included: (a) activating prior knowledge, (b) modeling instruction, (c) using direct and explicit instruction explaining the steps for algorithms, (d) integrating analysis of both process errors and operational errors, and (e) scaffolding instruction-using questioning or prompting. In a study in Germany, researchers found that tutor training, prior knowledge, skills, and the number of contact hours tutoring secondary education students, impacts student achievement and learning outcomes (Ömeroğulları et al., 2020).

Elementary School Students

There is little evidence of the pedagogical practices used by online tutors to tutor elementary school students live. Intelligent tutoring systems provided the academic support for many elementary school students (Hickey & Flynn, 2019; Madden & Slavin,

2017; Wijekumar et al., 2017; Xin et al., 2016). Hickey and Flynn (2019) reported that TutorBright, an intelligent at-home, online, one-to-one tutoring system helped students living in foster care households improve academically. The tutored children made statistically higher gains in reading fluency, comprehension, mathematics calculations than those in the control group, waitlist group. Madden and Slavin (2017) observed that the computer-assisted program Tutoring with Alphie had an effect size of 0.46 on struggling readers in grades K-3. Wijekumar et al. (2017) noted that students in fourth and fifth grades made significant gains in their expository reading comprehension skills due to the use of the Intelligent Tutoring for Structure Strategy web-based program. Improving their text structure skills enabled them to increase their reading levels across genres. Xin et al. (2016) added to the body of literature with an intelligent tutoring system geared to help close the mathematics achievement gap with upper elementary school students. This web-based program "Please Go Bring Me-Conceptual Model-Based Problem Solving" facilitates learning through constructivism, data analysis, and by simplifying word problems to make it easier for students with special needs to solve.

Hautala et al. (2018) conducted a pilot study with 61 children and found that first grade students can learn science through a virtual tutoring system. The students with the lowest pretest scores and the least amount of prior knowledge had the highest gains in science content. The pedagogical practices embedded in the virtual tutoring system were direct instruction of science content, the scaffolding of complex science terms, and the use of adaptive assessments. One online tutoring study (Annamalai et al., 2016) conducted with elementary school students to help improve their narrative writing skills

used Facebook as its learning management platform. However, the focus of the study was an online collaboration between the six fifth grade female students and on the teacher's reflections of the process. In the teachers' reflections, researchers found the use of the following pedagogical practices: explicit instruction, scaffolding, teacher modeling, providing feedback on their writing, differentiating instruction, peer tutoring, and having students compare and contrast their writing pieces with those of their peers to help them self-assess.

Fisher et al. (2016) examined teachers' reflections of online literacy tutoring through FaceTime, Google Docs, Padlet, and Popplet to support struggling readers. However, of the three of the students, one was in middle school reading at an elementary school level and another was a sixth grader. The three teachers used the following pedagogical practices: conducting initial assessments, goal setting, lesson planning, scaffolding, teacher modeling, and providing feedback to students. Vasquez and Straub (2016) explored online writing instruction for children with disabilities and found that these students require direct and explicit instruction in the writing process, need scaffolding in procedural facilitation, and benefit from word processing for publishing their writing. In a review of the literature, Vasquez et al. (2015) found that VLEs support the growth of social, emotional, and expressive language skill development among students with varying learning disabilities ranging from autism to ADHD and other intellectual disabilities. Students benefited from learning empathy, two-way communication, and academic skills with avatars in virtual learning spaces.

Hrastinski et al. (2019) examined the types of questions used by 79 live online math tutors. However, data were gathered from students in grades K-12, rather than K-5. Data showed that the embedded pedagogical practices used to tutor students were modeling instruction, providing students with online office hours and student advising, frequent communications between the online tutors and the students' classroom teachers, and the use of an online math coach as part of an accompaniment to the students' math textbook.

ChanLin et al. (2016) examined the growth in attitude and tutor perceptions of the service-learning project where 184 college students remotely tutored elementary during school after-school hours. The embedded pedagogical practices used were planning for learning to include socio-emotional and mental well-being instruction, delivering data-driven differentiated lessons to address students' academic and behavioral needs, scaffolding, and learning games. ChanLin et al. researched to find out how the tutoring team organized themselves to divide the tutoring labor. Some college students assumed the role of project leader while others took on the role of tutor or coordinator of students' support services.

One qualitative study took place immediately following the closing of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Szente (2020) examined toddlers and preschoolers as they interacted with their daycare teachers via Zoom during the first 3 weeks after schools shut down. Several themes emerged from this work: (a) educate young children by implementing live, planned lessons; (b) establish the home-school connection by engaging both the children and the parents; (c) maintain student and family engagement;

(d) record learning sessions; and (e) house video content in Google classrooms for parents whose work schedules did not align with the online learning sessions so that families can access the lessons at a later time/day.

Digital Tools for Online Tutoring

Digital tools are devices (computers, tablets, smartphones, and interactive whiteboards), computer programs, websites, applications, and online resources that make online learning easier (Dhawan, 2020). Digital tools serve several functions from increasing engagement (Dhawan, 2020) and motivation (Parrish, 2016) to helping students stay connected, communicative, and collaborative (Chapman & Mitchell, 2020). Digital tools support elementary school online learners by making learning more engaging, accessible, and personalized with adaptive instruction (Burdina et al., 2019; Hautala et al., 2018). In addition, digital tools allow elementary school students to share documents and learn from each other while using Google Suite (Dhawan, 2020) and social media sites such as Facebook (Annamalai et al., 2016). The use of a webcam, microphone, and headset offers students the human side of online learning as well as increased social presence (Dhawan, 2020; Garrison et al., 2000). In addition, the webcam, microphone, and headset enable students to have a more multimodal learning experience, which enables teacher modeling and better supports student learning, particularly ELL and SWD students who are known to struggle with learning. Facetime, Google-Docs, Padlet, Popplet, www.dictionary.com, and www.thesaurus.com were integrated into elementary school students' synchronous learning sessions to help increase student

engagement, develop students' word solving skills, and improve students' overall literacy skills (Fisher et al., 2016).

Summary

Chapter 2 focused on the literature review, the search strategies, the gap in the literature, the conceptual framework, and the history of distance education and online tutoring. As discussed throughout this chapter, there was little evidence of the pedagogical practices, digital tools used, and the lived experiences of K-5 tutors when tutoring students online. What we do know is that pedagogical practices are the techniques and methods carried out in the classroom or learning environment (Chia & Lim, 2020). Based on the analyzed literature, there seems to be a trend of consistent use of the following pedagogical practices for both face-to-face and online tutoring of K-5 students. They are scaffolding instruction (Vygotsky, 1978), modeling and explaining steps and procedures through direct and explicit instruction (Ediger, 2017; Fisher et al., 2016; Hughes et al., 2017; Vasquez & Slocum, 2012; Vasquez & Straub, 2016), engaging in learning discussions (Choi & Walters, 2018), providing adequate time for student practice and embedding questioning techniques to help students develop critical thinking skills (Hrastinski et al., 2019), as well as assessing learners' acquired knowledge (Ediger, 2017; Johns & Mills, 2020; Kier & Clark, 2020; Vasquez & Slocum, 2012; Vasquez & Straub, 2016).

This study added to the body of educational technology literature by providing the narratives of the perceptions of online tutors so that K-5 online teachers and online tutors have a better understanding of the online tutoring design, the processes involved, the

execution and challenges involved in tutoring via a CoI. As illustrated in this chapter, the CoI model (Garrison et al., 2000) has three interconnected spheres: social presence, teaching presence, and cognitive presence. This study focused on the lived experiences of K-5 online tutors. Therefore, teaching presence was most relevant to this study.

Walden University's mission requires that every doctoral student focus on bringing about positive social change. The COVID-19 pandemic changed the nature of K-5 teaching and K-5 online learning, suddenly thrusting educators into unchartered waters. With the majority of fourth-grade students not reading at grade level (NCES, 2019); now more than ever educational technology knowledge on the pedagogical practices and digital tools used to tutor students in one-to-one and/or small groups online must be readily available. Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology used for this doctoral research study and the role of the researcher.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of online tutors regarding their pedagogical practices and digital tools used when tutoring students in grades K-5. Participants in the study were tutors who provide online tutoring in reading, writing, or mathematics to elementary school students needing remediation or enrichment. To gain a better understanding of the perceptions of elementary school online tutors, the phenomenon of online tutoring pedagogy was examined.

The first part of Chapter 3 is focused on the research design and rationale for selecting it. The second part focuses on the role of the researcher and gave details on how the participants were recruited for the research study. The third part includes information on instrumentation, the plan for data analysis, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

I gathered data to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of tutors when tutoring elementary school students in online synchronous settings?

RQ2: What pedagogical practices and digital tools do online tutors use when tutoring elementary school students online and why were those tools selected?

I selected the qualitative phenomenological approach, as it was the most feasible approach for this study. Phenomenological studies involve focusing research attention on the occurrences, events, and underlying meanings of the human experience (Moustakas, 1994). It was imperative to listen closely as each participant shared their knowledge of

specific experiences, practices, challenges, and rewards they have lived through as they tutor children synchronously in subjects that they need support in. Qualitative data allowed for a series of in-depth, rich, detailed descriptions of their lived experiences of tutoring children online than a quantitative methodology could. A quantitative methodology is more concerned with quantities, such as how many, how much, or how often (Creswell, 2003). I was not interested in finding information about how many online tutors tutor in a particular city, state, or town. I was not interested in how much money online tutors were paid compared to face-to-face tutors. Also, I did not want to uncover the frequency of lessons tutored per month, the number of minutes the tutoring sessions lasted, or the scores that students receive on quizzes/exams administered by the online tutor. Similarly, a mixed-method study was not a viable approach for this study because I was not interested in conducting any experiments, had not formed a hypothesis, and was not analyzing numerical data to integrate with interview data. A qualitative phenomenological approach allowed online tutors to describe and explain their lived experiences so that other educational stakeholders understand the phenomenon of K-5 online tutoring.

There are several approaches to qualitative research: narrative, case study, phenomenology, grounded theory, and ethnography. The phenomenological approach was chosen as the appropriate research design. Phenomenological studies are most concerned with understanding a phenomenon by exploring a unique human existence by having the participants describe in detail, their accounts of their lived experiences. This research took the form of a phenomenological study since I was interested in specific

information about the day-to-day/session-to-session process of online tutoring of students in grades K-5. A qualitative phenomenological study was a good fit for this research investigation because it allowed the participants to intentionally reflect on the essence of online tutoring, providing concrete examples to bring to life what synchronous tutoring looks like and sounds like based on their perspective (Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2018).

Using phenomenology as the qualitative inquiry strategy facilitated the process of collecting, examining, and analyzing information to shed light on the research questions because, over time, I revealed the answers to the research questions through a recursive, iterative process, as Moustakas (1994) described. Utilizing the phenomenological approach allowed me to ask probing and clarifying questions, seek the rationale or reasoning for certain statements, and ask the participant to elaborate, evaluate, extend, and give examples right on the spot in an effort to completely understand the participation and involvement of the online tutors (Vagle, 2018).

A phenomenological study was the most appropriate tradition to utilize for this research study as opposed to the other qualitative traditions. The phenomenological approach is the best research design choice since this approach is concerned with understanding the perceptions and perspectives of particular situations and phenomena (Moustakas, 1994). This approach was most concerned with a macro-level tour of the distinct "lived experiences" such as the teaching methods, duties, tasks, decisions, interactions, communications, and occurrences of what online tutors of young children in grades K-5 do to help them learn (Lodico et al., 2010). I am only focused on discovering

information about the pedagogy, processes, methodologies, and digital tools utilized by the K-5 online tutor.

