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Teacher Perceptions of Social Networking Tools for Increasing Student Literacy and Engagement

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MS, Central Connecticut State University, 2012

BA, Northern Caribbean University, 2007

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Learning, Instruction, and Innovation

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Abstract

Social networking tools are innovative practices utilized by higher education institutions to promote the development of literacy skills and encourage engagement in an online learning platform. There is limited understanding of whether social networking tools have a similar effect on fourth-grade students' literacy development and engagement. The purpose of this basic qualitative research study was to explore fourth-grade teachers' perceptions of using social networking tools for literacy development and engagement. Using the Garrison, Anderson, and Archer's community of inquiry conceptual framework, research questions were designed to explore fourth-grade teachers' perceptions of using social networking tools in English language arts classes for literacy development and engagement. Semi structured interviews were conducted with eight teachers who use social networking tools. Coded transcripts were analyzed for emerging patterns which led to themes that answered the research questions. Results from the study indicated that social networking tools support literacy skills development among fourth-grade students. The teachers also indicated that engagement among students was very high as students collaborated in their online communities. Finally, the teachers discussed the importance of planning effective lessons using social networking tools to develop literacy skills and actively engage students. This study adds to the field of innovation and literacy development. It may contribute to positive social change in supporting districts to make professional development decisions to support elementary teachers in accessing and using social networking tools for literacy instructions.

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Dedication

First, I want to give all praises to God, who has given me the strength to complete this journey. To my mom, Sheila, thank you for your endless support and love. You have modeled what it means to be resilient and pursue your goals no matter the challenges. Thank you for being my role model and my prayer warrior. Mom, I am finally done, and now you can proudly say your daughter is a doctor in her profession.

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Thank you for your encouragement and support to my brothers, Mark and Mervin. To my amazing best friend, Dr. Renee McKenzie, who always held me accountable to ensure that I met my weekly goals. Thank you for our conversations and for convincing me not to quit. To every friend and colleague who supported me during this journey and praised every hurdle I crossed, I thank you.

Thank you to the most awesome dissertations committee, Dr. Otto (chair), Dr. Pann, and Dr. Clay. Without my committee, this task would not be possible. Your support during this journey has pushed me to improve my research skills. I am grateful for all your support. Thank you for always being available through text, email, and video conference to my chair, Dr. Otto. You are a true definition of an excellent dissertation chair. You have a great way of asking me questions that would have me thinking critically about what my next steps should be. You gave me the push I needed not to give up, and your commitment to my success will be forever appreciated. Dr. Pann, thank you for your humility and kindness. Your guidance during the methodology process made understanding the steps of collecting analyzing data possible. In addition, I would like to express my gratitude to all those who assisted me during my doctoral study at Walden University.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Educators are faced with the responsibility to prepare students with the literacy skills they need to be successful academically, prepare for college, and have a future career. This responsibility is especially the reality for South Carolinian teachers who had 48.7% of fourth-graders who were unsuccessful in the English Language Arts (ELA) SC READY Assessment in 2019 (South Carolina Department of Education, 2019b). The International Literacy Association (2019) has identified academic skills which help students to become valuable citizens in society. These skills include foundational literacy skills, digital literacy skills, critical thinking, creative thinking, and collaboration (International Literacy Association, 2019). With the evolution of new literacies which utilize media and digital technologies, teachers must prepare students to meet the demand for effectively using these technologies (Alhinty, 2015). This demand requires teachers to be equipped and ready to implement these innovative practices in the classroom, especially in reading (International Literacy Association, 2019).

Technology has played a pivotal role in preparing children for literacy and long-term academic success (Herodotou, 2018; Palaiologou, 2016; Voogt & McKenney, 2017). One such innovative and engaging practice that has produced positive literacy development results is the use of social networking tools (Blake, 2016). Social networking tools promote interactions and the communication of information with others in a virtual environment (Eid & Al-Jabri, 2016). Eid and Al-Jabri (2016), Lim and Richardson (2016), and Manca and Ranieri (2016b) have shown that these tools

encourage learning among students as well as promote engagement during the learning process.

Beyond using social networking tools for educational purposes, there is uncertainty about how fourth-grade teachers use such devices for literacy development and engagement (Tur et al., 2017; Youssef et al., 2016). At the secondary and university levels, researchers have indicated the effectiveness of social networking tools for the development of literacy skills and increasing engagement (Fraser & Abbott, 2016; Lui et al., 2016; Lui & Lan, 2016; Rahamat et al., 2017; Tur et al., 2017). However, a gap exists in the literature that indicates how educators perceive social networking tools for literacy development and engagement at the elementary level (Henthorn & Cammack, 2017; Hu et al., 2017; Ramirez & Gillig, 2018; Tur et al., 2017; Youssef et al., 2016). Findings from this study could promote social change by informing teachers' instruction to promote classroom communities, critical readers, and thinkers. Findings could also lead to a positive social change in curriculum planning and policymaking to include social networking tools as a learning tool.

Chapter 1 examined South Carolinian's fourth-grade teachers' perceptions of utilizing social networking tools for literacy development and engagement. Included in Chapter 1 is a synthesis of current studies highlighting the effectiveness of social networking tools in developing literacy skills and promoting engagement. Next, I discussed my research problem and demonstrated the association with the study's purpose. Then, a discussion of the community of inquiry (CoI) framework and how it guided my research. This chapter also includes the definition of relevant terms and

assumptions, scope and delamination, and limitations. To conclude Chapter 1, a discussion of the gap in the literature will further indicate the relevance of the study.

Background of the Study

Researchers have investigated teachers' efforts to improve their students' literacy skills by using social networking tools to support literacy development (Fraser & Abbott, 2016; Lui & Lan, 2016). Studies on social networking tools have shown that the technology medium has developed comprehension skills in undergraduate students (Fraser & Abbott, 2016; Lui & Lan, 2016). Similar studies, heavily based on undergraduate education, showed critical thinking skills developed using social networking tools (Ahmad, 2015; Figaro-Henry & James, 2015). Social networking tools have also been prevalent in connecting students to one another in a nontraditional way to create a learning community (Lui et al., 2016; Tur et al., 2017). This learning community has reported effective engagement among students during the learning process (Lui & Lan, 2016; Rahamat et al., 2017).

Although there is an abundant amount of literature to support the use of social networking tools for literacy development and engagement at the collegial level, there is a deficiency in understanding the perceived benefits at the elementary level. Studies by Eren (2015), Henthorn and Cammack (2017), Hu et al. (2017), and Tur et al. (2017) discussed the need to explore the gap in the literature on social networking tools in the development of literacy skills and engagement in elementary schools. Investigating what fourth-grade teachers think about social networking tools for literacy development and engagement allowed my study to shed light on the phenomenon.

This study's relevance is supported by recent studies, which have indicated that computer-based social networking tools are relevant in literacy education (Lui & Lan, 2016; Rahamat et al., 2017). Lui and Lan (2016) postulated that social networking tools are relevant in literacy as they cater to the "collaborative learning needs" of students by creating an environment that transfers learning and promotes thinking critically (p.181). Rahamat et al. (2017) also supported social networking tools in literacy through Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). They reiterated the importance of social networking tools by indicating that integration with "conventional teaching" will support educators "to create a new learning environment" that will not only strengthen literacy skills but also produce lifelong learners (p. 81). Stover et al. (2015) indicated that social networking tools could be added to the ever-evolving instructional pedagogy to further expand the 21st- century literacy skills in students.

Exploring this topic could help fill the literature gap related to elementary teachers' perceptions of using social networking tools for literacy development and engagement among fourth graders. This basic qualitative research could lead to social change in curriculum development for integrating social networking tools into classroom instruction. The findings could also inform South Carolinian teachers of the possible benefits of using social networking tools to develop literacy skills and promote classroom engagement.

Problem Statement

Numerous studies have indicated that social networking tools positively impact literacy development and active engagement among students (Al-Samarraie & Saeed,

2018; Lui et al., 2016; Yarbrough, 2018). Educators are now viewing the educational benefits of social networking tools that exist for academic gains (Albarbari, 2016; Almekhlafi, 2016; Cakir et al., 2015; Sung, 2018). The problem addressed in this study is a limited understanding of elementary teachers' views towards using social networking tools to develop literacy skills and promote engagement. Researchers have made it clear that more investigation should occur on this topic (Dafoulas & Shokri, 2016; Lui & Lan, 2016; Ramirez & Gillig, 2018; Youssef et al., 2016). Eren (2015), along with Henthorn and Cammack (2017), collectively agreed that studies conducted on social networking tools, literacy development, and engagement were more focused on secondary and university schools than on elementary schools.

Purpose of the Study

Using a basic qualitative design, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore teacher perceptions of the use of social networking tools in developing literacy skills and encouraging engagement among fourth-grade students in South Carolina. Explicitly, this study examined teachers' perceptions of students' cognitive presence while using social networking tools to gain meaning and understanding during literacy instructions. Using interviews, I also explored teacher perceptions of student engagement during ELA instructions using social networking tools. The study examined how teachers use social networking tools to facilitate cognitive presence and social presence to provide future curriculum development data. By conducting this study, I hoped to add to the knowledge base of the effective use of social networking tools to support student engagement and promote literacy development. Findings could lead to social change by

informing fourth-grade teachers, administrators, school districts, and other stakeholders of the benefits and challenges of implementing social networking tools in the classroom.

Research Questions

The study aimed to unearth fourth-grade teachers' perceptions regarding using social networking tools to develop students' literacy skills and promote active engagement. Below are three questions that guided the qualitative study.

RQ1: What are fourth-grade teacher perceptions regarding students' cognitive presence as they use social networking tools to develop literacy skills?

RQ2: How do fourth-grade teachers perceive student levels of engagement and social presence when using social networking tools for literacy instruction?

RQ3: How do fourth-grade teachers perceive using social networking tools to facilitate both the educational community's cognitive presence and social presence to create meaningful learning of literacy skills among their students?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the community of inquiry (CoI) (Garrison et al., 2000). CoI is an educational community where individuals work collaboratively in an engaging way to construct meaning and form a mutual understanding of what is learned (Garrison, 2017). The theory has three elements: social, cognitive, and teaching presence. First, social presence is the participants' ability to be identified as members of a learning community (Garrison et al., 2000). Through social presence, community members establish a sense of belonging, encouraging inquiry and critical thinking. Second, cognitive presence is the learner's ability to confirm meaning

through reflection and discourse (Garrison et al., 2000). The framework's cognitive presence is grounded in Dewey's (1933) work on the reflective thinking model. Dewey believed that an essential element to educational success was reflective thinking, deepening the learning experience. This critical or reflective thinking validates previous knowledge and creates new knowledge. Finally, the teaching presence facilitates both the cognitive and social presence to have meaningful learning outcomes (Garrison, 2017).

The framework aligned with the study's nature as it explored a learning community teacher use, specifically social networking tools, to develop related cognitive skills in students. Aligning the research problem to CoI was essential in understanding how fourth-grade teachers viewed students' social interaction or engagement to build literacy skills through reflective thinking. I selected the CoI framework for this study because it highlights an understanding of social interaction's relevance in academic learning. The CoI framework also opens the opportunity for a better insight into educators' role in constructing a learning community that facilitates critical thinking, hence developing literacy skills. Chapter 2 provides a complete analysis of the CoI framework.

Nature of the Study

A basic qualitative research design was used to explore teachers' perceptions of using social networking tools for literacy development and engagement in fourth grade. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), basic qualitative research allows researchers to examine participants' experiences and connect meaning to their experiences. The study's selected design aligned with the problem explored, which focused on gaining a better

understanding of teachers' beliefs of using social networking tools in engaging and developing elementary students' literacy skills. The CoI framework also aligned with the basic qualitative research design. It explored educators' views of engaging students in an online learning society that promotes academic skills (Garrison et al., 2000).

The participants for this basic qualitative research included fourth-grade teachers who currently or recently used social networking tools for literacy instructions. These teachers were from two regions of South Carolina and have received a minimum Level One Google certification. Before selecting the participants, I posted a participants' recruitment flyer on Facebook, which was embedded with a Google Form survey. The Google Form sought to identify participants who qualified to participate in the study. The questionnaire also determined the type of social networking tools used, the frequency, and the purpose of using such devices for literacy instruction. The questionnaire aimed to identify teachers who used social networking tools to develop their students' literacy skills and promote engagement. Based on the questionnaire results, teachers who used social networking tools for reading instruction and engagement were selected using purposive sampling from those who met the selection criteria to participate in the study (Patton, 2015). Purposive sampling allowed me to collect rich information that aligns with the research problem, answer the research questions, and support the CoI framework (Patton, 2015). Selected participants were interviewed through Zoom. The interview questions were created and aligned with the conceptual framework and literature review to provide data to answer the research questions. Participants answered questions geared towards the social networking tools used in the school and their beliefs of students'

cognitive and social presence while using social networking tools for literacy instruction and how teachers facilitate these processes. The collected qualitative data were analyzed using the software NVivo (Version 12) and Microsoft Word to identify emerging themes to answer the research questions and add to the conceptual framework.

Definitions

The definitions serve as a guide in this basic qualitative research to avoid ambiguity of terms with multiple meanings.

Community of inquiry (CoI): The CoI framework outlines the educational process as a collaboration of experiences within an online community that encourages inquiry. Within this online community, learners are engaged in critical discourse to create both personal and group understanding. The framework has three elements social presence, teaching presence, and cognitive presence (Garrison et al., 2000).

Cognitive presence: Learners demonstrate construction, exploration, and reflection in the cognitive presence to evaluate information and construct meaning (Garrison et al., 2000).

Engagement: Engagement promotes an environment that contributes to reflective thought, resulting in students asking questions, sharing ideas, being skeptical, and expressing themselves (Garrison et al., 2000).

Literacy skills: Literacy skills are cognitive abilities that allow students to garner and understand the meaning of what they have read (Ouellette et al., 2017; Stevens et al., 2016).

Reflective thinking model: Reflective thinking is 'active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends' (Dewey, 1933, p. 118).

Social networking tools: The internet platform supports instructional practices on the web, thereby creating the opportunity for learning through other users' interactions to make learning more accessible (Imran et al., 2016).

Social presence: The social presence is the ability for students to see themselves as creating purposeful relationships by communicating effectively, having open communication, and group cohesion (Garrison et al., 2000).

Teaching presence: The instructional design that facilitates cognitive and social presence for students to realize personal and meaningful educational learning outcomes (Garrison et al., 2000, 2001).

Assumptions

My study had several assumptions. First, I assumed that the interview tool used to collect data would effectively explore teachers' perceptions about using social networking tools in the classroom. I ensured that the interview tool created was aligned with the CoI conceptual framework, literature review, and social networking tools as an instructional tool. I assumed that all participants would provide an accurate account of their demographic background using the online survey and be honest about their beliefs in using social networking tools in their classrooms, resulting in valid and credible data

Scope and Delimitations

This study's scope was based on design, conceptual framework, and data analysis boundaries. A boundary associated with this study was connected to the purpose of exploring teachers' perceptions of using social networking tools to develop literacy skills and support students' engagement. The literature review also captured another boundary related to this study: the K-5 teachers' beliefs of literacy development and engagement using social networking tools. Therefore, this basic qualitative research study included current fourth-grade teachers in two regions of South Carolina who used social networking tools for classroom instruction. Teachers participating in this study were knowledgeable about using social networking tools for classroom instructions. The study did not include teachers from other grade levels, from other geographical areas, and those who do not have experience using social networking tools for these purposes. Findings are transferable to ELA teachers and educators in similar settings who use social networking tools in their classrooms.

The CoI (Garrison et al., 2000) framework was used to design the study, and I did consider the conceptual framework of social learning theory (Bandura, 1978). According to Bandura (1978), the social learning theory indicates that learning is a social process where students interact with their peers by modeling and observing to construct meaning and knowledge. However, my study's focus was on using social networking tools for the development of literacy skills and engaging students. I did not use the social learning theory because it did not include my study's technology and literacy components. The CoI framework focused on using technology in a social learning environment that

supports student learning. The CoI framework is grounded in Dewey's (1933) reflective thinking model, which indicates students' critical thinking skills in a collaborative learning environment. These critical thinking skills are priority literacy skills for fourth-grade students in South Carolina (South Carolina Department of Education, 2019b). The CoI framework provided the social learning aspect of my study and the connection to digital technology and literacy skills that focus on reflective and critical thinking.

Limitations

A notable limitation of this study was participant selection. After the recruitment process, I did not have the required number of interview participants, which was ten. There was a possibility that this limitation may affect data transferability due to the lack of in-depth data to answer the research questions. I sent participant flyers to multiple technology-based online sites to invite ELA teachers who use social networking tools to address this limitation. Using various technology-based sites for the recruitment process gave me eight participants who used social networking tools for ELA instruction. This recruitment process ensured that the study's sample produced valid results for the research problem.

Another limitation of this study was related to the recruitment process, which could affect dependability. If participants were not honest during the recruitment survey, the findings' consistency would not be accurate. My study's results needed to be consistent and replicable using a similar sample group (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, having an honest description of the participants helped support the dependability of the study's process, findings, and conclusion

Significance of the Study

This study's significance is related to informing other educators about the possible benefits and challenges of using social networking tools for literacy development and engagement. This study could produce data that supports curriculum and instruction to integrate social networking tools to develop critical thinking skills that result in students becoming effective readers.

This study could fill the literature gap on educators' views on using social networking tools for literacy development and engagement among elementary students. This gap results from research heavily based on social networking tools in postsecondary schools (Henthorn & Cammack, 2017; Hu et al., 2017; Ramirez & Gillig, 2018; Tur et al., 2017; Youssef et al., 2016). Although studies have shown that collaborative technologies support literacy development in vocabulary learning and comprehension among postsecondary students, more investigation at the elementary level is needed (Hu et al., 2017). The gap presented made this study innovative. The findings could help educators better understand social networking tools' implications for elementary students' literacy skills (Khalaf, 2017).

Youssef et al. (2016) voiced the need to investigate the CoI framework in more elementary schools. More CoI studies are needed at the elementary grade level to understand the social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence. Laidlaw and Wong (2016) also supported the need to investigate further the cognitive presence of using social networking tools to develop students' literacy skills. Insights from this study could contribute to creating literacy policies that support classroom instruction in

developing elementary students' literacy skills (Henthorn & Cammack, 2017; Khalaf, 2017; Ramirez & Gillig, 2018). Obtaining a better understanding of the teaching presence may support educators with the necessary literacy instruction to promote our students' critical thinking skills and support students' engagement (Balakrishnan & Gan, 2016; Greenhow & Askari, 2017).

Findings from this study could contribute to positive social change in literacy instruction. Teachers' perceptions of using social networking tools could result in teachers seeing the innovative tool's value for developing students' literacy skills and promoting engagement. Administrators and policymakers could also be informed of the possible best practices to be included in the classroom to develop the critical thinking skills students need in a digital age.

Summary

The background section of Chapter 1 has presented information that indicates the value of social networking in developing literacy skills and promoting engagement among learners. However, the body of literature focused on higher level education, thereby creating a gap for understanding elementary teachers' beliefs about using social networking tools for literacy development and engagement. I addressed the gap by doing a basic qualitative study with fourth-grade teachers who used social networking tools for ELA instruction in South Carolina. The study's problem statement and purpose outlined the significance and relevance to explore the phenomenon. Using CoI as a lens, I explored ELA teachers' beliefs regarding social networking from a cognitive, social, and teaching presence.

The research questions that guided the study originated from the background, problem statement, purpose of the study, and CoI framework. I briefly discussed Garrison et al.'s (2000) CoI framework by indicating its alignment to the research questions, nature of the study, and the boundaries set. The study's nature provides a rationale for using the basic qualitative research design for collecting and analyzing data. The definition section defined terms connected to the phenomenon that clarified the language of the study. Assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations explained the study's boundaries. Chapter 1 concluded with the significance and summary indicating this study's possible contribution to positive social change.

Chapter 2 will provide a synthesis of research that focuses on using social networking tools to develop literacy skills and their effects on student engagement. These studies will be from the last five years relating to the literacy skills development opportunities, state of engagement in the classroom, and challenges associated with teachers using social networking tools. Chapter 2 will conclude with a discussion of the gaps identified in the literature.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Social networking tools are innovative technologies that have been identified to support students with the literacy development (Blake, 2016) and engagement they need (Lim & Richardson, 2016; Manca & Ranieri, 2016b) to function effectively in the classroom. With the use of social networking tools, students were able to develop collaborative skills (Davies, 2019), demonstrate critical thinking (Ali & Qazi, 2018), and improve literacy skills such as vocabulary (Al-Johali, 2019), comprehension (Rahamat et al., 2017), and metacognition (Ulu & Ulusoy, 2019).

