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Community College Faculty Experiences as Post-Pandemic Online Instructors

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
2026

Abstract

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MA, Purdue Global University 2019

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education Technology

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a sudden transition from face-to-face to online instruction. The problem that was addressed through this study is that little is known about the experiences of community college faculty members when teaching online in the post-pandemic era. Grounded in Hall's and Hord's concerns-based adoption model, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of community college faculty members' perceptions of their teaching experiences working online post-pandemic. For this basic qualitative design, data were collected through semistructured interviews with 10 community college faculty. A thematic analysis of the data revealed the following six themes: (1) faculty had pre-existing experience and familiarity with online teaching and tools' adoption and utilization of online platforms and tools; challenges and constraints in transition; institutional support and collaboration; flexibility and adaptation to student needs; and professional adjustments. The findings are that community college faculty transitioned from non-use of online learning tools to refinement and refocusing while expressing ongoing concerns about maintaining student engagement in the online classroom. Furthermore, faculty expressed a desire for institutional support through collaboration with curriculum designers and also training for students. The study's findings can contribute to positive social change by providing insights for stakeholders and policy changemakers seeking to support faculty members in adopting and sustaining new online teaching practices.

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Dedications

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my mother, an educator who taught me the power of resilience, and to my twin sister, Nayla.

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I wish to acknowledge the two most important people in my life, first and foremost, for always being supportive of my endeavors.

To my mom, thank you for never letting me doubt myself for a moment, even when I have. You walked this journey with me, not letting life's obstacles prevent me from completing such an impossible task: something only a mother like you could do.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the world rapidly transitioned from face-to-face to online learning. As a result, many educators were forced to teach in a distance format, with little to no experience, leading many to feel unprepared (Anderson, 2020). Community colleges, which are traditionally accessible and inclusive, faced unique challenges during this transition. Faculty members accustomed to face-to-face teaching were suddenly asked to teach online, and the challenges they experienced during the pandemic shaped their perceptions of online education (Anderson, 2020).

Progressing into the post-pandemic era, it is essential to understand the experiences of community college faculty members in a changed education landscape to understand the new shift in online learning and help mitigate barriers and challenges (Gardner & Stotts, 2022). By understanding how community college faculty members are experiencing online learning post-pandemic, change facilitators can gain insight into which practices and policies can enhance online teaching in community college settings.

Chapter 1 begins with a discussion of the study’s background, the problem statement, and the purpose of the study. Then there is a discussion and definition of the conceptual framework, as well as definitions of key phrases or words in the context of the study for the reader, and an explanation of the study's nature. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the research's limitations and scope, as well as its significance to higher education.

Background

Since the pandemic, researchers have focused on the perceptions and experiences of educators in K-12 and community colleges during the pandemic, aiming to understand the challenges they faced (Alamri, 2023; Anderson, 2020; Gardner & Stotts, 2022). However, it is essential to understand how educators perceive changes in a post-pandemic world, as online learning has gained popularity following the pandemic (Boyer-Davis, 2022; Gardner & Stotts, 2022). Community colleges are vital institutions that cater to diverse populations, so understanding the experiences of community college faculty members can provide valuable insights into how to effectively move forward in a post-pandemic world to meet the needs of a wide range of learners. Because much of the current literature focuses on the perspectives of community college faculty during the pandemic, this research study focused on the experiences of community college faculty members post-pandemic (Alamri, 2023; Gardner & Stotts, 2022).

While prior research has explored the experiences and perceptions of community college faculty who taught during the pandemic, further research is needed on this population post-pandemic (Dos Santos, 2022). Previous research has focused on the perceptions of higher education instructors during the pandemic and the experiences of community college faculty teaching online during the same period (Alamri, 2023; Anderson, 2020; Gardner & Stotts, 2022). Singh et al.'s study (2021) examined the experiences of higher education faculty during the pandemic, revealing that there were many issues and challenges faculty experienced while teaching online.

Another mixed-methods study examines the experiences of higher education faculty members during the COVID-19 pandemic and how it affects their perceptions as online instructors (Alamri, 2023). Other studies explore the experiences of faculty members and students, examining various challenges and factors that impacted their perceptions, such as accessibility and learning approaches (Al-Quds, 2021; Boyer-Davis, 2022; Dos Santos, 2022; Schwab et al., 2022). However, post-pandemic, no studies focus on community college faculty perceptions as online instructors after the COVID-19 pandemic. This study was needed to highlight the challenges faced post-pandemic and inform policymakers on how to implement best practices moving forward in community college online learning settings.

Problem Statement

The problem that was addressed in this study is that little is known about the experiences of community college faculty members when teaching online in the post-pandemic era. The situation or issue that prompted me to search the literature is that community college faculty experienced stress during the emergency remote transition, which continues to influence their experiences as instructors (Boyer-Davis, 2022). These levels of stress led to a higher workload and instructor burnout (Griffiths et al., 2022). Research examining faculty experiences before and after the rapid move to online instruction during the pandemic showed increased negative perceptions of their autonomy, competence, and relationship with students, among other factors (Schwab et al., 2022). Post-pandemic, many students continue to request online learning in higher education (Gardner & Stotts, 2022). As such, it was necessary to explore how community college faculty members' experiences during the pandemic continue to influence their experiences as post-pandemic online instructors.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of community college faculty members' perceptions of their teaching experiences working online post-pandemic.

Research Question

The following research question guided the study:

What are community college faculty members' perceptions of their teaching experiences working online post-pandemic?

Conceptual Framework

The concerns-based adoption model (CBAM) serves as the conceptual framework for this study. CBAM is a model that provides researchers with ways to understand how educators experience and react to change. It also provides a way for changemakers to guide the implementation of new changes (Anderson, 1997). Changemakers can refer to administrators, higher education personnel, principals, and department heads in educational settings (Hall & Hord, 1987). The stages of concern aspect of CBAM can address changes that include people's reactions, feelings, perceptions, and attitudes. CBAM considers the way educators experience changes and how to address their concerns to ensure the effective implementation of the innovation (Anderson, 1997; Hall & Hord, 1987). CBAM is a diagnostic method used in this study to explore how face-to-face community college faculty experienced changes in teaching online after the pandemic (Hall & Hord, 1987). It was used in this study to construct interview questions regarding faculty perceptions of the changes to teaching post-pandemic.

CBAM was developed in 1987 and has a history in education as a diagnostic tool that assesses educators' attitudes toward new changes (Hall & Hord, 1987). This model examines how community college faculty members are adapting to changes post-pandemic as they navigate an altered educational landscape. CBAM provides a foundation for interpreting educators' reactions, feelings, perceptions, and attitudes toward innovations (Kayaduman & Demirel, 2019). The CBAM framework is suitable for this study because it has a history of helping researchers determine educators' attitudes towards change; it will be substantial in assessing how community college faculty members feel and think about changes in online learning since the COVID-19 pandemic (Hall & Hord, 1987).

Nature of Study

A basic qualitative interview design was used to address the research question in this study. The study focused on how community college faculty's experiences of teaching online during the pandemic have influenced their post-pandemic online teaching experiences. The data are in the form of responses to researcher-developed, semistructured interview questions. The study participants consisted of 10 community college faculty members who met the inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria for my study participants are community college faculty members who taught face-to-face during the COVID-19 pandemic and who continue to teach online post-pandemic.

Community college faculty who did not teach online during the pandemic and who are not currently teaching online were excluded from the study.

Definitions

The following phrases or words are defined below as used in this study's context to help offer readers clarity.

Online learning: synchronous and asynchronous online learning pre-, during, and post-pandemic, including online learning tools (Schwab et al., 2022).

Community College Faculty: community college faculty who taught during COVID and who are still teaching online after COVID-19 (Gardner & Stotts, 2022).

Assumptions

This study made several assumptions. First, community college faculty members were willing to be interviewed via Zoom or in person and shared their perspectives about distance learning post-pandemic. Also, each participant likely had a different perspective due to the subjective nature of reality and everyone having different values (Burkholder et al., 2016). The following assumption was that community college faculty members would share their genuine perspectives and concerns about teaching online post-pandemic. The experiences or perspectives of individuals may be influenced by personal values and are relative. With these assumptions in mind, the purpose was to understand and interpret responses and experiences. By gaining sincere and representative insights into community college faculty experiences post-pandemic, we can better understand how to navigate online learning in this new landscape.

Scope and Delimitations

Acknowledging the study's delimitations and identifying its scope helped manage expectations and outline the study's boundaries. Because the study focused on community college faculty participants, its findings may not be representative of those within a broader context, such as other types of higher education institutions. This opens the door to similar studies within multiple contexts using a similar population to compare the similarities and differences of the findings in this study. Another delimitation was the time frame in which the data was collected, because it may have excluded any post-pandemic experiences that occurred after the study. Furthermore, the criteria for selecting participants can create such delimitations as excluding members with other roles.

This study limits its scope by focusing solely on the experiences of community college faculty members who have had post-pandemic online teaching experiences. The study does not focus on issues unrelated to online teaching, such as administrative challenges, nor does it aim to compare the effectiveness of online education with face-to-face education. It only seeks to understand how the experiences of faculty members who taught online have shaped their approaches to teaching online post-pandemic. Furthermore, the scope of the study was limited by focusing only on the lens of the stages of concern and levels of use aspects of CBAM within the framework. The study also excluded community college faculty who did not teach online during the pandemic and who are not currently teaching online. Understanding the limits of the study is essential to outlining the expectations so that they are defined and understood clearly.

Limitations

While this study provides valuable insight into the experiences of community college faculty members post-pandemic, various limitations needed to be acknowledged. Because the nature of qualitative research involves a small sample, one limitation is that the findings will generally only be representative of some of the population. Another limitation is that, because this study utilizes interviews, the interpretation of the data may be subject to bias. Furthermore, since the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing, the experiences of community college faculty members being interviewed can continue to change moving forward. Accepting and acknowledging the limitations outlined when interpreting and collecting data enhances the credibility of the research and provides insight into the field of online education (Griffiths et al., 2022).

Biases could have arisen in this study, including researcher, participant, or selection bias. Researcher bias could influence the study if the researchers' experiences are considered when interpreting the data. To mitigate this, researchers must be as objective as possible when interpreting data, using proper interviewing and data collection techniques (Mukherjee, 2020). Participants could also introduce bias into the study by not reporting their honest experiences, so sincere responses were emphasized throughout the interviews. To minimize selection bias, a purposive sampling technique ensured that the sample was accurately represented and included individuals from various age groups, genders, ethnicities, and teaching disciplines (Mukherjee, 2020). The sample size was also sufficient to achieve data saturation. With purposeful and rigorous strategies, such as reflective journaling, bias can be effectively mitigated (Kennedy, 2020). Keeping these biases in mind and having strategies to minimize their effects and made the study's results reliable and credible.

Significance

The study was significant because it filled a gap by examining how community college faculty members were experiencing teaching online post-pandemic. Current research examines faculty teaching experiences during the pandemic but have not addressed post-pandemic experiences (Boyer-Davis, 2022; Singh et al., 2021). By understanding the experiences and perceptions of faculty members, the study offers valuable insights into the adaptability of higher education institutions and the effectiveness of current support systems in the case of future events.

Education influences social change by empowering individuals to be innovative and progress in their communities. The study's findings can influence policymakers' decisions positively, not only in higher education but also in a broader educational context. The study also provides a deeper understanding of how events such as the COVID-19 pandemic can influence educational reforms and emphasize the need for support. Because colleges are at the heart of research and progress, supporting faculty as they implement new technologies and teaching pedagogies allows for greater student learning growth and less instructor burnout, so that these students can affect greater positive social changes within their communities.

Summary

This study explored how the experiences of community college faculty members who taught online during the pandemic have influenced their post-pandemic online teaching experiences. Understanding these experiences was significant in providing insight for administrators and change agents navigating a post-pandemic community college setting. The study's scope focused on a representative sample of community college faculty members and had delimitations that clarified the scope of the study. The study addressed and mitigated biases with the strategies mentioned above. The study results potentially affect positive social changes by guiding policymakers to support community college faculty members in a post-pandemic online teaching setting. Furthermore, it contributes to the existing gap in the field by contributing to the research on the experiences of community college faculty members post-pandemic. Administrative support, such as faculty training in online learning methods, is key to effectively implementing new changes (Hall & Hord, 1987; McCarthy & Ferreira, 2022). Ensuring that online teaching is effective in community colleges is a social issue that must be addressed to maintain the accessibility that community colleges need and are known for in society.

Chapter 2 will review the literature that synthesizes the current research on the perspectives of community college faculty members who taught online during the COVID-19 pandemic and the existing studies on post-pandemic faculty members. CBAM was used as the conceptual framework for the research and as the tool used to assess and study how faculty members changed during and after the pandemic while teaching online.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem that was addressed in this study is that little is known about the experiences of community college faculty members when teaching online in the post-pandemic era. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of community college faculty members' perceptions of their teaching experiences working online post-pandemic. While researchers have examined a wide variety of issues and barriers educators and students faced during the pandemic (Alzahrani, 2022; Anderson, 2020; Boyer-Davis, 2022; Iglesias-Pradas et al., 2021; Vladoiu & Constantinescu, 2021), more research is needed regarding how community college faculty members navigate and implement post-pandemic online curriculum (Gardner & Stotts, 2022; McCarthy & Ferreira, 2022).

This chapter describes the strategies for locating the literature that grounds this study, including the keywords and search engines. The conceptual framework, CBAM, is presented along with its definitions and context in the study. The literature review details the studies performed during the pandemic and concludes with the literature done post-pandemic to highlight the gap. The summary concludes with the critical findings of the literature and discusses the gap regarding perceptions of community college faculty members post-pandemic.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature for this study came from Walden's library and Google Scholar. The following databases were used to find the literature on CBAM, online learning during the pandemic, and studies on faculty members post-pandemic: ERIC, EBSCO, JSTOR, SAGE Journals, Scopus, and IEEE Xplore. The initial keywords used were *online learning, community college faculty members, post-pandemic, distance learning, COVID-19,* and *CBAM.* The majority of the research came from Walden's library, SAGE Journals, EBSCO, and ERIC. When searching through Walden's library for *online learning post-pandemic,* very little research was found, so a Google Scholar subscription to an RSS feed with the exact keywords generated articles as they were published. Because the topic of post-pandemic literature is so recent, it is essential to note that Google Scholar had a more active feed. Google's feed had over 30 articles on the keywords *community college post-pandemic,* while only five articles were generated from Walden's database, and 10 were generated from ERIC's database. To help narrow down the searches, operative words were used in the searches, such as "or" and "and" along with the same keywords from the initial searches. Filters applied included only peer-reviewed articles and journals. To make the search process even more efficient, the articles and abstracts were first reviewed to determine if they applied to the study. By applying filters and continuously adjusting the search terms and exhausting databases, the iterative search process resulted in identifying germane scholarship. Finally, all the articles used in the literature review are drawn from a 5-year time frame to ensure the study is relevant and credible.