A narrative research approach would be best suited for studying the lives of individuals to ascertain information about their personal lives. This approach did not align with my research questions, as it would require the participants to retell events from their own lives. The focus here is their professional world of online tutoring of elementary school children. An ethnographic research approach would be best if used for the study of anthropology examining the participants living in their natural environments along with the researcher serving as the participant observer (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2011). Since the focus of this study was on K-5 participants working from home, anywhere in the world, this approach did not match the research tradition. The grounded theory approach is most useful for deriving data and then constructing theories of processes, actions, or interactions grounded in the views of the participants in a study (Creswell, 2014). In this study, I was more concerned with the process of online tutoring that already exists based on existing pedagogical, instructional, and conceptual theories. The case study approach seemed like it might be a good research design fit since this approach is concerned with understanding perceptions offering rich data and descriptions from the interviewees and is dependent upon the researcher to interpret the data through an examination of themes (Yin, 2011). This approach would have been a viable choice if I were interested in a single case/entity, or just one online tutor/one online tutoring program/business. It would also have been a viable choice if the research study were focused on the system of online tutoring with all its moving parts, or if I were interested

in finding out more information about a particular policy of an online tutoring company. However, I was only interested in finding data about the process, duties, decisions, tasks, and daily experiences of online tutoring students in grades K-5 to gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher is multifaceted as it involves the work of a keen observer as well as the management skills of a project manager, paying attention to fine details, listening closely to the participants, and asking probing and follow-up questions (Yin, 2011). I was the only interviewer. In qualitative studies, the researcher is the instrument or tool of data collection (Ellis et al., 2008). Yin (2011) explained that the data are collected, interpreted, and mediated through this imperfect human instrument rather than through machines, inventories, or questionnaires. Therefore, there is room for researcher bias. Thus, the role and responsibility of the researcher include being able to objectively gather data without bias, interference, discrimination, and/or prejudice (Creswell, 2009).

I am an elementary school teacher with over 20 years of K-5 classroom teaching experience, 3 years as a teacher-leader serving as a K-2 reading coach, and 12 years as a face-to-face tutor, with some experience as a private practice online tutor and as an asynchronous adjunct graduate school instructor. I served in the role of an observer in this research study by performing the task to the best of my ability without embedding researcher judgments, opinions, comparisons, or prejudices in the data collection or analysis process (Vagle, 2018). To reduce bias, I kept a journal of my tutoring thoughts,

judgments, opinions, inferences about what methods were used, and/or ideas about online learning, pedagogical practices, and digital tools to be as neutral as possible during the interview and analyses processes. I played the role of investigator, keeping the tone formal yet conversational and consistently asking the same questions, in the same order, for each participant.

I was required to seek participants who met the eligibility criteria to take part in the study. The main criteria needed to be a participant in this research study were to be working as an online tutor of elementary school students in grades K-5, with a minimum of 1 year of K-5 online tutoring. Requiring participants to have at least 1 year of live, synchronous K-5 online tutoring experience increased the likelihood that the online tutor would have enough experience to be able to thoroughly answer the interview questions. Interviews with the participants were recorded and stored using the Zoom videoconferencing platform (https://zoom.us) and cloud storage (Archibald et al., 2019).

To ensure that the participants' identities were kept confidential and to protect the data (hand-written bracketed thoughts and the recorded interviews), they were stored in a locked file cabinet to which only I have access. The data will be stored for a period of 5 years and then destroyed per Walden University's guidelines. Before the interview data were collected, I obtained written permission and approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) as well as written consent from each participant.

I had no socioemotional, personal, or business relationship with the study participants. I had no supervisory responsibilities nor power over the participants and no bias or ethical issues existed. The findings from the research inform elementary school

educators to help them understand the process of online tutoring to be able to apply that acquired knowledge in their efforts to increase learning outcomes for students. To reduce subjectivity and researcher bias to the highest extent possible, there were no conflicts of interest, no use of incentives or rewards for participation, and no established employment relationships between the researcher and the online tutors (Creswell, 2003; Yin, 2011).

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

I used the purposive sampling strategy. Participants were selected based on the characteristics of the group and the purpose of the study. They were online tutors currently working, tutoring students in grades K-5 with at least 1 year of K-5 online tutoring experience. I conducted a Google search of online tutoring companies, "K-5 online tutors," and "elementary school online tutors." Purposive sampling (Merriam, 2002) involved identifying and selecting key people who had both the knowledge and the experience that I was seeking information about so that I could collect rich, detailed data to answer the research questions. Online profiles/webpages of potential participants were read and those who fit the criteria were contacted. I emailed 50 K-5 online tutors inviting them to participate in my research study. Contacting 50 participants increased the likelihood of finding participants who met the criteria. The participants were individually contacted via email with a letter of invitation.

The email contained a synopsis of the research study and outlined the two research questions. The email also indicated that participants could exit the study at any time, that there were no incentives for participating, and that the interview would take

about an hour to complete. Sixteen online tutors expressed interest, provided electronic consent, and served as the participants for the study.

Typically, qualitative studies and quantitative studies are different in terms of design. Qualitative studies do not require that the researcher secure a large volume of participants as one would in a quantitative study (Yin, 2011). To keep the data fresh in my mind and to begin to notice similarities, differences, and trends in the data, I conducted the study in 4 weeks. Once the data collection process began, each participant was assigned a number to further maintain confidentiality (Creswell, 2014).

Maxwell (2010) argued that a researcher's goal is not to make generalizations based on the sample size, but to explain, describe, and interpret the phenomenon, theme, central ideas, and trends in the data without regard to the number of participants and the number of opinions expressed by them. Creswell (2014) expressed that qualitative researchers should collect extensive details from a few individuals. Merriam (2002) emphasized that in qualitative studies, having a large number of participants should not be the focus; rather, the focus should be an examination of the quality of the data in terms of the participants' responses to the interview questions. Miles and Huberman (2013) argued against having a large sample size for qualitative studies. Certainly, the number of participants in the study was ultimately decided based on the number of participants who agreed to volunteer for the study and granted me permission to interview them. The sample size for this study is 16. Saturation was reached when the data from the participants became redundant and repetitive (Merriam, 2002).

Instrumentation

There were two sources of data: the online tutor's profile/webpages and the recorded interviews. The online tutor's profile provided specific information about their processes used, the materials they choose, their pedagogical style, and a glimpse into their knowledge base. In addition, my interview protocol was used to interview the participants. To yield data with rich description, much planning and care had to be put into the interview protocol. Researchers need to take the time to carefully plan the introductory questions, transition questions, key questions, and closing questions (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

There was a gap in the research as it pertained to the experiences of online tutors tutoring elementary school children online. No viable data collection instrument was found in the extant literature. After reviewing all the related research studies as presented in Chapter 2, I constructed a document with a set of interview questions. This document was vetted by a panel of three experts in the fields of elementary education, educational technology, and online tutoring. It contained my two research questions and the interview questions sorted into two categories: lived experiences and pedagogical practices. I emailed the panel of experts and requested that they advise me about my interview instrument and provide feedback to help me improve the flow. This vetting process provided feedback to me about ways to revise the document to improve sentence fluency, sentence order, clarity, specificity, text organization, and adding details to include special needs students, issues of accessibility, and details on adding a question about the use of a tutoring curriculum. I revised the document to create the final interview protocol, which

was used to interview the study participants. The vetted interview protocol yielded sufficient data. See Appendix A for the interview protocol and the relationship between the research questions and the interview questions.

Data Collection and Analysis Plan

Yin (2011) stated that the researcher should obtain as much data as possible to ensure that the research questions are answered and that the process is unfolded in a conversational-like, fluid manner. My goal was to interview all the participants within a 4-week span of time. The online tutor's profile was used to gather background data about their amount of time tutoring, areas of specialization, college degree information, tutoring style/preferences, and other applicable information.

I collected the interview data using the online, collaborative, cloud-based video conferencing platform, Zoom. I selected this platform because it is relatively easy to use, is a low-cost online tool, offers data management features, and provides updated security options (Archibald et al., 2019). Each participant received an email with unique password-protected information to gain access to my Zoom meeting room. Once there, we checked the video and audio features. Every invitation was set up so that each interview was recorded. After each interview with a participant, I saved the recording with a file name (e.g., P1, P2, P3, etc.).

To keep the interviews organized, I structured them so that the same questions were asked in the same order, which led to more consistent results allowing me to make more generalized statements and inferences about the data later (Yin, 2011). Once all the

data was collected, I listened to each recording at least two times and then transcribed the data.

NVivo (Phillips & Lu, 2018) is the qualitative data software that I used to sort, code, and analyze the data into themes. Participants' responses were read in search of patterns, similarities and differences and sorted into two groups based on the two research questions. Any data that stood out or were unconnected to any other data were considered discrepant cases. All biases and assumptions were written and bracketed in the researchers' handwritten journal to assist the researcher with being as unbiased as possible (Moustakas, 1994).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

The purpose of a phenomenological study is to better understand the lived experience of the participants whom all share in a certain phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). In this case, the phenomenon were tutors who tutor children online in grades K-5. Credibility relates to the confidence of the researcher that she/he has been transparent and truthful about the data, findings, and interpretations (Yin, 2011). To establish credibility, I collected interview data from all participants using the researcher-created interview protocol (see Appendix A). The interview protocol was composed of open-ended questions, which yielded robust, detailed responses instead of low-rigor, "yes" or "no" questions. To enhance credibility, I had the interview protocol reviewed and approved by an expert panel of educators.

Transferability

Transferability pertains to the researcher communicating the methodology, the participant experience, and the phenomenon with clarity and much detail (Creswell & Miller, 2000). A few ways to accomplish this is through bracketing my handwritten reflections, reporting the rich, thick, detailed descriptions provided by the participants as well as sharing the researcher's interpretations of the findings. Inferences and conclusions were drawn which help the reader see how the research content could be applied to his/her situation. A clear methodology provides an enhanced sense of transferability so that it would be relatively easy to duplicate the study and obtain similar results (Creswell, 2014).

Dependability

Dependability relates to how researchers expect the same/similar data outcomes regardless of the participants. To ensure that the results are consistent over time, I conducted an audit trail. An audit trail is a sequential record of all the activities that a researcher takes to prove that the data is truthful, based on the facts experienced by the participants. I was transparent about this process and provided a detailed account to show how the data was collected, coded, assigned themes, and analyzed (Creswell, 2014).

Confirmability

Confirmability points to the idea of objectivity. As a researcher, one must ask herself/himself the question, "To what extent will another researcher be able to obtain the same/similar results?" The researcher must prove that she/he has been trustworthy with reporting the data specifically, based on the dialogue and words used by the participants

(Creswell, 2014). To confirm the narrative as reported by each interviewee, the remarks and statements made by the participants were reported verbatim with the use of direct quotes. In addition, I kept detailed records of how data were collected to increase the likelihood of another researcher duplicating the research process with the same consistency.

Ethical Procedures

A letter of invitation was written and emailed to the participants for me to gain access to them. A letter explaining the research study and requesting participants' electronic consent to participate in the study was emailed to the participants. IRB approved all materials related to this study. The IRB approval number was 070821-0016947. Participants' identities were kept confidential by referring to them as P1, P2, P3, etc.; the data were protected and stored in a locked file cabinet to which only I have access. I had no socioemotional, personal, or business relationship with the study participants. I had no supervisory responsibilities nor power over the participants and no bias or ethical issues existed. The findings from the research inform elementary school educators to help them understand the process of online tutoring to be able to apply that acquired knowledge in their efforts to increase learning outcomes for students. To reduce subjectivity and researcher bias to the highest extent possible, there were no conflicts of interest, no use of incentives or rewards for participation, and no established employment relationships between the researcher and the online tutors (Creswell, 2003; Yin, 2011).

Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of online tutors regarding their pedagogical practices and digital tools used when tutoring students in grades K-5. Participants in the study were tutors who currently provide online tutoring in reading, writing, English, or mathematics to elementary school students needing remediation or enrichment. To gain a better understanding of the perceptions of elementary school online tutors, the phenomenon of online tutoring pedagogy was examined. In this chapter, I examined the methodology and the steps that I took to explore how elementary school tutors perceive the phenomenon of online tutoring. Chapter 4 described the results and the findings of the study. The lived experiences and thoughts of the online tutors were shared with me during the interview process. Then their data was organized around the two research questions. Chapter 5 concludes with my final interpretations of the data, the social implications, and my recommendations for future research.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of online tutors and their use of pedagogical practices and digital tools used when tutoring students in Grades K-5. The goal of this study was to understand the unique experiences of online tutors who tutor children, including the challenging and rewarding moments they encountered. The following research questions were used to address this phenomenon:

1. What are the lived experiences of tutors when tutoring elementary school students in online synchronous settings?
2. What pedagogical practices and digital tools do online tutors use when tutoring elementary school students online and why were those tools selected?

This chapter begins with a description of the setting, participant demographics, and the data collection process. Then, I explain how I analyzed the data and ensured trustworthiness in the study. Afterwards, I present the results of this study, including the themes generated from data analysis and supporting evidence from participant excerpts.