Ismail and Arshah (2016) indicated that students' academic achievement showed positive growth using social networking tools. However, studies have demonstrated the challenges educators face while using social networking tools for learning (Al-Bahrani et al., 2017; Almekhlafi & Abulibdeh, 2018; Manca & Ranieri, 2017). Some of these challenges were related to distraction (Al-Bahrani et al., 2017), privacy (Manca & Ranieri, 2017), and training (Almekhlafi & Abulibdeh, 2018).

There is a gap in the literature, especially at the elementary level, regarding how educators perceive social networking tools for literacy development and engagement (Henthorn & Cammack, 2017; Hu et al., 2017; Ramirez & Gillig, 2018; Tur et al., 2017; Youssef et al., 2016). There are more studies at the secondary and university levels indicating the educational value of social networking tools for the development of literacy skills and increasing engagement (Fraser & Abbott, 2016; Lui et al., 2016; Lui & Lan, 2016; Rahamat et al., 2017; Tur et al., 2017). The problem is that limited studies at

the elementary level discuss teachers' perceptions of using social networking to develop literacy skills and support engagement.

This study explored teachers' perceptions about using social networking tools to develop reading skills and promote classroom engagement for literacy instructions. The beginning of the literature review focuses on the CoI framework (Garrison et al., 2000) to better understand the topic related to the cognitive, social, and teaching presence. Included in the literature review is the definition of social networking tools. Studies were analyzed to understand integrating social networking tools in literacy instruction to stimulate engagement and develop reading skills. To conclude the review, a summary cited the literature gaps to support the need for this research.

Literature Search Strategy

Conducting this literature review required the use of various information sources. These sources included journals, books, internet sources, Walden University dissertations archives, and periodicals. Peer-reviewed articles dated from the past eight decades to the last five years were instrumental in identifying seminal works on the theoretical framework CoI. Walden University library provided database engines such as EBSCO, ERIC, and ProQuestSearch engines such as APA, Encyclopedia Britannia, and Google Scholar. The studies used were not older than five years. Terms used for the search engine included but were not limited to social networking tools, community of inquiry, social presence, cognitive presence, teaching presence, learning, literacy development, reading skills, vocabulary, cognitive skills, reflective thinking, comprehension, critical thinking, engagement, academic achievement, teacher' perception.

Conceptual Framework

This study used the CoI (Garrison et al., 2000) as a theoretical framework to investigate teachers' perceptions of using social networking tools to develop reading skills and promote literacy engagement. The CoI theory comes from the seminal work of Dewey (1933). He believed in developing cognitive skills through reflective thinking and promoted a constructivist approach to learning in general. The CoI framework originated from the ideology that meaningful learning experiences can occur in a social learning environment (Garrison et al., 2000). The CoI framework provides a reliable connection to the educational values of social networking tools for student engagement and the development of literacy skills. The CoI framework principles were used to develop the interview tool and provide the foundation for data analysis.

Seminal Work of Dewey

Setting the foundation for my study's theoretical framework is Dewey's (1933) reflective thinking model. Dewey's model highlighted the importance of reflective thinking or critical thinking in the learning process. Dewey defined reflective thinking as "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (Dewey, 1933, p. 118). Reflective thinking supports learning by deepening the meaning of learners' experiences to meet educational goals. During this reflective process, learners can authenticate existing knowledge and create new knowledge for the learning experience. Dewey postulated that the interaction between a student and their environment creates an experience that supports continuity. Continuity is a continuous

flow of knowledge, therefore, making learning an ongoing and cumulative process. Experience only in the learning process is not enough, hence reflecting on the experiences will make learning more profound and insightful (Dewey, 1933). Dewey cautioned that reflective thinking is a learning process, and it takes time and requires the learner to engage in various phases, as indicated below.

1. Perplexity: responding to suggestions and ideas that appear when confronted with a problem.
2. Elaboration: referring to similar past experiences.
3. Hypotheses: developing several potential explanations.
4. Comparing hypotheses: finding some coherence within these hypotheses.
5. Taking action: experiencing "mastery satisfaction, enjoyment" when selecting and then acting on these hypotheses (Dewey, 1933, pp. 106-115).

Although history prevented the inclusion of social networking tools in Dewey's seminal work, his work connected with innovative technology. The learning process is a cognitive and social activity stimulated through conversation among learners (Dewey, 1933). Dewey's work and social networking tools function in a similar realm, producing reflective thinking discussions to promote learning. Therefore, social networking tools should be considered part of Dewey's theory as it supports student learning through social and cognitive development by actively constructing knowledge in a social setting (Gonzalez-Perez & Taras, 2019).

Community of Inquiry

Building on Dewey's (1933) reflective thinking model, Garrison et al. (2000) was inspired to develop a comprehensive framework for online learning known as the Community of Inquiry. Garrison et al. integrated the technological and digital age element to the learning theory missing in Dewey's work. The CoI framework outlines the educational process as a collaboration of experiences within an online community that encourages inquiry. Within this online community, learners are engaged in critical discourse to create both personal and group understanding. Garrison et al. included three elements: social, teaching, and cognitive presence.

The social presence is the ability for students to see themselves as creating purposeful relationships by communicating effectively, having open communication, and group cohesion (Garrison et al., 2000). Within the CoI, social presence projects learners socially, emotionally, thereby allowing learners to see themselves as members of their community (Rourke et al., 2001). A sense of belonging and building relationships play an essential role in social presence. For social presence to be useful for purposeful learning, the community interaction should support reflective or critical thinking. Social presence does not represent engagement for social purposes only but rather engagement that promotes an environment that contributes to reflective thought. The engagement process should result in students asking questions, sharing ideas, being skeptical, and expressing themselves (Garrison et al., 2000). The social presence is not achievable if learners are only socializing; they should develop a sense of community for inquiry. To clarify the misconception people may have about social presence, Garrison (2017) modified the

definition to highlight inquiry and learning engagement. Social presence is the ability for learners to identify themselves as members of a learning community and purposefully collaborate in a reflective and questioning process (Garrison, 2017).

Garrison et al. (2000) identified three social presence categories, which were later refined by Rourke et al. (2001). The categories identified are affective interpersonal communication, open communication, and group cohesion (Rourke et al., 2001). Affective communication is the first condition established due to the CoI (Rourke et al., 2001). Affective interpersonal communication sees the learners using emoticons, punctuations, sense of humor, and self-discourse. Secondly, open communication creates an opportunity for reflective thinking. This open communication allows students to complement others, recognize learning concepts, ask and respond to questions, and contribute to others' views. According to Rourke et al., interpersonal and open communication adds to the third category of social presence, known as group cohesion. When students identify with their group and see themselves as part of the inquiry process, group cohesion is achieved (Rourke et al., 2001). Group cohesion could include addressing members by their names and using inclusive words such as "we" and "our." When group cohesion is established, it increases collaboration and discourse, which is the sharing of meaning, thereby optimizing the learning quality (Rourke et al., 2001).

The second element of the CoI theory is a cognitive presence, promoting higher order thinking skills in a CoI. Learners demonstrate construction, exploration, and reflection in the cognitive presence to evaluate information and construct meaning (Garrison et al., 2000). Cognitive presence is grounded in the literature of Dewey's

(1933) reflective thinking model. As cited above, Dewey postulated that reflective or critical thinking deepens our experiences' meaning and, therefore, creates a core instructional aim. Reflective thinking each confirms and generates new knowledge that produces an intimate connection with education. Critical questioning is crucial to inquiry and is viewed as an inclusive system of higher order reflection and discourse. To discuss the cognitive presence in more detail, Garrison et al. (2001) created the practical inquiry model (PI). One key attribute of this model is the interplay between the public and personal worlds, specifically relevant to the e-learning environment.

The PI model consists of four phases of critical inquiry: the triggering event, exploration, integration, and resolution. Triggering, which is the first phase, sees the learner conceptualizing a problem or issue. Activities in the triggering stage are designed to ensure students are engaged to generate questioning. The second phase is exploration, which prompts the learner to understand the problem and search for information to explain the situation. During the exploration phase, students repeat the process of exploring their reflective thinking and shared world ideas collaboratively to understand the problem. The third phase, integration, involves students engaged in critical discourse, creating a structured meaning and understanding. During the integration phase, the student solves the problem by creating a meaningful framework that will accurately resolve the issue. In the final stage of resolution, students select a solution or test the solution by implementing it to solve the problem.

The final component of the CoI framework is the teaching presence, which highlights the teachers' role in managing both the individual student and group sessions to

solve problems by providing explicit guidance. The teaching presence indicates the teacher's importance in modeling practical problem-solving skills, asking questions, and giving feedback to encourage students to learn from their peers and construct knowledge (Garrison et al., 2000).

The teaching presence is essential in ensuring that learning goals are met by merging the social and cognitive presence during the inquiry process (Garrison et al., 2000). A productive CoI relies on the instructor to design or facilitate students' cognitive and social presence to realize personal and meaningful educational learning outcomes (Anderson et al., 2001; Garrison et al., 2000). Instructors' primary responsibility in the teaching presence is designing activities relevant to social experiences, facilitating experiences that are reflective and leading to discourse, and assessing the outcomes of learning goals (Garrison et al., 2000). Teaching presence provides the design and facilitates interaction and discourse, which leads to high-order thinking. According to Garrison et al. (2001), teaching presence should assist students with metacognition by effectively managing and monitoring their learning and recognizing the inquiry's developmental progression (Garrison et al., 2000). According to Garrison (2017), the teaching presence of the CoI should be facilitated to ensure the right phase of high-order thinking is leading the learner to achieve metacognitive understanding from the activity they are engaged in as a community.

Application of the CoI Framework

The perception of elementary teachers using social networking tools for their classroom instruction aligns with Garrison et al.'s (2000) CoI framework. The

implementation of social networking tools in the classroom supports learning and, more specifically, the development of literacy skills and engagement. The CoI framework has been used as a lens for literacy development and engagement in an e-learning environment in previous research. Wu et al. (2017) applied the CoI framework to examine English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' oral proficiency in an online learning environment. Fifty English sophomores participated from a Taiwan university for four years. The mixed-methods study analyzed pre-test and post-test on comprehension questions and oral reading, a CoI questionnaire, and focus-group interviews. The results showed that the participants improved their oral proficiency, such as storytelling, class discussions, oral presentations, and dialogue collaboration through the CoI framework. Although the study focused on EFL learners' participants, it does support the relevance of CoI in the development of cognitive skills and reading skills. As presented in Wu et al.'s study, the results showed that using the online community improved the students' reading fluency. Most importantly, their reading comprehension improved, showing higher order thinking skills were better developed. The high-order thinking skills theme identified in Wu et al.'s study can help me apply the CoI framework to the process involved in the development of literacy skills.

To further support the CoI theory's importance for my study, Spires and Lester (2016) investigated how authors created game designs, Crystal Island, a game-based learning environment for elementary schools. The case study method included observations of ongoing sessions with the teachers and students, where the teacher was the facilitator. The study showed that students were engaged in the game, and their

knowledge of science content had increased drastically. Another key finding in the study was the improvement in students' problem-solving skills. The study concluded with the added value of CoI in promoting a social learning environment that promotes active engagement, collaboration, and active learning. Results from Spires and Lester informed my research of the potential connection of CoI in assisting elementary students to be actively engaged during the learning process.

On the subject of teaching design, Kilis and Yildirim (2019) explored the CoI framework using students for an online course. The case study aimed to investigate students' posting patterns in relation to social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence during online learning. Using purposive sampling, 91 students in an online associate degree program participated in six online discussions using Moodle. Analysis of the transcripts revealed a high level of posting behavior while participating in the social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence. Kilis and Yildirim analyzed the teaching presence based on "namely, design and organization, facilitating discourse, and direct instruction" (p. 187). The teaching presence was designed to provide participants with instant feedback, encourage participation and collaboration, and clear misconceptions.

The data revealed that the teaching presence maintained a substantial level due to the program's effective design and organization. The teaching presence theme highlighted in Kilis and Yildirim (2019) informed my research by showing how educators incorporate social presence and cognitive presence in online activities. According to Garrison et al. (2001), the teaching presence refers to how educators facilitate the

cognitive presence and social presence to promote worthwhile learning experiences among students. The teaching design encouraged students' participation, collaboration, and, most importantly, instant feedback. The teaching presence allowed for the clarification of misconceptions and supported students with a comfortable environment.

Mutually, these previous studies set the priority for using the CoI framework in exploring fourth-grade teachers' perceptions of using social networking tools for literacy development and engagement. The framework has been widely used in the education field and gave an innovative lens to developing literacy skills and engagement with social networking tools. Studies on CoI have provided relevance in education by representing elements to allow for a more in-depth learning experience (Garrison et al., 2000; Wu et al., 2017). The theory also proves its flexibility in applying various learning levels, such as K-12 and higher education (Youssef et al., 2016). The framework supports exploring and understanding its elements in literacy development to provide the theoretical context and interpret findings for my research.

Benefits of the CoI framework. The CoI framework is beneficial to this study because it provided an innovative and educational lens for understanding educators' views on using social networking tools. The framework is also aligned with the data collected to examine elementary students' possible literacy skills. This alignment is supported by CoI studies that analyzed the effects of an online environment in developing reading skills (Wu et al., 2017) and measured students' level of engagement (Rolima et al., 2019; Spires & Lester, 2016). The framework also supports teachers in providing practical classroom instructions (Al-Balushi & Al-Abdali, 2015). Garrison et al. (2000)

stated that an understanding of the CoI framework sets a clear expectation of balancing the social, cognitive, and teaching presence for meaningful learning. CoI addresses the role of teachers to create an online environment effectively. However, according to Youssef et al. (2016), more investigation of the framework is needed in elementary schools to better support educators with the necessary tools to provide quality education for students, thereby further supporting the relevance of the CoI for my study. The CoI framework was used in this study to answer the research questions, create an interview tool, and analyze data to gain a clearer understanding of social networking tools in an elementary classroom. The CoI framework may explain teachers' views of social networking tools to develop reading skills and encourage engagement.

Review of Literature

South Carolinian Fourth Graders

To ensure that our South Carolinian and the nation's students achieve academic success in reading, they need to demonstrate they are competent readers (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017a; South Carolina Department of Education, 2019a). Competent readers can actively and automatically construct meaning from what they read (Stevens et al., 2016). The process of reading requires self-direction and having the ability to monitor thinking. This monitoring of comprehension involves the process of reviewing, rereading, and asking questions. A crucial skill to becoming a skilled reader is mastering fluency skills (Jefferson et al., 2017; Ribeiro et al., 2016).

The reports to be presented on South Carolinian students' performance in reading will indicate the percentage of students not effectively applying the necessary cognitive

skills. When students have limited cognitive abilities, garnering the meaning of what they have learned will impede the process of adequate comprehension and understanding (Ouellette et al., 2017; Stevens et al., 2016). Knowing students' cognitive skills may provide educators with a better understanding of the instruction needed to support students' literacy development (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017b; Paige et al., 2019; Stanley et al., 2017; Tichnor et al., 2016).

National Assessment of Educational Progress

The review of recent reading assessments has created the need to support educators with instructional tools that strengthen students reading skills. The reports show that many students are not performing at a level that demonstrates their mastery of reading standards (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017a). The framework that guided the development of literacy assessments is research-based. The framework defines reading as "a dynamic cognitive process that involves understanding written text, developing and interpreting meaning, and using meaning as appropriate to type to text" (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017b, p. 3). The literacy materials included in the assessment are fiction, literary nonfiction, and poetry, allowing students to demonstrate their different ways of thinking when interacting with varying reading materials.

The questions were created based on three cognitive traits to measure students' mental processing when understanding literary and nonfiction materials. The three cognitive characteristics are as follows:

- Locate and recall: When locating or recalling information from what they have read, students may identify explicitly stated main ideas or may focus on specific elements of a story (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017b, p. 3).
- Integrate and interpret: When integrating and interpreting what they have read, students may make comparisons, explain character motivation, or examine relations of ideas across the text (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017b, p. 3).
- Critique and evaluate: When critiquing or evaluating what they have read, students view the text critically by examining it from numerous perspectives or may evaluate the overall text quality or the effectiveness of particular aspects of the text (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017b, p. 3).

Fourth Grade National Reading Report

According to The Nation's Report Card (2019b), NAEP scores are presented at five percentiles to show the progress made by lower (10th and 25th percentile), middle (50th percentile), and higher (75th and 90th percentile) performing students. The 10th percentile showed students in the U.S. performed at a score of 168, and at the 25th percentile, they scored at 197 for the year 2019. The 50th percentile saw a score of 225 for the NAEP proficient level. Students in the NAEP advanced category performed at a score of 248 at the 75th percentile and 266 at the 90th percentile (The Nation's Report Card, 2019b).

For the year 2017, the nations' students in fourth grade produced 171 at the 10th percentile and the 199 at the 25th percentile basic level (The Nation's Report Card,

2019c). The 50th percentile had a score of 226 at the NAEP proficient and the advanced level, the 75th percentile was 249, and the 90th percentile was 267. The percentile scores show a decrease in the students' average reading scores between 2019 and 2017. There was a decline in all the percentiles except for the 90th percentile (The Nation's Report Card, 2019c).

In 2019, an estimated 294,000 students were administered the 2019 reading assessment for grades 4 and 8 (The Nation's Report Card, 2019a). The results showed that students performed at an average reading score of 220 for fourth-graders. Compared to the 2017 score of 222, it shows a decrease in reading performance. At the above NAEP proficient level, there was also a lower percentage in 2019 when compared to 2017. Although students performed lower in the NAEP proficient level in 2019, there was a higher comparison in the last decade, especially in 1998 and 1992 (The Nation's Report Card, 2019a).

South Carolina College-and-Ready Assessments

The mandated English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics assessments for grades 3-8 South Carolinian students are the South Carolina College-and-Career Ready Assessments (SC Ready) (South Carolina Department of Education, 2019c). The ELA assessment measures the performance of students using the South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Standards. The vertical score ranges govern how students demonstrate their cognitive processes. For fourth-graders, a score of 100-418 would be "Does Not Meet," 419-508 "Approaches," 509-592 "Meets," and 593-850 "Exceeds" (ELA Vertical scale score ranges section). Students are required to receive "Meets" or "Exceeds" to

demonstrate they have mastered their grade-level standards (South Carolina Department of Education, 2019c).

South Carolina 4th Grade Reading Report

The mandated English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics assessments for grades 3-8 South Carolinian students are the South Carolina College-and-Career Ready Assessments (SC Ready) (South Carolina Department of Education, 2019c). The ELA assessment measures the performance of students using the South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Standards. The vertical score ranges govern how students demonstrate their cognitive processes. For fourth-graders, a score of 100-418 would be "Does Not Meet," 419-508 "Approaches," 509-592 "Meets," and 593-850 "Exceeds" (ELA Vertical scale score ranges section). Students are required to receive "Meets" or "Exceeds" to demonstrate they have mastered their grade-level standards (South Carolina Department of Education, 2019c, 2019d).

Social Networking Tools

Web 2.0 refers to the second generation of technological tools that are participatory and interactive (Rudman & Bruwer, 2016). It integrates technological and social interaction through the internet, allowing users to communicate with other users, collaborate, and produce content online (Rudman & Bruwer, 2016). Social networking tools evolved due to Web 2.0, which are based on an easy-to-use platform that provides users with the opportunity to generate content (Manca & Ranieri, 2017). Ebrahimzadeh Pirshahid et al. (2016) further added that social networking tools share common characteristics with Web 2.0 because it encourages users to create, share, and interact

with content. Although social networking tools fall under Web 2.0, they have the unique feature of making web sharing easier. With social networking tools, the process of sharing content is more accessible, allowing users to participate in social interaction and discussions (Radhakrishnan et al., 2020)

Studies have presented various definitions of social networking tools (Dhiman & Joshi, 2020; Divya & Sudhier, 2019). Dhiman and Joshi (2020) defined social networking tools as online platforms used to build a social relationship with others who share a common interest and interact with others on the given platform or site. Similarly, Divya and Sudhier (2019) defined social networking tools as sites that enable the masses with common ideas to communicate and share

Social Networking Tools Defined in Education

The definition of social networking tools has evolved over the years to indicate an educational and instructional purpose. Imran et al. (2016) posited that social networking tools support instructional practices on the web, thereby creating the opportunity for learning through other users' interactions to make learning more accessible. Social networking tools "help learners and instructors indulge in a formal and informal way of knowledge acquisition" (p. 332). Imran et al. saw social networking tools as more than communication opportunities, stating they "not only provide an easy way of communication between users to collaborate on various tasks, but they also are a good way to share knowledge by promoting distance and blended education" (p. 333).