Concerns-Based Adoption Model

The concerns-based adoption model (CBAM) is a model that allows researchers to understand how educators process change through several levels of concern (Anderson, 1997). CBAM is a model that has been used for over 40 years to help researchers understand educators' behaviors, problems, and attitudes in educational settings relating to educational innovations or changes (Hall & Hord, 1987). CBAM is a framework that was developed by Gene E. Hall and Shirley M. Hord at the University of Texas Research and Development Center for Teacher Education in the early 1980's, specifically to help understand the way educators adapt to changes and innovations (Hall & Hord, 1987). Since then, it has been a pivotal tool for helping changemakers in educational institutions understand the concerns of teachers whenever new changes are implemented.

The CBAM model helps change facilitators make innovations more acceptable by aiming to understand the concerns of individuals or educators who implement the changes. CBAM's components include stages of concern and levels of use, which are detailed further in the discussion. CBAM provides a foundation for understanding how individuals process changes and aims to help change makers address barriers to new changes, create support systems, and evaluate the implementation process. Overall, the purpose of CBAM is to help change facilitators implement new programs and innovations effectively by assessing and reducing the perceived concerns of educators (Hall & Hord, 2020).

CBAM is a diagnostic tool that interprets change as a process that develops in individuals over time and has three diagnostic components. First, the stages of concern that define the worries and perceptions educators have regarding an innovation. Next, levels of use, which define the way an innovation is implemented. Finally, innovation configurations, which define how an innovation can be implemented. Hall and Hord

(1987) developed CBAM and continue to refine it over the years to help changemakers understand and support innovations in education. That is why CBAM is a fundamental diagnostic tool in educational research.

During the 1970s, when Hord and Hall first developed CBAM, the United States was undergoing a period of educational reform, and many new federally funded programs that were being implemented in schools were failing. After identifying that the greatest factor in successfully implementing new innovations was the way educators perceived new changes, CBAM was born to address this issue and diagnose how teachers underwent changes to help facilitators successfully implement future innovations (Anderson, 2020). Hall and Hord developed CBAM at the University of Texas in Austin as part of a federal grant. CBAM was primarily invented to help successfully implement changes in education and has been used in a wide variety of educational settings since its creation.

CBAM has three primary constructs: the innovation configuration map, stages of concern, and levels of use, which allow researchers to generally understand educators' needs when implementing a new change (Hall & Hord, 2020). The first construct, the innovation configuration map, involves change facilitators creating a set of expectations for everyone involved in the change (Anderson, 1997). The innovation configuration construct typically consists of providing educators with steps or procedures to help facilitate the change process, avoid misconceptions, and receive input from everyone involved in the new implementation (Anderson, 1997; Hall & Hord, 2020).

The stages of concern construct assesses educators' reactions to innovation with the following categories from least to greatest: unconcerned, informational, personal, management, consequence, collaboration, and refocusing (Anderson, 1997; Hall & Hord, 2020). The purpose of the construct is to acknowledge and understand that educators go through various types of concerns, such as personal, management, impact, and informational (Anderson, 1997). Researchers pose open-ended questions to educators regarding the innovation to get an idea of an educator's concerns so that they can later be addressed to create a more efficient implementation of the innovation (Hall & Hord, 2020). At the lowest level, "unconcerned," an educator might have familiarity with a new change but have no concerns regarding the innovation, and at the highest level, refocusing, an educator might offer ideas to improve on the implementation of the innovation (Anderson, 1997; Hall & Hord, 2020). Table 1 illustrates the stages of concern along with a definition of each stage.

Table 1

CBAM: Stages of Concern

Stages of Concern	Description
0. Awareness	Little to no concern
1. Informational	Some awareness of the innovation and interest in acquiring more information about it
2. Personal	Uncertainty about the demands of the innovation and his or her ability to meet those demands
3. Management	The individual is focused on finding the best resources and information for the innovation but has issues regarding efficiency, organizing, and managing it.
4. Consequence	The individual is focused on impacting the student with the innovation and increasing student outcomes with it.
5. Collaboration	The individual is working with others to use the innovation.
6. Refocusing	The individual is refocusing his or her attention on exploring additional benefits of the innovation or for alternatives.

Note: Adapted from Hall, G. E. and Hord, S. M. (2020). Implementing change: Patterns, principles, and potholes. Pearson Education, Inc.

The stages of concern aspect of CBAM provides a measurement to identify how concerned an individual is about a new change, ranging from stages 0-6, where 0 is the lowest level of concern and level 6 is the most intense level of concern (Hall & Hord, 1987). In the context of this study, the stages of concern aspect of CBAM provides a guiding basis for understanding how community college faculty concerns shape their experience with innovation of online learning.

The third construct of the CBAM framework is the levels of use commonly utilized as an interview protocol. The eight use levels are nonuse, orientation, preparation, mechanical use, routine use, refinement, integration, renewal, and renewal (Anderson, 1997). An example of nonuse occurs when interviewing faculty; the interviewee might respond to a question about new technology with “I have heard of Zoom, but I have not used it in the classroom.” The orientation level means that an educator is familiar with the material, and the preparation level means educators understand the innovation's fundamentals (Hall & Hord, 2020). The levels go from least to greatest in terms of usage, so "nonuse" is the lowest, and "renewal" would be the highest level of use. Table 2 demonstrates the level of use along with a description of each level. By categorizing interview responses within each level of use, researchers can compare the levels of use and stages of concern data to understand how educators undergo changes (Hall & Hord, 2020).

Table 2

CBAM: Levels of Use

Levels of use	Description
Nonuse	Educators do not use the innovation.
Orientation	Educators are familiar with the change.
Preparation	Educators are planning to implement the new change or gathering resources.
Mechanical	Educators are using the innovation without adapting or customizing it
Routine	Educators are using the innovation regularly.
Refinement	Educators are adapting and actively using the innovation
Integration	The innovation is a central part of the educators' practices.
Renewal	Educators are reflecting on the innovation to use it in the future

Note: Adapted from Hall, G. E., & Hord, S. M. (2020). Implementing change: Patterns, principles, and potholes. Pearson Education, Inc.

For this study, levels of use and stages of concern was the most appropriate aspects of CBAM (Hall & Hord, 1987). The levels of use diagnostic aspect of CBAM defines the way a person does or does not use innovation and provided a way to define how community college faculty perceive changes in teaching online (Hall & Hord, 1987).

This study did not use the third component of CBAM, Innovation Configurations, because it only aims to understand the perspectives and experiences of community college faculty as they used or are currently using online learning tools in general.

Prior Research

For over 40 years, CBAM has been used to help researchers address concerns that educators experience as they undergo or implement new changes (Hall & Hord, 2020; Martin et al., 2022). CBAM has historically been a framework that helps educational leaders understand the concerns associated with new implementations, allowing them to tailor support strategies. Due to its adaptability as a broad and widely accepted framework, researchers have used CBAM to help understand how educators adapt to new tools in e-learning. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, CBAM was used as an effective framework to help researchers assess how first-time online faculty members adapted to the changes, finding that many first-time educators showed concerns about the lack of training or support provided by their institutions and about maintaining communication with students (Kayaduman & Demirel, 2019). CBAM has helped researchers understand the initial concerns of educators of various subjects and levels to design training programs and take measures to help mitigate challenges based on those initial concerns (Kayaduman & Demirel, 2019; Martin et al., 2022; Matar, 2017).

One recent study assessed how faculty members teaching STEM courses changed teaching strategies and goals over long periods (Martin et al., 2022). In this study, the researchers found that little research was done on how faculty facilitators undergo changes in online teaching practices and that understanding this is essential to supporting faculty in other areas (Martin et al., 2022). CBAM can determine and define how new technologies affect and impact educators' pedagogies (Matar, 2017). CBAM is also an effective tool for measuring the level of use of any new teaching technology introduced (Matar, 2017). The goal of utilizing CBAM as a framework is to help change facilitators successfully incorporate and execute innovations by understanding the concerns of educators.

Because CBAM can be an effective model to help researchers understand changes that educators undergo transitioning to online learning, it is no surprise that the model has been a framework of choice to understand faculty members' pre- and post-pandemic experiences. CBAM has been used in recent studies to help researchers understand the concerns and attitudes of educators undergoing large-scale changes in general education. For example, Kayaduman and Demirel's study found it essential not only to understand but also to relieve the concerns of educators as they implement new changes in the online classroom for the first time. CBAM was selected as the ideal tool to understand educators' concerns as they implemented new changes in the online classroom, finding that their concerns were closely tied to their attitudes toward innovations (Kayaduman & Demirel, 2019). CBAM provides a way for researchers to understand educators' attitudes as they adapt to new changes in the online classroom.

Relevance to Study

Developed in 1987, CBAM is a diagnostic method of assessing people's attitudes toward innovations (Hall & Hord, 1987). The framework is ideal for this study due to its ability to address aspects of changes that include people's reactions, feelings, perceptions, and attitudes (Anderson, 1997). The model served as a method to understand how community college faculty members processed change during and after the pandemic as they implemented new technologies and adjusted to new teaching environments and methods. CBAM provides a grounded foundation for explaining teachers' attitudes, concerns, and behaviors as they navigate post-pandemic changes in higher education. By utilizing CBAM to understand community college faculty members' concerns post-pandemic, recommendations were made to help mitigate or predict future challenges (Kayaduman & Demirel, 2019). Finally, CBAM is a foundational diagnostic model for assessing and understanding the experiences of community college faculty members. CBAM was used to develop the interview questions and in the data analysis process to understand how faculty members undergo changes and to determine their concerns. The following section will discuss community college teaching before COVID-19.

Literature Review

Community College Teaching Before COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic was a catalyst for online learning in community colleges. However, online learning was not a new concept in community colleges before the pandemic. Many higher education institutions were already experimenting with hybrid courses, weighing the advantages and disadvantages 20 years prior (Huber, 1997). Even in the late 1990s, over half of online enrollments were in community colleges, with adjunct community college faculty being the most significant portion of long-distance educators (Allen & Seaman, 2007; Huber, 1997). The growing demand for online learning came from a need for flexibility for adult learners with busy lives, where the physical presence of a traditional classroom was not feasible. Because adjunct community college faculty often work in multiple campuses, the convenience of reducing travel and performing tasks also created a higher demand for online learning. In the early 2000s, community college faculty found that even just having the ability to turn in documents and provide feedback online was far more convenient than doing some of these menial tasks in person (McCormack, 2015). The advantages, even before the pandemic, far outweighed any potential disadvantages.

Although online courses have become increasingly popular in community colleges, there remains considerable uncertainty about the learning and academic outcomes for students taking online coursework compared to those in face-to-face courses (Francis et al., 2019). While online learning existed in community colleges prior to the pandemic, progress was much slower pre-COVID due to the uncertainties. Before the pandemic, faculty elected to teach online or hybrid courses. However, community college faculty who were teaching face-to-face during the pandemic were forced to switch to online learning. As a result, the COVID-19 pandemic caused an immediate and mandatory need for online learning, which had already become increasingly popular in higher education institutions, especially within community colleges (Francis et al., 2019). Because most institutions and community college faculty were unprepared for the sudden shift, numerous challenges and barriers arose during the COVID-19 pandemic as faculty navigated new technologies and teaching methods (Ozkan & Budak, 2021). During the emergency switch, many community college faculty members who were forced to teach online experienced reduced teaching satisfaction due to feeling a lack of competence compared to their face-to-face roles but preferred to continue using online teaching as a supplemental tool (Schwab et al., 2022).

Transition to Online Learning During COVID-19

During the pandemic, courses that had never been taught entirely online before were put to the test. Therefore, researchers were curious about how traditionally hands-on courses, such as music or STEM subjects, could be taught entirely online during the pandemic. One study found that, during the pandemic, most music instructors had no prior online teaching experience and identified the overall quality and delivery of instruction as the greatest challenge in online learning (Yilmaz et al., 2021). The sudden shift to online learning created a need to address problems in these hands-on subjects. Most instructors who taught these types of courses had no experience teaching online, finding it challenging to keep students motivated. However, when asked about their perspectives before and after the pandemic, they reported having more positive attitudes and an increased openness towards the advantages of online learning (Almubarokah & Arifani, 2021; Yilmaz et al., 2021). What these studies found was that, more important than the type of subject being taught, the most critical factors impacting course delivery were found to be an instructor's attitude, knowledge, digital competence, and the students' equipment (Almubarokah & Arifani, 2021; Iglesias-Pradas et al., 2021). Rather than the mode of delivery, the authors of these studies generally concur that instructor and student digital readiness have a higher impact on learning outcomes (Almubarokah & Arifani, 2021; Iglesias-Pradas et al., 2021).

As community college faculty experimented with teaching the first fully online courses, they reported facing such challenges as digital literacy barriers and unpreparedness (Boyer-Davis, 2022). However, despite these barriers, faculty reported positive outcomes in terms of flexibility and a desire to blend online and face-to-face learning in the future, moving past the pandemic (Boyer-Davis, 2022; Lucas & Vicente, 2022). These findings suggest that faculty members' perceptions of online learning have adjusted, with more positive perceptions towards hybrid models.

Another study in the United States found that students preferred taking online humanities courses, while STEM courses were more effective when presented face-to-face, resulting in mixed findings depending on the type of course (Banks & Vergez, 2022). However, most of these studies suggest that online learning has numerous advantages, particularly in STEM and elective courses, where synchronous technology and proper planning are employed (Almubarokah & Arifani, 2021; Yilmaz et al., 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, student outcomes, engagement, and satisfaction varied across different courses. The main reason for this is that most courses that were traditionally hands-on had never been taught online before the pandemic (Yilmaz et al., 2021). The studies found that results varied depending on the nature of the course, implying that some courses were more challenging to transition to a fully online setting, particularly those that were more hands-on (Almubarokah & Arifani, 2021; Iglesias-Pradas et al., 2021; Yilmaz et al., 2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic's shift to online learning, students and faculty who had never tried online learning before discovered many added benefits, including flexibility, self-paced learning, health and safety, and accessibility (Kaur, 2024). Although faculty members experienced difficulty in adapting to online learning during the pandemic, many benefited from a reduced workload due to the ability to submit feedback and grades online (Bosley & Custer, 2021; Penrod et al., 2022). After the pandemic, the reduced workload resulted in more positive attitudes towards online learning. Because online learning was already increasing in popularity before the pandemic, COVID-19 accelerated the shift toward online learning that was already occurring (Anderson, 2020). Due to the perceived benefits of online learning, one study's results showed that, by providing coaching sessions to community college faculty members during the pandemic, faculty and students had an overall positive experience compared to those with little to no support (Alzahrani, 2022). This finding suggests that providing faculty with additional training and administrative support can lead to more positive teaching outcomes. Initially, many researchers put into question the quality and feasibility of online learning but agreed that online tools and online learning should be a permanent supplement even after the end of the pandemic. One certainty is that online learning is here to stay due to its necessity and potential (Anderson, 2020). Multiple researchers demonstrated the importance of finding solutions to the challenges and barriers that exist in online learning (Alzahrani, 2022; Anderson, 2020; Vladoiu & Constantinescu, 2021; Yilmaz et al., 2021).