Setting

Purposeful sampling was used to recruit the participants. As described in Chapter 3, I recruited and interviewed 16 participants. All 16 interviews were conducted using Zoom, a web-conferencing tool with both audio and video enabled. All interviews were scheduled via email based on the time zone of the participants. This required me to be flexible with scheduling my virtual interviews at any day or time that worked best for the participant. All participants met me online from either a desktop or a laptop computer.

None of the participants used a cell phone and there were no technical issues involved. There were no deviations from the procedure outlined in Chapter 3 regarding the research setting, and no changes that would impact the interpretation of results.

Demographics

I interviewed 16 participants for this study, 14 of whom were women and two of whom were men. Each participant was assigned a number. Six participants had not tutored online prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, whereas eight participants had prior experience tutoring online. Participant demographics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Online tutoring prior to COVID-19?
P1	F	White	Y
P2	F	White	Y
P3	F	White	Y
P4	F	African-American	Y
P5	F	White	Y
P6	F	White	Y
P7	F	Hispanic/Latinx	N
P8	F	White	Y
P9	F	White	N
P10	F	White	N
P11	M	White	Y
P12	M	White	Y
P13	F	White	N
P14	F	White	N
P15	F	White	Y
P16	F	White	N

Note. F = female; M = male; Y = yes; N = no.

At the time of the study, all research participants were employed tutoring K-5 students online in English, phonics, decoding and syllabication, math, writing, critical thinking, and/or reading comprehension. Eight of the online tutor participants experienced leaving "brick and mortar" schools to teach/tutor online exclusively. Participants' work experiences included being teachers in schools, educational therapists in their home offices, working exclusively for themselves as online tutoring business owners, and/or as independent contractors for online tutoring companies. Ten of the participants have tutored using a multisensory methodology that helps students who are dyslexic/struggling readers, called Orton-Gillingham. Seven of the online tutors had an active online teacher presence on YouTube marketing their businesses, recruiting students and teachers, educating parents and educators, and coaching people who are or want to become online tutors.

Data Collection

This interview portion of this phenomenological study consisted of virtual interviews with 16 participants. Initially, 15 interviews were confirmed. However, one participant missed the first appointment time but then later contacted me and requested a rescheduled appointment. Interviews were conducted using the interview protocol found in Appendix A. The time range for conducting the interviews was 2 weeks.

Participants were recruited by email invitation. The email invitation provided a synopsis of the study and the two research questions. If participants expressed interest in participating in the study and met the inclusion criteria, then they read the consent form and provided their consent to participate by replying to the email, "I consent" to the

email. Once consent was established, I made appointments with participants based on their time zones and their preferred days and times. I logged on to Zoom and entered the space 10–15 minutes before each participant to make sure that my video and audio were working well and to ensure that I was early for each appointment. When the participant had logged in, I reiterated the focus of the study and indicated that I would be recording the interviews. Participants were reassured that the notes that I took would be kept confidential and that no one would be privy to the data except for myself and that no one other than the two of us would be present in the Zoom meeting.

After I asked the interview questions, I remained quiet while I jotted notes and bracketed my thoughts on a printed copy of the interview protocol. If the participant had a question or needed me to clarify, I repeated the question and clarified as needed. Some participants spoke for prolonged periods sometimes exceeding 15-20 minutes. Therefore, I was able to capture rich detailed descriptions of raw data. All data were recorded and stored in Zoom's cloud. I watched the recorded videos and listened to them two times to get a sense of the patterns, trends, similarities, and differences. I downloaded data and then uploaded it to be transcribed. I transcribed the data using the automated transcription platform Sonix (https://sonix.ai). Once the data were transcribed, I exported the data to a Microsoft Word document and saved it with a distinct file name in a password-protected file, as described in Chapter 3. Then I printed the transcriptions to begin the data analysis process.

Data Analysis

To begin the data analysis process, I transcribed the interviews and reread through all 16, which allowed me a thorough immersion in and familiarization with the data. I uploaded them to NVivo 12 Pro, which is a computer software designed to help qualitative researchers organize and analyze large amounts of qualitative data. After I uploaded interview transcripts into NVivo, I started the coding process. To do this, I opened a participant's transcript in the coding frame of the NVivo program and began reading line-by-line, highlighting passages of text pertinent to the study and research questions. After highlighting a passage in NVivo, I right clicked the mouse and selected the option to *Code Selection*. Then, I created a new code under the option for *Top Level Code* that briefly described the passage of text. Examples of coding are provided in Table 2. I continued coding all interview transcripts in this way, reading line by line, and assigning a code to each passage. In some cases, if I had already created a code for one passage of text that applied to passages in other interviews, I assigned that previously created code to those other passages. As I moved further along in data analysis and completed coding more interviews, the number of novel codes I created with subsequent interviews was minimal. This was an indication I had reached data saturation, because participants were not describing new aspects of the phenomenon with additional data collection.

Table 2

Examples of Codes

Code	Excerpt
Students who do not understand	"I have to reteach it; I have to think about ways to reteach them a specific skill." (P7)
Lack of information	"If the child is autistic, I have an autistic boy, I know he's autistic, he's never told me that." (P11)
Tools for organization	"As soon as I'm done with the lesson, when they submit what they owe you, the company sends me a submit your lesson form." (P3)
Feedback to parents	"I keep my communication with parents a little bit more minimal." (P1)

This coding process left me with a list of (87) codes from all of the transcripts. I examined the list of codes for similarities between them and clustered these related codes together into larger categories, or themes, and gave those themes a brief title describing the contents. I did this by clicking on the codes in NVivo and dragging and dropping them together, much like sorting physical piles of similar information on a table. I continued placing codes into these themes until all codes were reduced into these themes. The structure of these themes and codes are presented in Table 3, including how they aligned with each RQ.

Table 3

Generated Codes and Themes

RQ	Theme	Codes
RQ1	1. K-5 online tutors as educational entrepreneurs	Living abroad; pursue business opportunities; greater autonomy
	2. Rewards of being a K-5 Online tutor entrepreneur	Cultural experiences; watching students blossom, socioemotional bond; job itself
	3. Challenges of being a K-5 online tutor entrepreneur	Students who do not understand, behavioral issues; technology troubles; learning environment, engaging students
RQ2	4. Pedagogical practices of online tutors	Planning or preparing sessions, established curriculum; assessments, reassessing; finding/creating teaching activities, extending, modeling
	5. Using digital tools to enhance online tutoring practices	Marketing using social media, increase engagement; feedback to parents; feedback to students, tools for organization

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The primary threat to this study was that I am an elementary school teacher who owns a K-5 private practice online tutoring business. However, I acknowledged and avoided any biases by bracketing my thoughts while interviewing the participants and maintaining a strict, professional demeanor throughout each interview. In addition, there were no personal, social, business, or organizational conditions, nor any influences, conflicts of interests, or relationships with participants. I followed the processes as stated

in Chapter 3 using the four criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability for establishing trustworthiness.

Credibility

The credibility strategies outlined in Chapter 3 were followed to avoid any bias and to report only the truth about the data. I collected interview data from all participants using the expertly vetted, researcher-created interview protocol (see Appendix A). The interview protocol was comprised of open-ended questions, which yielded unique, robust, detailed responses allowing the voice of each online tutor participant to be heard rather than the thoughts of the researcher. While participants spoke, I was careful not to nod, speak, smile, or react in any way that might sway or influence their responses (Creswell, 2014).

Transferability

The transferability strategies outlined in Chapter 3 were followed so I could communicate the methodology, participant experience, and the phenomenon with such clarity that it would be likely that other researchers could transfer or relate the findings of the research study to other educational settings (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I accomplished this through bracketing my reflections, capturing the thick, rich descriptions of each participant, and sharing my interpretation of the findings. This way inferences and conclusions could be drawn that would help the reader see how the data could be applied to their situation. A clear methodology provides an enhanced sense of transferability so that it would be relatively easy to duplicate the study and obtain similar results (Creswell, 2014).

Dependability

The dependability strategies outlined in Chapter 3 were followed to ensure that other researchers could expect the similar data outcomes regardless of the participants. The process by which data were collected is clearly outlined in the Data Collection section of this chapter. This section serves as the audit trail or record of the activities that I took to prove that the data are truthful (Creswell, 2014).

Confirmability

The confirmability strategies outlined in Chapter 3 were followed to ensure that the data is objective. To ensure objectivity, I reported the data using dialogue from each participant. To confirm the narrative as reported by the interviewee, the remarks and statements made by the participants were reported using direct quotes and the exact words spoken verbatim.

Results

The data analysis yielded five themes present in the data. The first is K-5 online tutors as educational entrepreneurs. The second and third themes relate to the rewards and challenges of being a K-5 online tutor, respectively. Theme 4 is pedagogical practices of online tutors, and the final theme is using digital tools to enhance online tutoring practices.

Theme 1: K-5 Online Tutors as Educational Entrepreneurs

The sense of autonomy participants experienced was an important component of being a K-5 online tutor entrepreneur. With this autonomy, participants could build thriving online tutoring businesses through private tutoring, tutoring companies, or any

mix of the two. In fact, most participants built their livelihood through some combination of their own private practice with K-5 students and tutoring as independent contractors through established online tutoring companies.

P7 appreciated the one-on-one aspect of being a K-5 online tutor entrepreneur and that she could provide individualized instruction to one student at a time. She also believed that being free to work with technology benefitted her students, because "technology is the way," and she used technology "to [my students'] advantage." P7 envisioned a hybrid situation of online and in-class tutoring and instruction, with "kids being at school, but in a room in which I individualize instruction; every kid has to have his laptop … we all learn differently and at a different pace."

P1 liked that she was free to "manage [my] business however I want." By using different online tutoring platforms, P1 had control over how many students she tutored at a time and how much she charged her students' parents. She said, "You can create the curriculum completely on your own," which was a real benefit of working as an online tutor entrepreneur. P1 also shared, "I am able to tutor online while I stay at home and raise my children!"

For P8 and P12, the autonomy that came with being a K-5 online tutor entrepreneur meant the ability to live wherever they wanted. P12 lived and taught from his home office in Malaysia.

P8 said that being able to tutor children online helped her make some changes in her life. She said,

> I am living in France and I was not planning on doing this for a living. I went to school to be an art teacher. So I was like okay, I'm gonna do this really quickly while I figure things out in France and as soon as I can get a job in France, that's what I'm going to do. Just the experience every day working and looking forward to working and working one-on-one with students made me want to continue doing this. I work every Sunday which kind of would suck normally, but I like all the students I see every Sunday, so it's worth it. I'm really, really lucky. It's actually really perfect for my life situation at this moment.

Online tutoring provided participants the autonomy to live anywhere in the world they wanted, like P8 in France. P9 also appreciated this because at the time of her interview, she had previously found out that she was moving. When she informed the parents of her students about her impending move, and that she would need to move to remote online tutoring, she anticipated they would not want to continue, but was happy to learn she was wrong. "They were actually okay with it; I was surprised," P9 shared, "Online tutoring has opened doors for me." P10 also liked the autonomy and flexibility of online tutoring because these tutoring programs connect kids in need of tutoring to tutors everywhere. "I had, at one point, I tutored a little girl in California, and I live in Massachusetts, so that's amazing," P10 said.

P11 began tutoring online within the two years prior to his interview and said, "I launched into this to understand it." He liked that, through online tutoring, he could make a difference and influence "a lot of children." He appreciated seeing the benefits of online teaching, which he referred to as "outstanding." Like P9, P11 had experienced doors

opening because of his tutoring entrepreneurship. “Opportunities have opened up to me from the companies themselves … being asked to be a brand contributor is a big deal,” P11 said of this milestone.

Not being tied to a brick-and-mortar school or office building left participants free to pursue other interests, too. P3, P4 and P6 are published authors and tutoring online allowed them the flexibility to write. For P6, being a K-5 online tutor entrepreneur provided the autonomy to pursue her passion project, which was helping other tutors and tutoring children. “What I’m putting in is at least 60 hours per week. … I am completely booked in my businesses. … So both of those have become big passion projects and I’ve been able to blend them into two amazing businesses each bringing in more than six figures,” P6 said.