Further defining social networking tools in education, Czerkawski (2016) postulated that they were applications used to update, analyze, and share information to

create relationships and support informal learning. Social networking sites provide a wide range of tools, services, and practices. These tools and methods facilitate communication, collaboration, and content sharing across networks (Czerkawski, 2016).

Saini and Kaushik (2017) saw using social networking tools as the right path to support the revolution in education. They defined social networking tools as technological tools that can exchange information both in and outside of the classroom to develop students' and teachers' education levels. According to Saini and Kaushik, interaction among users on social networking tools supports the learning process by allowing students to:

- prepare their assignments and presentations with the help of SNT.
- create digital libraries for their documents for easy access.
- post the messages on the wall.
- create groups of friends with similar interests from joint group discussions to share their ideas.
- develop their communication skills, expressing their views without inhibition.
- study at his own pace. (p.108)

I used Imran et al.'s (2016) definition of social networking tools for this study. Imran et al. defined social networking tools as connected to communication in an online environment and, most importantly, they defined social networking tools as a medium for learning. The definition of social networking tools will be internet-based tools that allow teachers and students to participate in literacy instructions. Such devices can include but

are not limited to videos, blog podcasts, Google Docs, Skype, social networking sites, and wikis.

Social Networking Tools and Learning

With the review of recent literature, students' learning was a theme evident with social networking tools. Students' learning in this literature review focuses on the experiences encountered due to using social networking tools for educational value (Ali, & Qazi, 2018; Ibrahim et al., 2018; Msonde & Msonde, 2017). Emerging from the learning theme were four sub-themes: student-centered learning, engagement, critical thinking, collaboration, and academic achievement.

Student-centered learning. Throughout recent years the importance of switching from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning has been encouraged to allow students to be involved and have ownership of their learning goals (Kandi & Basireddy, 2018; Msonde & Msonde, 2017). Student-centered learning is similar to the concept of student autonomy, which Ibrahim et al. (2018) described as an important opportunity to allow learners to make their own decisions during educational interactions with other learners on social network platforms. Rahimah (2018) also observed a similar theme in their study that discussed students' evidence of displaying autonomy while learning with social networking tools. Santoso et al. (2016) also revealed that when participants were given the option to make educational decisions, they could direct their own academic experiences by interacting with social networking tools, making learning student-centered.

Engagement. In education, social networking tools have proven beneficial in the class by positively impacting engagement among learners (Deka, 2015; Judrups, 2015). Studies have shown that social networking tools provide students with the opportunity to learn course materials in an engaging manner (Chen & DiVall, 2018; De Arriba, 2016; Denker et al., 2018). Such tools help students' engagement and stimulate active interaction and collaboration (Bahati, 2015). Through active participation, students use social networking tools to solve problems, create products, and share completed products with their peers (Dafoulas, & Shokri, 2016). Chen and DiVall (2018) revealed that social networking tools provide learners with the opportunity to be more engaged in learning sessions. Findings from the study further add to the body of literature that indicates the effectiveness of social networking tools in engaging students during the learning process.

Recent studies showed a connection with social networking tools encouraging both engagement and higher order thinking skills (Bolden & Nahachewsky, 2014; Peeters, 2018; Yarbrough, 2018). Yarbrough (2018) noted in a study that online Wiki-based quizzes increased students' engagement. The results revealed a higher level of collaboration among the participants due to the discussion board, which stimulated higher order thinking skills. Yarbrough concluded that social networking tools such as Wikis could support engagement and higher order thinking skills. Bolden and Nahachewsky (2014) also noted a similar trend, connecting students' engagement and creativity using innovative tools. Students were not only engaged, but they were also developing higher order thinking skills as a result of interaction with the Web 2.0 tools. Peeters (2018) argued that the participants were engaged in both "cognitive and metacognitive

processes" (p. 905) during online peer interaction. Peeters further added that the online learning environment encouraged the participants to aim for organizational, cognitive, and social skills demonstrations, creating a highly engaging interaction among peers.

Studies revealed that careful planning and monitoring are essential when encouraging student engagement with social networking tools (De Arriba, 2016; Denker et al., 2018). Learning activities that incorporate social networking tools need to associate with the learning outcome, and as such, teachers need to plan specific online learning activities. Denker et al. (2018) investigated students' engagement using Twitter by using 483 undergraduate students from a Midwestern state university. Lectures happened once weekly, using Twitter to engage with students. Throughout the rest of the week, instructors monitored students' questions and responded to other students. The study justified using social media to encourage students' engagement as students in the study were motivated to communicate with their lecturer and other students in the course. Denker et al. proposed that educators need to find ways to form a classroom community to promote student engagement, therefore considering a practical instruction plan. De Arriba (2016) also echoed that social networking tools open the avenue for engagement among learners if planned effectively.

Lopez-Cupita (2016) conducted a qualitative study using two groups of beginning English level students in a psychology class at a university in Colombia. The study concluded that the students saw the program "Just in Time Teaching" as an effective way for them to be engaged and promoted active participation among them as students. Lopez-Cupita concluded that teacher preparation is essential in delivering effective

instruction using social networking tools. Teachers should have detailed instructions, and assessments should have clear evaluation criteria to support students (Zheng et al., 2015).

Ramirez and Gillig (2018) addressed the gap in students' engagement in elementary classes by investigating students' and faculty members' attitudes in using computer technology and Twitter for educational purposes. Included in the quantitative survey study were 127 students and 50 faculty members. The participants responded to 15 items in an Attitude Toward Computer Technology for Educational Purposes Survey and a 15 item Attitude Towards Twitter using an Educational Purposes Survey. An analysis of the data revealed that there wasn't a significant difference between students' and faculty's attitudes towards using computers or Twitter for learning and student engagement. There was a significant difference in attitude towards computers for education due to the increased number of online classes. There were no differences in students' and faculty's attitudes towards Twitter for education. Ramirez and Gillig concluded that there was a positive influence of computers for educational purposes for both students and faculty members. Both students and faculty wanted to learn more about Twitter for educational purposes. Ramirez and Gillig also added that there needs to be more investigation in measuring students' engagement with online courses for future studies. This investigation needs to be done with qualitative and quantitative studies, as it includes the integration of social media in the learning process. The researchers also suggested studying teachers' perceptions of other populations, such as lower-level schools.

Critical thinking. Critical thinking skills play a vital role in preparing students to become lifelong learners and productive members of their society (Szabo, 2019). Munyoka et al. (2019) recently supported that claim by indicating when participants in their study create and share educational content with their online community. They develop a sense of critiquing their work to be contributed to the learning community. This self-awareness of evaluation in the learning process changes thinking to create new ideas (Ali & Qazi, 2018). Habibi et al. (2018) noticed different results for students displaying critical thinking skills while using social networking tools. Habibi et al. indicated that students were not involved during their online activities and cautioned that this could have resulted from how instructors were involved in the lesson. Thereby suggests the importance of instructors actively participating with students while using social networking tools to meet learning goals (Habibi et al., 2018).

Collaboration. Literature has revealed that collaboration is another vital skill students need during the learning process while using innovative tools (Krouska et al., 2019; Zolotarev et al., 2018). Davies (2019) discovered that using social networking tools enhances the learning process by allowing students to share ideas and positively affect collaboration. Davies aligns with Garrison et al.'s (2000) CoI framework, which indicates that students express their understanding of an educational task due to communicating with their peers within a social network to support feedback and share information. Social networking tools help collaboration due to flexibility with time and location (Pribeanu et al., 2019). Such flexibility of social networking tools offers students the avenues for collaboration and the sharing of new knowledge with peers (Al-Rahmi & Zeki, 2017).

Social networking tools were observed by Jena et al. (2020) to support educators in developing educational tasks that created a collaborative environment. Collaboration between educators and students through social networking tools changes learning behaviors (Jena et al., 2020). The collaboration guided students' behavior, leading to academic accomplishment (Jena et al., 2020). Due to student interaction, the collaboration opportunities created knowledge-based environments for students (Song et al., 2017). In these knowledge-based environments, collective intelligence is developed by students by developing knowledge as a result of participation (Song et al., 2017). The added value of social networking tools for collaborative learning among teachers and students has further validated the social and cognitive presence of the CoI framework (Garrison et al., 2000).

Achievement. Studies have explored social networking tools for achievement in various academic areas (Ismail & Arshah, 2016; Samad et al., 2019). The investigation of achievement and social networking tools in Naveen and Nagesh's (2017) study revealed that college-level students had higher achievement while using social networking tools. These results followed a similar pattern to Samad et al. (2019), which indicated a positive correlation between academic learning and the use of social networking tools. The perception of college students believes that social networking tools positively impact their academic performance (Ismail & Arshah, 2016). Contrary to Ismail and Arshah (2016), Wakefield and Frawley (2020) reported that low academic achievers were more at risk when using social networking tools such as Facebook. Wakefield and Frawley also

noted that it is crucial to consider students' general academic achievement level before utilizing social networking tools for learning performance.

Social Networking Tools and Literacy Development

The importance of social networking tools as educational tools for literacy development is evident in recent studies (Kurt, 2017; Selevičienė & Burkšaitienė, 2016). Students developed these literacy skills as a result of active communication and engagement with other members (Kızıl, 2017; Özerbaş, & Mart, 2017). Al-Samarraie and Saeed (2018) indicated that social networking tools provide the platforms for integrating collaborative learning through innovative technologies to promote creativity and critical thinking among learners. Social networking tools are designed to create a learning environment that supports a community that develops and reinforces literacy skills and deepens students' understanding (Kurt, 2017), and facilitates engagement among students (Lui et al., 2016). Students relied heavily on cognitive skills to create new meaning and apply their experiences to solving problems (Huffman, 2017).

Recent studies on social networking tools and literacy development showed usage in various grade levels; however, elementary-level studies were rare. The other studies focused more on secondary and higher education levels. It was also revealed that most studies focused on developing literacy skills for language learners (Barrot, 2016). Although these studies focused on higher education and language learning, several themes emerged from social networking tools and literacy development. These themes included vocabulary, comprehension, questioning, and metacognition. The themes identified align with the SC Ready reading skills needed for South Carolinian students'

academic success. As indicated in the ELA standards, students need to master and apply cognitive skills to demonstrate proficiency at their grade level (South Carolina Department of Education, 2019c).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is an essential skill that students need to develop to be active readers (National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, & What Works Clearinghouse, 2018). This ideology is supported by the International Literacy Association (2019) by stating that vocabulary development is an indispensable part of the reading process. It was evident in recent literature that social networking tools in the classroom can create interaction and exposure in an online learning environment to develop vocabulary skills (Al-Johali, 2019; Nikiforou, 2019). Nikiforou (2019) discussed that vocabulary development is a noted trait for English for Specific Purposed (ESP) field. The study aimed to determine how effectively students would improve their ESP vocabulary using wikis to create a dictionary. The data collection process included completing a vocabulary task through a collaborative environment to create a wiki glossary. Only first and second-year undergraduate students doing an English course for Biological Sciences students took the course, and the instructor had access to the wiki. Over 13 weeks, students added words to the wiki dictionary made from the class material, books, and discussions. The students were also encouraged to use the vocabulary words in sentences and create a pronunciation guide. The students revealed that creating the dictionary gave them a sense of ownership, which resulted in the coherent need to complete the task. This activity encouraged the students to be engaged and effectively

complete the task. As a result, students were allowed to develop their vocabulary skills further.

In another study related to the exposure and interaction in an online environment for vocabulary development, Al-Johali (2019) investigated the effects of wiki-based instruction on vocabulary learning among intermediate students in Saudi Arabia. Thirty-one participants in the quasi-experimental did a wiki-based course that lasted for 12 lessons. The course taught 70 vocabulary words taken from the participants' English text. Data was collected using a pretest and post-test and an observation card. An analysis of the data, through descriptive statistics and a one-sample t-test, showed that the wiki positively affected vocabulary learning. The students produced a better grade in the post-test. It was concluded by Al-Johali that wiki, if designed and implemented well, can be an excellent tool for teaching vocabulary and developing vocabulary skills among learners. Vocabulary can support comprehension, communication, fluency, and academic achievement, making language performance skills better.

Tertiary-level students view the positive impact of social networking tools on vocabulary development (Lui & Lan, 2016; Putman, 2017). Lui and Lan (2016) conducted a qualitative study to determine tertiary students' confidence and vocabulary gain after using social networking tools. The observations and vocabulary test showed that students were significantly motivated and displayed a higher vocabulary level after using social networking tools. Putman (2017) mirrored Lui and Lan by reporting that social networking tools promote collaboration to develop vocabulary skills during online interaction. Students learned new words and used those new words in context (Putman,

2017). Although these findings are for tertiary level students, collaboration through social networking tools is an opportunity to give students success in the development of their vocabulary skills.

Comprehension

Studies have revealed the development of comprehension skills using social networking tools from higher education students' perspectives. Regarding literacy development using social networking tools, Hu et al. (2017) discussed 14 licensure graduate student perceptions and practices of using social networking tools with K-12 struggling readers. Sources of data included questionnaires, lesson plans, lesson reflections, and observation notes. Participants from the mixed-methods study indicated a positive reaction to social networking and noted that technology-based instructional practices helped students acquire comprehension skills and content. A similar study by Rahamat et al. (2017) examined students' readiness and perceptions towards Information and Communication Technology. The quantitative study had 235 students who use mobile devices in learning. The questionnaire data indicated that student interactions with mobile devices within the English Language curriculum encouraged critical thinking and showed a positive perception.

Continuing the saturation of higher education studies, Fattah (2016) saw the need to investigate the use of blogs in developing the reading skills of English language learners. Using a quasi-experimental design, fourth-level students from the English department of the Qassim Private Colleges, Saudi Arabia, were assigned to a control and experimental group. The participants were English majors in their first year of study in

their undergrad program. Both the control and experimental groups did a pretest and post-test using reading passages. The treatment of the study used blogs as an independent tool for two months to develop reading skills. The results of the online reading program showed that the students were actively discussing the reading passages. The experimental group improved the post-test and final exams, increasing their achievement level. The learning environment allowed the students to negotiate their thoughts as they developed their understanding of what they read. The participants' understanding allowed them to answer questions about the passages. Additionally, the students were able to summarize the passage's main ideas.

Researchers have found a connection to developing literacy skills with the cognitive presence of the CoI framework (Garrison et al., 2000). Studies have shown that social networking tools can help develop students' comprehension skills (Fraser & Abbott, 2016; Lui & Lan, 2016) through reflective or critical thinking (Garrison et al., 2000). Reflective thinking skills play a role in developing undergraduates' comprehension skills using social networking tools (Ahmad, 2015; El Shaban, 2017; Figaro-Henry & James, 2015; Vorobel et al., 2018). To further explain the CoI framework's alignment to literacy development, El Shaban (2017) discussed the value of social networking tools in promoting literacy skills development. Socrative (2017), which is a web 2.0 tool, was used as an active learning activity in the qualitative study to explore English second language learners' (ESL) perceptions of the tool. The participants were 14 international students who were learning English to pass the language proficiency to enroll in undergrad U.S. universities. This study demonstrated how SRS and active learning

activities encouraged engagement, stimulated collaboration, and developed critical thinking skills. Cognitive skills developed resulted from students using analytical skills to come up with solutions to the task given. The participants reported in their interview that the Socrative activities encourage them to think more critically. El Shaban also concluded that educators need training and plan to use Web 2.0 tools in the classroom. Teachers need to efficiently use various ways to embrace the advantages of using online learning tools to promote learning.

Studies within elementary schools were not frequently evident in the development of comprehension skills through social networking tools. In limited research, Lui et al. (2017) reported that educators used social networking tools during a semester for 80 minutes per week in an elementary school setting. The participants were English language learners (ELL) who read a story of their choice from an iPad and then worked in pairs to retell their story. Finally, students published their work for students in the networking community to view and make comments. The study showed that students made gains in their language usage and used higher order thinking skills to solve problems (Lui et al., 2017). In a similar school setting as Lui et al., Henthorn and Cammack (2017) explored the correlation of using social networking tools and literacy development within three primary schools in London. Observations and interviews used in the case study showed that students were actively engaged and developing comprehension skills such as synthesizing, analyzing, and evaluating. These studies provide the foundation to explore social networking tools in developing comprehension

skills in elementary school, even though the Lui et al.'s study focused on English Language Learners.

Questioning

Another literacy skill identified in the review of literature while using social networking tools was questioning. Chiu et al. (2016) offered insight into social networking tools' benefits in developing questioning skills. The purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of coediting-based note-taking with questioning reviews to produce complete notes. Chiu et al. wanted to understand whether students use questioning reviews to prepare notes to help attain better learning achievement scores. Chiu et al. hypothesized that elementary school students would yield better scores by creating completed notes using coediting to ask questions. Participants for the study included 13 Grade 6 classes from Southern Taiwan. Using two groups, one group used the traditional way of taking notes by reading, and the other group used interactive coediting-based notes through Google Docs to create complete records. The randomly selected students received instruction from the same teachers, who administered whole group instruction. Participants received technology training on how to use Google Doc note-taking four times weekly. Participants did assessments as well as a self-report survey to gather data. Feedback was given by 5 to 10 selected students on the PowerPoint Slides to suggest areas for improvement. Chiu et al. noted that although the comparison of the reading group and the coediting group did not show better academic achievement performance, there was an improvement in the students' comprehension skills. Application of the technology, coediting, supported students in producing complete notes

using the reading strategy of questioning. Asking questions allows students to monitor their thoughts as they read and support the comprehension process. The self-report evidence showed that the incorporation of the questioning did give the coediting groups an edge over the control reading group by allowing the students to recall more information from their reading.

Lee (2018) also addressed a similar theme of developing questioning skills by exploring the effects of Collaborative Questioning, Reading, Answering, and Checking (C-QRAC), a collaborative script on University students' science reading literacy in a flipped classroom. The study's randomly grouped participants were 85 Taiwanese university students who received C-QRAC, and the other group did not receive C-QRAC. Both groups received critically thinking instructions and were assigned reading passages before classes. The results showed that the group that received C-QRAC instruction performed better on the multiple-choice questions. The structure provided by C-QRAC allowed college students to think more about their questions during the group discussion. This study further supported literacy development with social networking tools. Students also did more rereading to understand the reading content with group members better. The C-QRAC collaborative script not only activated critical thinking but also allowed students to monitor their comprehension when reading expository science materials (Lee, 2015).

Building upon the benefits of social networking tools in developing questioning skills, Herrera and Kidwell (2018) discussed the benefits of using electrical literature circles. The literacy community has supported the use of literature circles in classrooms

to promote students' literacy skills. The benefits range from developing students' self-determination exposure to multicultural materials perspectives and views and developing an enthusiasm for reading (Barone & Barone, 2016; Vaughn et al., 2015). The electrical literature circle typically consists of 4 to 6 students. The teacher will assign each member a role to ensure group participation and equal opportunity to express and share ideas about the reading material. The study reiterated the cognitive benefits of developing questioning skills. Giving learners the platform to interact in a virtual environment supports critical thinking skills by asking questions and interacting effectively with their reading materials. It was evident in these studies that social networking tools assist students in developing comprehension skills such as questioning.

Studies have shown the positive impact of social networking on developing literacy skills by learning another language (Chun et al., 2016; Deveci, 2017; Dizon & Tang, 2017; Fattah, 2016). Baş & Turhan, 2017 explored the tool Poll Everywhere with students who were learning Turkish as a foreign language. An investigation of students' views of using Poll Everywhere for developing skills in writing occurred. The case study implemented three activities using Poll Everywhere to learn the Turkish language. Findings from the study indicated that the use of the tool Poll Everywhere gave students an interactive environment to stimulate students to write. Although the study explored using the tool in writing classes of foreign language learners, there was a positive impact of the social networking tool on cognitive skills and language development. The interactive environment allowed students to increase their level of knowledge as they learned from each other. The interactive process also allowed students to evaluate each

other's work by asking questions, which developed their critical and creative skills (Chun et al., 2016; Deveci, 2017; Dizon & Tang, 2017).

Metacognition

The use of social networking tools has indicated a positive effect on metacognition development (Sidi et al., 2017). According to Sidi et al. (2017), metacognition is an in-depth process that allows a reader to self-regulate and think about learning. The effects of online learning have shown a relationship between the cognitive level of metacognitive for higher education learners. Ulu and Ulusoy (2019) support this connection by investigating online learning effects on metacognitive awareness of reading. Results from the study indicated that there was a significant difference between pretest and post-test scores on the level of problem-solving.