Online learning has gained popularity, particularly in community colleges (Floyd et al., 2022). During the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers investigated faculty perceptions of effective and ineffective practices in online courses, as well as the adaptations required, and found that instructor communication could improve many of the perceived issues (Li et al., 2021). For instance, the authors reported that instructors who send regular announcements and respond promptly to students help build connections between faculty and students, minimizing miscommunication over assignments and deadlines (Li et al., 2021). Romero-Hall and Ripine (2021) conducted a study which focused on faculty members at a university in Tampa and found that online courses during COVID that required teaching pedagogies they were familiar with using face-to-face required less preparation than online courses that required new pedagogies. Another study that focused on community colleges surveyed both students and faculty members, similarly finding that certain teaching pedagogies were more effective in the online classroom than others but that communication barriers were an issue during the COVID shift (Li et al., 2021; Romero-Hall & Ripine, 2021). A key finding across the literature during the pandemic is that communication is essential to improving instructor course delivery and, overall, more positive perceptions of online learning (Anderson, 2020; Li et al., 2021; Vladoiu & Constantinescu, 2021).

Online Learning in Higher Education During COVID-19

COVID-19 highlighted many barriers to online education for students and faculty that might have existed before the pandemic. Such challenges included family responsibilities, unfamiliar technologies, accessibility, inequity, and increased workload (Bosley & Custer, 2021; Griffiths et al., 2022). A term repeated throughout these studies is “inequity,” referring to the multiple facets of inequality: lack of funding, academic resources, internet access, or technologies. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing equity issues, contributing to the challenges highlighted in studies conducted during the pandemic. Many researchers propose resolving the problems of educational inequity and providing training for educators who are teaching online (Anderson, 2020; Bosley & Custer, 2021; Griffiths et al., 2022). Following feedback from students and educators, a significant global barrier to accessibility was identified during the pandemic. Despite this, the COVID-19 pandemic forced many students to rely on online learning as their only option even though they faced accessibility issues. Due to students facing health concerns during the pandemic, community college enrollment declined, but the number of students enrolling in online learning increased (Anderson, 2020). While internet accessibility is an issue, creative asynchronous solutions can help overcome such barriers.

While asynchronous learning offered temporary solutions to accessibility in online learning during the pandemic, the issue of the isolation that comes with asynchronous learning was a significant topic of interest during the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, one group of researchers incorporated social and emotional learning (SEL) strategies into an online curriculum to overcome such barriers in their study (Vladoiu & Constantinescu, 2021). Other researchers have examined synchronous learning tools in the online classroom, such as Zoom and Discord, which helped mitigate the lack of human interaction that students and teachers experienced during the pandemic as they transitioned from face-to-face to online learning (Anderson, 2020; Vladoiu & Constantinescu, 2021). Developing a sense of community in the online classroom helped students and faculty communicate and receive support from each other during the pandemic (Vladoiu & Constantinescu, 2021). Another group of researchers discovered that group-based activities, active discussion forums, and frequent video meetings created an effective learning environment during the short-term transition (Altillo et al., 2021). Overall, finding ways to maintain social interaction with students and professors was a common problem. The findings of these studies demonstrated a need to address ways to maintain communication in the online classroom (Altillo et al., 2021; Vladoiu & Constantinescu, 2021). These authors found that the value of video or voice conferencing tools was essential to maintaining positive learning outcomes and high levels of student engagement in the online classroom during the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented a unique challenge across higher education institutions. Although many events across history have caused changes in the way courses are delivered, there has never been an event like the COVID-19 pandemic that created a need globally for distance learning (Prokes & Housel, 2021)**.** While there have been events that shut down physical school operations temporarily, there has never been an event such as the COVID-19 quarantine that shut down schools for months (Delgado, 2021). This historical event provided an accelerated push for online learning, allowing researchers to explore the effectiveness of online courses and ways to improve course instruction and delivery (Delgado, 2021).

Faculty Perspectives

The studies surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic in higher education settings focus primarily on student outcomes, perceptions, and experiences, but not faculty perspectives. For instance, students reported that they were affected mainly by employment and mental health changes, demonstrating that the crisis impacted how students perceived online learning during this period (Prokes & Housel, 2021). Through multiple studies, students reported that social connection was a necessity to help overcome isolation during the pandemic as they completed online courses (Altillo et al., 2021; Ozkan & Budak, 2021; Prokes & Housel, 2021). Synchronous technologies, such as Zoom and active discussion boards, helped create a sense of community and mitigate this issue during the pandemic (Erdogmus et al., 2022). The faculty found that accessibility was a barrier to course completion for students, and studies propose solutions such as hotspots and device loaning services to provide students with the necessary resources to complete courses effectively (Erdogmus et al., 2022; Ozkan & Budak, 2021; Prokes & Housel, 2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, community college faculty members underwent many broad challenges and barriers due to the sudden shift from face-to-face to online learning (Floyd et al., 2022). These challenges included remote teaching, personal responsibilities, and online learning barriers. In addition to the changes in their work-home balance, they also had to navigate the challenges in new online instruction skills and methods. Another barrier, in addition to the abruptness of the shift, was the lack of knowledge instructors had of digital tools in the online classroom, according to a mixed-methods study that focused on teacher practices and perceptions during COVID-19 (Meirovitz et al., 2022). This study utilized 129 participants and found that faculty highly relied on instructional support when using digital teaching tools. The teachers who were already accustomed to digital tools implemented them more frequently while teachers who had rarely or never used them faced technological difficulties that prevented them from fully implementing them. During the pandemic, another study's findings showed that that faculty members and students both generally agreed that while the benefit of online learning was its flexibility, many users reported negative feedback regarding mental health and socialization, suggesting a hybrid model moving forward to address those challenges (Mushtaha et al., 2022). The findings of these studies demonstrate some of the main barriers that resulted in the abruptness of shifting to online teaching when instructors felt unprepared: accessibility and a knowledge gap in online teaching versus face-to-face (Floyd et al., 2022; Meirovitz et al., 2022; Mushtaha et al., 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic overall pointed out gaps in the lack of faculty and student support for online teaching and learning. For example, adjunct faculty reported that many colleges and universities excluded them during the pandemic or did not provide professional development for online teaching (Anderson, 2020; Bosley & Custer, 2021; Griffiths et al., 2022). In general, studies conducted during the pandemic have explored how students and faculty members felt during this time and examined the barriers and challenges they faced (Anderson, 2020; Avello et al., 2020; Griffiths et al., 2022). This event highlighted the need for additional support, including professional development and training, as well as additional resources, to enhance the quality and accessibility of online learning.

While there were many assumptions and barriers regarding online learning during the pandemic, the reality is that online learning is a necessity at times (Anderson, 2020). Bird et al.'s study (2022) found that faculty and students in community colleges faced the greatest accessibility barriers due to health and financial concerns. However, their study concluded that, even though students had lower academic performance in the short term, as faculty and students became acclimated to the online learning shift, the long-term impacts (of around a year) were minimal. The researchers concluded that any negative impacts or perceptions were due to the abruptness of the shift from face-to-face to online learning, rather than the instructors' familiarity with online teaching (Bird et al., 2022). A recurring theme in these studies is the concept of "abruptness," which takes into account that unpreparedness was the greatest challenge during the shift to online learning during the pandemic.

Understanding the broad experiences of faculty in higher education during COVID-19 provides valuable insight to the study. A quantitative study that focused on the perspectives of both students and faculty aimed to understand the challenges they faced during the COVID-19 pandemic as they quickly transitioned to online learning (Mushtaha et al., 2022). This study, like others, demonstrated that faculty and students had positive experiences regarding the flexibility of switching to online learning but preferred a hybrid model due to the decrease in socialization of going fully online (Li et al., 2021; Mushtaha et al., 2022; Vladoiu & Constantinescu, 2021). Another study's findings showed that there was little to no research on guiding higher education faculty in how to use online learning tools for both online and face-to-face classrooms (Watson et al., 2023). The researchers of this study employed a mixed-methods approach to survey students and faculty on the effectiveness of online teaching methods and tools, finding that, overall, prerecorded lectures were the most preferred tool, and most participants preferred quiz-based games. Conversely, a closely related study that explores only instructors' perceptions and experiences of synchronous video learning, who were accustomed to only asynchronous tools, found that while synchronous learning provided a greater sense of community through real-time interaction, accessibility remains a major barrier to successfully implementing synchronous teaching and learning (Belt & Lowenthal, 2022). Another reported barrier from a qualitative study focusing on the perspectives of students in higher education is that online learning needs to be both equitable and accessible to be effective and inclusive (Matsieli & Mutula, 2024).

The results of many studies demonstrate that asynchronous tools, such as Zoom recordings or interactive assignments, are effective and positively perceived in the online learning environment (Li et al., 2021; Vladoiu & Constantinescu, 2021; Watson et al., 2023). Asynchronous technologies can overcome the primary barriers to online learning, such as access to devices or internet connectivity, providing students and faculty with the flexibility to learn and teach. These studies provide valuable insights as to the types of technologies that community college faculty may have positive perceptions of as they continue to teach post-pandemic. Online learning is here to stay, and that online tools and online learning should be a permanent supplement post-pandemic (Anderson, 2020; Gardner & Stotts, 2022). A universal theme of the COVID-19 studies done on higher education was that professional development and training on online tools were essential moving forward (Anderson, 2020; Gardner & Stotts, 2022; Li et al., 2021; Lundberg & Stigmar, 2024; Matsieli & Mutula, 2024; Watson et al., 2023). Since the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing research has remained necessary to continue supporting best practices in online learning in order to improve teaching and learning experiences in community colleges.

Post-Pandemic

Because the data are so recent, there are limited studies on the perspectives of community college faculty members' experiences with online learning post-pandemic. What is known is that, post-pandemic, researchers are examining how online education has changed and addressing the barriers and challenges faculty faced during the pandemic. Most authors agree that, following the pandemic, there is an even greater increase in demand for online learning due to its convenience and effectiveness in higher education (Gardner & Stotts, 2022; Lundberg & Stigmar, 2024; Matsieli & Mutula, 2024; Singh et al., 2021). Instructors, after adjusting to new synchronous learning technologies, preferred remote classes due to their ability to mitigate work and family responsibilities (Gardner & Stotts, 2022). The following section is a discussion of existing post-pandemic studies, their suggestions, and their findings.

Post-pandemic Faculty Perspectives

Following the pandemic, academic institutions are evaluating various instructional models, including hybrid, blended, and fully online courses. One research study found that it was necessary to support faculty during the pandemic and provide mental health support to instructors who would continue to teach fully online post-pandemic (Singh et al., 2021). The same study also found that instructors significantly improve courses and deliver instruction post-pandemic. However, support from stakeholders and administrators will be necessary to provide quality blended and hybrid learning experiences as we move forward (Singh et al., 2021). Because most courses are being created by instructors who convert their face-to-face content to online or blended formats, instructors who can incorporate an element of "human connection" into their new content will be able to create effective academic experiences (Singh et al., 2021). Another post-pandemic study highlights the importance of humanizing online and blended learning through social and emotional learning (SEL) practices. Evans found that when instructors incorporate SEL strategies into the online or blended classroom, the issue of isolation can be mitigated effectively (Evans, 2022). A mixed-methods study, where researchers interviewed thirty faculty members, found that, post-pandemic, faculty experience positive job satisfaction when teaching online or in a hybrid format. Furthermore, post-pandemic, they continue to integrate new online learning tools and blended learning approaches as a result of the rapid transition from COVID-19 (Dewangan et al., 2024). Creating organized courses that have strong first impressions where students and instructors get to know one another through discussion forums and online communities to lay a strong foundation for teaching presence (Evans, 2022; Singh et al., 2021). Post-pandemic studies seem to align with two ideas: blended and online learning models are higher in demand than ever before, and instructors will need to humanize their course creation and delivery to mitigate the social challenges from the pandemic (Dewangan et al., 2024; Gardner & Stotts, 2022; McCarthy & Ferreira, 2022; Singh et al., 2021).

Post-pandemic studies also reveal that faculty should avoid scheduling video meetings back-to-back and record meetings to provide online classroom flexibility and mitigate “meeting fatigue” (Moric et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2021). Another post-pandemic quantitative study that analyzed five STEM courses at a community college found that the average impact of teaching with video recordings and face-to-face lectures was similar (Moric et al., 2022). These studies suggest that faculty can adapt their traditional classroom lectures to recorded video content as they develop their online curriculum, without compromising effectiveness while maintaining balance and flexibility (Moric et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2021). Similarly, a study observing the perspectives of higher education instructors worldwide found that while online teaching is a “double-edged” sword, it comes with as many benefits as challenges. Online learning requires specific teaching strategies and ongoing professional development to ensure effective implementation (Lucas & Vicente, 2022). Overall, the related post-pandemic studies demonstrate that there are more positive perceptions of online learning as long as instructors receive adequate training and utilize relevant teaching pedagogies (Lucas & Vicente, 2022; Moric et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2021).

Another qualitative study from 2023, which focused on the experiences of preservice teachers, employed a narrative inquiry approach (Ali & Nath, 2023). The study found common themes in participants’ responses that highlighted teachers’ concerns about the effectiveness of communication in online classrooms compared to face-to-face settings, as well as student engagement. For instance, the educators expressed concerns about maintaining student engagement when using online activities with repetitive content, such as boring question-and-answer discussions and tutorials. While this study focuses on the experiences of preservice teachers enrolled in higher education online courses to become future educators, it comes closer to observing community college faculty experiences post-pandemic than other studies that focus on perspectives outside of higher education or on students. The existing post-pandemic studies suggest that communication and human connection are at the core of successful course delivery, with a singular format for synchronous online learning (Gardner & Stotts, 2022; McCarthy & Ferreira, 2022; Singh et al., 2021).

Post-Pandemic Student Perspectives

It is important to acknowledge the perspectives of students who are learning post-pandemic to understand the full scope of how the perspectives of online teaching have been impacted since the pandemic. A key study that focuses on students' perceptions of the asynchronous model, which was favored during the pandemic, according to the discussion of studies in the previous sections, examines the benefits of post-pandemic online learning (Sakkir et al., 2023). The researchers of this study had similar conclusions regarding asynchronous learning in their discussion, finding that it was one of the most well-liked approaches due to its flexibility. Post-pandemic, researchers found that students using an asynchronous online learning approach, with WhatsApp and YouTube as the primary platforms, were highly motivated by the asynchronous model because they could replay content multiple times (Sakkir et al., 2023). Another post-pandemic quantitative study focusing on the academic performance of students in higher education who are learning online found that students with low technological literacy struggle to remain engaged, while self-directed learners thrive when using digital asynchronous tools (Sharma & Saini, 2023). This implies that online learning is not a one-size-fits-all model.

Overall, based on the popular sentiments regarding asynchronous learning models presented in the studies discussed throughout this review, it will be essential to explore the sentiments of community college faculty members who are teaching post-pandemic and those who taught during the pandemic, in order to contribute to the ongoing discussions.