Educational entrepreneurs understand the knowledge economy. The participants reinvested in themselves and their businesses. P4–P7, P9, P10, P13–P16 all have a background in Orton Gillingham. P1, P2, P8, P11 and P12 all have a background in English as a Second Language (ESL)/Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). They all took their experiences, knowledge and expertise and turn-keyed the information to monetize their online tutoring businesses. They serve in many capacities such as online tutoring leaders, coaches, mentors, content creators and YouTube sensations.

Theme 2: Rewards of Being a K-5 Online Tutor Entrepreneur

Participants identified several rewards of working as K-5 online tutors. In addition to the sense of autonomy being an educational entrepreneur provided, as described under

the first theme, K-5 online tutors noted other personal and socioemotional rewards from tutoring online. Participants appreciated the opportunities being a K-5 online tutor provided them, like access to cultural experiences. They also felt the job was rewarding when they developed close connections with students and their families and enjoyed watching students bloom personally and academically.

Not all participants taught internationally, but those who did took advantage of some of the opportunities available to them through the companies they worked for. As independent contractors for international tutoring companies, these online tutors had travelled to places like China, where they tutored K-5-aged children in English. P2 said,

> I had the opportunity to visit my students. So, not every teacher gets this chance, but I was able to go to China and to meet them, and they just, they take you to dinner, like, give you gifts, like, they're just so grateful for their teachers. So, that was just kind of a life-changing experience to meet them in person. … Visiting China, that was a really neat experience. I would have never, ever thought that I would do that, nor, like, had the desire, I don't know. Like, I love to travel, but I never had China on my bucket list. But, once I met the people and fell in love with them, it was such a rewarding incentive. I wanted to go meet them.

P12 also said meeting his students was a rewarding experience, and one he had access to only because he was an online tutor through a program that facilitated travel to China. Participants did not have to travel to have rewarding cultural experiences vis-à-vis their students. "There have been so many sweet moments," said P1, "one is … It was Chinese New Year, and the student took the laptop outside to show me all the fireworks

that were going off in China, where he lives. That was just really special to be invited at that moment."

In addition to cultural opportunities, K-5 online tutors had related to their tutoring jobs, connecting with students and their parents and families was a reward of tutoring most participants identified. P3 described the rewarding sense of accomplishment when she determined why a student of hers was acting out in their tutoring sessions. "What I figured out was that all of this acting out behavior and all the stuff was, first of all, his fear of failure," P3 relayed, "but also nightmares about the pandemic." P3 said her "biggest reward" was feeling like she helped the family, because she suggested this student's mom take the student to a play therapist. For P3, this was about the connection she could make with students as a tutor, and she said, "It's not just ABC, it's knowing who the child is inside and knowing that you might be the only one."

P4 found it rewarding when her students remembered her birthday. She described how, in the past, students had remembered her birthday and even made cupcakes or cakes for her to honor her, even though she tutored them online and could not eat the baked goods. "I tell them, that is so kind of you, I love it," said P4. This type of connection with students, a connection which evoked a sense of family, was something other participants noted as well. P5 said, "Most of the kids that I've been with have been with me for years now." She said her students "become family…everyone's turned into family," and P5 often sent Christmas cards back and forth with her students' parents each year, along with small gifts, like when one of her students pierced her ears and she sent a pair of earrings.

Participants described feeling a connection with students' parents and families. P7 recalled a phone call she received from a student's mother about the student getting into private school. P7 had worked for two years with this student on speech and english tutoring, and seeing the student be accepted into private school made P7 "emotional talking about it." P7 remembered struggling "so much to help her with reading tutoring and speech and learning" so the student could move out of her previous school and was happy when the parents called her to share the good news. P6 explained the reward inherent in these relationships,

> I would say some of the relationships that you build with some of your students is so rewarding. I've been working with one family for eight years. And so, I know everybody in their family. The one little boy I'm working with now from the family was in the crib when his sister was taking lessons with me, and he would be going to bed for the night and he would be in the crib and he would, like, literally listen to the two of us reading together while he would be trying to fall asleep. … And so it's just really rewarding to work with the same families versus having to, like, every year I have to switch my students. I get to hold on to my students or I get to see them make those great results and wish them the best on their way, whatever the parent chooses.

Like other participants, the rewards of being a K-5 online tutor were, for P6, not measured just by how well the student performed academically, but also in the relationships with the student and family. This was also true for P2, who said that "the coolest thing is that I can build a relationship with them and support them, and you kind

of become part of the family." P2 noted she regularly chatted with her students' families through international chatting apps, which was something other participants said they did, too.

Cultural experiences and making connections with students and families were important rewards of being K-5 online tutors, but participants also found it rewarding to watch their students blossom over time. P1 said, "you watch a child grow up," which is a rewarding feeling. P1 described tutoring a group of gifted children with high IQs who often "feel different from everyone else," and to see them work together under her tutelage was rewarding. "You'll see the real reserved ones speak up and you get the feeling that they don't always speak up and their opinions are valued, even though they may not be typical to their peers," P1 said.

In addition to blossoming socially, participants enjoyed watching their student's blossom academically, too.

P8 found it rewarding watching her students learn to read. "I have had some kids that started with me when they were four years old and they didn't know English, and they are reading now," P8 elaborated. Similarly, P9 recalled a student who was proud of himself when he created a slide show about a family trip and a book, because this student was struggling to write paragraphs. "When they're proud of something, that is very rewarding," said P9. P11 experienced this with a student he was tutoring in English. P11 knew this student liked him, and P11 was the only tutor this boy would see, but the student was having a lot of trouble getting "into the rhythm of speaking English," said P11. One day, P11 started the tutoring session and his student held up a picture of a long

phrase, written in English, and he pronounced it in what P11 referred to as "perfect English."

Participants were rewarded when students had lightbulb moments or demonstrated that concepts clicked and they finally understood something they were working on. "When they get things," said P13. She elaborated, "That's always the best for me, but when they can explain what they're doing. And when they finish a book, they get very excited about that too, finishing something." P7 also used this wording to describe those rewarding lightbulb moments. P7 said, "When you see a child who gets it, you're like yes, all that hard work from both sides…it's paid off." P10 agreed; she found it rewarding when students see their own progress and realize what they can do, given the practice and tutoring time.

P16 experienced many rewarding moments. Like P13, P7, and P10, P16 stated, "It's rewarding when the students' confidence is built to a point that they question the work I've done. I mean, this is an amazing feeling." P16 also expressed that learning new assistive technologies is helping her improve her craft. However, her most rewarding moment was moving and the new online clients.

> My husband and I moved from Oakland, California, you know, the Berkley area, to Connecticut and I had only one client then. But, I started up a new practice, online and it is growing. I love that online learning for young kids is growing. Now I do not have to drive to students' homes and back. I can just log into Zoom. In the past, if the child was not in the mood for in-person tutoring, I had to make the time up or if an appointment was at my office and the parent cancelled or was

late, I had to charge a fee. Now, Zoom allows me to be a little more forgiving if the child does not want to have the session that day or time. If the child has trouble with focusing, I can just offer two 30 minute sessions with a few 1-5 minute breaks to keep the child motivated and engaged."

Theme 3: Challenges of Being a K-5 Online Tutor Entrepreneur

In addition to the rewards of being a K-5 online tutor entrepreneur, participants described some challenges. Technology troubles were challenges directly connected to being an online tutor. Other challenges K-5 online tutors faced were behavioral and linked to students' lack of understanding during the tutoring session or special needs about which tutors were not made aware.

Being a K-5 online tutor meant using the internet and technological tools to tutor students, which meant that any internet or technology problems affected them and their ability to tutor students. P1 found technology problems with her students to be a real challenge. She said these challenges occurred "all the time." P1 said, "I'll have a nice lesson plan … and two of the kids, their internet is so bad." On another tutoring platform for which P1 works as a consultant, "staff people … pop in your room and help you with internet and technology issues." On that platform, these staff members acted as a middle person to communicate with the parents if the technology troubles are on the students' end.

Unlike P1, who had someone who could help with tech problems in real time, P11 said, "That's the most challenging thing is feedback with the powers that be, there's no direct lines. You can't pick up an 800 number and communicate with anybody." Instead,

P11 and others who tutored in similar situations to him, had to send the companies a work ticket describing the problem and hope that there is a response from someone who can help. When issues like this happened to P9, she moved to the phone. "I've learned to use the phone as a backup … so, if we lose connections, I have them text me. … I'll have them email me so I can see."

P2, who tutored via the same company and platform as P1, also acknowledged the immediate help from staff, but dislike that tutors were penalized if they experienced technology problems:

> Internet. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. So, you can have internet issues. So, if it's on the teacher's end, you could have an IT issue and that would be kind of a ding on your record. Whereas, if it's on the students, and it would show up as an IT issue. So, they have a support group there, so you would reach out … in the classroom and say, like, audio's not working. … But you could have internet issues and class could be canceled because of it. And then if it is a teacher that keeps having to cancel and they either need to fix their internet, or they take away your contract.

P12 also said technology problems were a challenge, though these happened to him relatively infrequently. "Most challenging moments would be, well, with companies, it's oftentimes the technology, to be honest with you," said P12. He elaborated that one problem with this was the stress associated with technology problems because, as the tutor, "you're kind of responsible for fixing it." P5 suggested ways that these challenges with technology could be mitigated, but these suggestions were more for students and parents than for tutors, in that parents could find a coffee shop or library to work in.

Participants also described the challenge of handling students who did not understand the learning material. Participants had to be attuned to the behaviors of their students so they could gauge when those students did not understand, because often, students would not communicate this directly.

P13 said that she paid attention to behavioral changes in her students that conveyed to her they did not understand the material. “They definitely go slower, because they don’t have a parent saying, ‘you need to get this done’ and making them behave online. Some of them actually turn the computer … let you look at the ceiling,” said P13, demonstrating this during her online interview. According to P2, there were some culturally specific behavioral changes she knew to look for to gauge if her students understood her. “For my Chinese students, so, they could start crying. They could break down. They could not say anything. They could sit there the whole time,” P2 said.

Other participants said students gave them blank looks, which signaled lack of understanding. P8 described one student of whom she said, “sometimes he’ll just get, like, a blank look, and so most of the time I’m checking for comprehension.” P11 discovered that a lack of engagement was a sign that students did not understand the material. Sometimes the material did not move quickly enough for the student, P11 said. He elaborated,

> I’ve noticed that students get bored really, really quickly with the repetition of a certain section. Like, if you will have seven lessons in a unit, they give up after the second lesson and they are not getting it. And so, for the next four lessons,

you're struggling to try to get them engaged and they just quit. They just throw their hands up and do not respond to me.

This lack of engagement on the student's part was also an indication to P12 that the student did not understand something, and he needed to change the lesson. "I have to do rechecking with them to make sure that they are understanding, and you can usually tell pretty quickly, but in terms of respect, you know, emotional response, they shut down, they don't speak," P12 stated, "They just stare at you."

When working with these students who lacked understanding of the material, the challenge became how to best approach helping them. P7 said that a lot of tutoring was maintenance. P10, who worked in special education as a reading specialist, said she used a lot of visuals to make learning multisensory for her students.

Another way participants handled this challenge was by reteaching to students. "If I realize the student doesn't understand, I change or I do something different," said P8. P10 explained that she used "rephrasing" to reteach to her students. P6 encouraged her students by using "as little help as possible," which she did by pointing to a word on the screen with her cursor or providing hints toward the correct answer.

P11 said being attuned to students was especially challenging when working with children who might have ADD/ADHD or be on the autism spectrum, because "you're not allowed to identify that, so, you have to work with that student." Other participants varied in their experiences with students with special needs. However, they agreed one challenge was that tutors were not often notified about any specific diagnoses. "A parent never tells you if their child has been diagnosed with something, almost like they keep it

a secret," P6 reported. When this happened, participants had to be flexible and adapt. P12 said, "So, you just do your best with adapting as best you can." Those participants like P8, who had worked extensively with students with special needs in the past, said, "I think my experience with those kids before has helped me be a good tutor. … I think just having a lot of patience and understanding."

According to most participants, students with behavioral problems presented major challenges for online tutoring. Sometimes these behavioral problems were related to a lack of understanding but other times, the problems were related to something else. P9 explained that sometimes her students with behavioral problems "freeze." She explained, "That's a behavior you see from kids with learning challenges, they don't, they don't do something, and occasionally, this only happened once or twice, they blackout the screen or they leave." P9 suggested that more of her students seemed to be struggling around the time this study was conducted because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and said her students were "afraid of COVID and talking about that, too," which she connected to her discussion of students' emotions and behaviors.