Similar to Ulu and Ulusoy (2019), Makrogiorgou and Antoniou (2016) also showed that social networking tools positively affected students' metacognition in adjusting their reading rate. Regarding instructional practices, Reid et al. (2017) encouraged the use of prompts in online learning environments to promote student reflective thinking to activate metacognitive skills. These studies have indicated that social networking tools positively relate to metacognitive awareness in students' literacy development (Makrogiorgou & Antoniou, 2016; Ulu & Ulusoy, 2019).

Teachers' Perceptions of Social Networking Tools

This section of the literature review will seek to understand teachers' views on using social networking tools in the classroom. Some educators' perception is that they believe that social networking tools should merge into the learning instruction for

students (Nadelson et al., 2018; Sung, 2018). This integration, educators believe, will promote active engagement among students and place them on a path of constructing meaning and developing their critical thinking skills (Albarbari, 2016; Almekhlafi, 2016).

Although educators have expressed the effectiveness of social networking tools, there was evidence of low usage reported in the classrooms (Almekhlafi, 2016; Cakir et al., 2015; Tur et al., 2017). Tur et al. (2017) explored 155 student teachers' use and perception of using Twitter in their educational programs from two universities in the United States and Spain. Quantitative data was collected using surveys, and qualitative data were collected using students' reflective writing. The mixed-methods study revealed that most of the participants saw the educational value of using social networking tools. However, the Spanish participants saw more value in using Twitter to find and share information, while United States students emphasized the collaborative and interactive benefits. This study indicates the various perceptions of social networking tools in higher learning.

Cakir et al. (2015) explored teachers' perceptions of using social networking tools in education and their frequency. Five hundred sixteen pre-service and 317 in-service teachers did a survey in Turkish primary schools. The results showed that pre-service teachers saw a higher educational value of social networking tools than in-service teachers. The results also showed a moderate usage of the classroom devices with the pre-service teacher, which was still higher than the usage frequency for in-service teachers. Similarly, Almekhlafi (2016) investigated pre-service and in-service teachers' perceptions of using Web 2.0 tools in K-12 schools and universities. The study showed

that they were high perceptions of Web 2.0 tools in the classroom; however, the usage was very low.

A further review of the low usage of social networking tools for educators' instructional activities revealed that challenges were a literature theme. From the theme, challenges, sub-themes emerged from the literature: distraction, privacy, work-life balance, and training

Challenges

Although the benefits of social networking tools have been evident in the literature, the concerns have limited using such innovative tools in the classroom (Almekhlafi & Abulibdeh, 2018; Cakir et al., 2015; Manca & Ranieri, 2017). Implementing social networking tools has met many challenges as teachers seek to educate students on a digital platform (Al-Bahrani et al., 2017; Al-Samarraie & Saeed, 2018; Leung et al., 2019). Some of these concerns identified were distraction, privacy, work-life balance, and training.

Distraction. Educators have indicated that social networking tools can be a form of distraction for students in the classroom. Studies have shown that educators have experienced that social networking tools divert students' attention from the learning task at hand and ultimately disrupt the learning process (Al-Bahrani et al., 2017; Manca & Ranieri, 2016b). Kitsantas et al. (2016) revealed that students might get distracted by social networking tools and not stay focused on the educational task. In another study, students responded quicker to the latest social network trends than responding to a learning activity (Purvis et al., 2016). According to Anshari et al. (2017), this quick

response to non-educational tasks indicated distraction among students. Educators also voiced their concern that if students use social networking tools for educational activities, they would not manage their time effectively on learning activities and focus more time on the platform's social aspect (Al-Bahrani et al., 2017). Educators encounter the challenge of ensuring that learning instructions are structured to ensure that students are fully engaged to limit students' opportunities to be distracted by innovative tools (Manca & Ranieri, 2016a).

Privacy. The use of social networking tools in a learning environment has afforded the connection between teachers and students. However, the use of such tools has created a concern for online privacy (Al-Bahrani et al., 2017). Educators and students have expressed concern for privacy while interacting with social networking tools (Al-Samarraie & Saeed, 2018). Manca and Ranieri (2017) revealed that privacy prevents many educators from using social networking tools in their courses.

Regarding privacy and social networking tools usage, cyberbullying was another prevalent concern (Donelan, 2016). Studies at the college level have shown that students have been victims of cyberbullying (Kitsantas et al., 2016; Leung et al., 2019). Styron et al. (2016) recommended that educators be aware of such behavior during course activities with social networking tools and be willing to intervene when such an event occurs. Intervening on minor events could prevent the escalation of cyberbullying (Macaulay et al., 2018).

Work-life balance. Another challenge unearthed in the literature was work-life balance. According to Bauwens et al. (2020), the concern of work-life balance is familiar

to teachers; however, the inclusion of social networking tools for instruction has contributed more to this problem (Hansen & Gray, 2018). Teachers have expressed their concerns that with social networking tools, students can access educational support (Li & Wang, 2020). With such access, teachers found it challenging to maintain a barrier between their work life and their personal life (Ibieta et al., 2017).

Training. The implementation of social networking tools in the classroom may improve students' participation and engagement if training and support are provided for both teachers and students (Akçayır, 2017). Educators have shown concern for training to use social networking tools for many reasons (Sobaih et al., 2016; Wingo et al., 2017). Educators need time and support for opportunities to train in using social networking tools in the classroom (McGee et al., 2017).

Almekhlafi and Abulibdeh (2018) investigated the concerns educators had for using social networking tools in the classrooms. The study results showed that the teachers had a high perception of innovative tools for students' academic gains; however, there was an average usage in the classroom. Almekhlafi and Abulibdeh indicated that the tools' average usage could result from limited professional development in using social networking tools. Educators voiced the concern of not receiving additional training needed to integrate social networking tools in the teaching and learning process.

Teachers have also voiced their concerns about the constant updating of technology that requires teachers to use newer model tools (Al-Bahrani et al., 2017). Krutka et al. (2017) discussed the possible hindrance of implementing social networking

tools in the classroom because of teachers' high demand to learn newer applications that have saturated the virtual environment.

Summary

The literature review has revealed that social networking tools play a vital role in literacy development and engagement among learners (Ali & Qazi, 2018; Dafoulas & Shokri, 2016; Kurt, 2017; Peeters, 2018; Yarbrough, 2018). Previous studies investigated the use of social networking tools for literacy development (Al-Samarraie & Saeed, 2018; Kızıl, 2017; Özerbaş, & Mart, 2017) and students' active engagement (Chen & DiVall, 2018; De Arriba, 2016; Denker et al., 2018). There is, however, limited literature to support social networking tools with the development of literacy skills and improving students' engagement in lower-level schools (Ramirez & Gillig, 2018; Tur et al., 2017; Youssef et al., 2016). The review also showed limited studies that highlighted the effects of social networking tools on developing foundational reading skills, which creates the foundation for comprehension.

The literature gap is mainly evident in the limited studies on elementary students developing literacy skills due to using social networking tools (Hu et al., 2017; Tur et al., 2017). Despite the overwhelming research done on social networking tools and literacy development in tertiary settings, further studies need to explore the effects of social networking tools on literacy development. Dafoulas and Shokri (2016) also voiced the concern that social networking studies focused more on a population of higher level students. Their study showed that students' grades showed positive growth while using Facebook as a learning environment. Students showed active engagement and

participation in conducting learning activities through Facebook. The study's limitation was only one type of social networking tool was used, and the sessions were only available to students who were in college.

Although this literature review has provided evidence for the effective use of social networking tools for student engagement, there was an extensive amount of studies related to language learning rather than on literacy development within elementary students (Chun et al., 2016; Deveci, 2017; Dizon & Tang, 2017; Fattah, 2016). The literature review lacks exploring in-depth the level of engagement related to reading instructions for fourth graders. Greenhow and Askari (2017) have noted the increased inclusion of social networking tools or Web 2.0 Tools in the classroom. The rise of such devices is frequently included in the language learning curriculums, which are known as computer-assisted language learning (CALL) (Manca & Grion, 2016). The literature review has shown strong support for social networking tools in engaging students in language learning but not yet for fourth-grade students developing literacy skills.

To address the literature gap, I explored teachers' perceptions regarding the development of literacy skills in fourth-grade elementary students using social networking tools. Studies to indicate the use of social networking tools in South Carolina to develop literacy skills were not evident during the literature review process. There was also no study to support the perception of social networking tools in engaging South Carolinians' fourth grades in literacy classes.

Chapter 3 presents my research design and rationale for implementing a basic qualitative study to explore the phenomenon. Included in Chapter 3 is a detailed

description of my role as a researcher, selecting participants, collecting, analyzing data, and ethical procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions fourth-grade teachers have on using social networking tools for the development of literacy skills and engagement. Exploring social networking tools could fill the gap of understanding South Carolinian educators' perceptions of using social networking tools for literacy development and engagement for elementary instruction. Al-Samarraie and Saeed (2018), Lui et al. (2016), and Yarbrough (2018) have supported the effectiveness of social networking tools for literacy development and engagement in higher education. The gap exists in exploring elementary teachers' views on using social networking tools for literacy development and engagement. Ramirez and Gillig (2018) indicated a need to examine the phenomenon of social networking tools for literacy development and engagement in an elementary learning environment.

Chapter 3 discussed the rationale for my research and selecting the basic qualitative research design. This chapter describes my role as a researcher and method for participant recruitment and selection. Also included are the measures that I implemented to create my instrument for data collection. I discussed Patton's (2015) research tradition for data collection, data analysis, and trustworthiness for my research.

Research Design and Rationale

Three research questions guided my forthcoming study on the perceptions of teachers using social networking tools for literacy development and engagement:

RQ1: What are fourth-grade teacher perceptions regarding students' cognitive presence as they use social networking tools to develop literacy skills?

RQ2: How do fourth-grade teachers perceive student levels of engagement and social presence when using social networking tools for literacy instruction?

RQ3: How do fourth-grade teachers perceive using social networking tools to facilitate both the educational community's cognitive presence and social presence to create meaningful learning of literacy skills among their students?

The purpose of my research was to understand the perceptions of South Carolinian teachers in using social networking tools for instruction. Specifically, I explored fourth-grade teachers' beliefs for utilizing social networking tools to develop literacy skills and maintain engagement. Using a basic qualitative approach, I interviewed fourth-grade teachers in two regions of South Carolina. According to the State of South Carolina Department of Education (2020a, 2020b), districts in the undisclosed areas of South Carolina received excellent scores for integrating technology into classroom instructions. Teachers who currently or most recently used social networking tools to teach English and Language Arts content were included in this study. To create a pool of participants, I used Google Forms (2020) to screen teachers for their location, grade level, and implementation of social networking tools for ELA instruction. Participants were selected using "purposive sampling" and signed consent to participate in the research (Patton, 2015, p. 295). After receiving approval from the participants, I collected data through interviews (See Appendix E)

My rationale for using a basic qualitative design for this study was to understand the phenomenon of social networking tools and how they contributed to the CoI framework (Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) postulated that basic qualitative research adds to

knowledge and discovers a phenomenon's truth. My study aimed to understand teachers' perceptions of using social networking tools to develop literacy skills and promote student engagement in fourth-grade students. Using in-depth interviews, I sought to understand the participants' beliefs about literacy development and engagement and the use of social networking tools for instruction (See Appendix E, Interview Protocol).

A qualitative study allows researchers to explore how participants make sense of their experiences (Patton, 2015). The basic qualitative design allows real-world scenarios to explain a phenomenon through descriptive accounts from participants (Vagle, 2016; Van Manen, 2016). In education, basic qualitative research has become a regular practice by allowing researchers to frame their studies from concepts to investigate specific teaching-learning experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Thorne, 2016). In addition to informing educational practices, the basic qualitative design also provides the opportunity to expand knowledge of a phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Other designs I have considered and rejected are quantitative, phenomenology, case study, and narrative. A quantitative research design uses an objective approach to obtain information about a phenomenon and seeks to test, describe, or understand cause and effect relationships among variables (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). Understanding teachers' perceptions of using social networking tools to develop literacy skills and engagement were the study's aim. I did not seek to understand the relationship between two variables. Also, the questionnaire and numerical data would not generate the data needed about teachers' beliefs to explore the perceptions of social networking tools for literacy development and engagement.

Initially, I wanted to implement Yin's (2018) case study design to explore teacher perceptions of using social networking tools for literacy development and engagement in fourth grade. According to Merriam (1998), a study does not qualify as a case study if the researcher cannot distinctly identify the number of participants or the amount of time needed to conduct the research. A case study must be within bounded parameters, including a specific place and time to seek an in-depth understanding (Yin, 2018). On that premise, I rejected the case study design because recruiting participants online did not allow me to create a boundary around a setting. Namey et al. (2016) indicated that 80-90% of thematic saturation could occur between eight to 16 interviews, and I aimed to use 10 participants. My final study did not include 10 participants due to data saturation, and I transcribed and analyzed data throughout the data collection process. Although my initial sample size targeted 10 participants, Patton (2015) cautioned that the number could be less due to data saturation. The saturation of data did not allow me to put a limit on participants in my study. Another traditional characteristic of a case study is implementing multiple data sources for triangulation (Yin, 2016). Although I used multiple data sources, such as interviews and follow-up questions, they did not provide "a detailed and rich story about a person, organization, event, campaign, or program" (Patton, 2015, p 259). The study’s aim was to capture fourth-grade teachers' beliefs across a broader spectrum and context of using social networking tools for literacy development and engagement. A case study design was not feasible to collect data from multiple sources during a pandemic. I was unsure how soon the safety restriction due to COVID-19 would cease, allowing me to access a research site (South Carolina

Department of Education, 2020b). Using the case study design would not answer the research questions because they explore teachers' perceptions of using social networking tools for literacy development and engagement. A case study intends to answer "how" and "why" questions about a phenomenon (Yin, 2016). This feature diminished the use of a case study design for my study.

Although phenomenology design aligned with the purpose of my study, which is to explore teachers' perceptions using social networking tools for the development of literacy skills and promote engagement, it was not in alignment with the research questions. According to Patton (2015), a phenomenology approach captures individuals or groups' lived experiences to understand how they experience the world. My research questions aimed to understand the perceptions teachers have about the phenomenon of social networking tools. The research questions were not asking, "what is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of people?" (Patton, 2015, p. 115). Instead, the research questions asked questions that explored teachers' beliefs about using social networking tools for literacy development and engagement.

The final qualitative design that did not align with my study is the narrative inquiry. My research did not seek to understand the phenomenon of social networking tools by analyzing stories. Patton (2015) posited that the narrative inquiry examines stories to understand a created culture. This inquiry design was rejected for my study because my focus was not to unearth social networking tools patterns in culture but to understand experts in the field perceptions of using social networking tools. Also, the

data collected did not include a narrative, which would unearth the participants' findings and a phenomenon. For those reasons, the narrative inquiry was an unsuitable design for my study.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher was recruiting and selecting participants to collect, transcribe, code, analyze, and interpret data. During the data collection process, I ensured to follow an interview protocol. As stipulated by Patton (2015), the interview protocol included participants to access the interview questions to ensure transparency. I gave my participants the convenience to schedule their interview and follow-up questions times. Participants were guaranteed my confidentiality and support while answering questions. As a researcher, my role was to be an active listener during the interviews while taking accurate and complete notes, asking follow-up questions, and being mindful not to cause bias by communicating my views of the phenomenon of social networking tools.

To further address other biases and conflicts, I did not use my current place of employment. The participants I recruited did not have a personal or professional connection to me. I am very passionate about literacy development and the implications it has for student success. As such, I have integrated the use of social networking tools in my reading instruction. My beliefs in my pedagogical practices were potential biases, and being aware of these biases were crucial during the collection and analysis of data (Patton, 2015). Managing these biases were very important in ensuring that a qualitative study is valid (Amankwaa, 2016). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), establishing trustworthiness in a study ensures reliability and validity. Implementing trustworthiness

in qualitative research requires using strategies to guide the researcher in identifying possible biases and creating trustworthy research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Patton (2015) also voiced a similar view by indicating the importance of researchers implementing strategies to identify and prevent biases in qualitative studies. To ensure that my research was trustworthy, I implemented techniques such as member checking, the use of a reflexive journal, and peer review (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015). Implementing these strategies that manage biases helped me as a researcher to ensure that trustworthiness was evident in my research process. These strategies will be discussed in further detail in the 'Issues of Trustworthiness' section of my study.

Methodology

I explained in detail the procedures implemented to conduct my basic qualitative research. The methodology section explored the participant recruitment and selection process, the data collection instrument, and a data analysis strategy that aligns with the basic qualitative research design.

Participant Selection Logic

After receiving Walden University IRB approval (05-14-21-0482548), my recruitment targeted the fourth-grade teachers who use social networking tools for their ELA instructions. The recruitment flyer (Appendix A) indicated my research topic and invited South Carolinian teachers who teach ELA to complete a survey through Google Forms (2020). The Google Forms was embedded in the recruitment flyer for interested participants to complete. The Google Form (Appendix B) sought information such as demographic location, grade level, years of experience, qualification with technology use,

and experience teaching with social networking tools. Participants who showed interest by completing the survey received a pseudonym. A spreadsheet feature available with Google Forms recorded the participants' responses. The spreadsheet allowed me to organize and identify possible participants that matched the criteria. Criteria for the participants were: (a) currently or recently taught in South Carolina; (b) a teacher of fourth grade ELA; (c) minimal qualification of a Level One Google Certified Educator certificate (Google for Education, 2020); and (d) prior use of social networking tools to teach ELA. I targeted two regions of South Carolina because of the possible opportunity to get rich data from teachers who work at technology-based schools. For a teacher to receive a Level One Google Certified Teacher certificate, they must enroll in Google training (Google for Education, 2020). During the training, teachers learn to implement Google apps in classroom instructions. At the end of the training, teachers complete an exam to test their knowledge of Google and demonstrate how to implement Google Apps in classroom instructions (Google for Education, 2020). Listed below are questions used in the survey to ensure participants' eligibility in this study.

1. Are you located in South Carolina? _____
2. Do you teach ELA in fourth grade? _____
3. Do you have a certificate, endorsement, Google badge, or training in technology and instructional integration? _____
4. Do you use social networking tools for ELA instruction? _____
5. How often do you use social networking tools for your classroom instruction? _____

6. Does your school cater to 1:1 technology, which means a device for each student? _____

7. Are you willing to participate in an interview to share your thoughts on social networking tools and literacy development? _____ If yes, what is your email address? _____

Participants had to meet the criteria indicated in the survey above. Once participants were identified, a consent form was emailed to request participants to participate in the study (See Appendix D for Consent Form). Participants who consented to the study received a Demographic Questionnaire (See Appendix F). The participants for this basic qualitative study consisted of fourth-grade ELA teachers from South Carolina. The participants had classroom experience integrating social networking tools in their ELA or reading instruction. After establishing a pool of participants who used social networking tools for ELA instructions, I used "purposive sampling" to meet the criteria to select participants (Patton, 2015, p. 295). According to Patton (2015), purposive sampling is used by researchers to select participants who share similar characteristics, enabling the researcher to answer the research questions. By using purposive sampling, it allowed for the in-depth gathering of data to better answer the research questions.

My study's sample size was initially 10 because Sim et al. (2018) cautioned that the larger samples could lead to data that was not in-depth. Sim et al. further added that it was essential to focus on emerging themes to determine the sample size. When there is repetitive and redundant data, researchers should use it as an indicator to stop (Sim et al.,

2018). A sample size of ten would be appropriate to produce in-depth data to be analyzed. In a basic qualitative study, Patton (2015) suggested 10 participants and indicated a reduction in the sample size if saturation occurs before interviewing the 10 participants. For this study, I interviewed 8 participants, at which saturation occurred. This sampling procedure aligned well with the basic qualitative design because the participants' expertise shed light on the CoI framework and suggested information about the phenomenon that was studied.

Instrumentation

The data collection tools used were semi structured, flexible, open-ended interviews through Zoom (Version 5.0). The interview questions were aligned with the research questions (Patton, 2015) and the conceptual framework, CoI (See Appendix E Interview Protocol). I used the CoI framework to provide a structure for the interview protocol. From the CoI framework, interview questions were aligned with the cognitive presence, which connects to Dewey's (1933) reflective thinking model. These questions sought to understand educators' views on social networking tools and critical thinking skills for literacy learning. In the process of exploring the social presence element of the framework, interview questions were related to engagement on a social networking platform and its relationship to literacy learning. I also designed the instrument with the teaching presence of the CoI framework to have a better understanding of how educators facilitate literacy activities with social networking tools.