Summary

After searching multiple reputable databases for relevant literature published within the past five years, a clear gap in the literature was identified, indicating a lack of research on community college faculty perceptions following the COVID-19 pandemic. CBAM is the conceptual framework that was used to explore the attitudes and feelings of educators as they underwent changes post-pandemic (Hall & Hord, 2020; Martin et al., 2022). Research on the perceptions of online learning in community colleges has found that educators often feel unprepared for new technologies, accessibility issues are prevalent, and asynchronous technologies are extremely helpful (Bosley & Custer, 2021; Erdogmus et al., 2022; Griffiths et al., 2022). Prior to the pandemic, there was much uncertainty about online learning, in general, which made progress slow, and most community college faculty had not taught fully online with synchronous technologies (Boyer-Davis, 2022; Ozkan & Budak, 2021).

Chapter 2 provides a history and discussion of online teaching before, during, and post-pandemic in community colleges with a focus on community college faculty members. The discussion provided the groundwork and context needed to demonstrate the necessity for the study. Chapter 3 will discuss the research methodology: participant selection, credibility, participant recruitment, and instrumentation.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of community college faculty members’ perceptions of their teaching experiences working online post-pandemic. Data were collected from community college faculty members who taught online during the pandemic and who are continuing to teach online post-pandemic. Chapter 3 will discuss the rationale and design of the study, the role of the researcher, the methodology, ethics, and issues of trustworthiness.

Research Design and Rationale

This study used a basic qualitative research design to explore the experiences of community college faculty members teaching online post-pandemic. These individuals discussed their experiences with adapting to new changes during the COVID-19 pandemic and how they are adapting to these changes as they teach in the post-pandemic era. The following question was studied:

RQ: What are community college faculty members’ perceptions of their teaching experiences working online post-pandemic?

I chose a basic qualitative interview research design for this study because the goal is to observe the experiences of people within a community in the context of an event. Interviews were ideal due to their ability to provide in-depth accounts of individuals' experiences and how a phenomenon is perceived. For this reason, interviews are a data collection method that is class-aligned with qualitative studies. The goal of this study was to understand the experiences of a group of individuals, which is more appropriate for a qualitative research design because it is descriptive and analytic

(Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Furthermore, because the study is in the context of a historical event, the COVID-19 pandemic, the experiences of individual participants are complex and require qualitative inquiry.

A quantitative design would not have been appropriate for this research study because its purpose was not to measure or compare variables. According to Burkholder et al. (2016), a quantitative design typically involves an independent and dependent variable, as well as a confounding variable. For instance, a correlational design helps researchers make basic inferences based on the results without determining causation. Furthermore, the data in a quantitative study is objective, while the purpose of this study is to obtain subjective reports of experiences.

While many research methods can be utilized for qualitative designs, this study used a basic qualitative approach because the aim was to explore, describe, and analyze the lived experiences of individuals (Marshall et al., 2021). The experiences of community college professors during and post-pandemic as they taught and continue to teach online were the focus of the study. For instance, an action research study is a qualitative and contextual method that addresses problems or topics and aims to find solutions, which was not the purpose of this study (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Case study research involves examining individual cases rather than the experiences of individuals within a broader context. An ethnographic approach did not make sense for this study either, as it is a field study method that involves in-depth relationships with participants, making detailed observational fieldnotes, and is largely based on cultural contexts (Marshall et al., 2021; Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Role of the Researcher

For this qualitative study, I served as the primary investigator. The role of the researcher involves selecting participants from the target population, determining the data sources, and conducting the interviews (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). I was also responsible for all the data analysis and implementing bias mitigation strategies. Reflexivity and rigor were at the core of reducing researcher bias. Reflexivity entailed constant awareness and self-reflection through journaling as I conducted the research and interacted with participants. Because this study required studying the lived experiences of individuals, rigor was an important aspect of maintaining validity. The research design's alignment of questions and inquiry, along with maintaining fidelity to participants' experiences during research, are rigorous strategies that were applied. Furthermore, addressing the limitations and challenges of the study, as raised by my role as the researcher, helped mitigate bias (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

My role as a researcher did not conflict with my present position because I do not work with community colleges or community college faculty. There was no conflict with participants in higher education settings, as the two were unrelated. I recruited participants from local community colleges in the United States, where I was unaffiliated.

Methodology

This section discusses the methodology used for this basic qualitative study. The purpose of this section is to transparently discuss the specific procedures and techniques that are used to analyze the data collected in the study. The discussion includes the logic for participant selection and process, the characteristics of the population chosen, the sampling strategy and rationale, the issue of trustworthiness, the instrumentation used to collect the data, the interview protocol, the recruitment process, and the data analysis process. This section also includes a description of the replicable process for data analysis.

Participant Selection Logic

Participants for this study included community college faculty, both full-time and adjunct, who taught online during the COVID-19 pandemic and who are currently teaching online at a community college. For this study, purposive sampling was used, recruiting participants from specific populations (Burkholder et al., 2016). It is also known as strategic or purposeful sampling. This sampling strategy was justified because the participants required specific characteristics: they needed to be individuals who taught online at a community college during the pandemic and who were currently teaching online, making them ideal for a study of their lived experiences. Faculty members who did not teach online during the pandemic were excluded. To meet the sampling criterion, the participants clicked on a link on the social media flyer if they demonstrated an interest in participating in the study. From there, they were directed to a sign-up form that asked if they were over 18, taught online during the COVID-19 pandemic in a community college setting, and if they were currently teaching online in a community college setting. If they responded “yes” to all of these questions, then they proceeded to the informed consent form, where they selected “I consent” and typed their full name. If any of the responses were “no,” then they were exited from the form. The sample size consisted of 10 participants to meet the inquiry needs and data saturation for this basic qualitative study (Burkholder et al., 2016; Cobern & Adams, 2020). According to Ravitch and Carl (2021), data saturation is the point where no more data needs to be collected because there are no gaps or unexplained phenomena.

Instrumentation

For this study, I developed a semistructured interview protocol. The interview protocol consists of one set of 10 interview questions for the participants (Appendix). Each of the 10 interview questions is open-ended and aligned with the CBAM constructs, specifically the Stages of Concern or Levels of Use. CBAM is a diagnostic tool that helps researchers understand how educators go through changes by addressing their reactions, feelings, and attitudes (Anderson, 1997). I modeled my protocol based on my reading of studies such as Kayaduman and Demirel's (2019) to help me construct the questions. The study consisted of 10 participants. Kayaduman and Demirel (2019) investigated the concerns of first-time online teachers using CBAM as a framework after implementing a training program. They mentioned that using open-ended questions is the best way to extract the concerns of educators as they navigate the online classroom. My instrument consisted of 10 open-ended interview questions that had various follow-up probing questions. While the referenced study used two sets of interviews, one after training educators and the second 4 weeks apart, mine only required one set to understand the participants' perspectives about teaching post-pandemic. Kayaduman and Demirel (2019) also used a series of probing questions after each open-ended question to help further gauge the participant's concerns and to facilitate in-depth responses. Another pivotal study is Olson et al.'s, which also used CBAM to examine the change process of implementing a strategic plan in a school district using a stages of concern survey and interview questions. The survey's open-ended questions aimed to inquire about the educator's actions and feelings related to the way the changes in the strategic plan took place. With both studies, CBAM was a process that helped guide the questions and follow-up questions. The questions I designed aim to gain a deeper understanding of the actions and feelings of community college faculty as they continue to teach online post-pandemic, and the probing questions encouraged them to provide in-depth responses. CBAM served as the guiding conceptual framework and the basis for the interview questions, designed to understand how community college faculty members experience and currently experience online teaching. Overall, this protocol respected participants' time and allowed for efficient and effective responses.

Interview Guide

The interview guide was based on Jacob and Furgerson's (2012) research on effective protocols for conducting qualitative research interviews. The interview questions were guided by the conceptual framework and research question and were designed to collect meaningful data for the study (see Appendix). The questions were open-ended, allowing participants to provide in-depth responses that are characteristic of a phenomenological study (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). A pilot study was conducted with three colleagues to ensure that the interview questions were appropriate and that the research question was answered accurately. The interviews began with the easiest questions and then moved on to more controversial or difficult questions to help participants feel at ease. Table 3 shows the alignment of the 10 interview questions to the conceptual framework.

Table 3

Interview Questions Aligned to Conceptual Framework

	Interview Questions	Stages of Concern	Levels of Use
IQ1	How would you describe your experiences using new technologies as you transitioned to online teaching during the pandemic?		x
IQ2	What challenges have you had while teaching online post-pandemic?	x	
IQ3	What are the benefits of teaching online compared to face-to-face instruction?		x
IQ4	What are the drawbacks of teaching online compared to face-to-face instruction?		
IQ5	How have your initial perceptions of online teaching during the pandemic changed compared to your experiences post-pandemic?	x	x
IQ6	What resources do you feel would be helpful to increase your effectiveness as an online instructor?	x	x
IQ7	What recommendations would you make to improve online teaching in the community college setting now?		x
IQ8	How has the process of integrating new teaching practices or technologies changed since you started teaching online during the pandemic?	x	x
IQ9	What are some barriers you faced teaching online during the pandemic?		x
IQ10	What are the barriers you currently face teaching online?		x

Note. IQ = interview question

Procedures

The recruitment, participation, and data collection procedures were based on standard basic qualitative research design guidelines. The purpose of this section is to describe in detail how the participants were recruited and the procedures for data collection and participant recruitment. This section also explains the data analysis process and the process of trustworthiness, credibility, and ethical guidelines. A discussion and summary of this section will follow.

Procedures for Recruitment

The primary recruitment plan involved posting social media flyers that linked to the recruitment form on relevant Facebook groups, such as Online Teacher Success and Support, and The Ultimate Support Group for Online Teachers/Tutors. Before posting on social media groups, I acquired permission from the group admins to post the flyers. The social media post explained the purpose of the study, the criteria requested by participants, and the interview procedures. If this resulted in too few participants, the secondary strategy was to offer a $75 Visa gift card incentive and use Zoom's Qualitative app to recruit participants using the same social media flyer with targeted Facebook ads. The ads contained the same flyer as the social media post from the primary strategy and linked to the same form. However, altruistic participants interested in contributing to the study without incentives provide the best outcomes, so this was a last-resort strategy (Negrin et al., 2022). With any of these recruitment methods, once participants answered the three criteria questions and signed the informed consent form, they were directed to a calendar where they could select a timeslot to schedule a Zoom interview. After selecting an available timeslot, participants received an email with a Zoom link and a confirmation email. Participants received reminders 24 hours prior to their scheduled appointment.

Procedures for Participation

Participants were directed to an online form that guided them through the criteria: being over 18 and a community college professor who taught online during and after COVID. The online form was created using Qualitative, a Zoom app. Participants who met the selection criteria proceeded to sign an informed consent form. Participants indicated their consent by selecting the "I consent" box and typing their school email address and full names. After obtaining the participants' consent, they were directed to a calendar to select a time for the interview. Participants chose an interview time using the calendar link. After selecting and confirming a time, the participants were emailed a Zoom link. Twenty-four hours prior to their appointment, they were sent a reminder. If they needed to reschedule, they could select an alternative time slot from the calendar. This approach respected the time of participants and allowed for flexible scheduling.

Procedures for Data Collection

The interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom due to feasibility and consisted of 10 participants. Recording the interviews and transcripts allowed me, as the researcher, to focus on interviewing the participants without pausing to take notes (Burkholder et al., 2016). There was only one interview per participant using the set of 10 interview questions, with each question followed by a probing question if the response was not in-depth. The Zoom interviews had audio and video features enabled to maximize the quality of the responses and the data. The data were collected in the form of one-on-one interviews via Zoom and was arranged according to the participants' schedules. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and was scheduled by participants at a convenient time. Participants were able to choose to have video on or off during the interview and the interviews were recorded with transcripts. After the interview, participants had the opportunity to perform member checks to ensure their responses were accurately represented (Burkholder et al., 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). This was accomplished by providing participants with a summarized copy of their responses via email after their Zoom interviews had been completed. Participants were able to send back their responses with any corrections within 3 days of receiving their recorded transcripts. At the end of the data collection process, participants exited the study using a debriefing procedure that consisted of a summary of the purpose of the study, an opportunity to ask questions or provide comments, and an explanation of how their responses were used to contribute to the study (Burkholder et al., 2016). The debriefing procedure provided the participants with feelings of trustworthiness and credibility towards the study.

Data Analysis Plan

For this basic qualitative study, I used a thematic analysis approach to analyze the data collected from the interviews. Thematic analysis is a general approach to qualitative data analysis that involves observing patterns and relationships among the data, which is ideal for creating generalizations based on the data collected from the interviews (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). To understand the experiences of the participants, key phrases were analyzed along with commonalities to theme the data, a method appropriate for interviews (Miles et al., 2014). With this approach, I pasted the data from Zoom's transcription service into Microsoft Word and Qualitative and annotated the transcriptions to observe patterns or differences in the data. Using a codebook with definitions of each code, a name for each code, and example quotes, I initially coded the data and organized it into the codebook both manually and with Qualitative (Saldaña, 2016). In this first-level coding stage, I summarized the data from the transcripts and then went to second-level coding to find recurring patterns and grouped related codes into broader themes. Then, based on those patterns, I created general themes regarding community college faculty's experiences teaching online. Microsoft Word allowed the data to be presented clearly before running it through the coding software. The purpose of Qualitative, a computer software that assists in organizing, coding, and visualizing data, was to facilitate data organization and provide more accuracy and credibility.

After the initial coding phase, I used thematic analysis to create broad themes by grouping codes with patterns. Observing patterns and identifying recurring themes in data from interviews is the basis of thematic analysis (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). These broad themes were then sorted into central themes representing faculty members' perceptions of online teaching post-pandemic. By organizing the data into themes, I was able to draw general conclusions about the overall perceptions of community college faculty members as they continue to teach online.

Discrepant data are also known as disconfirming evidence or outliers (Burkholder et al., 2016). Identifying and analyzing discrepant data is essential to add credibility and dependability to the study (Burkholder et al., 2016). Discrepant data are any data that could be considered "outside of the norm." Therefore, the context in which the data appears will be carefully examined. Any data deemed discrepant was set aside into its category. After all the data had been organized, I reviewed the data categorized as "discrepant" to acknowledge it and decide if it created new themes or had implications for future studies. The discrepant data will be discussed at the end of the results to offer explanations or suggestions to researchers for future studies on the same topic.

Issues of Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, the trustworthiness of a study is critical to its credibility and reliability. Trustworthiness is also known as validity, meaning researchers can trust the study's data, meaning, and results (Burkholder et al., 2016). To avoid questioning validity, this study used multiple strategies to mitigate invalidation, such as ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and following ethical procedures (Burkholder et al., 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Credibility

For qualitative research, credibility is defined as a researcher's ability to consider the entire context of the study and deal with complex patterns; this is also known as internal validity, which aims to ensure that the study measures what it is intended to measure (Burkholder et al., 2016; Shenton, 2004). In this study, credibility refers to how accurately the data reflects the participants' experiences and whether the data that was collected was an accurate representation of the population. Maintaining credibility involved eliminating bias and human error as much as possible through rigor. Therefore, a leading strategy was to utilize member checks, which allowed the participants to review a summary of their responses and the results for accuracy (Burkholder et al., 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). The participants had 72 hours to make corrections. As a final strategy, tactics to encourage honesty from participants when contributing data were implemented, such as allowing them to decline participation, encouraging them to give honest answers, and establishing a researcher-participant rapport (Shenton, 2004). These rigorous strategies helped ensure that the study was credible and representative of the study.