P14 found tutoring via Zoom was challenging when she shared control of the platform with her students. P14 said sometimes, a student would take over control and "they won't stop," so she handled this by using the abort control button. P5 had also experienced behavioral challenges unique to online tutoring. She said that some students shut down or put their head on the table. P5 recalled tutoring students who had walked away from the screen or shifted the camera, so they were out of sight during the session.

P5 said her elementary school students presented more of the behavioral challenges than her older students, which was something P3 discussed, too. “It’s very tricky to deal with little kids online,” P3 said. She also attributed some of these behavioral challenges to the unique circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. P3 elaborated, “These kids are stuck at home. They are isolated. They have just been with their parents. They’re going to act out, and they do.”

P16 shared a different set of challenges she faced: (a) learning the “ins and outs” of the Zoom platform while simultaneously helping her students learn the tools, (b) helping to build up students’ self-esteem after her students’ parents and teachers call them “lazy” and (c) finding resources to keep her students that struggle with executive function deficits. P16 stated, “Younger children with learning disabilities and executive function deficits frequently have ADHD which presents a whole set of other issues like distractibility. It is hard to try to maintain engagement with kids with ADHD.” P16 also shared,

> I am still transitioning and transferring from using the materials I used pre-COVID-19. I used to use my card deck, blending board and sand for our Orton Gillingham tutoring sessions. However, now I am always online watching YouTube videos and shopping for resources at www.imse.com. I am basically still teaching myself how to go from being in person to an online tutor. I am still adapting.

P16 spoke about the challenging experience of helping her students cope emotionally:

> My kids are basically misunderstood by both their teachers and their parents. It is rewarding that we now collaborate online to help the child. But, on the other hand, I am never, ever happy to hear them say that the kid is lazy. So, I use the Pomodoro method with a physical hand-held timer. We work for a set number of minutes depending on the child, and then we take 5-minute breaks and the kids love the breaks and get right back to work after. Their brains get so tired after all the work it takes to decode words. So, I create a safe space for them to fight, flight or freeze so I can help them emotionally. So, that's when they can play with their Think Putty, Fidget toy or show me a stuffed animal or pet.

P16 and P13 both struggled to "get the ball rolling" moving from in-person to an online tutor after the whole country was shut down. P13's biggest challenge happened as soon as the country shifted into COVID-19 quarantining: "You know, we all got dumped into this Zoom pretty rapidly over a year ago and it was very frustrating because there was nothing available and remember as a teacher, you know, we're not tech savvy and as a tutor I don't have a tech. I don't have a technician. It is me, and that can be frustrating."

P13 also shared her physical pains and physical space issues experienced at the height of the pandemic.

> I was at the chiropractor for 3 months because of my neck and sitting all day. I was in pain for six or eight months because when we first started, I am at home on my PC and you are doing this all day. There was a lot of figuring it out, alone, quickly. I was like, How do I read his paper? I was actually using my cell phone because my pc at home did not have a camera. So everything was sold out, you

> could not get technology at the store. So I was using my phone as a document camera, a microphone and a physical camera. I was up at night, literally with connects and Legos building a perfect stand for my camera. A couple of friends of mine would exchange texts and show their desks at the end of the day. My desk was a mess because you get done with one kid and you throw that pile and you get another one. So, you really have to come up with a system, I mean it was absolutely, exhausting, four in the morning till 10:00 at night. I mean the anxiety, like just all of it was a hot mess. I'm glad that I figured out a system that works for me.

P13 also communicated her frustration with online tutoring the younger students. She stated,

> So those kids in K-2, it's very hard to engage, especially if they don't have the tools they need. I think it is easier if they have the tools and they do not have the cat and the dog and the sibling running by and waving at you. It is just hard. Because if they are in grades K-2, they probably have a sibling or a pet [pauses to chuckle]. However, it is slowly coming along. I go as fast as I can and as slow as I must.

Theme 4: Pedagogical Practices of an Online Tutor

The pedagogical practices of educational entrepreneurs varied to some degree, especially in terms of planning and preparation. This variation was often based on the platform or company for which the participant worked as an independent contractor.

Participants were resourceful in their ability to source materials they needed to assist their students.

Several participants contracted with other tutoring companies to teach english to Chinese children. Those participants appeared to spend less time preparing and planning for the tutoring sessions in large part because the curriculum was already established. P1, who tutored for The Large Company (TLC; a pseudonym), said when tutoring for TLC, she prepares for the session by filling out the students' information and obtaining any relevant teaching supplies and props in case she finishes the material too quickly. "There's nothing worse than the stress of ending early, especially with TLC, because you're really on the clock," said P1. Between sessions, she switches the name of the student and sets up for the next session.

Participants who taught using a combination of their own resources or did not tutor through a company like TLC had other planning and preparation strategies. P7 was careful to plan according to her state's curriculum scope and sequence, as her students would be following that, too. P7 said she did not share her plans with her students or parents, but kept records for herself because, importantly, P7 said, "The only difference is that I don't need to move on so fast because the whole point of tutoring someone is to make sure that they master." P7's record keeping helped her track where each student was in the learning process. She used these records to plan for subsequent sessions based on any errors students made "so I can refocus and review that in the beginning."

P10 also prepared and planned lessons based on student errors, which was in keeping with the tradition of tutoring in which she was trained:

> It's a multisensory reading instruction. … I devise the lessons around their errors, so I have a running record of something [a student] read. I'm going to look at those errors and know what sounds and patterns she needs to work on and then I'll design the lesson around that.

P8 preferred to plan close to session time, so she began about 15-20 before her tutoring session. However, P8 also said she enjoyed being a K-5 online tutor entrepreneur because she worked one-on-one with students. "So, you prepare for the lesson, but I don't prepare every single thing exactly. Because I don't know exactly what the student's going to say, what's going to happen that day, so I leave space." P13 seemed to take a more informal approach, similar to P8. "I just do pencil and paper, it's much faster for me," P13 said, sharing her preference for paper and pencil instead of typing "We do the three part OG drill with pencil and paper."

P8 and P13 contrasted somewhat from P1, who preferred to make sure she had materials and resources for the entire tutoring session. P4 was also a self-identified over-planner. "I over-plan," said P4, "I always have an organized plan [including] introduction, I'm going to give you about two, three minutes." P12 also planned his lessons and found it helpful to use the Nearpod computer software to help. He said, "Nearpod is a presentation platform that lets you take basically boring presentation to make them more fun. You can use quizzes, games, things like that…challenges and videos." He found planning through this software helpful because it "allowed me to create more interactive lessons."

Assessments played a role in lesson planning and preparation, too, as they often served as a starting point for preparing lessons. P10 said,

> Before I get to know the student, I'll give them some sort of assessment so that I know where they're reading and what sounds they don't have. … It depends on the student, you know, there are different assessments that assess single word reading. … I would say [I assess] once every couple weeks, I would do some kind of assessment … but with the Orton-Gillingham, you're assessing every lesson because you're writing the next one based on the errors of the last.

P3's process was like P10's when working with the Orton-Gillingham method. "The first thing that I do when I bring a student on is, I have an online meeting with the child and the parent to see what their goals are, and make sure that I can deliver," P3 described. From there, P3 determined if the problem was auditory processing or reading comprehension, and then "I go to my home resources" to plan the lessons around the student's needs and goals.

P5, who managed a tutoring company, described the assessment process as something conducted at the company level while parents sign up to have their child tutored. In P5's company, the tutors are not necessarily the people assessing the students. Follow-up assessments at regular intervals were also typical within P5's company and other participants conducted ongoing assessments as well.

P11 had a somewhat different take on assessment in the context of online tutoring and teaching English, in that he did not use assessments to plan or prepare lessons. "An assessment is not a grade when you're teaching English…they're learning a second

language; it's not for college credit, it's not for high school credit, this is not to get into a special school," P11 said, "This is learning and practicing english online through tutoring."

The teaching tools and activities participants used when tutoring online varied between participants but almost always included a variety of tools and techniques targeted to the specific student and to keep students engaged. Participants who taught for TLC and other tutoring companies relied on those platforms as their primary teaching technology, but participants who did not work as independent tutoring contractors through such a company used other technology. Zoom was especially popular for K-5 online tutor entrepreneurs who worked exclusively for themselves. P6 said, "I use Zoom for the most part and one of the cool things I love about it is I can actually share my controller with my student." Through the Zoom platform, students could access a whiteboard to share their work with online tutors, which participants found helpful.

Participants also used platforms like Way to Go Tutoring and Out-Bound Tutoring. These online platforms generated new tutoring leads for participants for a small fee and provided an online space for tutoring sessions, if desired. Often, tutors followed the lead of the school their student attended. One participant said, "In school, we use School Tutoring, but when I tutor privately, I use Way To Go Tutoring." This participant also said she used Google Meet for online tutoring sessions on occasion. Another participant, who also used Way to Go Tutoring, said, "I use Way to Go Tutoring to get my leads and then I pay them a percentage every time."

Participants had to adapt their activities to tutoring online but did not appear to find this a challenge. Using a whiteboard, either built into the online learning platform or a small physical board that could be held in front of the camera, was an important tool for tutoring activities. P7, who tutored in math, among other subjects, said she used both a whiteboard for tutoring and online worksheets. She said a physical whiteboard worked well for her math students to write their work on and then hold up and share with her. Unlike P7, P1 has used interactive whiteboards where students could annotate directly on the virtual whiteboard. P14 used Google Slides or Google's version of this digital whiteboard, Jamboard, which she liked because it was interactive.

Participants also used interactive games during the online tutoring sessions, both as learning tools and as rewards for students who were doing well. P11 used a program called Panda English, which contained games like whack-a-mole for students to learn English. Interactive games like this were good for students because "you're constantly giving coins as a reward," P11 said, "I'll have a lot of games like that, and I tutor them through play." P14 also used interactive games "because [students are] pretty much obsessed with video games." P12 used games to break up longer lessons and add variety to his tutoring sessions. "Guess a word, tic-tac-toe, draw a picture, something like that, just to kind of break up the lesson, especially if it's an hour," P12 said.

Other tools were multisensory, so students could learn in different ways, but this was not always easy, according to P13. Auditory tools included music and sound effects. P1 said that when she teaches English, she uses sound effects like a baby crying so students can link the word cry to the sound. P11 also used music as an auditory tool,

creating songs to help students learn. And while visual tools were a bit more straightforward for online tutoring, kinesthetic took a little work to adapt. Those participants who taught for TLC were used to a kinesthetic technique that involved a (TPR) total physical response and provided lots of examples of how this worked. P1 said when teaching movement words, she has students get up and move around and act out the movement. P2, too, said, "I'm making sure that they're not just sitting there and staring at me, but it's very interactive [with] movement involved." P12 often combined kinesthetic techniques with the games he used to keep his young students engaged, playing games like Simon Says.

Modeling and extending were two other pedagogical practices participants used in their online tutoring sessions. P7 and P15 both used the *I do, we do, you do* method of modeling with their students to learn and retain information in long term memory. P2 also used this technique, explaining,

> I would first model it for them, I do it. And then we would do it together, and it's actually broken up in the slides, like it would say, "Introduce this word, the teacher says." … It would really be scripted for you. So, if you were a new teacher, it was very scaffolded for you. Like, you understood exactly what to say, but I would say that that could also be a con, because then it made it a little bit too scripted, but modeling is huge, making sure that the teacher models for the student not only the new concepts but also correct sentences.

P8 used this pedagogical practice of modeling "in all my classes." Extending was another pedagogical practice participants described to enhance instruction online. P11

said that in the TLC program, “we are encouraged to extend as well.” Extending, in the context of online tutoring, meant expanding on what the students were learning and using different techniques to help students learn. Extending provided greater opportunity for students to learn and practice new vocabulary words and helping them expand from simple to complex sentences, according to P2. P12 referred to extending as needing “to further teach something,” which included him using classroom props to help students deepen their meaning.