Due to the fact I created the data tool, I needed to ensure there was validity. To achieve the validity of the data collection tool, I implemented Patton's (2015) six types of

questions to guide the creation of interview questions. According to Patton, interview questions should seek to determine a participant's background, knowledge, experiences and behavior, feelings, opinions, and sensory. To further validate the data collection tool, I solicited an expert panel, which consisted of my dissertation committee and professors from a well know university (See Appendix C for Expert Panel Invitation). According to Coulter et al. (2016), an expert panel is beneficial when seeking specialized input and evaluation. These experts should be based on the field of experience to make a valuable contribution. The expert panel included four doctoral-level professors, two of whom were my dissertation committee members. The expert panel members have researched technology integration for literacy development and are specialists in qualitative research design. By having the interview questions reviewed by the expert panel, the questions were aligned with the conceptual framework, research questions, and relevant data to understand the phenomenon of social networking tools. Presented in Table 1 is the alignment of the interview questions to the research questions.

Table 1

Interview Questions and Research Questions Alignment

Interview questions	Background	RQ1	RQ2	RQ3
Question 1	X			
Question 2	X			
Question 3	X			
Question 4				X
Question 5		X		
Question 6		X		
Question 7			X	
Question 8			X	
Question 9				X
Question 10		X	X	X

Interview

The selection of an interview tool for this study is contingent on data collection strength for collecting detailed information (Patton, 2015). According to Patton, interviews for qualitative studies allow researchers to focus on specific data to answer research questions. Participants are allowed to share an intricate perspective that would not be possible with quantitative data collection tools. Patton also indicated that although interviews have their strengths in collecting qualitative data, a researcher needs to be

cognizant that poorly communicated questions could result in bias or inconsistency. Patton (p.428) created ten guiding principles for researchers to practice before interviewing to address this concern. These ten guiding principles are

1. Ask open-ended questions.
2. Be clear.
3. Listen.
4. Probe as appropriate.
5. Observe.
6. Be both empathic and neutral.
7. Make transitions.
8. Distinguish types of questions.
9. Be prepared for the unexpected.
10. Be present throughout.

Interview Protocol. Having an interview protocol (Appendix E) prepared me by ensuring I knew the inquiry questions and obtained the essential information. Interview protocols are also necessary for participants. It is a means to communicate critical confidential concerns, the purpose of the interview, and what will happen to the data to be collected (Patton, 2015).

Follow-up Questions. Although the tradition of basic qualitative research utilizes only interviews, I provided follow-up questions to each of the eight participants to gather their views about the phenomenon. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), follow-up questions allow researchers to explore further participants' answers for depth,

thoroughness, credibility, and details. To confirm the participants' interviews outcomes, I asked follow-up questions at the end of the interview. I asked follow-up questions that explored themes discovered, and the wording of the questions reflected the participant's prior answers to the interview questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I gained approval (Walden IRB approval number 05-14-21-0482548) from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) before recruiting participants for the basic qualitative study. After IRB approval, I posted a flyer (Appendix A) on teacher Facebook pages, which are closed groups with over 200,000 educators who integrate innovative technology in their daily classroom instructions. The Facebook pages offer K-12 teachers the opportunity to "participate in a wide range of sessions all online that focus on your classroom teaching strategies with technology. Learn cutting-edge technology integration techniques and lessons from experts delivered via video sessions" (Teach with Tech, 2020, What is TWTCON section, para.1). Interested participants clicked on the link embedded in the flyer to complete a survey (Appendix B). The Google Forms (2020) presented survey questions to identify South Carolinian fourth-grade teachers who regularly use social networking tools for ELA instruction. A laptop that is password protected accessed the Google Forms completed by participants. Participants' identities were kept confidential within the limits of the law. I did not ask for participants' names at any time or link their responses to contact information. Participants' personal information was not used for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, I did not include participants' names or anything else that could identify them in the study reports. If I

were to share this dataset with another researcher in the future, I would remove all names and identifying details before sharing; this would not involve another round of obtaining informed consent. The data was secured by including password protection, data encryption, and the use of a pseudonym. Data will be kept for at least five years and then destroyed, as required by the university.

After receiving responses from the questionnaire, purposive sampling was used to select eight participants located in South Carolina who currently or recently used social networking tools for ELA or reading instruction in fourth grade. Selected participants received an email indicating procedures for confidentiality and data collection. The participants were assigned pseudonyms to uphold ethical standards, as stipulated in the participants' consent form (Appendix D). The time frame to complete all interviews was six months. I used Zoom (Version 5.0) to conduct the online interview and audio record the sessions. Participants were not video recorded during the interviews. Additional notes were taken during the interviews, and I made entries in my reflexive journal about the data collection process. The audio recordings were downloaded for data analysis and reference. The expected time for each interview ranged from 30 to 60 minutes. At the end of each interview, I thanked the participants for participating in the interview.

Interviews were transcribed, and I checked the transcriptions by listening to the audio recordings for any discrepancies. Participants participated in member checking by receiving an email with instructions on reviewing transcriptions for accuracy. Participants identified no errors and indicated that the transcriptions were correct. I emailed all participants that the interview process was complete, thanking them for their

participation. The email also shared I would send their $20 Gift Card in a separate email and a link to the published study.

Data Analysis Plan

To ensure practical analysis of data, Patton's (2015) strong foundation for qualitative research guided my steps to analyze data. "The challenge of qualitative analysis lies in making sense of massive amounts of data. This involves reducing the volume of raw information, sifting the trivial from the significant, identifying significant patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal" (Patton, 2015, p. 521). When all interviews and follow-up questions were completed and transcribed, I used Nvivo (Version 12) and Microsoft Word™ to organize and compile raw data.

I selected NVivo (Version 12) as qualitative software because it has many benefits for me as a qualitative researcher. The software can manage the data collected from a study (QSR International, 2020). The interview transcripts are collected and organized in the internal files allowing easy access to the data. Another excellent feature of the software is that multiple files can be opened simultaneously for the researcher to view, just by clicking on the document. NVivo has a feature that assists researchers to query data by posing questions about the data. The software helps answer these questions and save the results for further interrogation (QSR International, 2020). Another advantage of using the NVivo program is its ability to visually represent graphs to demonstrate the relationship between theoretical and conceptual data for analysis (QSR International, 2020). NVivo offered the opportunity to manage ideas that allowed me to

understand concepts and theoretical ideas during the research process. With the help of NVivo, I used word frequency queries to list the most common words or concepts in the interview transcripts. By searching only the text, I identified possible codes using the treemap that displayed the most frequently used words in the bigger rectangular boxes.

The categorization of interview questions occurred based on the three research questions. Classifying the interview questions based on the research questions allowed me to organize the data better. The raw data were organized according to the research questions allowing for the coding of data for a better analysis. I digitally recorded all interviews, and the transcriptions were stored as an encrypted file on my password-protected laptop.

After the organization of data, I used Linneberg and Korsgaard's (2019) coding strategy to first identify codes that were analyzed for patterns to present emerging themes. There was a separate examination to identify themes and patterns related to the concepts of the study. I analyzed the concept, CoI framework, for themes related to the social, cognitive, and teaching presences. Specifically, I focused on themes prevalent within the framework's cognitive presence that highlights Dewey's (1933) reflective thinking model and its connection to literacy development. Additionally, I isolated concepts of engagement within the social learning environment contributing to students' literacy learning. Finally, I also examined themes and patterns associated with fourth-graders literacy skills by using social networking tools.

Microsoft Word and NVivo (Version 12) were two methods used to assist with organizing and identifying codes in the data. The reason for using two methods is to

identify differences and similarities in the patterns identified. Using the highlighting and comments tools in Microsoft Word, I analyzed transcripts to identify codes and patterns. Some relevant codes in the study included: *higher order thinking, evaluating, inquiry skills, question stems, high depth of knowledge, prove, synthesizing, students checking for understanding, reflecting on learning, metacognition, reflective journal, learns from mistakes, projects, research, student creativity, exploring,* and *decision-makers*. The codes were then analyzed to identify patterns in the data.

For better organization and analysis, patterns from Microsoft Word were transferred to a table. After hand-coding the data with Microsoft Word, NVivo (Version 12) was used to help code and organize the data. After the completion of both coding methods, I analyzed code patterns for similarities and differences. This step ensured that I identified recurring irregularities in the data (Patton, 2015). Irregularities enabled me to identify patterns I sorted into two categories. These categories are known as "internal homogeneity" and "external homogeneity" (Patton, 2015, p. 555). According to Patton (2015), internal homogeneity determines which data belongs to a specific category and holds together in a meaningful way. On the other hand, external homogeneity is concerned with the boldness and clarity of differences identified in categories (p.555).

The data were analyzed by "dealing with rival explanations, accounting for disconfirming cases, and accounting for data irregularities as part of testing the viability of an interpretation" (Patton, 2015, p. 570). Interpretation of the data illuminated the unknown and misconceptions to confirm what the data supports (Patton, 2015). Finally, I presented the findings lucidly and concisely.

Issues of Trustworthiness

A researcher should consider credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability when conducting research (Patton, 2015). Evaluating a study's trustworthiness allows a researcher to identify potential validity, reliability, and objectivity concerns (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017).

Credibility

Credibility is the researchers' ability to confidently link the truth to the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking is one method to ensure the data is valid. Member checking is a method that can allow participants to feel as though they are part of the research process; further examination and probing of the data will occur (Nowell et al., 2017). Member checking validates the credibility of a study by allowing each participant to review and clarify their responses. Once the data from my research was collected, it was transcribed and reviewed by me for any inconsistencies. Each participant received a copy of their transcribed interview from a secure laptop. Participants check for data accuracy and determine if their responses to the questions were interpreted correctly (Nowell et al., 2017).

Transferability

According to Nowell et al. (2017), transferability ensures that a study's findings are transferable to other members and organizations in the field focused on the study. This study's findings can be transferrable to ELA teachers, South Carolinian teachers, and Literacy organizations. To ensure transferability, I used purposive sampling. Participants in the sample used social networking tools to develop literacy skills and promote fourth

grades engagement. Thick descriptions of the sample groups' interviews will help others make their conclusions to transfer to their professional or personal activities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability

Dependability demonstrates that the findings of a study are consistent and repeatable, therefore allowing other researchers to have a similar interpretation and conclusion of the data collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The use of Patton's (2015) interview guide ensured that my study was dependable. I also used a reflexive journal to make notes of the process and reflected on possible biases. Recordings of interviews and correspondence emails were archived to ensure validity. Data collection and analysis were done in a specific order, as stipulated by Patton's traditions. Patton's procedures ensured that I was continually reflecting on any possible biases about using social networking tools in the classroom. I used the in-depth approaches to ensure that only the participants' narrative was analyzed to present the findings transparently (Patton, 2015).

Confirmability

Confirmability is the neutrality that the study's findings are based on the participants' responses and not the researchers' biases or interests (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The use of reflexive writing can help a researcher detect biases or perspectives towards the participants and the data collecting process (Xerri, 2018). As an ELA teacher, I regularly use social networking tools to build an online community to support cognitive skills development and encourage engagement. This possible bias was a constant reminder for me to attain confirmability throughout the data collection and analysis

process. Confirmability through reflexivity occurred by writing journal entries to reflect on the research process and not letting any biases I may have about social networking tools affect my study's validity

Ethical Procedures

After receiving Walden University IRB approval, I ensured that all ethical measures were in place to protect my human participants. Steps for recruiting participants occurred as indicated in the recruitment procedures. I did not need institutional permissions from schools' districts and a specific employment place because I recruited participants from their social network, Facebook. The social network is across the different school districts and separates from the participant's workplace. More importantly, contact with school districts was not needed to access educators' contact information since the participants voluntarily participated in the study from their social media accounts. All teachers' identities in this study were kept confidential. Institutional approval is required when the research involves participants or utilizes human resources or physical resources of an organization (Athabasca University, 2020). If I recruited participants outside of the organization and data collection occurred offsite, institution permission is not needed. Offsite recruitment can be done by advertising through the media or print, posters, or email from a public list (Athabasca University, 2020). Bypassing the use of institutional permission further reassured participants of the confidentiality exhibited in this study. District and school administrators were not aware of the teachers who would express their perceptions of using social networking tools in fourth-grade classes for literacy development and engagement.

To further ensure the confidentiality of the participants, the study used pseudonyms. I eliminated the use of characteristics to identify participants in the study, for example, male or female. Communication of confidentiality measures to the participants occurred in a consent form and was repeated before an interview. I used a password-protected laptop to email consent forms to participants. The consent form and interview protocol indicate to participants that they were free to ask questions, ask for clarifications, and withdraw from the study.

Included in this study were steps to ensure the protection of data collected. Recorded audio interviews, along with transcripts, were stored on a password-protected laptop. My committee and I only had access to the data collected. The data was stored on an external drive and locked in a fireproof safe that was only accessible to me. The data will be destroyed after five years, as stipulated by Walden University.

Summary

Chapter 3 has outlined the role I played as a sole researcher to explore the perceptions fourth-grade teachers have about social networking tools in developing literacy skills and promoting engagement. I ensured all steps discussed in my recruitment and participant selection maintained the ethical standards as stipulated by IRB. I also discussed the implementation of Patton's (2015) data collection strategy and data analysis. The chapter concluded with the steps I took to ensure the trustworthiness of my study. In Chapter 4, I will discuss in detail the study’s findings.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions fourth-grade teachers have on using social networking tools for the development of literacy skills and engagement. In addition, this study aimed to fill the gap in the literature on educators' experience of using social networking tools in elementary schools for literacy development and engagement.

The study was guided by three research questions as follows:

RQ1: What are fourth-grade teacher perceptions regarding students' cognitive presence as they use social networking tools to develop literacy skills?

RQ2: How do fourth-grade teachers perceive student levels of engagement and social presence when using social networking tools for literacy instruction?

RQ3: How do fourth-grade teachers perceive using social networking tools to facilitate both the educational community's cognitive presence and social presence to create meaningful learning of literacy skills among their students?

In Chapter 4, I began by describing the setting of the study. The study settings are followed by the demographic information, data collection process, and analysis. Next, I explained the methods I used to ensure the study's trustworthiness. I also described the steps taken in the research plan to complete the study. Finally, to conclude the chapter, I summarized the results of the basic qualitative study.

Setting

The setting of the study was online Facebook groups for educators. The Facebook groups include a broad demographic of educators who are international and local citizens of the United States. The Facebook groups cater to educators who teach ELA or Reading, use innovative tools for classroom instructions and specialize in fourth-grade content. Interviews with participants were done from my private office at home using Zoom. I used a password-protected laptop to audio record the interviews. All participants were at their homes in a private room during their interview. The average time to conduct all interviews was 40 minutes. I did not have control of the setting during the Zoom interviews. At the time of the study, I was not aware of any personal or organizational conditions that may have influenced the participants or the interpretation of the results.

Demographics

The participants were all fourth-grade teachers from South Carolina teaching ELA. As indicated in Table 2, the participants had different years of experience teaching ELA, ranging from five to 20 years. The teachers in the study also had various educational backgrounds. Five teachers had their master's degrees, and three had their bachelor's degrees. All participants also worked in a district that catered to 1:1 technology use for students. Although I did not include the school type in the demographic survey, the teachers did indicate that they were all from Title One schools. This information was presented during the interview process when the teachers talked about the students' demographics.

Table 2

Demographics of Participants

Pseudonyms for participants	Grade level	Subject taught	Technology training/ endorsement	Teaching experience	1:1 technology
Carla	4th	ELA	Yes	7	Yes
Kim	4th	ELA	Yes	12	Yes
Sophia	4th	ELA	Yes	5	Yes
Rose	4th	ELA and Math	Yes	11	Yes
Debbie	4th	ELA	Yes	22	Yes
Toni	4th	ELA and Social Studies	Yes	8	Yes
Lexi	4th	ELA	Yes	14	Yes
Beth	4th	ELA and Social Studies	Yes	9	Yes

All the participants in this study also indicated they had the training to use social networking tools in the classroom. At the study time, the participants indicated their active use of social networking tools, except one participant said they use social networking tools "sometimes." Google Classroom was used by all eight participants, while other tools used included Zoom, Schoology, ItsLearning, Nearpod, Whiteboard Chat, Pear Deck, and others. Some teachers indicated they had technology training, while others said they had technology endorsements.

Data Collection

The data collection process for the basic qualitative study consisted of one-on-one semi structured interviews with eight South Carolinian teachers who teach fourth-grade ELA. The intended number of participants was 10. Twelve teachers responded to the consent to participate in the study; however, only eight participants completed the

interview. The interviews ranged from 30 to 45 minutes as the educators shared their perceptions of social networking tools, literacy skills, and engagement development. Included in the data collection process were follow-up questions, which were asked at the end of each interview. Follow-up questions were based on the participants' responses to the interview questions. Follow-up questions were asked to explore the participants' answers for thoroughness (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Interviews were conducted online and audio recorded using the web-based calling app Zoom. It took six months to complete the interviewing process of all participants.

Before the interview process, interested participants who responded to the participation flyer (Appendix A) completed a Google form to determine if they met the criteria to participate in the study (Appendix B). Qualifying participants received and returned consent forms and set up interview dates that were convenient to them. The interview protocol was used during the interview (Appendix E). Participants answered questions about their definition of social networking tools and their experiences using social networking tools for literacy development and student engagement. Participants were given time to respond to questions and clarify a question if they did not understand what it was asking.

Before interviews were done on Zoom, participants were reminded that the interviews would be recorded, and they had the right to withdraw at any time. During the interviews, I took notes in my reflexive journal. They were no alterations to the data collection plan, as indicated in Chapter 3. Six interviews were done at the scheduled times; however, two interviews had to be rescheduled due to family emergencies. During

the data collection process, there was a disruption in interviewing four potential participants. As a result, four participants did not participate in their scheduled Zoom interview. They were contacted through email to schedule a second interview; however, the teachers did not respond.

Though there was a disruption in attaining 10 participants, the study was not impacted due to data saturation. Data saturation occurred with the eight participants that participated in the study as there were no new themes that emerged after interviewing the eight participants. According to Patton (2015), less than ten participants could result in thematic saturation. The data collected was recorded and stored as an encrypted file on a password-protected laptop.

Interview transcriptions were emailed to participants for clarification of accuracy. No participant indicated any error in their transcription. Participants were reminded of their rights while participating in the study. Participants were also reminded that the study was confidential, and they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Data Analysis

The interviews were recorded and saved to a password-protected computer and copied to an external drive securely stored in a home office. Each participant's interview was transcribed. I listened to each participant's interview carefully and transcribed what was said in the recordings. Upon completing the transcription process of each interview recording, participants were emailed a copy of their interview transcription. Participants were given time to review their transcription and respond if they identified errors. None

of the participants wanted any changes to their transcript as they thought everything was accurate.

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the data analysis process requires researchers to analyze interview responses from participants. Using a thematic approach helps to reduce the data into themes that are used to present the conclusions of a study (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Braun and Clarke (2006) set the foundational method for thematic analysis. The thematic analysis aims to unearth themes from textual data. Themes are the big pictures that identify the patterns in codes that guide the researcher in making conclusions about their study. For this study, I used Linneberg and Korsgaard's (2019) coding method for novice researchers to ensure I presented a true reflection of my participants' perceptions of the phenomenon. Their coding method first identifies codes in the descriptive data. Next, the codes are categorized to identify patterns. Finally, themes emerge from the patterns. Codes and themes are then grouped to answer the research questions.

All the data was compiled and organized, then uploaded to Microsoft Word and NVivo (Version 12) on my password-protected computer and backed up on an external drive. The identities of participants remained confidential by replacing their names with pseudonyms. Using Linneberg and Korsgaard's (2019) coding method, I hand-coded each transcription using Microsoft Word's comment and highlight tools. Comments made in Microsoft Word included codes identified in transcripts. After hand-coding 62 relevant codes in Microsoft Word, comments were exported into a table to assist with organization and analysis. Included in the table were participants, codes, text associated with codes,

and page numbers. After I completed hand-coding with Microsoft Word, the transcriptions were organized using the qualitative analysis program NVivo (Version12).

I used NVivo (Version 12) to run a query of terms used repeatedly during the interviews. Some of these words included social networking tools, engagement, and literacy skills. After I did a query of terms, I created codes related to the research questions and conceptual framework. Then, based on Patton's (2015) suggestion, I analyzed the transcript better using the codes in NVivo to identify patterns and themes.

After creating the codes, the transcripts were reviewed again to identify patterns aligned with the codes, conceptual framework, and research questions. After reviewing the codes for different patterns, no adjustments were needed for the previous codes created. The final patterns identified from the codes led to the development of themes. Themes that were identified shared a commonality of at least three-fourths of the participants. Six or more participants sharing a similar code were considered relevant to indicate a theme. Twelve themes emerged: *social networking tools help develop critical thinking among fourth-graders, social networking tools help develop reflective thinking among fourth-graders, social networking tools help develop problem-solving skills among fourth-graders, social networking tools allow for the application of skills among fourth-graders, social networking tools support increased engagement among fourth-graders, social networking tools support communication and collaboration among fourth-graders, social networking encourages accountability among fourth-graders, social networking tools support differentiated learning among fourth-graders, teacher training is important to implement social networking tools activities, planning relevant*

social networking tools activities is essential to engagement, class expectations must be clear when using social networking tools, and *student monitoring must be employed when using social networking tools*. The alignment of themes to the research questions and relevant codes are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Alignment of Themes and Codes to Research Questions

Theme (commonality)	Relevant codes	Research questions
Social networking tools help develop critical thinking among fourth-graders. (8)	Higher order thinking, evaluating, inquiry skills, question stems, high depth of knowledge, prove, synthesize	1
Social networking tools help develop reflective thinking among fourth-graders. (8)	Students checking for understanding, reflecting on learning, metacognition, reflective journal, learns from mistakes	1
Social networking tools help develop problem-solving skills among fourth-graders. (6)	Projects, research, student creativity, exploring, decision-makers	1
Social networking tools allow for the application of skills among fourth-graders (6)	Annotation, writing, RACE strategy, understanding Math questions	1
Social networking tools support increased engagement among fourth-graders (8)	Discussion, focused on a task, involved, participation polls, highly engaged, interactive	2
Social networking tools support communication and collaboration among fourth-graders. (8)	Peer feedback questioning, giving advice, peer learning, sharing, chat features	2
Social networking encourages accountability among fourth-graders (6)	Student's role, group leader, success criteria, responsibility, rewarding students, beating the clock	2
Social networking tools support differentiated learning among fourth-graders (7)	Reading levels, frustrational level, independent level, small groups, guided reading, students' individual needs, break out rooms	2
Teacher training is important to implement social networking tools activities (6)	Self-paced training, support to use technology, utilize free training sites	3
Planning relevant social networking tools activities is essential to engagement. (8)	Lesson design, reading strategies, standard alignment,	3

	breaking down learning standards, lesson focus	
Class expectations must be clear when using social networking tools (6)	Rules, review expectations, practice expectations, student-friendly expectations, students create class rules.	3
Student monitoring must be employed when using social networking tools (6)	Redirection, supporting students, checking for understanding	3

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

To ensure the credibility of my study, I used the literature review to provide the foundation of my research. The literature review was aligned to research questions which provided the guidelines I needed to conduct my study. I also had debriefing sessions with my dissertation committee to ensure that data collection protocols were being observed and maintained credibility with the data collection process. With the assistance of an expert panel and my dissertation committee, the data collection tool was evaluated to ensure that the data would answer the research questions. Member checking was done one week after an interview. Participants were emailed their interview transcripts to check for accuracy.

Credibility concerns in the study were also addressed by maintaining the confidentiality of the participants. Participants were each given pseudonyms and voluntarily shared their experience using social networking tools to develop literacy and engagement among fourth grades. There were no deviations to the research plans. Finally, the study's credibility was achieved through the triangulation of data.

Participants' interviews, follow-up questions, and reflective journal notes were used to ensure that the research questions were answered without bias.

Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research is the ability to apply the findings of a study to another situation (Patton, 2015). The transferability strategies addressed in the boundaries, scope, and delimitations sections were not altered. The participant selection was made through the purposive sampling of South Carolinian teachers who teach fourth grade ELA to ensure that the results were transferable. My study outlined the participants' grade level taught, years of experience, and school settings to include state, private or public school. I also described in detail the context in which the phenomenon was explored. The detailed description of the participants and their settings can inform researchers reading my study. This study could be adapted to different elementary grades, content areas, and various regions of the United States.

Dependability

The study maintained dependability through the research methodology and approved Walden University's IRB 05-14-21-0482548. I implemented an interview protocol to gather data from each participant. Participants were asked the same interview questions; however, follow-up questions varied based on each participant's answer to an interview question. Additionally, each participant reviewed their interview transcript for accuracy. The data collection and analysis process did not deviate from the IRB-approved methods. My dissertation committee had regular debriefing sessions with me to review the raw data. The sessions ensured that the data coding did not deviate from participants'

perceptions of the phenomenon. The dissertation committee also ensured that the results supported the study's interpretations and conclusions.

Confirmability

A reflexive journal was used during the interview and the data analysis. The reflexive journal helped me identify potential biases and reminded me of my role as a researcher. To ensure objectivity was maintained throughout the study, I made reflective notes of concerns that may have occurred in the previous interview to ensure transparency. During the analysis process, I made notes of my reasons for identifying codes in the data and reflected on my approach to using codes to identify themes to answer the research questions. A detailed audit trail was maintained, which included invitations and contacts for my participants, interview notes, and notes about the data analysis process. I also received regular feedback from my dissertation committee as we reflected on my coding process and possible biases I may have had during the process. To further ensure the confirmability of my study, I triangulated the data collected. Two data sources were used to validate the findings, semi structured interviews, and follow-up questions.

Results

The results below provide themes and illustrative quotes from participants to answer the three research questions that guided this study. The data presented show the views of fourth-grade teachers regarding literacy development and engagement among South Carolinian students. The results also discuss the components of the CoI framework

(Garrison et al., 2000), which focuses on cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence.

Before analyzing the data for themes, participants' perception of social networking tools was key to this study. Also, it was important to learn about the types of social networking tools they used for instructional activities in a fourth-grade ELA classroom. Social networking tools differed for each participant; however, throughout the interviews, the participants did share a commonality of using social networking tools as a classroom tool for providing instruction, as noted by Kim:

> Well, for me personally, those are like tools that we use in the classroom to increase engagement and also to help with literacy development. So whatever tools that we use, the aim is to get our students connected, to get them to collaborate with each other, and to improve their literacy.

Other participants defined social networking tools for communication as indicated by Lexi:

> I would define social networking tools as any device or app which allows for interaction between individuals. This interaction can be synchronous and asynchronous. Some of the social networking tools that I use in my classroom are YouTube, Google Classroom, Zoom, Jamboard, classroom bloggers, just to name a few.

Beth defined social networking tools for personal and professional use. "I think social networking tools are platforms that you use to communicate, whether it is for personal or professional use."

The data revealed that the various platforms used in the classroom differed. The platforms used in the classroom included Zoom, Google Classroom, Its Learning, Schoology, Dream Box, Canvas, and Microsoft Teams. As shared by Rose:

> My definition of social networking tools in the classroom are platforms that teachers use worldwide to develop students in becoming active learners. We have a variety that we use in our school systems, such as Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, Zoom, Canvas, DreamBox, and many others.

Indicating a different selection of social networking tools was Toni, and she did share a commonality of using Google Apps when compared to the other participants:

> To me, social networking tools are any tools or device apps that can allow face-to-face interaction. Just like a regular conversation between two people. Social networking tools are pretty much used to allow people to communicate with each other if they're not in a face-to-face situation. Some examples of social networking tools that I use in my classroom are YouTube. My kids are totally big fans of YouTube. They love Tick Tok, Zoom, Google suites, Google Docs.

According to fourth-grade teachers, the interviews indicated various definitions of social networking tools. Participants also showed they had some similar and contrasting tools they implemented in the classroom.

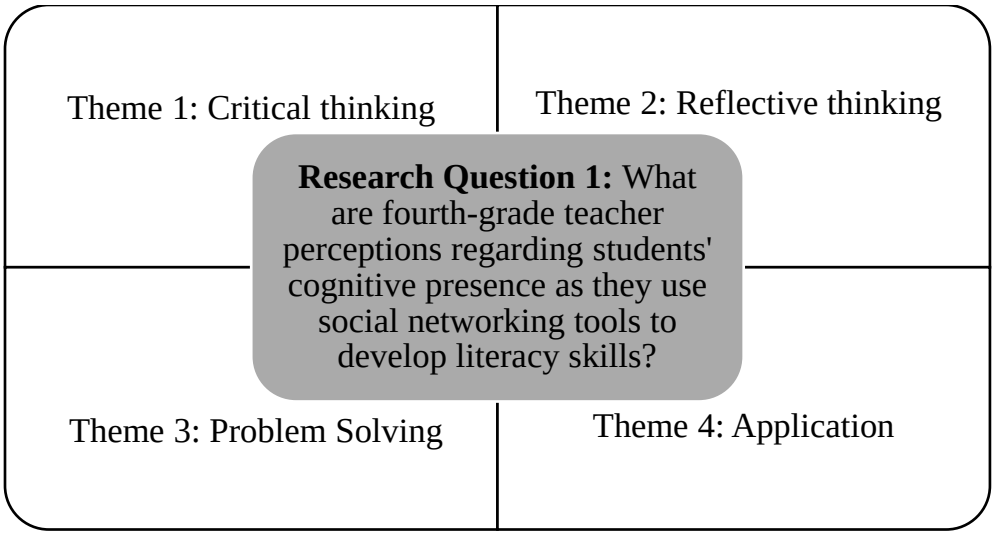
Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked: What are fourth-grade teacher perceptions regarding students' cognitive presence as they use social networking tools to develop literacy skills? Research Question 1 data analysis yielded the following themes: *social networking tools*

help develop critical thinking among fourth-graders, social networking tools help develop reflective thinking among fourth-graders, social networking tools help develop problem-solving skills among fourth-graders, and *social networking tools allow for the application of skills among fourth-graders*. Participants were asked questions about their views on using social networking tools to develop literacy skills among fourth-graders. The participants were also asked to explain their thoughts on the possible higher order thinking skills students could develop as a result of interacting with social networking tools in an ELA classroom. Results indicated that the participants shared a similar view on the higher order literacy skills students develop using social networking tools.

Figure 1

Research Question 1 Themes



Theme 1: Social networking tools help develop critical thinking among fourth-graders. Participants were asked during the interview to name the literacy skills developed among students when using social networking tools. A resounding response from the participants indicated that higher order reading skills were developed among fourth-graders. Eight participants expressed that critical thinking skills were developed when social networking tools were implemented in ELA instructions. Beth viewed critical thinking skills as higher order thinking skills and further added that students cannot be successful without such skills:

> I believe social networking tools play an important role in literacy development for students. During the interaction with social networking tools, students are able to communicate with each other during this communication process. Students are able to learn from each other. They are also able to contribute to their learning

> community, thereby developing higher order thinking skills. These are harder thinking skills and are instrumental in ensuring that students are successful academically…The joy of seeing students reading beyond a text and digging deeper for understanding makes what I do worthwhile. My students can analyze and synthesize the literature as well as critiquing and providing text evidence.

Another participant reflected a similar view as Beth. Sophia stated that the use of social networking tools in the classroom had propelled her students to think at a higher level as they interact with technology:

> I strive to create an environment that capitalizes on what the students already know to help them to get to a higher level in their education. So I know they love technology, so I create opportunities in my lessons for them to use those technology devices and to see that it's not all about fun and games. They can actually use those tools to show just what they know… as well as to increase their literacy skills and critical thinking. When my students are interacting with reading materials, I can hear them using critical thinking stems such as, "Do you agree or disagree with the statement_____? Cite evidence to support your answer". That level of thinking allows my students to use a higher depth of knowledge skills to respond to text.

Theme 2: Social networking tools help develop reflective thinking among fourth-graders. All the participants in this study agreed that the social networking tools provided students with the avenue to be reflective thinkers. Participants have expressed the advantages of using social networking to support having students track their learning

process. Sophia, Kim, and Carla all expressed how convenient it is to use social networking tools to help students develop the habit of being reflective learners and readers. The teachers shared that students can use the tools to identify when they face difficulty during the reading process and know when to apply strategies to get back on track. Another participant, Toni, described her views of reflective thinking and social networking tools as follows:

> Now, just like when they do their regular classroom paper and pencil activities, I love to use the social networking platforms to kind of get them to think about what they are working on. So, I like to also provide them with a rubric that they can use to match what they have done, to check to see what they have done and what they need to do as they work. So basically, I want them to know that even if they aren't successful at the first go, I like to keep that data tool to look back at it with them so that as we move through the learning material, they can always go back as well and check to see the progress that they have made. So it's not just staying on one level, we're starting here, but I also need them to see that we can track their progress. They can see their growth, and we can always look back at that using some of these social networking tools.

Lexi expressed the importance of reflective readers as a thriving fourth grader. She also indicated the use of social networking for students to reflect during the collaboration process:

> It's like, well, they always say two heads are better than one, you know, going back and forth with ideas you reflect about your thoughts. Especially with our

> reading standards, these kids are required to not only answer recall questions but they were given really high order questions that require them to step out of the box while interacting with their reading material. The need to be a reflective reader is important to be successful. I see in my classroom every day how effective social networking tools help my kiddos to be reflective readers.

Debbie had a similar view of reflective thinking and students collaborating:

> I think it is important for students to interact with social networking tools to develop deep thinking skills; as I mentioned before, the role that social networking tools play does develop this skill. Students are able to evaluate not only their thinking but the thinking of others when trying to complete a literacy task.

One participant discussed that students are aware that whatever they post on social networking tools will be there publicly. Beth believes that students will be more reflective when they are going to be using social networking tools for school activities:

> I think one of the biggest parts of having social networks is that kids now know that whatever they put out there, they can't get it back. So that's a big part of them learning. We do videos in class, we learn how to use the internet properly, how to use social networks properly because they've learned this year that whatever they put out there, they can't get back, so they have to be responsible for the things they say, and they have to reflect on whatever they're putting out there.

Similarly, Beth expressed the development of reflective thinking among fourth-graders using social networking tools. She explained that students develop analytical

skills, metacognitive skills, and questioning skills, which develop students into reflective learners:

> One of the main skills that I've seen being developed in kids is metacognition. Also, when students engage with each other, this allows students to learn from other students creating a mindset of asking questions. Questioning is one of those essential reading skills that students need to develop. It makes kids think about what they are learning.

Rose shared her views on social networking tools and reflective thinking among her students. She also shared how she incorporates writing to allow her students to reflect on their learning:

> I think that's the biggest part of how they can be reflective, I think, and we've done so much writing and journaling. It's so much easier to track it online, so they've done dialogues and stuff like that, so it helped them develop as writers and helped them while they're writing to think about their learning. I like the fact that it is convenient. So, it gives them more opportunities to learn and to reflect on what they have learned. So that's one thing I like about social networking tools. With everything that's going on, so they've learned to be reflective.

Participants' responses have indicated the benefits of using social networking to support fourth-grade students' reflective thinkers. In addition, the participants have revealed that students' ability to think about their learning process is essential as they function effectively as fourth-grade students.

Theme 3: Social networking tools help develop problem-solving skills among fourth-graders. Participants in this study have expressed the helpfulness of social networking tools in the development of problem-solving skills among fourth-graders. Six participants revealed how social networking tools were implemented to develop students into problem solvers during the interview. Kim's view of problem-solvers reflected immediate feedback to students to understand if they have grasped a concept:

> I could pause my lesson, and I could ask them to share their response to me based on if they either watched a video if they had to look at a demonstration lesson I did on that topic. I want them to give me a response if I am solving the problem correctly. I like stepping out of the problem from the first step to the solution of the problem. Then I could also get that positive feedback from them to see if they actually grasped the concept of the lesson that I was teaching. That will make me know more of what they have a difficulty in.

Other participants saw the use of social networking tools to provide students with the opportunity to do problem-based projects. For Debbie, she uses the tools to allow her students to complete tasks that are connected to the real world:

> For me, I like to have my students make connections to the real world. One thing they need to learn is to be able to solve problems. Using social networking tools, my students are given a project to complete using a chapter book we are reading. I give them guidelines; however, I give them the freedom to be 21st-century learners and work together to complete the project given.

Carla echoed a similar way in which students become problem solvers while using social networking tools in the classroom:

> You know what is so cool about social networking tools. It allows my students to be problem solvers. The platform allows my students to interact with each other be problem solvers. I like to challenge my students, so I give them problem-based projects that require them to identify a problem and work collaboratively to identify a problem to that problem.

Theme 4: Social networking tools allow for the application of skills among fourth-graders. Applying a skill learned was a notable theme that emerged from the interviews. Participants agreed that the learning process and social networking tools should allow students to use the skills. Four participants expressed that social networking tools enable students to apply new skills they have learned in the classroom. The participants added that students could share ways to use reading skills with their fellow classmates to reflect that learning has taken place.

Toni also agreed that students should be able to apply new skills learned: "When students are engaged, that will give them the opportunity to focus on learning new skills and not only learning skills but also being able to use these skills when the task arises."

Lexi discussed the application process from a different perspective. She indicated that when her students use social networking tools, they develop technological skills, which they apply to complete ELA tasks:

> This year so far, we have to use so much technology that I myself have learned so much. We've used Google Classroom. I've taught my kids how to make videos,

> how to highlight and annotate. I've used short stories, have kids made videos. It's just been everything.

Lexi further added that the technology skills her students learned were implemented in her ELA classroom to complete assignments. Like Lexi, another participant discussed allowing her students to apply social networking tools in her ELA lessons. Kim discussed how her students apply the skills to write a response to text activity called text-dependent analysis. Kim stated that completing a text-dependent analysis task requires her students to be able to apply analytical skills to respond to the writing task:

> It is a good platform because you have to challenge these kids. The best strategy that I normally use with that ELA writing lesson, I normally use the RACE strategy. That's RACE in all caps. That's what I normally use. They restate the question. The R stands for restating the question. The A, answer the question and all its parts. And the C, cite the evidence. And E, and then you're going to explain your evidence. It is an effective tool. I got a lot out of them using it when I model the behavior that I expect them to adapt. Whatever I do, I expect them to do the same and we take it in stages. When I'm teaching and writing, let's say today we are going to work on a passage, you're going to read the passage. So you're going to give them the key points, you're going to read the passage, and then you are going to restate the question. That's the first part. Then you'll give them another little passage where they could underline the key points, answer the question and all its parts or whatever it is that you want them to respond to. They got to go into

> the passage, find the responses for the questions. Then I let them. They could do it virtually, too, they will have the passage pulled up there with them and they have the little whiteboard. They have the little markers there that they would insert and draw, and then they could underline it there. They will be explaining themselves. What is it that they responded to? I would ask the question, and they would share that response with me. Then we're going to ask another set of students, were the responses correct? If those persons responded to say yes, then you're going to ask why and explain why you chose those responses and why did you say that those responses were correct?

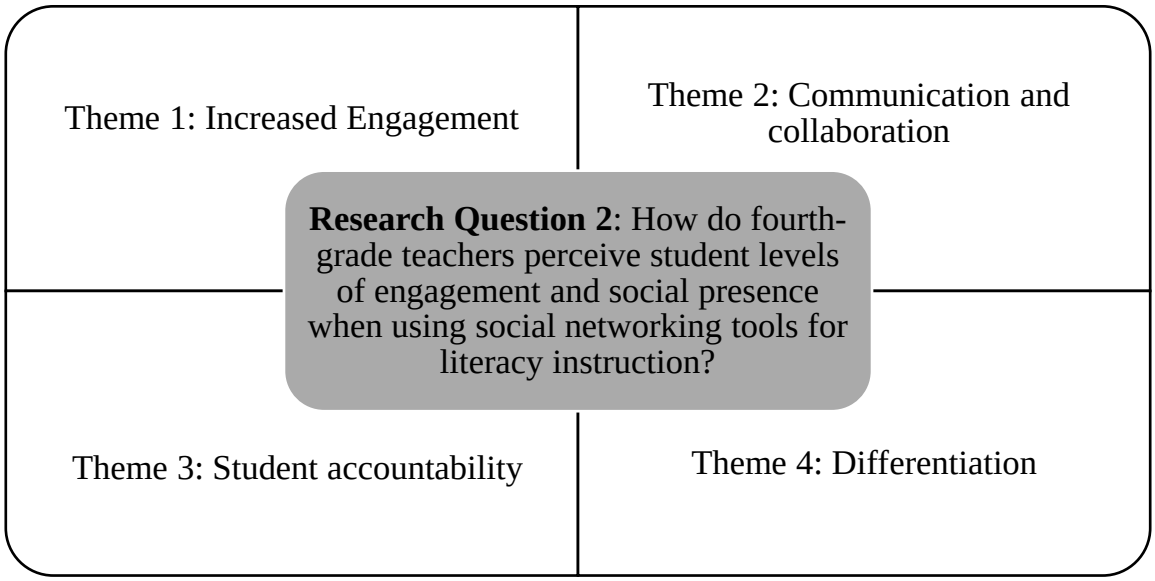
Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked: How do fourth-grade teachers perceive student levels of engagement and social presence when using social networking tools for literacy instruction? Research Question 2 data analysis yielded the themes of *social networking tools support increased engagement among fourth-graders, social networking tools support communication and collaboration among fourth-graders, social networking encourages accountability among fourth-graders,* and *social networking tools support differentiated learning among fourth-graders.*

Participants were asked to describe their experience with student engagement when using social networking tools. The participants also expressed their views on the impact of engagement on literacy development. The results showed that the participants had different views of social networking tools and engagement among fourth-graders.

Figure 2

Research Questions 2 Themes



Theme 1: Social networking tools support increased engagement among fourth-graders. Beth saw increased engagement among her students with the use of social networking tools, as they were participating more in classroom activities. She discussed that her students were talking more in class compared to when she met them initially:

> Well, the kids that I have in my homeroom, which I was actually new to those kids and basically using a virtual platform, I actually got a lot of them talking. At first, they're not used to you, so that's going to be a challenge at first, but as they progress along, as they get to know you and based on their strategies that you're also using to teach, you got to pick strategies and videos and things that will get them talking.

Kim also agreed that her students talked more due to using social networking tools. In addition, her students were more confident in using the features of the social networking tools to participate in class:

> I've seen a lot of them actually opening up their mouths, becoming more responsive, in a nutshell. More responsive. At first, it was that challenge, but after they got used to me and all of that, I really had a lot of them want to participate. They would click the share button. They would raise their hands and be able to explain an answer because that's the way we actually train them to respond, from where the problem starts to where the solution comes at the end, whether it's ELA, science, or social studies, the same way I do it across the board.

In support of Beth and Kim, Debbie shared a similar view on students being more engaged:

> Well, first of all, to be engaged means to be involved. If you are not engaged, then you won't really necessarily be involved. The engagement has a whole lot to do. Once you grab the attention of those students and have them well engaged, that's a plus.

Although all the participants believed that the social networking tools increase student engagement, some participants made it clear that the engagement factor was very significant to developing literacy skills. Carla discussed having students engaged and developing literacy skills:

> All right. First of all, if kids aren't engaged, you can't get anywhere with them. So if we want kids to grow in their literacy skills, we have to have them engaged, so

> that's the first part of getting them to grow in their literacy skills is having them engaged and being a part and wanting to do whatever we have them to do it.

Participants perceived social networking tools to increase students' engagement during literacy activities. However, Rose recommended that teachers need to design plans to support engagement among students:

> My view on social networking tools and engagement is that it creates an atmosphere of active learning where students are given the responsibility to complete various tasks in such a virtual environment. So if you're asking if the social networking tools are good for engagement, it is only if teachers plan or design activities online effectively.

Theme 2: Social networking tools support communication and collaboration among fourth-graders. The interviews revealed that all eight participants believed social networking tools support communication and collaboration among students. The participants discussed the relevance of social networking tools to support effective communication and collaboration among students to attain a goal for the learning community. Toni describes how her students were able to communicate and collaborate during the learning process while engaging with their group members:

> Okay. So, one example that I can describe is where I will teach my lesson and then have my students reflect on what they have learned. So not all students like to write, and so if they're not comfortable writing out what they have learned, then they are able to speak orally and record themselves on Flipgrid, and then share that back with me. Now they can also share it with their classmates, and that's

> where their classmates can go ahead and comment under the video that they have created by asking them questions or giving little suggestions and tips, or just commending them on the job that they have done using the platform.

Sophia also shared a similar view of using social networking tools for students to collaborate. She highlighted how small group sessions are done, allowing students to work collaboratively to complete a task:

> Well, sometimes, we use these tools to help our students to collaborate. So there are times when I will need to have some small group sessions if I'm not able to monitor all those groups at the same time. This is a time when I can create my centers in such a way that each group is using one of the social networking tools to collaborate and also to get their assignments done. I like to use Google Classroom. There is a chat feature there where they get to post their comments back and forth to each other, but they also know that they have to do that within the confines of the classroom rules. I've also used Zoom to get my students to collaborate as well. And again, that's where they can use the chat feature. That's where they can also unmute and have live conversations with each other about the material that they're working on.

Debbie shared the positive effect of communication and collaboration in developing literacy skills among her students. In addition, she discussed the social networking avenue allow her students to develop questioning and debating skills:

> So, I use Google docs on a regular basis, and I believe that allows my kids to not only interact but also develop the skills that they need to be literate. For example,

> I would post a question in Google Docs and then have my kids have a discussion based on a question. During their discussion, you know they will debate and go back and forth. Giving reasons for answers and I believe that develops reading skills just by having good conversations online.

Beth was another participant who expressed the positive effects of social networking tools and collaboration. She explained how collaboration among her students supports students in developing their inquiry skills:

> In my classroom, I mainly use social networking tools for academic work. I use it in various subject areas, especially in ELA, and I also use it for many collaborative assignments and inquiry-type of assignments. I think the platform is awesome to allow students to effectively complete those types of task together.

Theme 3: Social networking encourages accountability among fourth-graders. Six participants in this study had a similar perception of students being accountable to complete a given task. The participants revealed that online activities gave students ownership of their learning as they aim to complete a learning goal as an online community. Rose stated that using social networking tools makes students responsible for completing a task. She also added that students know their roles and must collaborate to get the assignment done. Lexi further added to student accountability by stating:

> To ensure that my students are engaged, I ensure that during their interactions online, they are each given roles. This allows my students to know they are accountable for staying on task and getting the work done. Let's say, for example, one lesson that I did was a literature circle activity using the book The Chocolate

> Touch. From that activity students, were required to participate in deep conversations, which not only sought to answer recall questions but were developed in such a way to ensure that students were asking and answering critical thinking questions about the book.

Toni described a similar view of social networking tools and accountability among students. She asserted that students would be more engaged if they knew what was expected of them, hence, making sure they collaborate to get an academic task completed:

> I do you believe that social networking tools encourage engagement because students are required to interact with each other actively. If you're in a social networking environment and you know that your teacher has access to you and can constantly see what you are doing, you're going to take responsibility and make sure that you're actively engaged in the activity. To me, it's like a regular face-to-face classroom where the teacher monitors what the students are doing.

` Beth noted:

> I think by now, these kiddos understand how technology work in the sense that teachers are tracking everything they do, for example, how long they are working on a task and whether the task is completed. Our students know this, so they have to know that "hey, if I don't do my work, my teacher will know" That is what is so cool about social networking tools.

Theme 4: Social networking tools support differentiated learning among fourth-graders. Giving students the opportunity to learn at their level was discussed

among seven participants in this study. Using social networking tools during classroom instruction allows differentiation. Participants had various views about differentiation and how social networking tools are incorporated into the learning process. Some participants discussed that differentiation is important for engagement and developing literacy skills. Kim discussed the importance of differentiation during literacy instructions:

> Even if you're being observed and then you're going to be there teaching a lesson, you have to make sure that you get learners from all the different reading levels. We have three levels there. We have the frustrational, we have the independent, and we have the instructional level. That is why the differentiation of instruction, too, is also very important. Very important because children are unique and they, therefore, learn differently. It might audio-visual aid. Some might just listen to you talking there and they grasp what you're doing.

Rose added that differentiation is essential primarily to ensure that students are engaged through the learning process:

> Therefore, getting them engaged and being engaged is a plus. Any teacher, whether elementary or high school, those are strategies that you have to have in your skills. That's a very good and effective way of getting those children being involved and being able to share responses to questions. When you get those responses from them, as I stated earlier, that will tell you what level the children are and what more they need. You can improve on the weakness and build upon their strengths.

Lexi shared the use of social networking tools for small group instructions that support differentiation:

> We have breakout sessions where I can work with students at various levels and give them support. In their small groups, students interact with each other and then come back to the main session. So it's used in multiple ways to still have kids being engaged and learning at their level.

Carla discussed using social networking tools for differentiation, but she highlighted the positive impact on literacy development among her students. In addition, she credited the use of the tools to engage students of different learning abilities to excel on the SC Ready assessment:

> Social networking tools are very effective, especially when teaching my students during the pandemic. I was very concerned because I have students from different learning groups. With the use of social networking tools, I was able to plan activities that had my students actively engaged while developing reading skills at various learning levels. My students were more engaged, and it showed in their preliminary state test scores. My kids did way better than I thought they would be, considering what they went through with the pandemic.

Research Question 3

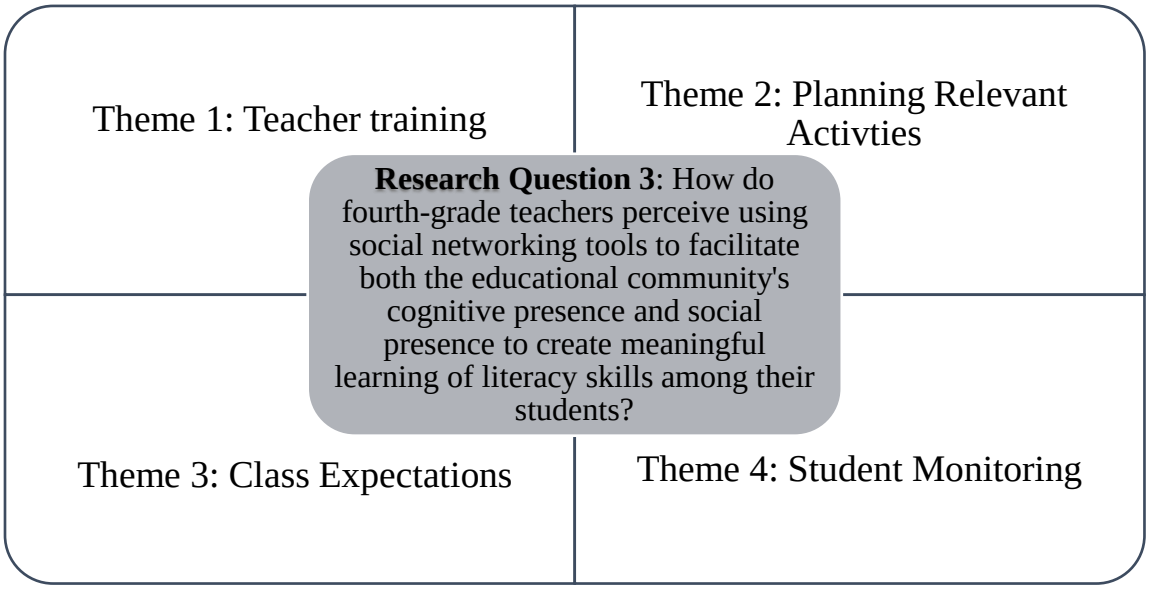
Research Question 3 asked: How do fourth-grade teachers perceive using social networking tools to facilitate both the educational community's cognitive presence and social presence to create meaningful learning of literacy skills among their students? Four themes emerged based on Research Question 3: *teacher training is important to*

implement social networking tools activities, planning relevant social networking tools activities is essential to engagement, class expectations must be clear when using social networking tools, and *student monitoring must be employed when using social networking tools*. I present the results in this section according to the four themes.

To answer Research Question 3, participants in this study responded to questions that described how they used social networking tools in the classrooms for literacy instructions. The participants suggested advice to teachers who were planning to use social networking tools in the classroom. Results indicated that the eight participants had different views on planning instructional materials and recommendations for what should occur during the teaching process.

Figure 3

Research Question 3 Themes



Theme 1: Teacher training is important to implement social networking tools activities. Six participants discussed the importance of teachers receiving training to use social networking tools. Sophia stated, "I would be uncomfortable not knowing how to navigate social networking tools in my lessons. That is why I am always doing online training to sharpen my skills." Carla noted, "Come on, teachers! It doesn't hurt to learn how to use technology in the classroom."

Participants reiterated the importance of teachers using new technology in the classroom. Debbie and Kim recommended that teachers watch videos to learn how to use social networking tools. Debbie remarked, "At my school, we have to watch training videos on Simple K12. There are great and very short, perfect for the busy teacher." Sharing a similar view is Kim:

> All I could say for teachers going forward in a new school term coming is that make yourself well-rounded as possible. If you are lacking lecturing in certain areas of things that you don't know, I would recommend that they go on Google, pull up a video, watch the video on whatever points are, whatever they can garner from it. Also work with other persons, other team persons.

Rose noted that as educators, we would continue to use technology in the classroom; therefore, we need to be familiar with these platforms and know how to use them:

> For example, Kami, we use Kami a lot, too, in Canvas. That's, you upload a worksheet, and that's a digital sheet that the kids can actually go in and respond to. They could underline the response. They could write on the worksheet. All of that and everything is on the internet. We are still going to be using Canvas, even if the kids are going to be physical or virtual, so you will still need to know these platforms well and be able to manipulate them.

Theme 2: Planning relevant social networking tools activities is essential to engagement. The participants agreed that planning relevant activities was essential to develop the literacy skills needed. Toni discussed the importance of planning an effective lesson for captivating students' attention. In addition, ensuring that students are working collaboratively to confirm that students complete a task depends on an effectively planned lesson by the teacher. She also reiterated the importance of engagement in the learning of literacy skills and implored teachers to plan for student engagement carefully:

> One has to be careful when thinking about using social networking tools for engagement, and that is ensuring that students are engaged in the task that is given to them, and so it's important for teachers to plan effective activities using social networking tools to ensure that students are actively engaged with their group members to complete the assignments on hand.

Debbie cautioned that social networking tools could be a distraction if not used effectively by teachers. She recommended that teachers plan instructions that cater to groups to ensure engagement and active learning:

> I think it can be a distraction because it gets used so much. They can go on so many other things while they're staring at the screen because I've had kids, they're sitting in front of the screen, and they're looking directly at me, but you can tell they're not doing what they're supposed to be doing. So that level of distraction is there. But at the same time, if we as teachers offer activities in groups and stuff like that, we can still have them engaged in the activities that they should be doing.

To provide an optimistic view for those who do not value social networking tools, Rose discussed that the tools serve a great purpose in the classroom, especially with literacy development. She stated the value of social networking tools relay on the effective planning teachers need to implement to encourage engagement among students and the avenue to promote students into effective readers:

> I would also like to add that although some may see social networking tools as a waste of time in the classroom in the sense that it is just for having conversations

> that they are not constructive, it does have value for educational growth as well as literacy growth. The main concern is that these literacy activities need to be designed in such a way that it promotes active engagement and that students will become better readers.

Theme 3: Class expectations must be clear when using social networking tools. Six participants discussed the importance of class expectations when using social networking tools. The participants used the term "rules" to represent class expectations during the interview. For example, Carla stated, "We cannot just have our kiddoes use these tools without ensuring they understand how to use them. They have to be taught rules and procedures." Beth described the importance of expectations as:

> If students are not doing what they need to do, then maybe the teacher has not made her rules clear. It's a no-brainer that there have to be clear guidelines for students. If not, they will do what they want to do. They need to know the consequences if they go to other sites and do not complete their work. And trust me, they will try to.

Sophia's suggestion aligned with Beth in that when planning activities for students when using social networking tools, it is essential to communicate the classroom expectations to students:

> All right. So before we do anything at all, it is up to me as a teacher to set the expectations for my students and ensure that they also understand these expectations before we begin working in these platforms. Now, once you have laid the ground rules and they understand the rules and the expectations or the

> instructions for their assignment that we're about to work on, then I see where they are productively engaged, and they usually do well.

Theme 4: Student monitoring must be employed when using social networking tools. The participants in this study noted the importance of monitoring students during the lessons on social networking tools. The educators indicated the importance of designing lessons that allow feedback between teacher and students, hence the need to monitor students. Rose reflected on her planning process to ensure her students are monitored, "I ensure my lessons include academic feedback. I support my students during the lesson to give them the feedback they need to support their learning." Similarly, Carla discussed the need to monitor her students for academic purposes and stay on task. She explained that her students need supervision during the online learning process:

> When using these apps in the classroom, I constantly monitor my students. Sometimes they will get carried away. I have to make sure that when they are off task, I am there to redirect them if it is needed. We cannot just have the students working in groups without teacher supervision.

Lexi highlighted the importance of teachers managing social networking tools correctly to ensure students are engaged and learning. She also mentioned the importance of having less classroom disruption to ensure that students are actively learning:

> Okay. So one of the things is that if students aren't engaged, then we're going to be having a lot of classroom disruptions. So we want them to be as engaged as possible, but not just engaged for the sake of being engaged. We want them to be

> able to demonstrate just how much they know, how much they understand, and what they can do. Now, like I said, when we manage these tools properly, this is what students are able to do. Showcase what they know, and also give us clear ideas as to what we need to do, or next steps that we need to take to ensure that we get them to the level that they need to be at.

Sophia also shared a recommendation that social networking tools should be appropriately managed to ensure that students are interacting in their online community:

> And if for some reason they get stuck, or they're not sure of what to do, that's where they can start collaborating with each other or ask me whatever questions they have about what we are working on. It can be a productive tool, but it has to be managed properly.

Overall, the fourth-grade teachers spoke about the importance of ensuring that students are monitored during the teaching and learning process online. The participants discussed the need to monitor students for academic progress, behavior, and social interaction with their peers.

Summary

Discussed in Chapter 4 were the results of my basic qualitative study about teacher perceptions of using social networking tools for developing literacy skills and promoting engagement among fourth-grade students. Outlined in Chapter 4 are the methods of data collection and data analysis. Research Question 1 data analysis yielded themes related to *social networking tools help develop critical thinking among fourth-graders, social networking tools help develop reflective thinking among fourth-graders,*

social networking tools help develop problem-solving skills among fourth-graders, and *social networking tools allow for the application of skills among fourth-graders.* Research Question 2 data analysis yielded themes of *social networking tools support increased engagement among fourth-graders, social networking tools support communication and collaboration among fourth-graders, social networking encourages accountability among fourth-graders,* and *social networking tools support differentiated learning among fourth-graders*. Research Question 3 data analysis yielded themes related to *teacher training is important to implement social networking tools activities, planning relevant social networking tools activities is essential to engagement, class expectations must be clear when using social networking tools,* and *student monitoring must be employed when using social networking tools.*

Chapter 5 continues with a detailed discussion of the results, including conclusions about the findings and how they connect to the literature and conceptual framework. Additionally, I will discuss limitations and recommendations for future research. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes with the implications of my study and recommendations for instructional practices when using social networking tools.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

I used Garrison et al.'s (2000) CoI framework to analyze the experiences of eight fourth-grade teachers using social networking tools for literacy development and engagement. Findings from the study were consistent with the framework. The CoI framework comes from the seminal work of Dewey (1933). He believed in developing cognitive skills through reflective thinking and promoted a constructivist approach to learning in general.

The data collected in my study produced 12 themes related to teachers' perceptions. I described in detail the alignment of the theme to the research questions. I also discussed the connection of the findings to the CoI framework and the literature review. Within the scope of the study, the themes identified were similar to themes found in previous studies and the CoI framework.

Interpretation of Findings

Research Question 1

To better understand the perception of social networking tools and literacy development among fourth-graders, I first analyzed what were social networking tools according to the participants. This research indicated that fourth-grade teachers defined social networking tools as any site that supports interactions, which was supported by Dhiman and Joshi (2020). Furthermore, Dhiman and Joshi defined social networking tools as online platforms used to build a social relationship with others who share a common interest and interact with others on the given platform or site. Divya and Sudhier

(2019) also supported this definition, identifying social networking tools as sites that enable the masses with common ideas to communicate and share.

Fourth-grade teachers in this study also defined social networking tools for educational purposes. They elaborated that the tools served as more than an avenue for communication but an accessible platform for students to interact and create learning opportunities. This study also stated that social networking tools allow students to share information to create relationships and support formal and informal learning. This finding aligns with several studies that define social networking tools as educational tools to foster the teaching and learning process (Czerkawski, 2016; Imran et al., 2016; Saini & Kaushik, 2017).

Consistent with the findings of Kurt (2017) and Selevičienė and Burkšaitienė (2016), fourth-grade teachers cited the importance of social networking tools for literacy development. Students developed these literacy skills as a result of active communication and engagement with other members (Kızıl, 2017; Özerbaş, & Mart, 2017). According to Kurt (2017) and Huffman (2017), social networking tools develop and reinforce literacy skills and deepens students' understanding by relying on cognitive skills to create new meaning and apply their experiences, which aligns with the findings.

Research Question 2

The effects of using social networking tools to ensure engagement among students were confirmed when compared to previous studies. The responses from the fourth-grade teachers in this study indicated that students demonstrated engagement, as reflected in studies by Chen and DiVall (2018), De Arriba (2016), and Denker et al.

(2018). All the participants in this study discussed how social networking creates the environment for students to collaborate, encouraging active engagement. The engagement and collaboration findings align with Dafoulas and Shokri (2016) that social networking tools stimulate active interaction and collaboration, allowing learners to be more engaged in learning activities.

Another element of engagement discussed by the fourth-grade teachers in this study was literacy development. The participants identified literacy skills as higher order thinking skills as reflected in the English Language Arts (ELA) South Carolina College-and-Career Ready Assessments (SC Ready) (South Carolina Department of Education, 2019c). The ELA assessment measures students' performance using higher order skills to demonstrate students' cognitive processes (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017b; South Carolina Department of Education, 2019c). Previous studies have shown a connection with social networking tools encouraging both engagement and higher order thinking skills (Bolden & Nahachewsky, 2014; Peeters, 2018; Yarbrough, 2018). The participants in this study confirmed that as a result of using social networking tools, students were engaged and developing higher order skills related to literacy development.

Research Question 3

Studies discussed in Chapter 2 had similar findings on how teachers create a meaningful learning environment to facilitate cognitive and social presence during online learning. Research Question 3 focused on soliciting the recommendation from fourth-grade teachers to use social networking tools in ELA lessons to promote literacy development and engagement. The findings revealed that fourth-grade teachers

considered effective planning and monitoring essential. Studies showed that careful planning and monitoring are essential when encouraging student engagement with social networking tools (De Arriba, 2016; Denker et al., 2018; Lopez-Cupita, 2016; Zheng et al., 2015). The participants felt that learning activities that incorporate social networking tools need to associate with the learning outcome, and as such, teachers need to plan specific online learning activities. In agreement with Denker et al. (2018), the fourth-grade teachers recommended creating a practical instruction plan. De Arriba (2016) also echoed a similar view to the findings that social networking tools can provide students with countless learning opportunities if planned effectively.

Another notable finding of this study was the monitoring of students during the online lesson. Participants discussed the need for teachers to be involved in their online lessons by monitoring students and checking for understanding. Studies with similar findings indicated the students were not engaged during their online lesson and suggested that the instructor be involved (Habibi et al., 2018; Kilis & Yildirim, 2019). Online classes require the monitoring of students to optimize the learning process (Kilis & Yildirim, 2019).

Implementing social networking tools in the classroom may improve students' participation and engagement if training and support are provided for both teachers and students (Akçayır, 2017). Educators have shown concern for training to use social networking tools for many reasons (Almekhlafi & Abulibdeh, 2018; Sobaih et al., 2016; Wingo et al., 2017). Educators need time and support for opportunities to train in using social networking tools in the classroom (McGee et al., 2017).

Another element of training discussed by participants was that technology is constantly changing. Therefore, teachers need to keep up with the changes. Similar studies have shown the similar concern that technology is constantly updating. Therefore, there is a demand for training in newer technology applications (Al-Bahrani et al., 2017; Krutka et al., 2017). The fourth-grade teachers in this study shared a similar view to El Shaban (2017), who stated that educators need training in using social networking tools in the classroom to embrace the advantage of the learning process.

The findings of Kitsantas et al. (2016) stated that social networking tools could distract students. Studies have shown that educators have experienced that social networking tools divert students' attention from the learning task and ultimately disrupt the learning process (Al-Bahrani et al., 2017; Manca & Ranieri, 2016b). However, contrary to those finding, fourth grade teachers in this study indicated that social networking tools are not a distraction if teachers plan engaging lessons that keep students on task.

CoI Framework

Cognitive presence. Garrison et al.'s (2000) CoI framework built on Dewey's (1933) reflective thinking model by merging learning in an online community. Dewey believed that reflective thinking supports learning by deepening learners' experiences. Dewey defined reflective thinking as ‘active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends’ (Dewey, 1933, p. 118). During this reflective process, learners can authenticate existing knowledge and create new knowledge for the

learning experience. The fourth-grade teachers indicated that students develop literacy skills due to reflective thinking and critical thinking.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the cognitive presence of the CoI framework promotes higher order thinking skills. The participants in this study noted a similar view as indicated in the cognitive presence of the CoI framework. Learners demonstrate construction, exploration, and reflection in the cognitive presence to evaluate information and construct meaning (Garrison et al., 2000). Garrison et al. (2000) created the PI model of the CoI framework. PI model consists of four phases of critical inquiry: triggering, exploration, integration, and resolution. Triggering, the first phase, sees the learner conceptualizing a problem or issue. The second phase is exploration, which prompts the learner to understand the problem and search for information to explain the situation. The third phase, integration, involves students engaged in critical discourse, creating a structured meaning and understanding. In the final resolution stage, students select a solution or test the solution by implementing it to solve the problem.

Fourth-grade teachers shared experiences of four stages of the PI model as discussed by Garrison et al. (2000). The teachers shared that due to using social networking tools for ELA instructions, students could question their peers. Second, fourth-grade teachers have discussed the level of questioning due to the students' online learning community. Third, the responses from the fourth-grade teachers have shown agreement with Garrison et al. in the cognitive presence element of the framework. Finally, the teachers shared that the communication process among students developed literacy skills at a higher level when compared to the South Carolina state ELA standards

Social presence. When I analyzed the fourth-grade teachers' responses to the CoI framework's social presence, I observed similarities between the findings and the framework. According to Garrison et al. (2000), the social presence does not represent engagement for social purposes only but rather an engagement that promotes an environment that contributes to reflective thought. All the participants discussed this during the interviews. They indicated that the interactions between students should create an environment of students sharing their thoughts, creating solutions to problems, asking questions, and learning. The social presence is not achievable if learners only socialize; they should develop a sense of community for inquiry. The findings of this study align with the tenets of social presence, which is the ability for learners to identify themselves as members of a learning community and purposefully collaborate in a reflective and questioning process (Garrison, 2017).

Teaching presence. The teaching presence of the CoI framework highlights the teachers' role in managing both the individual student and group sessions to solve problems by providing explicit guidance (Garrison et al., 2000). The findings of my study confirm the role of teachers in modeling, monitoring, and providing feedback to students. The teachers felt that the design of an online lesson should provide instant feedback to clear misconceptions.

Garrison et al. (2000) added that teaching presence is essential in ensuring that learning goals are met by merging the social and cognitive presence during the inquiry process. The fourth-grade teachers in this study revealed the importance of planning or designing lessons that cater to engaging students to develop the literacy skills they need

to be functional fourth-grade students. This study also discussed that planning relevant activities requires discussing classroom expectations to ensure that the social presence and the cognitive presence can work in unison to develop literacy skills.

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of this basic qualitative study was the number of participants to complete all the interviews. Eight participants participated in this study which was initially planned for ten. Regarding transferability, the sample size was not representative of fourth-grade ELA teachers in the entire state of South Carolina, much less the whole population of the United States. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalized to all fourth-grade teachers in South Carolina. Another limitation was teachers committing to their scheduled interviews due to their busy lives. After recruitment, 12 teachers signed the consent to participate in the study. However, only eight teachers completed the interview.

Research bias is another limitation of my study. As a teacher who uses social networking tools in the classroom, I realized that my views might impact my interpretation of the findings of this study. During the interviews, I had to be mindful of not letting my personal feelings project onto my participants. To ensure my views were not affecting my participants' perceptions, I used reflexive journaling. The reflexive journal helped me be aware of my perceptions and focus on the participants' perceptions of the phenomenon.

The final limitation of this study relates to the recruitment process, which affected dependability. If participants were not honest during the recruitment survey, the findings'

consistency would not be accurate. My study's results need to be consistent and replicable using a similar sample group (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, having an honest description of the participants helps to support the dependability of the study's process, findings, and conclusion. In addition, including follow-up questions at the end of each interview helped maintain dependability with my study's findings.

Recommendations

The themes identified in this study revealed potential areas for future study. Some participants indicated that social networking tools contributed to the accountability aspect for students during collaboration. In addition, the participants discussed the positive impact of students' accountability on learning. More research could be done to investigate the impact of social networking tools and their role in students' accountability during learning and collaboration.

Another aspect of accountability that was not mentioned by many participants was in relation to achievement. The use of social networking tools makes students accountable for their education, which opens the opportunity for increased student achievement. Findings of Ismail and Arshah (2016) and Samad et al. (2019) have presented results that indicated a positive effect of social networking tools on students' achievement. The investigation of achievement and social networking tools in Naveen and Nagesh's (2017) study revealed that college-level students had higher achievement while using social networking tools. Although the literature indicated that social networking tools produce higher achievement results for college-level students, I recommend future research on social networking tools and achievement for fourth-grade

students. In addition, more research would provide data addressing social networking tools and student achievement at the elementary level.

Another emerging theme from the study was differentiation related to students learning needs. Students learn at different levels, and participants in this study discussed the impact of social networking tools when supporting the needs of their students. Differentiated learning has become a relevant point of discussion in the educations system. A study that focuses on the social networking tools and differentiation with the same demographic group would further support the value of differentiated learning and the development of literacy skills.

The final recommendation of this study is based on a limitation of my study. The study was conducted with eight fourth-grade teachers who utilize social networking tools in the classroom for ELA instruction in two regions of South Carolina. Therefore, my study should be replicated with other fourth-grade teachers who use social networking tools in other regions of South Carolina and other states in the United States to investigate if the findings will be similar. Additionally, I would recommend using a larger sample size for future studies. Although my study reached saturation with eight participants, a larger sample size may provide a deeper understanding of using social networking tools to develop literacy skills and promote student engagement.

Implications

The findings of this study have implications for positive social change. The findings of my study have an impact on societal positive social change. The International Literacy Association (2019) has identified students' academic skills needed to be valuable

citizens in society. These skills include foundational literacy skills, digital literacy skills, critical thinking, creative thinking, and collaboration (International Literacy Association, 2019). The findings of this study support the importance of using social networking tools to develop the necessary skills needed for students to function effectively in society.

The second contribution of my study to promote positive social change is at the individual level by improving professional practices. The literacy development opportunities are heavily supported by the literature (Al-Johali, 2019; Kurt, 2017; Nikiforou, 2019; Selevičienė & Burkšaitienė, 2016). The teachers in this study were active users of social networking tools and advocates for students' abundant literacy development opportunities. The findings of this study provided recommendations that other educators could use as a guide to implementing social networking tools. Educators who are skeptical about using social networking could use the study finding as an avenue to discuss utilizing such tools in the classroom.

The findings of this study have positive effects of using social networking and contribute to organizational social change. Like previous empirical studies, my study supports the importance of using social networking tools in the classroom to develop students' critical thinking skills to function effectively as readers, however, at the elementary level. Also, from the perspective of fourth-grade teachers, social networking tools provide students with a learning community that promotes engagement and supports the inquiry process. My study can contribute to positive social change by giving education stakeholders at the district level the opportunity to integrate social networking tools into the ELA curriculum. Policymakers could also see this as an opportunity to

support educators with the necessary training to implement social networking tools in the classrooms.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study confirm Garrison et al.'s (2000) CoI framework. Garrison et al. created this framework for online learning at the collegial level. However, the results of this study demonstrated that social networking tools could be used as an instructional tool for elementary students. As presented by the participants, the results indicate that the framework's social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence all work in unison to support students' literacy development and engagement. In addition, social networking tools were connected to the CoI framework as a virtual environment that promotes students being members of a collaborative group for learning.

This study also shows the connection between the CoI framework and literacy development. The CoI framework was created from Dewey's (1933) reflective thinking model, and limited studies have indicated the connections to literacy development among younger students. The results of this study have presented the CoI framework to be instrumental in developing literacy skills among fourth-grade students. Even though the participants did not indicate commonly known recall literacy skills or lower-level skills, the participants did discuss the higher literacy skills students will develop due to social networking tools. According to the teachers, these skills were developed not only using social networking tools but also with careful planning, which aligns with the teaching presence of the CoI framework.

Recommendations for Practice

The fourth-grade teachers shared recommendations for instructional practices when using social networking tools in an ELA classroom. The fourth-grade teachers discussed recommendations related to before and during social networking tools for literacy development and engagement. Before using social networking tools, a key recommendation was setting rules and expectations for students. The participants expressed that students needed to be aware of the rules while using social networking tools in the classroom to ensure that the teaching-learning process is fully maximized. Some teachers also discussed that creating the rules gives the students ownership and encourages a more engaging classroom.

The teachers also noted the importance of monitoring students while using social networking tools in the classroom. The teachers' perceptions were similar regarding monitoring students for staying on task and providing support when needed. Monitoring students for educational support through teacher-student feedback clarifies students' misconceptions. Monitoring students regularly get students on track to effectively contribute to their learning community.

Conclusions

As educators, we are tasked to support our students with the skills needed to function effectively in the classroom and society. One such skill is the ability to be a critical reader, and this can be done through the use of technology such as social networking tools (Kurt, 2017; Selevičienė & Burkšaitienė, 2016). As a result, educators are now focusing their attention on implementing social networking tools for educational

benefits (Albarbari, 2016; Almekhlafi, 2016; Cakir et al., 2015; Sung, 2018). However, regardless of the numerous studies indicating the positive impact of social networking tools, little was known about elementary teachers' views (Al-Samarraie & Saeed, 2018; Lui et al., 2016; Yarbrough, 2018).

The problem related to this study was the limited literature that supported elementary teachers with implementing social networking tools for students' literacy development and engagement (Dafoulas & Shokri, 2016; Lui & Lan, 2016; Ramirez & Gillig, 2018; Youssef et al., 2016). As a means for addressing this problem, my study provides a deeper understanding of how fourth-grade teachers perceive using social networking tools in the classroom for literacy development and engagement. The key findings of this basic qualitative study demonstrated that fourth-grade teachers perceived the use of social networking tools to develop literacy skills needed for fourth-grade students to function effectively in South Carolina schools. In addition, elementary teachers who use social networking tools have discussed the positive effects of the tools and discussed concerns for the importance of effective planning for classroom instructions.

The findings of this study present the opportunities for positive social change for the implementation of best practices in the classroom. This positive change can support teachers with the before and after activities that can be used to ensure students' literacy success. Informed decisions can also be made at the organizational level to provide teachers with the necessary professional development training to use social networking tools in the classroom.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

ATTENTION TEACHERS!!

Do you use social networking tools?

Help the community of educators better understand teachers' beliefs of using social networking tools to support literacy development and engagement in fourth grade ELA instruction.

Volunteers must meet these requirements:

- 18 years or older.
- Use social networking tools in the classroom.
- Teaches reading or ELA in fourth grade.
- Currently or recently in South Carolina

About the study:

- One 30-60 minutes Zoom or Google Meet interview
- There will be a follow-up email to review the interview transcript.
- Your information will be kept confidential.

To confidentially volunteer, click the following link to complete a participants' survey. [Survey Link]

For more information, please call or email: Kishema Simms,
kishema.simms@waldenu.edu
754-444-8142.

This study is part of the doctoral research for Kishema Simms, a Ph.D. candidate. Walden University's approval number for this study is **05-14-21-0482548**.

Appendix B: Google Form Questionnaire

Are you located in South Carolina? _____

Do you teach ELA in fourth grade? _____

Do you have a certificate, endorsement, Google badge, or training in technology and instructional integration? _____

Do you use social networking tools for ELA instruction? _____

How often do you use social networking tools for your classroom instruction? _____

Does your school cater to 1:1 technology, which means a device for each student? _____

Are you willing to participate in an interview to share your thoughts on social networking tools and literacy development? _____ If yes, what is your email address? _____

Appendix C: Expert Panel Invitation

My name is Kishema Simms, a Ph.D. Candidate at Walden University, working on my dissertation in education. My years of experience as an elementary teacher spans for 16 years, both in Jamaica and South Carolina.

My study's interest is to explore teachers' perceptions of using social networking tools for literacy development and engagement in their classroom instruction.

I know your expertise is in literacy and innovative technology for classroom instruction, hence my reason to invite as a member of my expert panel. Your participation in the study to become an expert panel will help me create an interview tool that will capture teachers' essence of teachers' beliefs of using social networking tools for literacy development and engagement. Your contribution would be of great value to me as I maintain the ethical standard by creating a valid and credible tool for my study.

If you are interested in sharing in creating the data collecting tool, please contact me by email: kishema.simms@waldenu.edu or phone: 754-444-8142. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kishema Simms

Learning, Instruction, and Innovation, Ph.D. Candidate

Appendix D: Follow-Up Email to Participants with Consent

During my experience as an elementary teacher, I have seen the influence of social networking tools in the classroom. This influence was especially prevalent in the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers have adjusted to integrating social networking tools for communication, collaboration, and providing instruction. One way of proving instruction is for the development of literacy skills.

While reviewing the literature on the topic, it was evident that extensive studies have investigated the use of social networking tools for the development of literacy skills and promoting engagement among college students. Unfortunately, limited studies have explored elementary teachers' views using social networking tools for literacy development and engagement.

If you believe your experience and knowledge about social networking will add to this study, please indicate your consent by signing below. Walden University's approval number for this study is **05-14-21-0482548**.

Printed Name of Participant

_____

Date of Consent

_____

Participants' Signature

_____

Researcher's Signature

_____

Appendix E: Fourth-Grade Teacher Interview Protocol

Study: The perceptions of fourth-grade teachers have about using social networking tools in the classroom to develop literacy skills and increase student engagement.

Date:
Time of Interview:
Method:
Interviewee Alphanumerical Code:
Script:

My name is Kishema Simms, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. Thank you again for your willingness to be a participant in my study. The purpose of this interview is to understand the perceptions fourth-grade teachers have about using social networking tools in classroom instructions for literacy development and increasing students' engagement. Please note that your responses from this interview will remain confidential. To protect your identity, please refrain from using your name at any point in this interview. I will be recording this interview to obtain a permanent record. Is it okay with you if I begin recording?

General perception of social networking tools:

1. Tell me about your professional background.
2. How would you define social networking tools? What are some examples you use in your classroom?
3. Please describe any training you have received on using social networking tools in your classroom.
4. Tell me about how you have used social networking tools in your classroom? (RQ3)
5. Please elaborate on the use of social networking tools and the development of literacy skills among your students? (RQ1)
6. Tell me your thoughts on the use of social networking tools for developing reflective or critical thinking in your students? (RQ1)
7. Describe your experiences with student engagement when using social networking tools? (RQ2)
8. Based on your experiences, how do you believe student engagement impacts literacy development? (RQ2)
9. Describe how you facilitate literacy development using social networking tools in your classroom. (RQ3)
10. Is there anything additional you would like to share about using social networking tools for literacy development and engagement?

Concluding Statement:
Is there anything else that you would like to share with me before we finish this interview? Thank you so much for taking the time to participate in my study. Your responses will remain confidential, and I appreciate your cooperation.

Appendix F: Demographic Questionnaire

Participant Background Questionnaire

Please complete the following demographic questions. All personal information will be kept completely confidential and anonymous. None of the responses you provide will be connected to your name, email address, or other identifying information.

What is your gender?
- ○ Female
- ○ Male

Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?
- ○ No
- ○ Yes

What is your race?
- ○ American Indian and Alaska Native
- ○ Asian
- ○ Black or African American
- ○ Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander
- ○ White
- ○ Two or more races

What is your age group?
- ○ 18 to 24 years
- ○ 25 to 34 years
- ○ 35 to 44 years
- ○ 45 to 54 years
- ○ 55 to 64 years
- ○ 65 years or older

What is the highest degree or education level you have completed?
- ○ Some high school
- ○ High school graduate
- ○ Some college
- ○ Associate degree
- ○ Bachelor's degree
- ○ Some postgraduate
- ○ Master's degree
- ○ Doctorate/Professional degree

Where do you work?

- ○ New England - Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont
- ○ Mid-Atlantic - New Jersey, New York, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania
- ○ East North Central - Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin
- ○ West North Central - Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota
- ○ South Atlantic - Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia
- ○ East South Central - Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee
- ○ West South Central - Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas
- ○ Mountain - Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming
- ○ Pacific - Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington

How long have you been teaching ELA/ reading classes?

- ○ 1 to 3 years
- ○ 4 to 5 years
- ○ 6 to 10 years
- ○ 11 to 20 years
- ○ More than 20 years

What type best describes your organization?

- ○ For profit
- ○ Non-profit (religious, arts, social assistance, etc.)
- ○ Government (local, state, or federal)
- ○ IT
- ○ Legal services
- ○ Financial
- ○ Health care
- ○ Education
- ○ Law enforcement
- ○ Other

How long have you been with your current organization?

- ○ 1 to 3 years
- ○ 4 to 5 years
- ○ 6 to 10 years
- ○ 11 to 20 years
- ○ More than 20 years