Transferability

Transferability is the ability for a study to be replicated in other contexts in qualitative studies (Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Shenton, 2004). Transferability was accomplished by providing a thick description of the context of the study so that other researchers can extract further applications (Burkholder et al., 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). In the context of this study, the descriptions of the historical context of the pandemic and online learning, and participants can provide transferability that suggests further studies. For instance, the study could be applied to many contexts, such as in different types of community colleges, different geographical settings, or across different populations of educators. To allow researchers the ability to extract other contexts, the study defined the demographics and characteristics of the community college faculty members and defined the type of community college. Transferability, in this study, was accomplished through thick descriptions of the context to provide opportunities for researchers to find applicability: the number of participants involved, the period in which the data were collected, the location and number of community colleges taking part in the study, and restrictions in the characteristics of the participants who contributed data (Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Shenton, 2004).

Dependability

Dependability can be compared to the concept of reliability in quantitative studies, which means the study's data are consistent throughout time and repeatable (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). In the context of this study, dependability is how well the participants' responses answer the research question. I used a reflection journal to practice researcher reflexivity to question bias and ensure that the study remained objective (Shenton, 2004). Furthermore, I used consistent data procedures by gathering data from participants by using the same interview protocol, such as by asking interview questions in the same order and in the same setting (Burkholder et al., 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). By consistently collecting data, the study data are consistent and dependable.

Confirmability

Confirmability is a criterion of trustworthiness in qualitative research that ensures the data collected from participants is based on the perspectives and experiences of those participants rather than on the biases or interpretations of the researcher (Burkholder et al., 2016). Qualitative research acknowledges that data are subjective, so that confirmability can be compared to objectivity in quantitative research (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Utilizing member checking was a crucial strategy for mitigating issues of confirmability so that participants were able to confirm that the data and results accurately reflected their experiences (Burkholder et al., 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Researcher reflexivity as another essential strategy that was implemented to question the possibility of bias or subjectivity through reflective journaling (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Confirmability was ensured through these rigorous strategies to eliminate the possibility of bias as much as possible.

Ethical Procedures

The trustworthiness of qualitative research depends on how researchers follow ethical procedures and add a critical element of trustworthiness to a study (Burkholder et al., 2016). For this study, I followed ethical procedures by applying to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University. First, I obtained IRB approval from Walden University to ensure that the procedures followed the ethical guidelines throughout the recruitment and data collection process. According to Walden University, all research that uses human participants must be reviewed and approved by the IRB (n.d.). Next, I began the recruitment process as described in the procedures section above. As per the IRB guidelines, I used the consent form template from Walden University's ethics guidelines to request participants' informed consent, and I used the research ethics approval checklist to ensure participant confidentiality and ethical procedures were being followed (n.d.). The informed consent was provided in the form after participants selected that they met the criteria. Participants were asked to select "I consent" and then typed their email address and full name. Furthermore, I conducted interviews ethically by avoiding influencing their responses and ensuring participants had responded genuinely to the initial form questions regarding participant criteria. I also removed any identifying participant information from transcripts and files. Interviews were conducted in a quiet space, where others could not hear their responses, and they were also encouraged to choose a private location. The names of community colleges were not stated in the study, and the research was limited to the United States. I also maintained participant confidentiality by keeping the responses in a password-protected OneDrive folder. I will store the data for a total of 5 years and then delete it.

Summary

The purpose of Chapter 3 was to discuss the research plan for the study, which considered many aspects of qualitative research to ensure that the findings were of high quality and, therefore, provided meaningful contributions to the field. The research plan involved ethical considerations and implemented strategies to ensure the study was trustworthy, credible, dependable, and transferable. Chapter three also discusses the process for participant selection, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter four will discuss the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of community college faculty members' perceptions of their teaching experiences working online post-pandemic. The research question was as follows: What are community college faculty members' perceptions of their teaching experiences working online post-pandemic?

To accomplish this purpose, I interviewed 10 community college faculty members who met the study's criteria and analyzed the data based on themes and patterns that emerged from their responses. Furthermore, I explored how they described their experiences of online teaching based on how their experiences during the pandemic shaped how they experienced teaching online post-pandemic. Chapter 4 will report the study's setting, the participants' demographics, the data collection process, the data analysis, the trustworthiness, and the results.

Setting

The participants of this qualitative study were recruited through social media, using the Qualitative platform. The participants were recruited from various community colleges in urban and rural locations throughout the United States. The participants taught a variety of subjects, including core courses and electives. All the participants were part-time adjunct faculty instructors.

Several organizational conditions may have influenced the interpretation of study results. For instance, some rural community colleges were remote, making accessibility a challenge that influenced participant experiences, compared to suburban community colleges, which had greater accessibility (internet, commute, and resources). Some faculty also taught online before COVID-19, which may have affected their perceptions of online learning. Lastly, some courses may have been more challenging to teach online than in a face-to-face setting, which may have impacted participant perceptions. These differences may have affected or altered participants' experiences and influenced the study's results.

Demographics

The participants for this study included 10 participants from 10 different community colleges. This section will describe the demographics of each participant. The demographics include the instructor’s rank, whether they are full-time or part-time, and the subject (s) they teach. The discussion also includes the type of community college where they teach. Descriptions of each participant were developed using the information they provided in the initial survey.

Participant 1 is a part-time online and in-person community college faculty member in the English department at a community college in an urban area. The college is situated in a major suburban city with a diverse student population. The participant also teaches at multiple campuses. Their role includes planning and designing curriculum and decision-making as the department chair in her college.

Participant 2 is an online instructor who teaches research courses at an urban community college. The college is situated in a major suburban city and serves a diverse student body. They teach a mix of online and in-person courses at this college and teach research skills to undergraduate students. Their position involves teaching asynchronous courses and providing students with regular feedback.

Participant 3 is an English adjunct professor at a community college in a rural location. The participant's role involves providing a flexible learning environment for students online. Participant 3 works from home, juggling family and work responsibilities as they teach online. Their role as an instructor requires providing students with feedback and preparing them for their future careers.

Participant 4 is an adjunct faculty member who teaches online and in-person public speaking at a community college in a major city. They teach public speaking and presentation skills to help students succeed professionally and academically. As this is a core class for their community college associate's degree program, they play a crucial role in their institution.

Participant 5 is a part-time instructor (adjunct faculty) who teaches a first-year seminar at a community college. The first-year seminar is a course that teaches students the expectations of higher-education academics and the logistics associated with them. The college is located in a rural area in Maryland, so its course facilitates students transitioning from high school to higher education. As adjunct faculty, they support students in this introductory course and provide regular feedback to the administration.

Participant 6 is an adjunct faculty member at a community college in Oregon. They offer a range of online courses focused on digital marketing. The course they teach almost every semester is Introduction to Video and Audio Editing. The community college where they are an instructor is considered a rural institution, and they are a fully online instructor. This participant transitioned from face-to-face teaching to online teaching during the pandemic. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, none of this participant's classes were face-to-face.

Participant 7 teaches courses centered on business at a community college. This campus is in an urban area in a major city. This participant mainly teaches digital marketing courses, both online and in-person. Their courses require students to upload videos, present, and discuss information. As community college instructors, their role as elective course teachers is to prepare students for careers in business and relevant fields.

Participant 8 is an adjunct faculty instructor at a community college in a major city. They teach counseling online and design their own curriculum. This participant works with a diverse population of students and taught only face-to-face during the COVID-19 pandemic, then switched to online instruction. They also juggle other roles in addition to the adjunct faculty position.

Participant 9 is an adjunct faculty member, teaching part-time as an English instructor. This person teaches online and face-to-face at a community college in New York. They also teach literature and writing courses, providing students with regular feedback. As an online instructor, this participant instructs a highly diverse population of students. Occasionally, the participant teaches courses in a hybrid format – online and face-to-face – at their institution.

Participant 10 is an adjunct faculty instructor at a rural community college in Texas. They teach online and face-to-face public speaking, sometimes offering hybrid courses. In this highly rural area, the participants' students often face challenges attending class face-to-face. Table 3 illustrates the demographics of the participants and their corresponding pseudonyms.

Table 4

Participant Demographics

Participant Pseudonym	Rank	Subject	Type
P1	Part time	English	Urban
P2	Part Time	Research	Urban
P3	Part-Time	English	Rural
P4	Part-time	Public Speaking	Urban
P5	Part-time	1st Year Seminar	Rural
P6	Part-Time	Intro to Video Editing	Rural
P7	Part-Time	Digital Marketing	Urban
P8	Part-Time	Counseling	Urban
P9	Part-Time	English	Urban
P10	Part-Time	Public Speaking	Rural

Data Collection

I received IRB approval on July 10, 2025, and began data collection soon afterward. For this qualitative study, I collected data from 10 participants and conducted a total of 10 virtual interviews on Zoom using the interview protocol described in Chapter 3 (see Appendix). I audio-recorded using the embedded record feature within Zoom, and I also used Zoom's transcription service. Interviews ranged between 30 and 45 minutes. Although the data collection process remains the same in Chapter 3, some logistics have changed. First, instead of MAXQDA, the Qualitative software by Zoom was used to create the invitation, recruit participants, and analyze the data. The incentive was also raised from $40 to $75 to increase interest. IRB approved the change from MAXQDA to Qualitative and the incentive updates to the recruitment method. No unusual circumstances occurred during the data collection process, unless explicitly stated.

Interviews

The interview with Participant 1 occurred on Aug 1, 2025, and lasted 33 minutes. My following interview was with Participant 2, which took place on August 13, 2025, and lasted 32 minutes. The interview with Participant 3 occurred on August 12, 2025, and lasted 34 minutes. My following interview was with Participant 4, which took place on August 13, 2025, and lasted 30 minutes. The interview with Participant 5 occurred on August 14, 2025, and lasted 31 minutes. My following interview was with Participant 6, which took place on August 16, 2025, and lasted 33 minutes. The interview with Participant 7 occurred on August 18 and lasted 30 minutes. My next interview was with Participant 8, which took place on August 21, 2025, and lasted 32 minutes. The interview with Participant 9 occurred on August 24, 2025, and lasted 34 minutes. My final interview was with Participant 10, which took place on August 27, 2025, and lasted 31 minutes.

Member Checking

Once the data were analyzed, I created a transcript to send to each participant for member checking. This transcript included minor revisions to correct transcribing errors caused by Zoom's platform. It also allowed me to ask follow-up questions about specific areas where I needed clarification and ensure that the mistakes had been cleaned up accurately. I heard back from nine of the participants. Three participants clarified specific details, such as the names of programs or finding additional transcription errors. The other six participants confirmed via email that the data had been accurately transcribed and reported.

Data Analysis

I used a thematic analysis approach recommended by Ravitch and Carl (2021) to analyze the data collected from the 10 interviews. I conducted coding both manually and by utilizing Zoom's Qualitative software. To prepare interview data for the data analysis phase, I transcribed the audio using Zoom's transcription software and manually redacted any identifying data. I also corrected transcription errors and sent the transcripts to participants for review, as described in Chapter 3.

Next, I manually went through the transcripts, used Microsoft Excel to organize the data by participant, and began coding the data. After the coding process, I organized the data into categories and themes. I also uploaded the transcripts to Zoom's Qualitative program in preparation for secondary coding. The Qualitative app analyzed each transcript and coded the data, grouping it into categories and themes. I verified the data using my manually coded process and produced the final results, which represent six broad themes.

To assist in the coding process, I developed a codebook, as suggested by Saldaña (2016). The purpose of the codebook was to provide a structured method for organizing and analyzing the data for each interview transparently and consistently. The codebook also allowed me to code the data and then categorize it into broader themes. I collected the data using Zoom's transcription software. Then, I pasted the data into Microsoft Word and Qualitative, annotating the transcriptions to assist in coding. I maintained a codebook in Microsoft Excel to organize the data as I manually reviewed it, creating codes at the first-level stage. I ended up with 60 codes through the data analysis process, which I then organized into broader categories. These categories resulted in 16 broad and related themes. Ultimately, I synthesized the 16 themes into six broader themes to encompass all the data. I ran the transcripts through qualitative analysis software, cross-referencing the themes from my manual coding to ensure accuracy. Regarding discrepant data, I included any data that is considered an outlier, outside of the standard set of data used in the data analysis process (Burkholder et al., 2016). While some responses from participants were outliers, they still could be considered representative of unusual experiences or situations, so I included them in the coding process while acknowledging them as discrepant. Table 5 summarizes the final themes with categories and codes from the data that best describe the data.

Table 5

Summary and Quotes for Themes from Data Analysis

Theme	Categories grouped with the theme	Codes
A. Pre-existing experience and familiarity with online teaching and tools	Prior experience with online teaching	Familiarity with integrated online tools, Familiarity with LMS, pre-existing online teaching experiences
B. Adoption and utilization of online platforms and tools	Core platforms and engagement tools	Zoom, Canvas, Blackboard, Google Classroom, Nearpod, Pear Deck, Canva, Zoom breakout rooms
C. Challenges and constraints in transition	Early transition challenges and Barriers	Limited initial online teaching experiences, technological readiness, institutional support and constraints, lack of initial protocol, Zoom usage challenges, video instruction challenges, and Wi-Fi access.
D. Institutional support and collaboration	Training and protocol, instructor and instructional design collaboration, and institutional infrastructure	Training and protocol needs, faculty development on online teaching, collaboration with faculty, institutional designer support, institutional communication, and resource access.
E. Flexibility and adaptation to student needs	Policies and student needs	Flexible assignment policies, flexible scheduling, understanding diverse student situations, and student technology familiarization.
F. Professional adjustments	Adaptability	Hybrid/asynchronous formats, new technologies

Evidence of Trustworthiness

I upheld issues of trustworthiness in a number of ways. In this section, I will describe how I ensured credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. First, I ensured credibility by utilizing member-checking, as advised by Saldaña (2016).

After the interviews, I emailed each participant a copy of his or her transcript and asked them to verify it for accuracy. Every participant confirmed or replied with minor clarifications to transcription errors. Furthermore, I ensured credibility by verifying my manual coding process with the codes and themes generated by the qualitative software. As a result of using this coding process, I enhanced the credibility and accuracy of the study's findings. As I described in Chapter 3, I ensured credibility by minimizing human error and researcher bias as much as possible through rigorous methods, such as member checks. I ensured honesty from participants by allowing them to decline participation during the initial survey and by establishing a positive rapport between the researcher and participants (Burkholder et al., 2016; Shenton, 2004).

Another essential component of trustworthiness was maintaining the transferability of the study. By providing a thorough context of the study, such as by describing the historical context and the demographics of the participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). The in-depth context will enable other researchers to build upon this in further studies. For instance, researchers could transfer this type of study to different populations of instructors. By also defining the type of community college, such as rural or urban, this further allows researchers to define the parameters of future studies and replicate the study across different contexts.