Theme 5: Using Digital Tools to Enhance Online Tutoring

Participants made use of the numerous digital tools available to them to enhance their tutoring practices. These tools included ways to market their online tutoring practice, provide feedback to students and parents about progress, to better engage students during the lesson and ways for K-5 online tutor entrepreneurs to organize their work. Participants provided feedback to parents and students in a variety of ways, and some participants described providing limited feedback to parents. P7 provided a weekly summary of feedback to parents of her students, but this came in the form of a phone call or an email summary. P9 also used email to connect with parents and provide them with feedback. She said she did not do this with all her students, but “if they’re young, I’ll sit and talk to the parents, and we talked about what happened and what went well and what didn’t.”

P14 found that many parents did not request feedback. “A lot of parents just don’t even want to read anything,” P14 said, “So, I just kind of gauge by how they are.” If parents do want feedback, P14 writes a letter to them. P12 acknowledged that his

feedback was more informal with his private students, saying, “I communicate through WhatsApp and things like that with the parent, on a more casual basis.”

Other participants, and especially those who worked for TLC, took advantage of a feedback system built into the tutoring platform. P1 described a “very formal feedback process” which included typed feedback via a rubric, which also included “a hefty paragraph that I write,” according to P1. P8 also described this written feedback for parents through TLC and said there is a tutoring partner in China who is also available to help parents and provide feedback. “I can give the parent feedback and the parent can give me feedback, but there’s not a chat room where I could send a message and they could send a message back,” said P8. She continued, “I’m able to contact the learning partner, so that’s the person that’s in China that’s helping the parents…If you want to communicate back and forth, it goes through another party.” P11 also had experience using the learning partner for feedback:

> With feedback to parents about the online session, for example, I had a student that came into class, was not prepared, came in 10 minutes late, that was distracted by television the entire time; I was doing everything I could to get his attention and nothing was working. I used puppets and all the motivational tools, but he was completely checked out, was not interested in anything going on. I communicated with the learning partner about the students’ behavior. The learning partner immediately spoke to the parents; the next class, the student was focused, ready to go listening, paying good attention.

In terms of feedback for students, participants acknowledged that the feedback occurred throughout the lesson, so follow-up feedback for the student outside the lesson seemed redundant. “We spell words, and they know if they got them right or wrong. I ask a lot of questions,” P13 said of her feedback practices during the lesson. P6 said, “I do not provide feedback to the students; they’re getting feedback consistently throughout the session.”

Key to being K-5 online tutor entrepreneurs was staying organized, especially because these tutors often worked with many students both privately and through different tutoring companies. Digital tools were handy for participants, who shared their techniques for staying organized. The Google suite of technology tools was popular with many participants. P8 linked her tutoring calendar to Google Calendar and blocked off a set schedule each weekday that she devoted to tutoring. “I try to keep my hours always the same,” P8 said. She also planned for the next day to “keep organized that way.” P4 also preferred Google Calendar for staying organized, but admitted she had “one of those big, wide calendars” that she puts on her wall. P12 shared that he used the program Asana to stay organized:

> I use a program called Asana, which is a project management tool. I use that to organize my lessons or what I’ve covered. It’s mainly used outside of education. Teams use it to organize projects. But I use it for my own business. I organize their lessons in there and if we didn’t finish something, then I’ll move that to the next card in the program.

P12 said he would go crazy without Asana to stay organized and preferred this to a spreadsheet or Google Docs. P11, on the other hand, liked spreadsheets to stay organized. He used Excel to organize his day based on Chinese time, or the times of the day he tutored students who lived in China. Each tab in Excel represented a company for which he worked. He said working with the Excel sheet helped "prevent double booking."

Others preferred low-tech options for organization. P9 used physical folders for students, but sometimes used Google Docs if it made sense for the student. P3 said, "I have a legal pad for each kid," which helped her keep a running record, with dates, of each student she tutored. P6 used a notebook system, too. P13 also preferred physical organization to digital, maintaining a clipboard and file box for each student. After learning that maintaining a separate notebook for each student "was a pain in the patootie," she moved online to a one-notebook system in OneNote, which is a virtual notebook in which she keeps student information.

Summary

This chapter included a description of the setting, participant demographics, how data were collected and the audit trail. This chapter provided unique insight into the lived experiences of sixteen online tutors who tutor children in grades K-5. The results demonstrate the role online tutors play in tutoring students and sheds light on how they use their teacher presence to manage their online tutoring environments. The data shows that online tutors' lived experiences include a plethora of pedagogical practices. For example, establishing and maintaining tutor-tutee relationships, assessing student interests, academic levels, goals and emotions, and planning data-driven content,

gathering props, choosing games, providing rewards and researching/creating visual, auditory, kinesthetic resources to enhance student learning outcomes and keep students engaged. Other pedagogical practices included modeling, providing direct and explicit instruction via the gradual release model (I do, we do, you do), immersing students in the Total Physical Response (TPR), having discussions, asking critical thinking questions, extending language, and sharing instructional feedback.

Online tutors used a myriad of technological, digital tools that helped make the experience of online tutoring more engaging and more manageable. The digital tools helped the online tutor plan, organize, recruit, teach, engage, reward, and communicate. In Chapter 5, I summarize key findings, present an analysis of the data, interpret the findings and describe the limitations of the study. I also report recommendations for further research, explore implications for positive social change, and provide a conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of online tutors regarding their pedagogical practices and digital tools used when tutoring students in grades K-5. Two thirds of students in the fourth grade do not read on grade level (NCES, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic brought uncertainty about how to support K-5 students online with pedagogical practices and digital tools to help improve student-learning outcomes (Dhawan, 2020; Johns & Mills, 2020 Trust, 2018;). Researchers acknowledge that online tutoring is one tool that may enhance their literacy skills (Fisher et al., 2016). I conducted this study to address the gap in the literature.

In this chapter, I first interpret and explain the findings to indicate how they confirm, disconfirm, and extend knowledge in the discipline by comparing them with what was previously found in the literature. Then, I analyze and interpret the findings through the context of the conceptual framework. I also present the limitations, report my recommendations for further research, explore implications for positive social change, and provide a conclusion. The two research questions that guided this study were the following:

1. What are the lived experiences of tutors when tutoring elementary school students in online synchronous settings?
2. What pedagogical practices and digital tools do online tutors use when tutoring elementary school students online and why were those selected?

Interpretation of the Findings

Confirm

The study revealed that the lived experiences of tutors who teach elementary school students in online synchronous settings include data-driven instruction. First, online tutors conduct initial assessments and use students' interests to keep them actively engaged. This confirms previous research. Stover et al. (2017) found that instructors must first capture data to get a sense of how students are performing in order to determine the instruction and tools needed to assist learners. Stover et al. also indicated that instructors must capture and maintain the attention of young learners by immersing them in the things they enjoy. All participants spoke of piquing students' interests by engaging them with audio, video, games, animals, movement and hands-on participation and practice. P16 shared that she maintained student interest by dividing the online tutoring sessions with work time minutes and break time minutes. Participants 2, 8, 11 and 12 shared that they allowed the learners to build Manycam 3D designs and stickers in the form of ice cream cones, cars, houses, and animals as end-of-session rewards or as tools to keep the learners actively motivated.

Another lived experience of the participants was the use of the pedagogical practice of explicit instruction. In the literature, Hughes et al. (2017) found that what mattered most, in terms of group size, was explicit instruction. All participants discussed how they used "modeling instruction," "direct instruction," "explicit instruction," or the "I do, We do, You do" method to provide systematic guidance to support students' acquisition of new skills. Participants also experienced the use of scaffolding instruction

and differentiating instruction. Previous research indicated that scaffolding instruction and differentiating instruction help learners acquire new concepts and skills at their own pace, based on their own needs and prior knowledge (Feng et al., 2017; Vygotsky, 1978).

Participants 5, 6, and 7 experienced using retrospective miscue analysis while conducting reading conferences. Wang and Grieve (2019) discovered that when teachers conduct reading conferences with students it helps teachers understand students' gaps in decoding, fluency, and comprehension. P4, P6, P10, and P13 listen to their students read passages using qualitative reading inventory assessments and at Raz-Kids (https://www.raz-kids.com), Readworks (https://www.readworks.org), and Reading A-Z (https://www.readinga-z.com). They record the information and use the miscue analysis data to drive phonics and fluency instruction.

The second theme, rewards of being a K-5 online tutor, was influenced by the interaction and positive relationship between the online tutor participants and the K-5 students. Their repeated learning sessions together led to feelings of connectedness and academic intimacy (Fisher et al., 2016). K-5 students felt valued and supported, which resulted in them focusing and engaging in the lessons while participants modeled instruction (Nicholson et al., 2019). Engagement in data-driven, scaffolded instruction led to acquiring new skills and knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). The progress that participants experienced during these social presence interactions resulted in feelings of career satisfaction and contentment. In addition, Theme 3, challenges of being a K-5 online tutor, was influenced by teacher presence. ChanLin et al. (2016) reported that online tutors must include, as part of their instructional decisions, a plan for technical

difficulties, socioemotional learning and mental well-being instruction to help curtail behavior challenges of K-5 students during online tutoring sessions. P1, P2, P11 and P12 reported the practice of relying on the "firemen" or emergency tech support personnel who aided the students' parents and the participants when there were issues of connectivity or sound quality. P13 and P14 planned yoga and stretching exercises for students when they needed a break, whereas P5, P7, and P8 embedded hands-on game time for students when they became fidgety. P16 encouraged her students to use their "Thinking Putty" to help them relax for 2–5 minutes between tasks.

Disconfirm

Some of the previous research contrasts with this study's findings. Paige (2018) found that some pedagogical practices are not pedagogically sound and result in academic failure. For example, using "quick fix" response to intervention programs or immersing students in test prep alone does not provide students with the skills they need to become confident, proficient readers. P9 does not engage her students in test prep. Instead, she revises content from www.readworks.org. She removes challenging words and replaces them with synonyms. She also revises the questions with figurative language to make them more literal so that her students that struggle can understand them. P15 uses the digital tool Lexercise and the Recipe for Reading curriculum to support her dyslexic readers.

All of the participants shared their experiences of using pedagogical practices such as modeling, scaffolding, differentiating, and leading students in methodologies geared to support students with language-based learning disabilities or for students

learning the english language. Pedagogical practices like the Total Physical Response and the Orton Gillingham method are specially associated with helping students who struggle with acquiring/processing the english language. Participants did not report using gimmicks or trendy "quick fixes." Rather they took the time to engage learners in data-driven, sequential, cumulative, multisensory (visual, auditory, tactile) instruction to help students' brains receive the content via multiple pathways.

Prior research indicated that some instructors experienced the practice of low academic expectation of hinting and helping students (Brodeur & Ortmann, 2018) rather than maintaining a culture of high expectations as all the participants in this study reported doing. In this study, P7 helped one of her students get accepted into a prestigious private school. She recalled how she individualized instruction to close achievement gaps as they practiced basic skills for over a year. In addition, Nicholson and Tiru (2019) found that K-5 tutees need more than 3 weeks of reading intervention to begin to ameliorate reading gaps. Although the intervention included the teaching of decoding strategies, syllable division, and sight word reading, students only made slight reading gains. The experiences of the participants in this study speak to the interactions and social, cognitive, and teaching presences they maintained over months, and—for most participants—many years, provides insight into the close-knit socioemotional relationship needed to build feelings of safety and trust within the online tutoring environment. P11 expressed his excitement about his well-developed social relationships with his students noting that parents continued to book appointments, specifically with him because they

were pleased with his teaching style, feedback provided to parents and the positive rapport he maintained with his students.

Extend

This study adds to the body of literature by providing insight about the phenomenological experiences of K-5 online tutors and their online tutor entrepreneurship. This was an unexpected finding. Previous research revealed that online tutoring practices related to instruction, curriculum, and digital tools (Clark et al., 2014; Fisher et al., 2016). However, the idea of online tutors as businesspeople exhibiting an *entrepreneurship presence* is an emergent code in the data that broadens our perspective of the lived experiences of K-5 online tutors.

All participants shared aspects of their business experiences. When I posed questions about pedagogical practices and digital tools used for online tutoring P5 provided specific information. She stated that her company uses the software Tutorbird for appointment scheduling and billing, and for housing intake, tutoring lesson and assessment notes. P12 spoke of "leaving the stress of brick-and-mortar classroom teaching" to branch out on his own to live in Malaysia and "make way more money" working for himself tutoring children online while living in Asia. P7 is a former New York City and New Jersey teacher, but she gave that up to launch her tutoring business and "really help kids learn." P6 has a YouTube presence dating back over 10 years. She is a published author in the field of online tutoring, regularly shares her content on syllable division, reading strategies, digital tools, her online course and newsletter, online

tutor challenges, and markets herself to be hired by prospective online tutors to coach them on how to create and maintain an online tutoring business.

Participants shared their experiences of marketing themselves, recruiting clients, choosing or creating educational content, beginning and ending their sessions, and developing and maintaining business relationships, as well as using their skills, knowledge, and expertise to support learners while they earn a profit from the service that they provide. In doing so, they exercise their social, cognitive, teacher, and entrepreneurial presences. Social presence (Garrison et al., 2000) was demonstrated in the interactions of meeting, greeting, and communicating between the online tutor and the client. Both connected to Zoom to reveal their true selves in a safe, nonjudgmental virtual space. Cognitive presence (Garrison et al., 2000) was displayed in the data analysis of the clients' initial assessment, the academic rigor apparent in the questions posed by online tutors to check for understanding and the meaning making involved to help K-5 students construct new knowledge. Teacher presence was exhibited in the selection of instructional materials, digital tools, and pedagogical practices chosen for the online environment to meet the academic needs of each unique learner (Garrison et al., 2000). The crux of all the decision-making was greatly influenced not just by the participants' teaching presence, but also by their entrepreneurial presence, which led to them demonstrating strong leadership capabilities.

This study also extended the knowledge of digital tools used by K-5 online tutors with the addition of Zoom's features: chat box, annotation whiteboard, audio-visual sound, screen-sharing, breakout rooms and abort remote control. Participants indicated

that they used the chat box when instruction focused on letter-sound relationships, segmenting and blending words, sight word instruction, spelling, dictation, and checking for understanding. The annotation whiteboard allowed both the participants and the K-5 students to write, draw, underline and highlight and when the participants needed students to stop, participants used the abort remote control feature.

Participants reported using other digital tools, as presented in Appendix B. This study highlighted using music from the internet for yoga and stretching. Participants noticed that halfway through their online tutoring sessions, students' attention span had waned, and they integrated music for yoga and stretching to help online students refocus. Another digital tool that this study highlighted is an Orton Gillingham (Sayeski et al., 2018) based, reading and spelling, hands-on program named Whizzimo. P5 raved about how Whizzimo helps turn anxious, struggling readers and dyslexic students into confident, fluent, competent readers in one-to-one online tutoring sessions.

Interpretation of the Findings: Conceptual Framework

The findings confirmed and extended knowledge as compared with Garrison's (2000) CoI conceptual framework, which described three co-existing elements that influence online learning: social presence, cognitive presence and teacher presence. According to Garrison, all three elements must be working together simultaneously for students to benefit from online learning environments.

Themes generated from the interviews provide insight about the nature of the day-to-day experiences, business operations, and tutoring processes of K-5 online tutors. Garrison's conceptual framework (Anderson et al., 2001; Annamalai et al., 2016;) was

observed at work through the one-on-one and small group interactions participants had with their online tutoring students, colleagues, and clients. This study extends the work of Garrison's research focused on creating optimal learning outcomes for adult, college-level online learners, where this study exclusively focused on K-5 online learners.

Social Presence

Social presence relates to the tutors' ability to project themselves as "real people" while engaging in open communication, emotional affect, and group cohesion (Armelli et al., 2016). Participants engaged in the use of social presence by providing feedback and communicating with students and parents. Participants described that they first practiced building a rapport with students at the onset of each session. Participants observed students' verbal and nonverbal communication to determine more information about the students' interests/mental well-being while they maintained friendly relationships in every session. Some relationships have lasted well over 2–5 years. Participants used voice tone, social cues, and encouraging words to engage K-5 online learners and enhance their online tutoring instruction.

All 16 participants created online tutoring spaces to be safe online environments of one-to-one or of small group learning pods where they could project their personal characteristics into their learning community. Many of the participants presented their "true selves" in their websites, YouTube videos, and Zoom online tutoring sessions, where clients gained access to their body language in the form of smiles, voice intonations, articulation of speech, and facial expressions. This confirms findings of Lee et al. (2018) who found that effective instructional design and directed facilitation of

discourse between members of the learning community resulted in elevated levels of social presence. In their academically intimate online spaces, participants showed their "real" personalities, which resonated with their clients. This led them to select the participants as their child's online tutor or persuaded clients to pursue them as online tutoring business coaches. Being comfortable in their "social presence skin," being vulnerable, and showing up as their "authentic selves" enabled the participants to build trusting relationships with K-5 students, their families, and colleagues (Armelli et al., 2016). Armelli et al. (2016) argued that social presence is a major force in establishing and maintaining engagement and sense making in online learning environments and that both teaching and cognitive presences have "become social." K-5 students in turn were able to share their COVID-19 talks about the loss of loved ones as well as moments that made them overjoyed (e.g., test scores, academic grades, the birth of new siblings, new toys and games, holiday celebrations, and the like).

Cognitive Presence

Cognitive presence relates to the extent to which online learners immersed themselves in making connections, meaning making, drawing conclusions, and making inferences about what they are learning (Garrison et al., 2000; Garrison et al., 2001; Garrison, 2009; Turula, 2018). Participants indicated that they helped students develop critical thinking skills and helped them make sense of what they were learning through modeling and engaging students in questioning, from lower-level questions to higher, more rigorous ones. Through cumulative review sessions/activities, participants reported

that students were able to make connections, recall concepts, analyze miscues, self-correct, and overcome academic obstacles.

Participants designed instruction that immersed students in opportunities to engage in active communication to help students learn concepts, make meaning, and connect prior knowledge to acquired knowledge (Turula, 2018). P2 engaged in cognitive presence by asking critical thinking questions, which helped students make predictions and draw conclusions during their online tutoring English grammar lessons. P7 led third grade students in small group math online tutoring helping them connect division to multiplication. P4 provided instruction that deepened students' understanding of how to revise a paragraph. P1 conducted weekly brainteaser, mind bender enrichment sessions with advanced students who are beyond the basics and craved academic challenges. She shared that her shy, introverted and bright students "come alive" when she divided them up into Zoom breakout rooms to discuss their answers. P4 loved to read with students, pose engaging comprehension questions and let the students answer in mass using the text chat feature. She indicated that her students loved to "peck away" and type their answers so they could all see their responses in real time. All these interactions confirm the work of Turula (2018) who found that an online teacher's social presence greatly influences a students' cognitive presence.

Teacher Presence

Teacher presence is at the heart of this phenomenological study. The evidence of social presence and cognitive presence could have only happened with well-thought out, planned instruction, which indicates the evidence of teacher presence. Teacher presence

relates to the design, facilitation, and direction of students' cognitive and social processes in learning environments. Teacher presence includes three categories: design and organization of content, facilitating discourse, and direct and explicit instruction (Garrison et al., 2000; Hersman et al., 2017). All participants demonstrated a strong teacher presence.

Teacher presence was observed in the instructional decisions participants made to conduct their online tutoring sessions. Teacher presence was also evident in their business websites, tutoring company profiles, and/or YouTube and Instagram posts, which displayed their selection of curriculum resources, instructional methods, assessment materials, marketing, as well as in the 'step by step' dialogue they used with the student(s). Most participants described times when they modeled instruction using the "I do, We do, You do" gradual release strategy to scaffold concepts, steps, strategies, and processes for students when they reached tricky words, wanted a student to explain errors in grammar, or when students needed to use syllabication for word solving. In their use of questioning techniques, participants facilitated discourse, helped students make-meaning and helped students acquire new knowledge.

Participants' YouTube videos and online business profiles showed them marketing themselves by sharing their pedagogical practices in teaching English Language Learners (ELLs) and Students with Disabilities (SWDs); showcasing strategies like Total Physical Response, the use of props, extending language to build oral vocabulary, and Orton Gillingham expertise to help learning disabled and dyslexic students. In their interviews, participants discussed the value of them choosing

multisensory techniques, websites, and materials to help students that struggle with reading "crack the code" through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic means. Every participant discussed the value of organizing content and instruction around both the informal and formal data they collected from their students. For participants in private practice that did not purchase instructional materials for SWDs or ELLs they used their strong knowledge base to design their own content and resources using Google's G-Suite, specifically Google Docs, Google Jamboard, Google Slides and Google Forms. The plethora of varied interactions and countless experiential examples provide insight into Garrison's (2000) elements of social, cognitive and teacher presence.

Limitations of the Study

This study utilized a phenomenological design. The data were collected using purposive sampling. The first limitation of this study is that the participants who volunteered to participate were K-5 online tutors, but their services were not exclusively limited to K-5 students. Some of them also provided online tutoring with struggling readers in middle and high school. Therefore, their lived experiences were not exclusively as K-5 online tutors.

A second limitation of this study is that the focus of most, if not all participants' experiences, were on the teaching of english language arts skills, including receptive and expressive english language development, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing. Only one participant provided data about experiences with online tutoring students in mathematics and another participant shared data on explicit

instruction in the teaching of the writing process. This study lacked information about pedagogical practices and digital tools used across reading, writing and mathematics.

A third limitation of this study is that data were collected from only three types of online tutoring environments: companies based in China that hired American, English-speaking online tutors, independent contractor companies that allowed online tutors to market themselves through their online profiles, and private practice online tutors who have websites, YouTube videos, and Instagram posts which market their services. To be able to see patterns, similarities, and differences among and between participants, I limited the study to three distinct types of online tutoring companies.

The last limitation is that I needed to consider included researcher bias. I am a doctoral student learning in an online environment. I have over 22 years of elementary school teaching experience. I own a K-5 tutoring business that I transitioned to a fully remote, online tutoring business for students in grades K-5. I previously served as an adjunct instructor who used Blackboard. Blackboard is a learning management system that I used to teach an asynchronous course for graduate level, elementary school teachers at a college. Part of my current work as a public school teacher includes working as a literacy coach with K-2 teachers in the teaching of reading and strengthening their pedagogical practices. To address these concerns, I noted my biases, thoughts, and opinions regarding participants' choice of digital tools, pedagogical practices, and the extent to which they described experiences as defined in the CoI framework by bracketing my thoughts in my note-taking journal. For these reasons, the data cannot be used to generalize about K-5 online tutoring and it certainly cannot be used to debate

about the experiences and attitudes of other online tutors. Despite the limitations of this study, I designed the interview protocol, had it vetted by a panel of experts, recruited the participants, conducted the interviews, transcribed the interviews, and analyzed the data using sound phenomenological practices. Data saturation was reached and the study's themes were apparent among all participants, thus increasing the study's credibility.

Recommendations

The data in this study explored the pedagogical practices and digital tools used by K-5 online tutors. Future researchers might explore the lived experiences, pedagogical practices and digital tools used by Pre-K to 12 online tutors and Pre-K to 12 online classroom teachers to gain a broader perspective of the phenomenon (Moliner et al., 2020; M. Wu & Gao, 2020; Szente, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic caused many educators to determine how to conduct online learning in remote environments. Having data on the day-to-day online tutoring/teaching, pedagogical practices and digital tools readily available to support learning for all students is crucial for students' academic growth and development (Dhawan, 2020; Trust et al., 2020).

In addition, this study provided data focused on online tutoring predominantly in the context of english language arts; but the field may benefit from having data focused on online tutoring/teaching in science (Hautala et al., 2018), mathematics (Choi et al., 2018; Hrastinski et al., 2019; Moliner et al., 2020; M. Wu et al., 2020), and writing (Vasquez et al., 2016). Conducting studies such as these would offer K-12 educational stakeholders the breadth and depth of knowledge the field needs in these content areas. Doing so may also help future educators in school systems should they continue to

grapple with providing instruction to students during the COVID-19 pandemic; or if, nationally, schools should move towards a more hybrid model of learning; or if schools choose to begin to provide more personalized teaching offering students one-to-one learning (Cerruto et al., 2020; Kier et al., 2020; Kuhfeld et al., 2020; Trust et al., 2020).

The last recommendation is to conduct a study to collect data about K-12 students that are struggling readers, whose online tutors use the Orton Gillingham program, 'Whizzimo' in their online tutoring sessions. NCES (2019) data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress indicated that 65% of fourth grade students and 29% of eighth grade students do not read proficiently. It would be interesting to explore this area to find out more information about how students that struggle with decoding and spelling respond to this instructional digital tool.