Additionally, the dependability of this study, which refers to its ability to remain consistent over time and be repeatable, was maintained by using a reflection journal and practicing researcher reflexivity to question bias and ensure the study's objectivity (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Furthermore, the data procedures were kept consistent by gathering data using the exact same interview protocol with no variations for each participant, such as asking the interview questions in the same order (Burkholder et al., 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Confirmability was the final criterion of trustworthiness in the study, ensuring that the data collected were accurate to the perspectives and experiences of the participants and had no researcher bias (Burkholder et al., 2016). The primary strategy to ensure confirmability was utilizing remember checks to ensure the participants had a chance to review their responses for accuracy. Researcher reflexivity was also a central component in maintaining confirmability by maintaining a research journal to question the possibility of researcher bias and eliminate the possibility as much as possible (Burkholder et al., 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Results

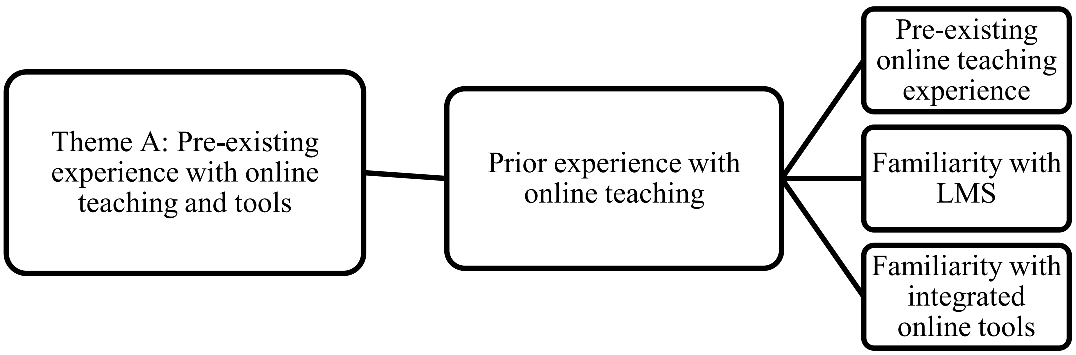
In this section, I have organized the results by theme. For each, I include categories and codes. As part of data analysis, I determined that six themes answered this RQ: What are community college faculty members' perceptions of their teaching experiences working online post-pandemic?

Theme A: Pre-existing Experience With Online Teaching and Tools

The first theme to answer RQ 1 was pre-existing experience with online teaching. Figure 1 shows the categories and codes for this theme. One category made up this theme and a total of three codes. Figure 1illustrates the category and codes for this theme.

Figure 1

Code Tree for Theme A: Pre-existing Experience with Online Teaching and Tools



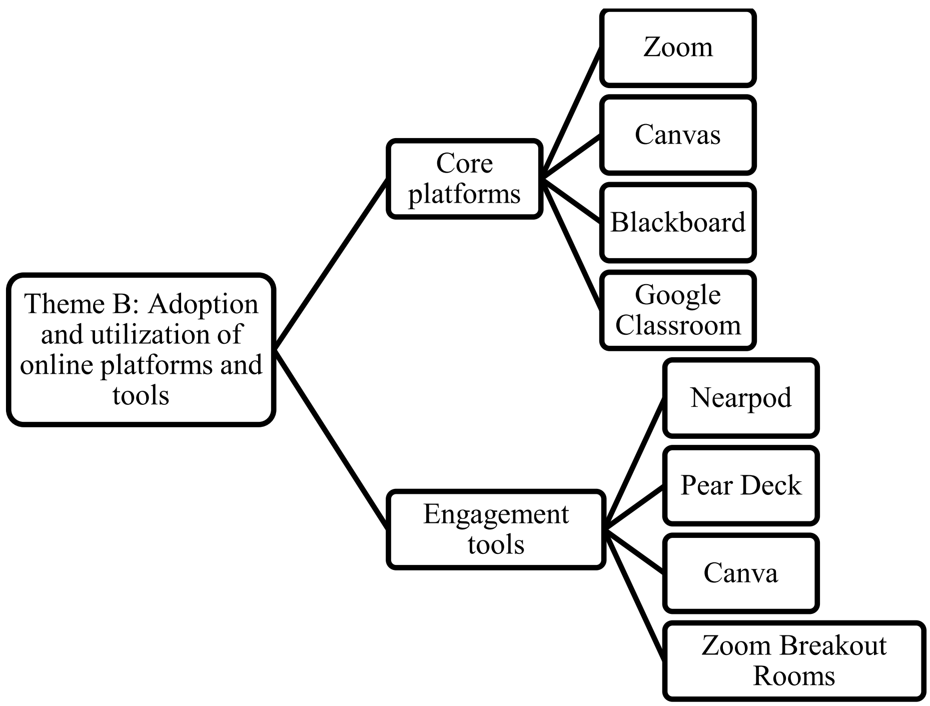
The category for this theme was "prior experience with online teaching" and consisted of three codes (pre-existing online teaching experience, familiarity with LMS, and familiarity with integrated online tools). A few of the participants had prior experience with online teaching or online tools before the COVID pandemic. For example, Participant 1 mentioned that they were already using online teaching before the COVID-19 pandemic, which made the transition to online teaching less impactful. Participant 3 stated that online teaching "wasn't much different from what I was already doing." Participant 3 taught mostly online prior to COVID and said they were already accustomed to "uploading videos," using integrated online tools. Participant 6 also had prior experience with LMS, expressing, "I felt like my job was kind of lessened because I already had a background in it." The participants mentioned drawing on prior experience, particularly in K-12 contexts, as they transitioned to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, Participant 3 also mentioned that using Google Classroom in the K-12 setting helped them understand how to prepare content for an online community college classroom setting. Multiple participants mentioned that they were already using Blackboard or Canvas before the COVID-19 pandemic, which simplified the transition. Participant 5 stated, “I already had some of the technology pieces and how to adapt, you know, lessons and things like that to an online platform.” Participant 5 also added that they were “already using Blackboard” and how they would “after I assessed an assignment, I would make a video talking about how things went.” Participant 7 also had prior experience with LMS, stating, “Pre-pandemic, I was an associate dean, so I took care of everything and was also the LMS champion.”

Theme B: Adoption and Utilization of Online Platforms and Tools

The next theme that emerged to answer RQ 1 was: adoption and utilization of online platforms and tools. Figure 2 illustrates the categories and codes associated with this theme. This theme comprises two categories and eight codes.

Figure 2

Code Tree for Theme B: Adoption and Utilization of Online Platforms and Tools



Core Platforms

This category comprises four codes: Zoom, Canvas, Blackboard, and Google Classroom. Participants mentioned using one or all of these in their online teaching toolset. For instance, Participant 2 discussed "utilizing Zoom" and switching to Canvas. Participant 5 said, "Definitely utilized Zoom … switched to Canvas … also utilize Blackboard. In K–12, I used Google Classroom." Five participants mentioned using Blackboard at the beginning of COVID and then switching to a different LMS, such as Canvas or Brightspace. Participant 7 really highlighted the transition from Blackboard to Brightspace, moving past COVID, stating, "The college was on Blackboard for like 20 plus years … so we are relatively new to Brightspace, and there are always new things that the LMS is rolling out." Participant 4 said, "Blackboard was very user-friendly, and then I switched to Canvas and, you know, we just had to have, I had to be patient with myself and learn a new platform."

Engagement Tools

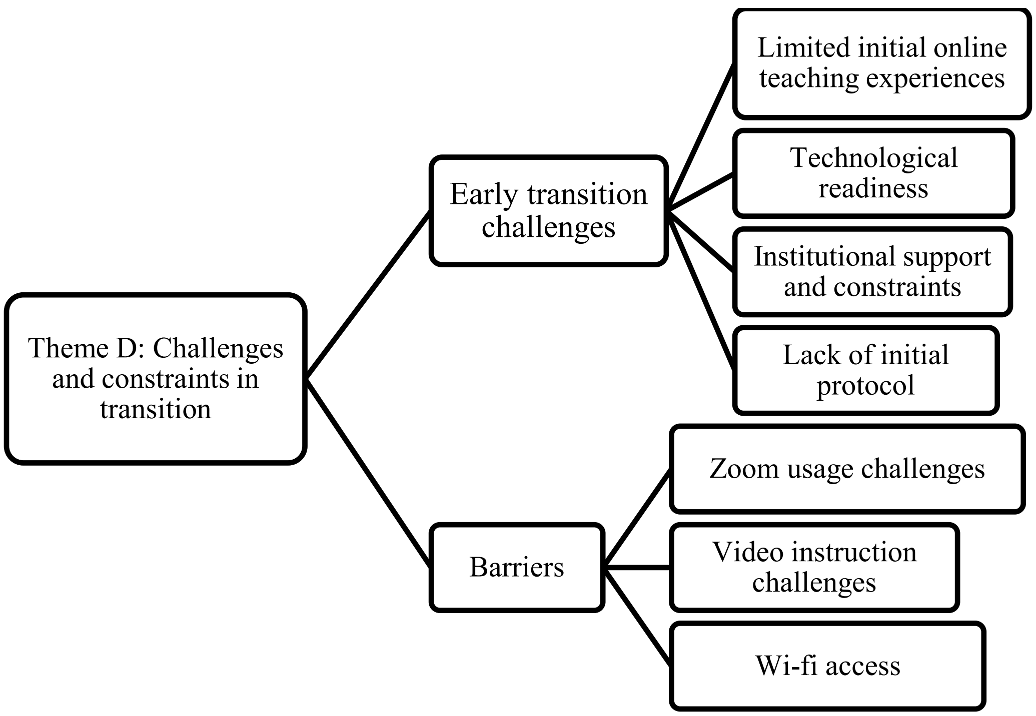
This category comprises four codes: Nearpod, Canva, Zoom Breakout Rooms, and Pear Deck. Participant 1 mentioned using Pear Deck to engage their students in the online classroom and how they taught other teachers how to incorporate it into their classrooms. Most participants discussed using engagement tools to keep students engaged in the online classroom. For instance, Participant 8 said, "I've used Canva to make presentations more engaging and interactive for my students." Several participants mentioned using Zoom's breakout rooms post-pandemic to increase student participation and engagement. Breakout rooms were mentioned frequently. Participant 9 discussed how splitting their students into groups encouraged students to participate, especially for larger classroom sizes, stating, "though I did start learning more about student engagement online and using breakout rooms." Participant 7 also said, "… and I think for me as a professor, I do have to make it engaging, like a lot of breakout sessions, to kind of break up that lecture style way that we typically sometimes teach if we're in an in-person class setting. Participant 3 mentioned that since COVID, "That's something that I do now that I didn't really do in the beginning until I was like told a few years ago to utilize the breakout room." Participant 4 said, "I think right now that is my biggest struggle is to ensure engagement is still at a high level," emphasizing ongoing concerns and a need for more ways to engage students.

Theme C: Challenges and Constraints in Transition

Theme C consisted of two categories and a total of seven codes. Figure 3 illustrates the breakdown of this theme.

Figure 3

Code Tree for Theme C: Challenges and Constraints in Transition



Early Transition Challenges

This category concentrates on the general challenges community college faculty experienced during the initial shift to online teaching during COVID. It consists of four codes: limited initial online teaching experience, technological readiness, institutional support and constraints, and lack of initial protocol. Over half of the participants mentioned facing early transition challenges because they had no prior experience with online teaching. Participant 9 stated, “When we first started teaching during COVID, it was just kind of a free-for-all, and we were doing the best we could." This quote exemplifies how most participants felt about their initial experience teaching online at a community college. Participant 2 described their experience as "overwhelming" because their institution "went from switching from one platform to another … based on price," representing an example of institutional constraints based on budget. Participant 8 emphasized the challenges of video instruction early on, stating that "Blackboard did not have enough bandwidth for video instruction."

Barriers

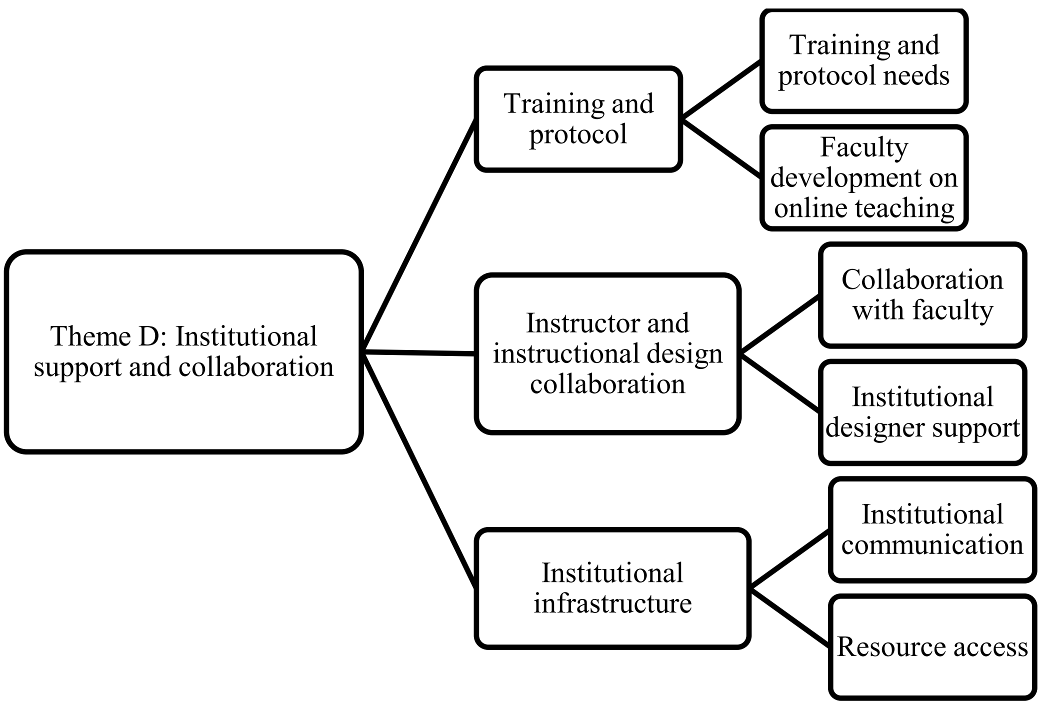
This category comprises three codes that identify the barriers community college faculty experienced during the initial COVID-19 shift to online teaching: challenges with Zoom usage, Wi-Fi access, and video instruction. For instance, Participant 3 stated, "I didn't know if I should use my account or the school's account, or if I wanted my students to have their cameras on." Most participants discussed using Zoom as a primary instructional tool but mentioned accessibility challenges or being unsure of how to use video instruction. The third code for this theme is Wi-Fi issues. Participants in rural areas all brought up Internet access as an issue, and that it was an issue that impacted and continued to impact their teaching experience. Participant 10 said, "Some students don't really have good Wi-Fi, and the speed might slow down, or it goes in and out. And that can be a challenge." In the context, this participant highlighted how being in a rural area can make Internet access a challenge for most students and teachers.

Theme D: Institutional Support and Collaboration

This theme emphasizes the need for institutional support from participants and increased resources to improve the online teaching and learning experience. Figure 4 illustrates the three categories and a total of six codes.

Figure 4

Code Tree for Theme D: Institutional Support and Collaboration



Training and Protocol

This category consists of two codes: training and protocol needs, and faculty development on online teaching. Almost every participant discussed a need for training or how their institutions already provided training for online learning post-pandemic. Notably, the timing was varied across participants. For instance, Participant 2 mentioned how training was not provided until “about a year into it,” and Participant 5 said, “Training students how to use the online tools would make my teaching more effective.” Half of the participants said institutions training students to use the online learning tools or platforms would enhance their teaching experience. Participant 7 added that “I think about it year in and year out, it is when our folks, our trainers really came together and said, we’ve gotta put some kind of protocol on for how we’re gonna do online teaching.” Participant 6, when explaining the need for student training to enhance teaching experiences, said, **“**… you’re playing, you’re playing a mini IT person, like try logging off, seeing if this clear your cachet, clear your cookies, close all your windows, see if that works.”

Instructor and Instructional Designer Collaboration

This category was made up of two codes: collaboration with faculty and instructional designer support. Multiple participants emphasized a need for collaboration with an instructional designer to enhance their online teaching experience moving forward post-pandemic. Participant 1 said, “It would be really great to be working with an instructional designer and like having a little bit more support as far as the technical aspects go.” Also, Participant 8 expressed the same need, stating, “I think that’s the one thing I’ve heard that having more access to instructional designers would help each professor.” Participant 3 said, “It would be helpful if they provided training to the instructor on how to create an online classroom and assignments.” Participant 5 stated, “I think they need training or an entry point on how to handle an online class load.”

Institutional Infrastructure

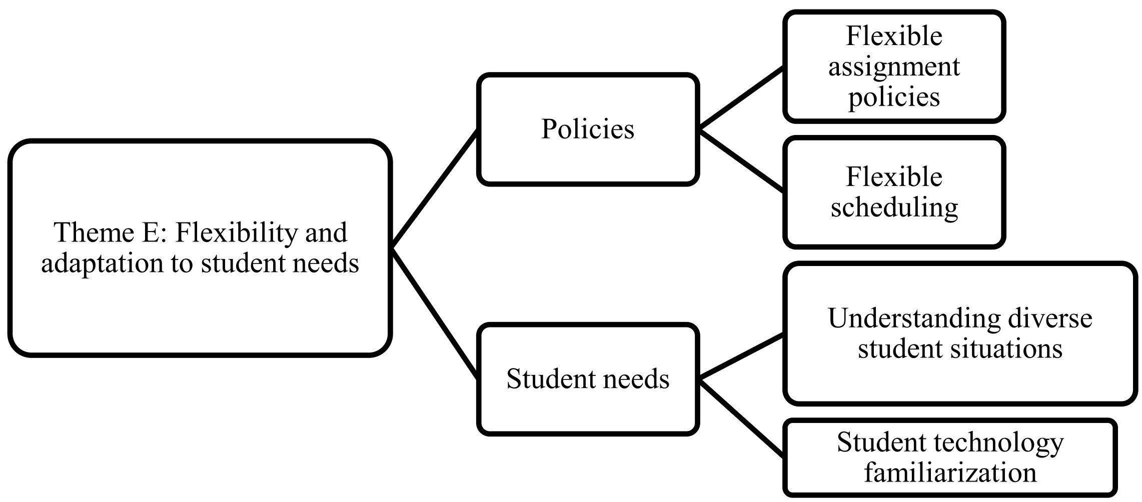
The last category for this theme had two codes: institutional communication and resource access. Most participants mentioned that they required more resources from their institution and clear protocols. For instance, one participant mentioned how important support from their institution was in creating a positive online teaching experience. Participant 2 said, “The college put out a ton of communication both on the professor side and the student side about, hey, we’re, this is what we’re doing, this is what we’re moving to, and here’s how to use it and here’s all the help documentation.” Regarding their institution providing support, Participant 9 said, “I feel like I’m supported as an online teacher. A lot of that is because I think our college does a great job.” Participant 6 emphasized how “It is important for our institutions to allow access to these apps that can enhance the learning process” when discussing the need for additional resources from their institution.

Theme E: Flexibility and Adaptation to Student Needs

This theme defines how instructors adapt to student needs and provide or have provided flexibility, consisting of two categories and four codes. Figure 5 illustrates the codes and categories for this theme.

Figure 5

Code Tree for Theme E: Flexibility and Adaptation to Student Needs



Policies

The first category for this theme was "policies" and consisted of two codes: flexible assignment policies and flexible scheduling. This category consists of how participants described how they adjusted their teaching policies to accommodate student circumstances. Most participants stated that the pandemic has made them more aware of extenuating circumstances, making them more flexible and empathetic in the post-pandemic period. Participant 5 exemplified becoming more flexible with policies after COVID, saying, "I don't know everything students may be dealing with, so let me show some grace and have a heart and be a little more lenient in certain areas." Participant 10 brought up one such example of some of their students living in their cars, so they said, "I've kind of developed more of a no-questions-asked type of policy with certain assignments … more flexibility in certain assignments."

Student Needs

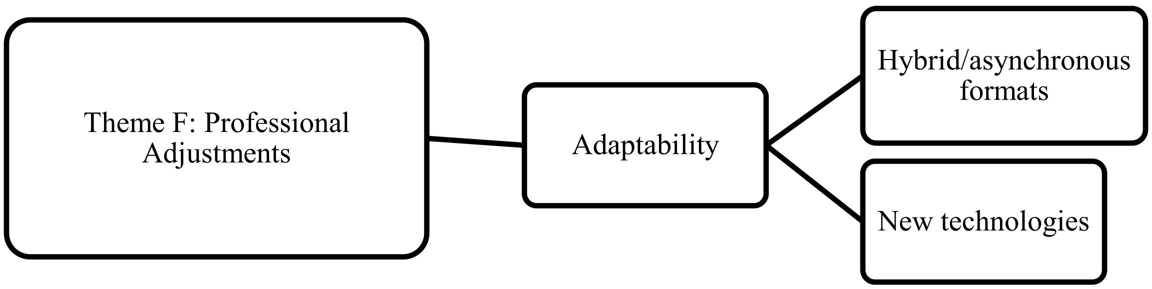
A second category for this theme is "student needs" and was made up of two codes: understanding diverse student situations and student technology familiarization. Multiple participants highlighted the importance of empathy and awareness as an online instructor. Participant 7 said, "Being aware that everybody's situation is a little different is important, if that makes sense." Participants broadly expressed a need for students to familiarize themselves with the technologies so that they can focus on teaching. For instance, Participant 2 said, "I have to teach whatever technology so that they understand how to utilize it, right?" Participant 4 said, "I think it all comes down to basically letting the people that you are serving have a voice and getting their perspective on what is needed and what can best serve them," regarding addressing the needs of students in urban areas.

Theme F: Professional Adjustments

This theme identifies the experiences and perceptions of community college faculty as they adjusted personally and professionally to online teaching. This theme consists of two categories and a total of four codes. Figure 6 illustrates the categories and codes for this theme.

Figure 6

Code Tree for Theme F: Professional Adjustments



Adaptability

The category for this theme is “adaptability” which consists of two codes: hybrid/asynchronous format and new technologies. Many participants mentioned shifting to new technologies from Blackboard at the beginning of the pandemic, such as apps like Canvas or Brightspace. Overall, they said it was a positive shift, even though one participant noted that the shift “required patience,” which represented how most participants initially felt. However, Participant 7 mentioned Brightspace makes learning engaging because it “turns my lectures into Disney cartoons.” Participant 9, when referencing switching from Blackboard to Brightspace, said, “It is just as much about survival as about teaching.” Another key excerpt is from Participant 8, who stated, “We have technology help, so that, that was great at, at our college, and I think that made the big difference from switching from one platform to another" when referencing the switch from Blackboard to Brightspace.

More than half of the participants stated that asynchronous online teaching is a sustainable teaching format. On adjusting to the asynchronous model, Participant 6 said, "In the Async model, you have, you have time to critique yourself as an instructor and adjust. Async allows you to go back and change your videos, and so I love that format." Participant 4, for instance, said that the asynchronous model eliminates many accessibility challenges and creates flexibility. However, Participant 3 mentioned the initial challenges, stating, "it was adapting to having a class that's part like a hybrid class. So they were struggling with the asynchronous part of it." These statements suggest that community college faculty prefers the asynchronous model as it mitigates many challenges.

Results in Context of the Conceptual Framework

The six themes identified in this study align with the CBAM framework (Hall & Hord, 1987). Through the lens of CBAM, the findings suggest that post-pandemic online community college faculty instructors find that many of their practices from teaching online during the pandemic have become routine. Faculty consistently identify maintaining student engagement as a main concern post-pandemic, demonstrating the "consequence" stage of concern, where community college faculty are focused on the learning outcomes for students of online teaching.

Levels of Use

Overall, community college faculty teaching online initially described their experiences with these online tools as nonuse (Hall & Hord, 1987). Participant 8 said, “How would I describe my experience? Well, at first it was overwhelming because we had to switch from in-person to online during a semester.” In contrast, the few teachers already teaching online before the pandemic expressed that they were already in “routine” use. For instance, Participant 2 stated, “My class was already set up to be online, so I was already using Blackboard” when discussing their transition to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Post-pandemic, community college faculty are now refining their use of these online tools and strategies to enhance their online teaching. This indicates movement towards a level 6 (refinement) and level 7 (renewal) use of online teaching tools and technologies (Hall & Hord, 1987).

Stages of Concern

The findings further suggest that community college faculty are at various stages post-pandemic. Most faculty members are concerned about maintaining student engagement in the online classroom and its impact on learning outcomes. Most participants expressed collaboration and refocusing concerns, voicing a need for collaboration with instructional designers when designing online courses (Hall & Hord, 1987). Furthermore, many faculty expressed management concerns regarding students’ lack of knowledge on using the online learning tools and platforms.

Discrepant or Unusual Data

Discrepant data are considered any data that is an outlier and outside the standard data set (Burkholder et al., 2016). For instance, a participant who had already been teaching online for a long time before the pandemic stated, “What I ended up doing during COVID wasn’t that much different from what I was already doing.” Because this was an unusual circumstance, as most community college faculty had little to no experience with online teaching, the participants’ experiences and perceptions differed significantly for some questions. However, I included this in the data analysis because it is important to represent every situation in the data to understand faculty attitudes. Another potential discrepancy data point was from Participant 2, who was okay with students using AI to write their essays, saying that it was fine as long as they edited their essays. This response differs from others who expressed concerns over students using technology for academically unethical purposes. Deciding to keep discrepant data adds credibility to the study results and dependability (Burkholder et al., 2016).

Summary

This study had only one research question, which was answered within the context of the conceptual framework, CBAM.

RQ: What are community college faculty members’ perceptions of their teaching experiences working online post-pandemic?

Most community college faculty had little to no prior experience with online learning when the pandemic hit, struggling to adapt to new tools. Following the pandemic, they expressed a desire for more institutional support and training, particularly for students, to enhance their teaching experiences. Faculty remain concerned about keeping students engaged in the online classroom, so they are shifting to online learning tools and strategies to mitigate these concerns. They have also refocused on newer learning platforms and tools past the pandemic, refining and improving the way they teach online, demonstrating a preference for asynchronous learning to overcome the challenges and barriers associated with online learning. Chapter 5 will discuss the interpretation of the findings, limitations, recommendations, and implications of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of community college faculty members' perceptions of their teaching experiences working online post-pandemic. Data were gathered in the form of semistructured interview questions collected from 10 community college faculty members who taught online during the pandemic and who continue to teach online post-pandemic. Their responses were analyzed using thematic analysis. This study focused on capturing the experiences of community college faculty to understand their teaching experiences in the post-pandemic era. The study found that, beyond the pandemic, faculty members desired more institutional training and support, with a particular emphasis on training for students to enhance their teaching experiences. The study also found that, regarding the online learning environment, faculty express ongoing concerns about student engagement, have moved from nonuse to refocusing and refinement of online learning tools, and found that asynchronous learning helps them overcome many of the voiced barriers and challenges. Community colleges are the pillar of education in many communities, so the results of this study are meant to assist policymakers in making decisions that will positively influence the perceptions of community college faculty as they teach online and adapt to new technologies in the future. This chapter addresses the interpretation of the findings, the study's limitations, recommendations, and implications.

Interpretation of the Findings

The post-pandemic experiences of community college faculty as they teach online were viewed through the lens of CBAM (Hall & Hord, 1987). It is essential to avoid generalizations when interpreting findings to provide accurate results that represent the data. Some of the findings from the current study confirm, disconfirm, or extend the findings from the literature. I interpreted these results in relation to the research question, organizing them by theme for each.

Pre-existing Experience and Familiarity With Online Teaching and Tools

The findings of this theme disconfirm the literature because the current literature found that many instructors had no prior online teaching experience (Delgado, 2021; Kaur, 2024; Yilmaz et al., 2021). Community college faculty were new to online teaching and had a complete lack of familiarity with online tools and teaching in general during the COVID shift to online learning (Li et al., 2021). While most participants in this study lacked familiarity with online teaching, a few participants expressed that online teaching was similar to what they had already been doing before the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found that multiple participants were already at the refocusing and refinement levels of use, disconfirming the literature that suggests all or most participants were at the non-use level at the beginning of the pandemic.

In this study, most participants reported struggling to adapt to new technologies, as they were teaching themselves and were at the non-use or orientation levels. However, participants who reported having institutional support expressed more positive perceptions as they adapted to online teaching tools. The few participants teaching online before COVID expressed that they did not feel the shift to online learning, as they were already in the refocusing stages of concern regarding online learning tools. Therefore, this study also extends findings from prior research to include the experiences of a few faculty members with online teaching experience, confirming their use of online teaching as either refined or routine before the pandemic.

Adoption and Utilization of Online Platforms and Tools

The findings for this theme confirm the literature regarding the utilization and adoption of online platforms and tools. Post-pandemic, participants have utilized various online learning tools and developed positive attitudes towards newer technologies, as they are now at the refinement and renewal stages. During the pandemic, they primarily used Blackboard, but have since migrated to Brightspace, Canvas, and Google Classroom. Overall, participants preferred using LMS and tools with asynchronous capabilities, emphasizing LMS that allow them to upload videos of lectures. Prior literature has mentioned that, during and post-pandemic, community college faculty have already utilized some of these learning tools, with most of the tools aimed at facilitating asynchronous communication with students (Altillo et al., 2021; Anderson, 2020; Vladoiu & Constantinescu, 2021). However, since the pandemic, most participants have discussed switching to Brightspace. This confirms that community college faculty are transitioning from routine use to refinement and renewal levels of utilizing online platforms, aligning with the literature on post-pandemic studies.

Instruction and Engagement Strategies

Regarding instructional and engagement strategies, the study's results confirm the findings of the current literature. The current literature indicates that student engagement in online classrooms has been a significant concern since the pandemic, particularly when implementing online activities with repetitive content and tutorials that lack interactivity

(Ali & Nath, 2023). The literature on post-pandemic studies confirms the findings of this study, which suggest that the key to student engagement is having engaging course delivery methods and providing an asynchronous online learning format, as communication and human connection are essential to student engagement (Gardner & Stotts, 2022; McCarthy & Ferreira, 2022). Furthermore, this study confirms that video or voice conferencing tools are the most effective way to keep students engaged in the online classroom using tools such as Zoom (Altillo et al., 2021; Vladoiu & Constantinescu, 2021). Post-pandemic, participants largely maintain ongoing concerns about keeping student engagement in the online classroom, although they have found ways to mitigate these challenges through course delivery methods.

Challenges and Constraints in Transition

In terms of the challenges and constraints instructors faced when teaching online, this study extends the findings of the literature. The majority of participants who had no prior experience teaching online before COVID-19 expressed that the transition was rapid and chaotic. While some participants said they had support from their institution, most did not initially, as they struggled to adapt and expressed management concerns as they moved from nonuse to orientation. Prior literature discusses faculty with little to no institutional support at the beginning of the pandemic. Multiple studies have reported that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, faculty initially faced numerous barriers, including personal challenges, accessibility issues, and a lack of familiarity (Floyd et al., 2022; Meirovitz et al., 2022; Mushtaha et al., 2022). However, this study was able to pull insights from those who did have online teaching experience; participants expressed an overwhelmingly positive experience with the transition from face-to-face to online learning. The study found that providing institutional support is key to addressing management concerns for instructors at the early levels of use phases.

Institutional Support and Collaboration

The findings of this theme extend the literature because participants expressed a need for institutional support through collaboration and the provision of training for students. Participants express a desire for students to be trained in using the online tools and learning software to enhance their post-pandemic teaching experiences. The participants claimed that spending time teaching students how to use the software and troubleshooting was a major factor negatively impacting their teaching experiences. However, the current literature highlights a need for faculty to have additional support, training, and resources to improve the accessibility of their online teaching experiences (Avello et al., 2020; Bosley & Custer, 2021; Griffiths et al., 2022). A similar study, which emphasized the benefits of online learning, found that ongoing professional development was a key factor in making online teaching and learning effective and sustainable (Lucas & Vicente, 2022). This indicates that much of the previous literature focuses on faculty expressing a need for training, but not for students. The key finding of this study strongly suggests that, moving forward, decision-makers should implement support and training for students as they transition to online learning for the first time at an institution, thereby extending the literature on what is known about ways to support online community college faculty.

Most participants responded that collaboration with faculty and instructional designers would significantly enhance their online teaching experience and train students to use online tools. They mentioned that having support with designing content and using the technical tools would be extremely helpful in mitigating ongoing concerns about technology usage. Similar studies reported that educators felt this support would benefit their online teaching. For example, a mixed-methods study that suggested online learning has many positive aspects and that to move forward, faculty and student support would be necessary for online tools (Lundberg & Stigmar, 2024). Multiple studies have recommended additional training and support for faculty, similar to the findings of this study (Gardner & Stotts, 2022; Li et al., 2021; Matsieli & Mutula, 2024; Anderson, 2020).

Flexibility and Adaptation to Student Needs

The findings related to this theme extend the literature because there was limited knowledge on how community college faculty have adjusted their policies on assignments in response to post-pandemic flexibility. Participants have voiced that, since the pandemic, they have become more flexible with students regarding policies for submitting assignments, procedures, and attendance. Since the pandemic, they moved from awareness to the refocusing stages of concern regarding flexibility, integrating new ways to adapt without compromising standards. Overall, the participants expressed that the pandemic made them aware of extenuating situations students are experiencing, such as being homeless and living in their cars, so they have developed a “no questions asked” policy with assignments at times. The literature, similarly, found that flexibility is an essential component to maintaining accessibility in the online classroom, with studies reporting that faculty incorporated asynchronous learning into their online classrooms through video platforms such as Zoom and YouTube as they switched from traditional classrooms to create a flexible learning environment (Sakkir et al., 2023; Sharma & Saini, 2023; Singh et al., 2021). A study conducted during the pandemic found that the primary benefit of online learning was its flexibility, and it suggested asynchronous learning as a key to mitigating barriers (Mushtaha et al., 2022). These findings may suggest that, moving forward, asynchronous learning tools are a key to maintaining a flexible learning environment, extending the existing literature on what is known about the effectiveness of asynchronous learning in providing flexibility (Singh et al., 2021; Vladoiu & Constantinescu, 2021).

Professional Adjustments

This study's findings confirm that professional adjustments continue to challenge online community college instructors; however, asynchronous learning mitigates many of the challenges associated with online learning. Asynchronous learning was found to be a solution that allowed participants to adjust to the challenges of flexibility and accessibility. The participants in this study mentioned that flexibility through asynchronous learning allows them to adapt to many of these professional challenges. During the pandemic and even post-pandemic, faculty express that solely synchronous learning has too many accessibility challenges. Studies from the pandemic have shown that with synchronous courses, faculty faced barriers, including students being unable to complete courses due to limited Internet access or a lack of devices (Erdogmus et al., 2022; Ozkan & Budak, 2021). Participants reported that the challenges with new platforms, such as Brightspace, have improved with increased institutional support since the pandemic. Similarly, the literature found that online instructors faced initial struggles with adapting to and overcoming barriers during the pandemic (Boyer-Davis, 2022; Li et al., 2021). The existing literature encompasses studies that have found faculty members face numerous challenges due to juggling their work-life balance (Floyd et al., 2022; Meirovitz et al., 2022; Mushtaha et al., 2022). The asynchronous learning model allows participants to overcome many of the challenges with professional adjustments.

Limitations of the Study

It is important to acknowledge the study's limitations while acknowledging the findings. First, the sample size consisted of 10 participants, which was intended to represent the entire population of online community college faculty teaching online in the study's context. This limitation must be acknowledged due to the nature of qualitative research, which uses small sample sizes in this research design (Burkholder et al., 2016). As a result, other insights and experiences may not accurately represent the population, underscoring the need for future studies in similar contexts. Next, because the study's criteria only included community college faculty who taught online post-pandemic and had taught online during the pandemic, this study may not represent online faculty with other roles in a community college setting.

Furthermore, bias must also be considered a limitation, such as participant or researcher bias. While rigorous measures were taken to mitigate as much bias as possible, such as using proper interviewing and data collection techniques, including a researcher journal and member-checking strategies, participants not honestly reporting their answers or researcher bias when interpreting the data is a possible limitation (Kennedy, 2020; Mukherjee, 2020). Purposive sampling and a sufficient sample size for qualitative research were also part of the strategy to minimize this limitation. Overall, the results of this study maintain credibility and reliability due to the rigorous strategies involved in this study and by acknowledging these limitations.

Recommendations

Recommendations for further research are provided in this section, with respect to the boundaries and limitations of the study. The first recommendation is related to the finding that online instructors expressed concerns about maintaining student engagement in online environments. Therefore, it is recommended to conduct further research on identifying barriers that hinder student engagement and to develop practical strategies to mitigate these barriers (Altillo et al., 2021; Vladoiu & Constantinescu, 2021). Further research will provide a deeper understanding of best practices for increasing student engagement and enhancing the online experiences of both students and teachers.

The second recommendation is related to the study's finding that faculty expressed a need for more support through resources, collaboration, and training to enhance their teaching experiences and improve student learning outcomes (Erdogmus et al., 2022; Ozkan & Budak, 2021). Future research could be performed on the types of training and professional development instructors would find most beneficial. Additionally, studies could be conducted to explore the impact of new technologies on teaching practices and student learning, including the attitudes of faculty members. This type of research would help provide a more profound understanding for decision-makers in institutions as they implement new changes.

The last recommendation is related to the limitations of this study. This study was conducted with 10 online community college faculty members from various parts of the United States who taught during the pandemic and are currently teaching online. The nature of qualitative research often involves small sample pools and is frequently limited by time and geographical constraints (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Therefore, this study should be replicated in other countries or with different populations, such as graduate school faculty, to determine if the results are similar. By conducting this study across various contexts, researchers can provide more comprehensive insights into the field, ultimately enhancing the experiences of online instructors and student learning outcomes.

Implications

This study contributes to positive social change in several ways. First, at the individual level, the findings imply that community college faculty members who receive institutional support through training, professional development, resources, and collaboration from colleagues will feel better equipped to teach in the online classroom setting. By receiving this type of support, individual instructors may adapt more effectively to implementing new instructional technologies and find more effective ways to keep students engaged, thereby mitigating and addressing potential concerns (McCarthy & Ferreira, 2022).

There is also potential for change at the organizational level. Community college institutions can utilize the findings of this study to develop future professional development training and identify more effective ways to support their faculty. In addition, because many community college faculty members expressed the need for collaboration, policymakers and administrators can use the findings of this study to find ways to encourage collaboration between content designers and online faculty members. Another one of the key implications of this study is that institutions can use the findings to find ways to provide students with training on instructional tools to improve learning outcomes and enhance the teaching experiences of online instructors, addressing concerns for student engagement and instructional challenges.

Another contribution to positive social change involves improving professional practice in engaging students effectively with online tools and asynchronous strategies to enhance student learning outcomes. The findings of this study can be used to identify additional ways to make asynchronous learning more engaging through platforms, online learning tools, and training, as the asynchronous learning model addresses numerous flexibility and accessibility barriers. Changemakers can use the findings of this study to form policies and decisions that affect how resources should best be allocated in institutions to support their faculty and students. These implications provide a foundation for improving online teaching at community colleges, which are the center and pillar of accessible learning in communities.

Conclusion

This study explored the experiences of community college faculty who taught during the pandemic and are currently teaching post-pandemic to understand how their experiences shaped their perceptions and teaching practices. Using CBAM as the framework, the research question was answered through four important key findings. First, the study found that community college faculty have moved past the nonuse stage of using online learning tools and platforms to refinement and refocusing. Another key finding is that post-pandemic, they have expressed a desire for institutional support and training for students in using online learning tools to enhance their teaching experiences. Faculty members also expressed a need for institutional collaboration in course creation with curriculum designers and have ongoing concerns about maintaining student engagement in the online classroom. The insights of this study extend and confirm much of the existing literature, providing a foundation for future research and informing policymakers and stakeholders as they make decisions that impact online teaching practices.

Overall, the findings of this study provide insights into the existing gap in the knowledge regarding community college faculty perspectives past the pandemic, extending much of the existing literature. Even though more research is needed to understand community college faculty experiences, this study provides a solid foundation for future researchers to continue exploring how educators perceive online learning. Past the pandemic, community college faculty are embracing online learning and experimenting with new technologies. The results of this study guide policymakers as they strive to make informed decisions that enhance the online learning experiences for faculty and students. To ensure the success of online learning in the future, educational institutions must continue to invest in support that will sustain this pivotal learning mode beyond a global crisis. Moving forward, faculty are no longer adapting to and struggling with online teaching; instead, they are embracing and reshaping it.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Introductory script:

Thank you for your interest in participating in my research study. Before we get started, I wanted to share a bit about myself and why I am doing this study as part of my doctoral research. I'd like to start off by introducing myself. My name is Irene Arshad, and I am an educator. I own and run a K-12 virtual tutoring business that I founded during COVID-19. Before COVID, I was a high school teacher, face-to-face tutor, and an adjunct community college faculty member. The COVID shift sparked my interest in how online learning has transformed education, as it greatly transformed my perceptions. Whenever I interview new tutors, the most fascinating part is often hearing how COVID-19 transformed their perceptions or careers. Hearing these stories has made me want to conduct this study for my doctoral research.

I wanted you to know that I have a specific definition of online learning, which is how community college faculty such as yourself deliver online instruction and use online tools. As you answer my questions today, please keep this definition in mind.

Thank you so much for volunteering to participate in this interview today. I so appreciate your time and expertise. I am looking forward to seeing the world from your point of view. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes. Will you become my teacher and help me understand?

I will be audio recording our interview today so that I may make a transcript, so that I can be sure to have an accurate record of what you share with me today.

[START RECORDING]

Background, Screening, and Introductory Questions

Today's date is [day of week, month, day, year], and it is [time of day].

[If required by IRB]
Before we get started with the official interview, I wanted to be sure you read the letter of consent. Do you have any questions about participating in this study?

Do you agree to be interviewed for this study? [Wait for response of yes/no]

I want to learn a bit more about you and your experiences about online learning.

- *How did you hear about my study?*
- Did you teach online during COVID and are you currently teaching online in a community college?
- Just to confirm, are you over 18?

Option A: *Thank you, Let's go ahead and move into the interview questions.*

Option B: *Thank you so much for your willingness to participate. But after talking with you, I'm not sure you have the depth of experiences on online learning in community colleges that I need to answer my research questions. Thank you for time.* [They do not receive any compensation (gift cards), if applicable.]

Table of Interview Questions: Add/remove rows as necessary.

Transition Statement: *The following questions will ask about your experiences on online learning in community colleges, before the pandemic and then post-pandemic.*

RQ	Interview Questions (IQs)	My Notes & Alignment to framework/literature
	IQ1: How would you describe your experiences using new technologies as you transitioned to online teaching during the pandemic?	
	Prompts: Can you provide specific examples?	
	IQ 2: What challenges have you had while teaching online post-pandemic?	
	Prompts: How have you addressed those challenges?	
	IQ 3: What are the benefits of teaching online compared to face-to-face instruction?	
	Prompts: Can you elaborate with some examples?	
	IQ4: What are the drawbacks of teaching online compared to face-to-face instruction?	
	Prompt: Can you tell me more about that?	
	IQ5: How have your initial perceptions of online teaching during the pandemic changed compared to your experiences post-pandemic?	
	Prompt: What do you think caused that?	
	IQ6: What resources do you feel would be helpful to increase your effectiveness as an online instructor?	
	Prompt: Can you elaborate on why you think some of these resources might be helpful?	

	IQ7: What recommendations would you make to improve online teaching in the community college setting now?	
	Prompt: What effects would you think that would have?	
	IQ8: How has the process of integrating new teaching practices or technologies changed since you started teaching online during the pandemic?	
	Prompt: Can you provide more details about that, such as concrete examples?	
	IQ9: What are some barriers you faced teaching online during the pandemic?	
	Prompt: How has your view on that changed?	
	IQ10: What are the barriers you currently face teaching online?	
	Prompt: Have you noticed any changes in these barriers since the pandemic?	

Final IQ.

Is there anything else about online learning in community colleges that we have not yet had a chance to discuss?
Additional questions you might end with:

- What have you learned about your teaching practice through all of this?
- What have you learned about yourself through all of this?
- Do you have anything else to add?

Closing Script: *Thank you so much for your time today. I really do appreciate you sharing your thoughts with me. Your insights will help contribute to the field of education by helping us understand the experiences of faculty in the online learning environment as we move past the pandemic. After the interview, I will reach out to you via email within the next week or two with a copy of the transcript, which is a part of the member-checking process. You will have the opportunity to make sure your experiences are accurately transcribed. Should you wish, I will provide you with a summary of the findings of this study via email. Your responses will remain confidential and be stored securely. If you have any further questions, please reach out to me via email at* irene.arshad@waldenu.edu*. Thank you so much again for participating in this study*