Implications

The results of this study may catalyze social change. The ISTE standards include the expectation that K-5 students have more engaging, personalized learning experiences. Two-thirds of students in the fourth grade do not read on grade level (NCES, 2019). Online tutoring is one tool that may enhance their literacy skills (ChanLin, 2016, Fisher et al., 2016; Szente, 2020; Stover et al., 2017; Vasquez et al., 2012).

Educational stakeholders might use the data from this study to create K-5 online tutoring best practice policies (Barbour, 2019; Barton et al., 2017; Bean et al., 2019; Serdyukov, 2017). The negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to interfere with students' learning (Kier et al., 2020; Kuhfield et al., 2020). K-5 online tutoring policies may provide a model of research-based, synchronous, online tutoring to be able

to help more K-5 learners catch up, get ahead, and enjoy reading, writing, and/or math more due to the increased attention received in one-to-one and/or small group online tutoring sessions with online tutors (Trust et al., 2020).

The participants from the study may benefit by implementing some of the practices provided in this study. The results of the study will be shared with the participants via email so that they are afforded an opportunity to learn from the other participants. All participants expressed interest in learning from the other participants in the study. They may want to shed light on how it might be possible to make K-5 online tutoring more prevalent, impactful, and engaging for young learners that struggle with language and reading .

Elementary school building leaders may consider creating professional development programs and/or extended day online tutoring programs to better support students who are performing below grade level (Beach et al., 2018; Cheung et al., 2016; De La Cruz et al., 2019; Lindo et al., 2018; Pai et al., 2017). Teachers of struggling readers, English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs) may form communities of inquiry (Feng et al., 2017; Garrison et al., 2000) where they support each other in implementing some of the pedagogical practices and digital tools found in this study.

Conclusion

The problem that this study addressed was a need for more research on elementary school online tutors' pedagogical practices and digital tools utilized while tutoring K-5 students. Specifically, knowledge was needed about the lived experiences of

K-5 online tutors. There was limited information regarding online tutors' self-reported experiences using pedagogical practices and digital tools to build K-5 students' academic capacities. The process, planning, design, and execution of K-5 online tutoring, from the perspective of K-5 online tutors was not found in the literature (Garrison et al., 2000). In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic (Dhawan, 2020), and how it has disrupted educational school systems (Kuhfeld et al., 2020) at the local, regional, national, and global levels, this knowledge could potentially provide information that school teachers, private tutors, interventionists, instructional coaches, and school building leaders can use in their efforts to improve students' learning outcomes.

This study sheds light on participants' experiences with pedagogical practices used in online tutoring. Findings identified five distinct themes participants reported: K-5 Online Tutor as Educational Entrepreneur, Rewards of Being a K-5 Online Tutor, Challenges of Being a K-5 Online Tutor, Pedagogical Practices of K-5 Online Tutors, and Digital Tools used to Enhance Online Tutoring. The pedagogical practices they reported using aligned with research-based practices for students (SWDs and ELLs) that struggle with language. For example, modeling, explicit instruction, and scaffolding helped students learn concepts and content. Participants also reported using a variety of auditory, visual and kinesthetic digital tools to help their students focus on instruction, engage in learning, and engage in repeated practice sessions as they acquired new academic information. Participants formed a CoI of one-to-one or in some cases, small group online communities of inquiry (Garrison et al., 2000; Stenbom et al., 2016) where

they attended to students' academic needs by using their social, cognitive, and teacher presences.

Having their own, personal online tutoring practices environments provided participants with reported feelings of autonomy, leadership and independence. They indicated that independence made them feel rewarded and valued. When they were faced with difficult moments, they used their decision-making skills to find clever solutions for behavior and technical challenges.

This study has filled a gap in the educational technology and elementary school education literature by providing educators with a set of pedagogical practices and digital tools (see Appendix B) educational stakeholders might consider using to inform educators' online professional practices. This study also provided insight into the process of how K-5 online tutors: use their social presence to reveal their true selves to form bonds with the K-5 learners; cognitive presence to build in critical thinking skills; and teacher presence to design safe, engaging, data-driven, socio-emotional virtual spaces where students can acquire new knowledge (Garrison et al, 2000). This study is unique in that it adds an entrepreneurial dimension to the educational technology narrative as K-5 online tutors in this study reported taking ownership over their careers, perhaps to lead more mission-oriented and purpose-driven careers in their effort to improve students' learning outcomes.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of tutors when tutoring elementary school students in online synchronous settings?	IQ1: In your experience, what is the process of online tutoring like? IQ2: Would you please walk me through, step by step, the beginning, middle and ending of an online tutoring session with you teaching a: a. Reading (Phonics/Decoding) lesson? b. Reading (Comprehension) lesson? c. Math lesson? d. Writing lesson? IQ3: Would you please account, for the steps you take before, during and after a tutoring session? IQ4: How do students respond if they do not understand/need help? IQ5: What does curriculum, communication, and content look like/sound like? IQ6: What can you share with me about the feedback you provide for the students? IQ7: How do you feel about online tutoring K-2 students? Students in grades 3-5? IQ8: What are some rewarding/challenging moments that you recall from your experiences? IQ9: Is there any particular online tutoring experience that has had a major impact on your life that you'd like to share?
RQ2: What pedagogical practices and digital tools do online tutors use when tutoring elementary school students online and why were those selected?	IQ1: What online platform do you use to tutor online? How is it used? IQ2: In terms of educational technology, what tools do you use to teach? Motivate? Differentiate? Assess? IQ3: In terms of educational technology, please share your experience of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic tools used in your online tutoring sessions. IQ4a: What resources do you use to tutor your students in Reading? Math? Writing? IQ4b: What resources do you use specifically for special needs students? IQ4c: How do you manage issues of accessibility? IQ5: How do you set the "tone" for tutoring? Rules? Procedures? Expectations? IQ6: How do you keep the online tutoring process organized? IQ7: In your experience, do the students ever work in groups or does instruction mostly consist of 1:1? If so, what does group work look/sound? 1:1 instruction look like/sound like?

Appendix B: Digital Tools

Name	Website	Purpose selected
YouTube	www.youtube.com	For marketing, recruiting clients, sharing expert content, affiliate link business information, contact information, and special announcements (birth of a baby)
Instagram	www.instagram.com	For sharing expert strategies, tips, tools, pics, ideas, failures, successes, content, following other experts in education, sharing special announcements (birth of a baby, launch of a course, marketing business product sales)
Institute for Multisensory Education	https://imse.com/	For purchasing digital curriculum materials (Google Slides) for students with dyslexia (audio/visual drills, syllabication, red words, dictation, letter formation, decodable books). Every Friday they provide free content to members via email
Susan Barton's Reading and Spelling remote tutoring system	https://www.whizzimo.com/barton.html	Susan Barton's Reading & Spelling program converted into digital form to be used with students with dyslexia, ELLs, or students that struggle to decode
Teachers Pay Teachers	https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/	For purchasing digital curriculum resources (created by teachers); some are free of charge
Manycam	www.manycam.com	Free application that allows users to use their webcam with video chat & live streaming to offer student rewards and increase engagement using sound effects and graphics
Reading A to Z	www.readingatoz.com	Digital resources & leveled books to develop skills across the five pillars of reading; can be used for shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, 1:1 tutoring; E-books are PDF files that can be printed or read on an iPad/tablet
Raz-kids	https://www.raz-kids.com/	E-book listening & reading at students instructional/independent reading levels, check comprehension, use annotation tools (highlight, underline, take notes), students can record themselves reading
Vocabulary A-Z	https://www.vocabularya-z.com/#!/	Differentiate your vocabulary instruction and practice with customizable word lists, printable and digital lessons and games

Name	Website	Purpose selected
Readworks	https://www.readworks.org/	Social Studies, Science, E-articles, narratives in PDF form; Use for Guided reading, repeated Shared Reading to develop fluency, tutors can use the articles with/without the questions/create their own questions, students can hear the articles /stories read to them
WhatsApp	https://www.whatsapp.com/	Communicate with clients during, after, between sessions, while on maternity leave, and/or on vacation
WeChat App	https://www.wechat.com/	Communicate with clients during, after, between sessions, and while on maternity leave, and on vacation
Google-G Suite	www.google.com	Create slideshow presentations, lessons, assignments, business contracts, forms, collect data, make & administer quizzes, analyze data, create schedules, list appointments on the calendar
Asana	https://asana.com/	Project Management tool to keep track of what students were taught and next steps for tutoring instruction
Kajabi	https://kajabi.com/	Application for course creation, business website, marketing, email newsletters
OneNote	https://www.onenote.com/download	Digital notebook (to do lists, reflect on your practice, take notes while you tutor)
Boom Cards	https://wow.boomlearning.com/	Interactive, engaging app that allows teachers to design their own study cards and see students interacting/answering in real time. Teachers can use the Boom Cards already created by other educators
Vooks	www.vooks.com	Free decodable books for students to read
Wilson Assessment of Decoding & Encoding WADE Assessment	https://store.wilsonlanguage.com/wade-wilson-assessment-of-decoding-and-encoding-4th-edition/	Assess students' ability to decode word and spell words
Huion USB Pen Graphics Drawing Tablet Board Kit	https://www.amazon.com/Huion-H420-Graphics-Drawing-Tablet/dp/B00MGLD3E6	Drawing and writing tablet used for letter formation, writing sentences, drawing pictures, and more.
Bit Paper	https://www.bitpaper.io/	Interactive whiteboard paper which can be used with or without Zoom
The Pomodoro Method	https://francescocirillo.com/pages/pomodoro-technique	A time management technique that helps online tutors work smarter not harder; Helps students set goals and get focused work done in a short amount of time with incremental breaks

Name	Website	Purpose selected
Aaron's Thinking Putty	https://crazyaarons.com/	Putty created to help improve the focus of students with ADD/ADHD or that struggle with executive functions
Story Jumper	https://www.storyjumper.com/	Help your students become authors! Help them plan, write and design their own e-book or download books other teachers and students have written
Nessy	https://www.nessy.com/en-us	Program that offers students Orton Gillingham support through play for helping them "crack the code; for whole class, 1:1, small groups, at school use, at home use, for developing phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency comprehension, letter formation, math and comprehension
Special Needs Toys	https://specialneedstoys.com/	Multisensory manipulatives that help reduce anxiety and help increase focus
School Specialty	https://eps.schoolspecialty.com/	Explode the Code resources & Recipe for reading resources for decodable books and a wealth of other resources for students with dyslexia
Bob Books	https://bobbooks.com/	Emergent reader mini books for children to read
Lexercise	https://www.lexercise.com/	Dyslexia screener, online Orton Gillingham based program to help students make gains; teletherapy jobs and trainings for educators
Word Wall	https://wordwall.net/	Ready-made templates for teachers to use to create gamified content for fun learning
Miro	https://miro.com/	Collaborative whiteboard App that allows the tutor to collaborate and model letter formation, assess students' spelling of words, upload PDF sheets and create/play educational games
Tutor Bird	https://www.tutorbird.com/	Tutor Business Management Software (online scheduling, billing, lesson notes, payment login, store/access online tutoring session notes)
Math is Fun	https://www.mathsisfun.com/	Website with math worksheets, puzzles, games, and an A-Z math dictionary of math terms
Lindamoodbell	https://lindamoodbell.com/	Multisensory teaching and learning for teachers and students with dyslexia, autism, and general learning challenges

Name	Website	Purpose selected
Handwriting Without Tears	https://www.lwtears.com/	Fine motor support for students with dysgraphia or for students in need of occupational therapy
easyCBM	https://www.easycbm.com/	Online assessment tools for monitoring word reading measure, fluency, and math skills
Qualitative Reading Inventory Assessment	https://www.amazon.com/Qualitative-Reading-Inventory-Lauren-Leslie/dp/0137019238	Tools to accurately assess children's reading abilities (word lists, fluency passages, comprehension) from early readers to advanced readers in high school
Near Pod	https://nearpod.com/	Tools to engage students by adding interactive activities to your lessons. For example, polls, collaboration boards, game-based quizzes, using any mobile device
Recipe for Reading	https://eps.schoolspecialty.com/products/literacy/reading-intervention/recipe-for-reading/about-the-program	Manual with an Orton Gillingham scope and sequence for teaching struggling readers
Explode the Code	https://www.rainbowresource.com/category/822/Explode-the-Code.html	Curriculum resources to support the Science of Reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension)