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Lived Experiences with Social Networking Technology to Improve Physical Activity

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Walden University
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Abstract

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BSN, Fayetteville State University, 1999

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Research suggests that Black women living in the United States are not engaging in sufficient physical activity, which is a major factor negatively impacting their health outcomes. Black Girls Run (BGR) is a targeted national health movement using the capacity of social networking technology as a tool to interact with and inspire Black women to live healthy through running. Literature lacked the voice and perspective of Black women who were embracing the innovation of technology to positively improve their health behaviors. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to gain a better understanding of the composite experiences of women in BGR and how they utilize social networking technology to improve their physical activity. Social cognitive theory provided the theoretical framework. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 13 women participants of BGR, who were selected using purposive sampling technique. Data were transcribed, organized, analyzed, and coded into common themes with the support of Nvivo 11 software. The findings revealed that social networking served as a tool that the women in BGR used to connect, encourage, and motivate physical activity, and it thereby helped to support their social and physical well-being. Study findings may contribute to positive social change by increasing knowledge and awareness of how technology can be used to promote healthy behaviors among Black women. This study may also provide useful information to stakeholders interested in health promotion strategies and programs to reduce the health disparity gap for Black women in the United States.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to God, through whom all things are made possible. Also, to my husband and Mom who tirelessly prayed, motivated, and supported me through the ups, downs, and sideways of this entire journey. In addition, I dedicate this study to the memory of my Father, though he is in heaven, the gift of his life and legacy etched the meaning of service for a more noble cause. Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my children, "my girls", and to all those along the way who inspired me to a purpose much greater than myself.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

There is an epidemic of poor health among Black women living in the United

States. Higher rates of morbidity and mortality are disproportionately impacting the lives

of Black women and significantly compromising the quality of their health and wellness

(Flegal, Caroll, Ogden, & Curtain, 2010). Numerous studies point out dissimilarities in

chronic diseases and conditions like obesity, heart disease, and hypertension that impact

the health of Black women more often versus women of other ethnicities (Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2016; Joseph, Ainsworth, Keller, & Dodgson,

2015; Rashawn, 2014; Versey, 2014). For example, 45% of Black women have

hypertension compared to 31.3% of White women, and Black women are more likely to

develop hypertension at a younger age (Mozaffarian et al., 2015). Similarly, the

prevalence of heart disease, which is the number one killer of women in the United States

is highest among Black women (Mozaffarian et al., 2015). According to the National

Health and Nutrition Examination Survey from 2011-2014, 82% of Black women were

considered overweight or obese compared to 63.5% of White women (CDC, 2016).

There are also marked dissimilarities from pregnancy-related complications with death

occurring three to four times more often among Black women than White women (Office

of Minority Health [OMH], 2014). Likewise, Black women have higher overall cancer

mortality rates as compared to White women, even though White women have a greater

risk of developing cancer (Siegel, DeSantis, & Jemal, 2014). Heart disease is the leading

cause of death for women and men in the United States but for Black women that rate is

49% as compared to 32% for White women (Mozaffarian et al, 2015). Differences also exist with the incidence of breast cancer in which Black women who make up only 13.7% of the total female population in the United States, yet they have the highest mortality rates than females of any other race (American Cancer Society, 2016). Collectively, these facts provide a glimpse of the health crisis caused by chronic disease and inequitable health conditions experienced by Black women living in the United States. They also underscore a public health crisis of systemic social injustice and human rights impropriety. Prior to the second Medical Committee for Human Rights conference Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated "Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane" (p. 22).

Securing a healthier future and developing interventions that bridge the health disparity for Black women in the United States are clearly needed. It is also a recognizably challenging because health is complex and influenced by an array of factors on multiple and intersecting levels (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion [ODPHP], 2011). Researchers have identified one of the major contributing factors negatively impacting the health of Black women as being the lack of sufficient physical activity (Bland & Sharma, 2015; Joseph et al., 2015). There is a well-established correlation between adequate physical activity and a healthier lifestyle (Joseph et al., 2015; Kolt et al., 2013; Pekmezi et al., 2013). According to the CDC (2016), physical activity reduces the incidence of cardiovascular disease, helps to control weight, and can improve mental well-being. Also, being physically active can help support stronger bones, help deter disease, and is linked to longevity of life (CDC, 2016). The CDC

(2010) established physical activity guidelines recommending at least 2.5 hours of moderate intensity aerobic activity and whole-body muscle strengthening exercise, at a minimum of two times a week for adults. In addition, inadequate physical activity has definitively been linked to increased risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, obesity, and other health complications (Joseph et al., 2015; Pekmezi et al., 2013). Researchers indicate that Black women engage in the least amount of physical activity when compared to women of all other races (Joseph et al., 2015). Consequently, unless effective and sustainable strategies to improve health outcomes for Black women are made and the health inequity gap greatly reduced, then the state of health for Black women will continue to be a crisis.

Joseph et al. (2015) suggested that innovative, culturally relevant, and sustainable approaches to promote physical activity are needed to help close the health disparity gap with Black women. In addition, Kelly et al. (2010) recommended having a clear understanding of what Black women value and believe with regards to their health and physical activity. Moreover, Doldren & Webb (2013) suggested the need for programs that are addressing Black women's health to also integrate perceptions of Black women regarding the challenges they face. One innovative approach demonstrating promise in its capacity to reach and inspire physical activity among Black women is social networking as a tool for health promotion.

Social media is a general term given to describe various mobile and internet-based applications through which users can publish, share, discuss, microblog, livestream, livecast, work virtually, network, and play online interactive video games (Bennett &

Glasgow, 2009; Cheung & Lee, 2010; Korda & Itani, 2013). The adoption and use of

social media technology are increasing rapidly with an estimated 1.79 billion users

worldwide and an expected increase of 2.5 billion users by 2018 (Statista, n.d.). Also, the

use of social media applications such as social networking sites have surged, growing at a

rate of 800% in eight years (Fox & Rainie, 2014). According to Perrin (2015), there is

little difference in social media use based on gender, racial and ethnic groups, and rural,

suburban, or urban communities. Furthermore, trends show a narrowing difference

between socioeconomic status, educational attainment, and age with social media use

(Perrin, 2015). A survey conducted to find out how many people use some form of social

media in 2014 revealed 81% of all American adults use e-mail or the internet on occasion

(Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, & Madden, 2015). Moreover, 65% of American

adults are on social networking sites (Perrin, 2015) with 72% of Black women using the

most popular social networking site Facebook.

Accessing social media is noted to be relatively easy and affordable, making it an

ideal platform for communicating and interacting with individuals, groups, churches,

communities, businesses, schools, universities, and organizations (Briones, Kuch, Liu, &

Jin, 2011; Korda & Itani, 2013; Postill & Pink, 2012; Ramanadhan, Mendez, Rao, &

Viswanathan, 2013; Tang, Gu, & Whinston, 2012). In addition, social media platforms

have the benefit of flexibility with 24-hour and 7-day a week access using mobile or

internet-based options, the capacity of global reach, and low operational cost (Salmons,

2010; Wilkinson, Basto, Perovic, Lawrentschuk, & Murphy, 2015). Social media

platforms are not limited to geography, race, socioeconomic status, age, or gender,

providing a dais for communicating, sharing, engaging, and exchanging information worldwide (Laranjo et al., 2015; Fox, 2011). Additionally, uses for social media cover an array of different purposes ranging from personal interaction, marketing campaigns, and supporting health promotion endeavors (Wilkinson et al., 2015; Tang et al., 2012). Furthermore, researchers are identifying various ways in which the utility of social media platforms can be used to promote health (Maher et al., 2014; Park & Calamaro, 2013). Also, researchers are examining the capacity of social media to help reduce health disparities among marginalized populations (Korda & Itani, 2013; Kozinet, 2010; OMH, 2011; Norman & Yip, 2012; Peek, Ferguson, Roberson, & Chin, 2014). A recent randomized control study conducted by Joseph et al. (2015) demonstrated positive results in improving light to moderate physical activity intensity using culturally targeted social media applications of Facebook and text messages with Black women. In another study conducted by Rashawn (2014) titled *Black Women Do Workout*, the researcher examined the innovative use of Facebook as a resource to promote physical activity among Black women, which its resulted in positively inspiring increased activity rates of Black women.

In an effort to confront the health challenges Black women face regarding their health innovative groups such as Black Girls Run (BGR), Black Women Do Workout, Black Women's Health Initiative, and GirlTrek are implementing new tools and strategies to promote positive and healthy behaviors and improve health outcomes for Black women. BGR is one of the more recognized and successful groups using the innovation of social media platforms to inspire and promote physical activity among

Black women. Founded by Carey and Hicks-Rocha, this group uses various social media applications like Facebook and Twitter to encourage interconnectedness, interaction, and motivate physical activity through running and other group activities. BGR promotes health-conscious environments in response to the health crisis of obesity impacting the lives of Black women (Garms, 2013). This group has a strategic and culturally focused mission and vision to encourage Black women to live healthier. BGR has rallied a large following of women, reporting over 250,000 women nationwide on their webpage (Knox, 2015). They have designed a variety of information tabs on their Facebook page that include happenings, videos, places, groups, apps, and events through which members can communicate, share, and interact with each other (Wegner, Jordan, Funk, & Clark, 2016). BGR has been able to positively address a salient public health issue of insufficient physical activity among Black women, although the group does not state direct or operational ties with local or state governed public health activities and actions. According to Brown (2016), most of the research about physical activity among Black women comes from the perspective of those with sedentary behavior, with little research from the viewpoint those women who are physically active. Moreover, the utility of social media as a tool for health promotion is a relatively new researched area. Even more novel is research that looks at gaining an understanding from the perspective of physically active Black women who are members of BGR and are making innovative use of social media to increase their physical activity. Therefore, it is important to gain an understanding of these experiences from the perspective of the Black women who are participating in BGR.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into the following sections, beginning with the background of the topic under study followed by the problem statement that will frame the research study, the research purpose, and then the research questions. The next sections will cover the theoretical foundation and conceptual framework, the nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the research. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the main points of the chapter.

Background of the Study

In an ideal world all people regardless of age, race, gender, religion, and socioeconomic status would have an equal opportunity to be healthy. Everyone would benefit from the availability of quality health care services and resources, culturally competent healthcare providers, affordable medications, and healthcare systems that promote equitable health for all. Preventive services, health education, and our complex and interconnected systems would center on protecting health and wellness for all. Also, communities where people live, play, and work would cultivate safe environments that foster healthy lifestyles such as access to local farmer's markets, walking trails, and tobacco free parks. Thoughts of health would shift from the leading causes death to the leading causes of life and stakeholders, research, resources, and policies would serve all people with the same concern. In essence, all people would have an equal opportunity for optimal health. In reality, segments of the population, such as with Black women in the United States are burdened with inequitable and disparate health outcomes (Joseph et al., 2015). The *Women of Color Health Data Book* provides current and pertinent data on various significant areas affecting the health of minority women in the United States

8

(Clayton, Brooks, & Kornstein, 2014). This report offered a compilation of facts and discussions regarding the harms incurred by disparate and inequitable health for Black women. The National Center for Health Statistics, (2013) reported similar statistics as they relate to health outcomes for Black women. For example, 49% of Black women over age 20 have heart disease; 82% are likely to be overweight or obese. New HIV infection rates are 20 times higher than those of White women, and Black women lead in overall cancer mortality rates (Go et al., 2013). Black women were also said to have significant disparity in health from women of other racial backgrounds and greater inequalities in the areas of economic security, educational attainment, poverty, entrepreneurship, and political leadership (Guerra, 2013). In 2012, the percentage of Black women holding a bachelor's degree was 8.58% compared to 12.7% of White women (Guerra, 2013). Regarding economic security, the poverty rate in 2012 for Black women was 28.6% versus 10.8% for non-Hispanic White women (Hamilton, Martin, & Ventura, 2012). Additionally, only 11.9% of Black women in the United States were noted to hold professional or administrative positions compared to 41.6% for White women (Hamilton et al., 2012). All these factors have a role in contributing to the state of health for Black women in the United States. Nevertheless, improving the health of Black women in the United States is clearly needed, it is also recognizably a complex problem based on multiple levels of influence such as socioeconomic status, educational attainment, and race (ODPH, 2011).

The advent of social media technology has significantly changed the communication landscape. Communication has expanded from the traditional one-way

flow of information from a sender to a receiver to a diverse and interactive

communication infrastructure (Korda & Itani, 2013). The infrastructure includes creating

and exchanging information through mobile and Internet-based systems (Korda & Itani,

2013). Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) described social media as "a group of Internet-based

applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and

allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (p. 69). The innovation of

social media is transforming the way people connect, create, interact, collaborate, and

share textual and visual information (Aichner & Jacob, 2015; Korda & Itani, 2013).

Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Ustream, Skype, WhatsApp, iMessage, and Pinterest are

examples of current social media applications that have become part of mainstream

activities people engage in daily (Smith & Anderson, 2018). In addition, social media

platforms are not only modernizing how people communicate, they are increasing the

speed of communication through real-time applications such as instant messaging

(Aichner & Jacob, 2015). According to Ngai, Tao, & Moon (2014), social media are

creating new communication opportunities through the amalgamation of technology and

social interaction. The broad demographic reach and rapid adoption of social media

technology make it a salient tool for supporting and advancing public health initiatives

(Chou, Prestin, Lyons, & Kuang-yi, 2012; Joseph et al., 2015; Korda & Itani, 2013;

Kozinet, 2010; Postill & Pink 2012). The inequitable health of Black women in the

United States is a significant public health problem, and the utility of social media

technology may facilitate interventions for improving their health outcomes.

Current users of social media in the health care industry include the Mayo Clinic, which uses content syndication and RSS feeds, affording its users the ability to subscribe and receive medical information (Mayo Clinic, n.d.). Another example is dLife.com, which integrates media networking for individuals and families living with diabetes by providing multiple online venues for real life information, connections, and inspiration on diabetic health, in addition to allowing users to share information and experiences (dLife, n.d.). Also, the CDC (2014b) uses widgets or web-based applications to permit specific content from their site to display on a user's web page. The AIDS.gov site houses links to various forms of social media such as blogs, mashups, and podcast in response to HIV (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013). Moreover, researchers are examining the benefits social media platforms can provide to address health disparities in the United States, as well as the challenges they present (Gibbons et al., 2011; Neiger et al., 2012). Examples of its broad use include the medical and health care industries, which are also incorporating an increasing use of social media platforms for a variety of purposes (Korda & Itani, 2013). The usability and interoperability of social media technology are advancing and revolutionizing how people live in the world communicate. This study contributes to the body of knowledge in this area by uncovering the reality of experiences and feelings of Black women in the United States regarding social media technology as a tool to improve their health through physical activity.

Research Problem Statement

Black women in the United States are burdened by striking differences in the incidence and prevalence of diseases and chronic health conditions as compared to White

women in the United States (Bland & Sharma 2017; Joseph et al., 2015; OMH, 2012). The lack of exercise and sedentary lifestyles are considered major factors that contribute to the health challenges faced by Black women (Joseph et al., 2015; CDC, 2014a). Based on the positive benefits of adequate physically activity, which include helping to improve health and lower the risk of disease (Rashawn, 2014), it would be advantageous for Black women to include exercise as a consistent part of their daily routine. Therefore, initiatives and interventions that promote physical activity are needed to improve health outcomes for Black women. There is growing information in the academic literature on the use of social media applications such as Facebook and text messaging for health promotion purposes (Joseph et al., 2015; Maher et al., 2014; Webb, Joseph, Yardley, & Michie, 2010). More specifically, research regarding the use of online technology-based platforms such as the internet, smartphones, and social media applications can be used to improve health outcomes are increasing (Gibbons et al., 2011; Joseph et al., 2015; Laranjo et al., 2015). While the use of social media applications to support various areas of public health continues to expand, there is also a need for evaluating how these applications are impacting health outcomes (Heldman, Schindelar, & Weaver, 2013). Furthermore, there is a paucity of current research detailing the experience of using social media technology to improve physical activity. More specifically, to decrease the health disparity gap between Black and White women, more research is needed regarding the lived experience of Black women who use social media platforms for health purposes (Pekmezi et al., 2013).

This study lends itself to a qualitative research design used for examining behavior and the perception of people. Quantitative methods are focused on testing theories through measurement values. Phenomenology is one type of qualitative research design that focuses on discovering the essential meaning of a phenomenon through the lived experience of the participant (van Manen, 1990). Hermeneutic phenomenology is a research method that evolved from Husserl and Heidegger that focuses on uncovering hidden phenomenon and the meaning associated with it, in essence, to explore the complexity of how humans make sense of their world. This approach to research is used to discover context and meaning about the experiences of people through interpretation of their described experience (Spiegelberg, 1982). As such, it is uniquely well-matched for this study in which I sought to conceptualize how social media technology influences behavior. Van Manen (1990) stated that a hermeneutic phenomenology research design is not bound to a set method for conducting research but does involve a process for data analysis such as the hermeneutic cycle that encompasses reading, reflective writing, and interpretation. The hermeneutic cycle appeared in the data analysis phase of this study. In addition, the SCT is examined in terms of human behavior and the interaction between the environment and individuals and how this reciprocal relationship influences behavior. As such, in this inquiry I sought to bridge a gap in knowledge by exploring the experiences of participants of BGR who use social media to improve their physical activity. The lived experiences of participants who were a part of the social media platform BGR may be useful for stakeholders who are seeking to find techniques to reach and improve the health and wellness of Black women in America. In addition, this study

may be advantageous in helping stakeholders better understand the experience and attributes of social media platforms that are successful in motivating and improving health and wellness among Black women. This research might provide insight for stakeholders interested in understanding more about the utility of social media technology as a tool to support the development of programs, practices, and policies that focus on improving health and social justice for Black women in the United States.

Purpose of the Study

Innovative strategies and solutions to engage, include, and improve the health and wellness of Black women living in the United States are needed. A recent study conducted by Joseph et al. (2015) proposed social media applications such as Facebook and text messaging are demonstrating positive results in increasing physical activity in participants when the content was culturally relevant and competent. Phenomenological research is an approach that attempts to uncover the experiences about a phenomenon from the perspective or point of view of the participant (Creswell, 2009). Given the success BGR is demonstrating in being able to rally Black women on a national level to become more physically active, understanding the reality of the experience from the perspective of the participants is important. Furthermore, in a study examining human behavior and computers, Galehbakhtiari and Pouryasouri (2015) posit that numerous studies concentrate on what motivates people to engage in online activities, while less attention is given to examining the lived experiences of the participants who are engaging in online activities. Therefore, the central phenomenon of this research study was the utility of social networking to improve physical activity; the participants included eligible

Black women who participated in BGR, and the research site took place in an online environment using Google hangouts. The emphasis of this research was on learning what emerges from the lived experience of the participants. As such, in this study I sought to add to the qualitative body of knowledge by exploring the abstract and intuitive phenomena that come from the descriptions of lived experiences by Black women using the social networking site BGR to improve their physical activity.

Research Questions

The research questions were a product of the literature review that identified a gap in knowledge about personal experiences from the vantage point of Black women and issues surrounding their health. They were also developed from the recommendations for future studies by other researchers of similarly focused interest in improving the health and wellness of Black women. I also constructed the questions from an interest in gaining better insight and understanding into ways to improve health and wellness among Black women.

RQ1: What is the lived experience of Black women using the social networking site on Black Girls Run to encourage physical activity?

RQ2: How do Black women participating in Black Girls Run view social networking technology as a motivator to engage in physical activity?

Theoretical Base

SCT is credited to the work of Bandura, a Canadian psychologist, and will be used as the theoretical foundation for this study. SCT evolved as an interpersonal theory that focuses on explanations of behavior from a human agentic viewpoint (Bandura,

1986). Badura's perspective on human agency suggests that people have the capacity to influence the conditions of their lives through personal, proxy, and collective influences. SCT explains human behavior as being caused by triadic reciprocal determinism (Bandura, 1986). The triad being behavior, personal, and environmental factors that constantly interchanging. Bandura (2004) proceeds by interconnecting the SCT with health promotion and disease prevention using the following key constructs:

- Knowledge or awareness and understanding about the risks and benefits of health.

- Perceived self-efficacy in which a person has the power to governor their health practices.

- Outcome expectations are what the anticipated costs and gains that a person believes will result from the health practices.

- Goals or health plans and strategies people establish.

- Perceived facilitators are the things people believe will help them achieve health.

- Impediments are the things people believe stop them from achieving health.

This study employed the perspective of SCT to inform the design and development of the research approach and research questions. SCT has largely been used in the capacity of research design for interventions as a means to help understand the predictors and principles of health behaviors (Richards et al., 2010; Rhodes et al., 2010). In this study, the key constructs will be used to help understanding the relationship between the adoption and utilization of social networking platforms for promoting

healthy behavior and physical activity. In a study by Duggan et al. (2015), it was reported

that 77% of women online use Facebook. In addition, Joseph et al. (2015) indicated that

Black women are utilizing social media applications such as smartphones and Facebook

at higher rates than women of other ethnicities. BGR is a health movement that was

organized to confront the obesity epidemic in the Black community by focusing on

improving fitness and health through running (Garms, 2013; Knox, 2015). This

movement and other similar health initiatives are using social networking platforms to

improve healthy behaviors and promote health. Considering this as significant, it is

important for stakeholders to have an understanding and insight from the perspective of

those whose behavior participant's viewpoint. Moreover, it is important to consider this

in the light of triadic reciprocal determinism of behavioral, personal, and environmental

influences which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

The rationale for selecting a phenomenological research design for my study

stems from wanting to explore innovative initiatives that are demonstrating success in

engaging Black women to improve their health. More specifically, there is a need to

know more about the experiences from the viewpoint and voice of Black women who are

successfully improving their physical activity utilizing social media platform through

groups like BGR. There is extensive quantitative research detailing the rates of morbidity

and mortality among Black women however, there is limited qualitative research that

captures important information about the human experience and the way in which Black

women understand and think about the issues surrounding their health as exist in their

reality. The tenets of phenomenological research seeks to understand the way in which people construct or experience their reality. Johnson (2015) explains it as being more than a cognitive process or conceptual activity and suggests it also includes taking part in and engaging with the environment in in an intuitive manner. This study seeks to add to the qualitative body of knowledge by exploring abstract and intuitive phenomenon that come from the descriptions of lived experiences of Black women using interactive social networking technology to improve their physical activity. A qualitative research design looks at behaviors and perceptions of people versus a quantitative design in which quantities and measurement values are the focus. Phenomenology is one of many types of qualitative designs that focuses on discovering the essential meaning of a phenomena. The researcher is attentive to the participant's reality about a phenomenon as it is perceived by the participants for the purpose of understanding their reality (Bliss, 2016). Life is experienced by a range of passive and active experiences that include what we see, hear, taste, smell, touch, and our perception, volition, and emotion (Smith, 2013). Phenomenology is distinctly suited for investigating in-depth understanding of conscious experience which encompasses the different ways we experience life (Bliss, 2016). The focus of this research is to explore a human phenomenon through the participants' viewpoints from the researcher's perspective. This study will also use the phenomenological methodology to identify patterns and uncover themes about the participants' experiences with the phenomena under study. van Manen (1990) states phenomenological research design is not bound to a set method for conducting research but suggest using a procedure for data analysis. This study will be guided by Tesch's

procedure which encompasses phenomenological reduction, imagination variation, and the essence of experience in the data analysis phase of this study.

Definitions

Black: A term researchers use to demarcate the African American or Black cultural groups based on the physical appearance of the group (Hunter & Schmidt, 2010).

Black/African American women: In this study, as used by the U.S. Census Bureau, the terms are used interchangeably to referred to a woman who is Black or African American (Hunter & Schmidt, 2010).

Health: The state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. (AcademyHealth, 2004, p13).

Health disparity: A particular type of health difference that is closely linked with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage. Health disparities adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater obstacles to health based on their racial or ethnic group; religion; socioeconomic status; gender; age; mental health; cognitive, sensory, or physical disability; sexual orientation or gender identity; geographic location; or other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion.

Health inequality and inequity: Health inequalities can be defined as differences in health status or in the distribution of health determinants between different population groups. It is important to distinguish between inequality in health and inequity. Some health inequalities are attributable to biological variations or free choice and others are attributable to the external environment and conditions mainly outside the control of the

individuals concerned. In the first case it may be impossible or ethically or ideologically

unacceptable to change the health determinants and so the health inequalities are

unavoidable. In the second, the uneven distribution may be unnecessary and avoidable as

well as unjust and unfair, so that the resulting health inequalities also lead to inequity in

health (World Health Organization [WHO], 2015).

Health outcomes: Refers to the impact healthcare activities have on people on and

their symptoms, ability to do what they want to do, and ultimately on whether they live or

die. Health outcomes include whether a given disease process gets better or worse, what

the cost of care is, how satisfied patients are with the care they receive, and what results

from what is done. (WHO, 2015).

Health promotion: Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase

control over, and to improve, their health. It moves beyond a focus on individual

behavior towards a wide range of social and environmental interventions (WHO, n.d.).

Physical activity: Physical activity is bodily movement produced by skeletal

muscles that results in energy expenditure.9 The term, physical activity, does not require

or imply any specific aspect or quality of movement. The term encompasses all types,

intensities, and domains. Although the term "physical activity" has been used often as a

short-hand description for moderate-to-vigorous-intensity forms of physical activity,

given current interest and discussions about physical activity of intensities less than

moderate-intensity (i.e., <3 METs, see description below), the term "physical activity"

should be used when discussing the full range of intensities. More specific descriptors

such as sedentary behavior, light, moderate, vigorous, or moderate-to-vigorous should be used when talking about a specific range of intensities (ODPHP, 2018).

Social media: Forms of electronic communication such as web sites for social networking and microblogging, through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content. (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, p. 61).

Social media platforms: a broad set of Internet-based communication tools used as an aid for people to create online communities and allow users to add friends, send messages and share content examples include sites like Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn. (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, p. 61).

Social networking: Online services through which people can connect and engage with others to read, create, and share content on the internet with other users (Capurro et al., 2014).

Assumptions

Phenomenology is one type of qualitative inquiry that seeks to understand the meaning of a phenomenon from the subjective reality of the participant's viewpoint. In this phenomenological study there were several assumptions which include a phenomenological approach being the most suitable approach to uncover meaning about the lived experiences of the participants in this study. Another assumption is that BGR is an actual online social networking platform that is really engaging Black women to become more physically active. Also, it is assumed that the participants have experienced the phenomenon under study, and the information they share represents a true and

accurate account of their experiences as members of BGR. Lastly, it is assumed that the information gained from the research will be viewed as uncovered knowledge about the lived experiences of the participants and not as scientific fact.

Scope and Delimitations

By using a social networking platform like Facebook, BGR has been able to reach and impact the health of Black women by building a culturally centered and supportive community that advocates and encourages health and fitness through running. This group created by founder and co-founder Carey and Hicks-Rocha has united a large number of Black women from diverse backgrounds across the nation in response to poor health and the obesity epidemic (Knox, 2015). Groups such as BGR are moving beyond the stereotypes and statistics and are using approaches through social media platforms to improve the physical activity for Black women. The research problem identified in this study centers on the poor health of Black women living in the United States and the modifiable behavior of physical activity which numerous studies suggest Black women are not engaging in (Brown, 2016; Versey, 2014). Based on the longevity of poor health among Black women in the United States, there is much to learn about ways to make considerable progress in transforming and improving the health of Black women. Therefore, I designed this study to help uncover information that can help close a gap in the literature pertaining to better understanding behavior through the experiences of Black women who are being motivated to improve their health.

Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden (2011) posit that social media platforms are not only transforming how we communicate they are also playing a pivotal role in interactive

dialog and influence. Albeit, they suggest more research is needed to understand what the motivation behind why people use social media platforms. Within the public health arena, social media platforms are being harnessed to promote health and behavior change (Korda & Itani, 2013). However, researchers suggest that the evaluation of various social media metrics on health promotion and a better understanding of what motivates behavior are needed. This study centers on capturing the lived experiences of Black women who are running and improving their health through the activities and inspiration of BGR.

Furthermore, this study emanates from a gap in the literature pertaining to qualitative attributes of behavior such as the motivation for physical activity, by focusing on the phenomenon of the lived experiences by Black women using social media platforms to improve their physical activity (Brown, 2016; Versey, 2014). Therefore, the scope of this study is intentional aimed at conducting a thematic analysis of the participants described personal experiences through interviews. The parameters also include the sharing of described experiences from the view of the participant's reality that is often not articulated in research studies. In addition, this study was purposefully chosen to uncover the descriptions of experiences from members of BGR using social media to successfully improve their physical activity levels.

Boundaries of this study include the selected population which includes Black women who are active members of BGR. Black women are utilizing other forms of social media platforms to improve their health such as Twitter for current health information or Pinterest to find healthy diet recipes. However, these groups were not included in this study because they did not meet the criteria for selection which was specific to the

participants shared experience. There are also other theories and conceptual frameworks frequently associated with the utility of social media and health promotion interventions such as the health belief model (HBM), the uses and gratification theory, social identity (SI), and social support theory (SST). However, these theoretical foundations and frameworks were not investigated as SCT was viewed as most appropriate for being a theory of human behavior that focuses on how behavior is guided by reciprocal relationships between the individual, their behavior, and their environment. As such, this inquiry seeks to gain a deeper understanding of behavior from the descriptions of the participant's experiences.

Limitations

This phenomenological study explores a relatively new issue as it pertains to the lived experiences of Black women, social networking technology, and physical activity. The nature of this qualitative research design involves the in-depth interviewing of a small number of participants that are explicitly selected based on their experience of the phenomenon. Therefore, this is identified as a limitation of study with regards to its transferability to other studies conducted with Black women using the social media technology of BGR to increase their physical activity. In addition, life and the human experience are complex, and behavior is more than an interpretation imposed on it based on the results of a research study. As such, the dependability or consistency of this research process may be limited due to the inexperience I have with conducting qualitative research. An attempt to mitigate the dependability of this study is to follow a clear and logical research process and by following the procedure process of

Walden University.

Another limitation of this study is researcher bias. Undertaking this phenomenological inquiry involves participants sharing verbal and non-verbal information about a shared phenomenon. In turn, my role as a research instrument is to gather, interpret, and analyze the experiences with the intent of contextualization. Although, the attempt of this research is to objectively report the subjectivity of the participant's experiences, as the researcher my thoughts, beliefs, viewpoint, and experiences are imposed into the study. To acknowledge my position as the researcher and lessen the potential of bias, I will use bracketing and reflectivity. Bracketing and reflectivity are processes used throughout the research in which the researcher identifies their viewpoint and then suspends assumptions and presuppositions in an effort to avoid biases (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Englander, 2012; Streubert-Speziale & Carpenter 2003).

Researcher's Reflections

I identify as a Black woman, wife, daughter, mother, and friend living in the United States surrounded by many other Black women that are family, friends, co-workers, and sisters in Christ who share both positive and negative experiences surrounding from a holistic perspective. I also have over 25 years of working in various capacities within the healthcare field as a Registered Nurse that has worked mostly with women and children. In addition, I founded non-profit groups that focus on health education, prevention, exercise classes, walking groups, and eating healthy for both adults and children. I also utilize various forms of social media platforms to include Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, for various health related reasons such as reviewing

specific health information, finding healthy recipes, and as a tool to support and manage group activities. As such, my experience and background will likely both shape and impact this study and the interpretation of data.

Significance and Social Change

The intent of this study is to uncover the subjectivity of the lived experience shared from the view of Black woman who use social media technology as a way to motivate their physical activity. Findings from studies conducted by Lopez-Class, Castro, & Ramirez (2011) suggested culture has a substantial influence on health behaviors. Improving the health of Black women is complex. This research contributes to social change by attempting to uncover intangible knowledge of shared experiences and to support a better understanding of the reality of Black women as they experience it. Potential contributions of this study include advancing public health knowledge and inspiring a platform for ongoing investigation and exploration of health promotion efforts and interventions for Black women that will facilitate health improvements. Also, this study can support a public health research praxis where the experiences of Black women are definitively intertwined in health promotion efforts.

Summary

This chapter contained the introduction, background, purpose of the research study, problem statement, and research questions that outlined the historical and present-day challenges confronting the health and wellness of Black women in the United States. In addition, the theoretical foundation which provides the structure for the research problem, the nature of the study, and the definition of terms that explain the meaning of

relevant words and phrases used throughout this study. Also included in the discussion of this chapter were the scope, assumptions, delimitations, and limitations. The next section will include a comprehensive literature review, literature search strategies, the theoretical framework, an examination of salient literature related to key variables and concepts about the study, summary, and conclusion, followed by the research methodology in chapter 3.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to add to the qualitative body of knowledge by exploring abstract and intuitive phenomena that come from the descriptions of lived experiences by Black women using the social networking site BGR to improve their physical activity. At 13.4%, Black women make up only a small portion of the overall population in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 20167). However, when it comes to chronic diseases like obesity, heart disease, and cancer, Black women rank among the highest when compared to women of other ethnicities (CDC, 2011; OMH, 2012). The condition of inequitable health outcomes for Black women underscores a significant public health problem and a relevant concern for social justice (Wegner et al, 2016). The state of health for Black women is the amalgamation of multiple, complex, and interacting factors, and the lack of adequate physical activity is seen as playing a significant role in the adverse health outcomes experienced by Black women in the America (CDC, 2012; Gibbons et al., 2011). Promoting healthier lifestyles and creating environments that support optimal health for Black women requires understanding what influences their behavior and the environment in which they live (CDC, 2012; McAlister, Perry, & Parcel, 2008).

Researchers have well established the disproportionate burden of disease and chronic health conditions that Black women face from a statistical standpoint (Joseph et al., 2015). Likewise, researchers have identified a growing interest among Black women who are using social media applications such as Facebook and Pinterest to interconnect

and empower their lives (Joseph et al., 2015; Rashawn, 2014, Versey, 2014). As such, organizations like BGR are using the innovation of social networking technology such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs to address and impact the health of Black women. BGR was established in 2009 by Carey and Hicks-Rocha, whose mission was to encourage healthy living and improve health outcomes like obesity for Black women (Garms, 2013). Currently, this organization reports having a growing membership and are utilizing social networking technology tools such as blogs, Twitter, and Facebook to rally members and support events that encourage and empower Black women to run. GirlTrek is another national movement created in 2010 by Dixon and Garrison with a mission to encourage Black women and girls to live healthier by taking up the practice of walking daily (Murthy, 2016; Winchester, 2018). The founders of this nonprofit organization report having over 400 neighborhood-based volunteers with 200,000 supporters who are using the capacity of social media technology to rally Black women and support them in transforming their lives through walking. GirlTrek acknowledges partnerships with Kaiser Permanente, National Park Services, and initiatives with the First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move Campaign (Murthy, 2016).

These organizations have demonstrated success at reaching, engaging, and empowering Black women to become more physically active. They have also been advantageous in fostering positive social change by inciting Black women to join constructive movements that promote physical activity and healthier lifestyles. In addition, these programs have been able to transcend the cumulative focus of disadvantage, discrimination, and disparate health outcomes by creating innovative

programs that support and encourage environments of health for Black women in the

United States using social media technology. While groups like BGR are incorporating

the utility of social media technology to improve the health of Black women, there are

many gaps in knowledge regarding how interventions like social media platforms

motivate physical activity and, ultimately, health. Therefore, it is necessary to gain an in-

depth understanding of the experiences from Black women participating in these

programs and using social media technology to improve their health. This may provide

valuable information that can be utilized by stakeholders who want to facilitate health

promotion efforts. Gibbons et al. (2011) posited the use of social networking technology

as being able to provide substantial opportunities for improving health and societal

connections but also points out that there is a need for further research to explore and

evaluate its efficacy. The capacity of social networking technology remains relatively

new as a tool for health promotion and evaluation of the technology and evidence-based

research on its utility remains modest (Korda & Itani, 2013; Gibbons et al., 2011). As

such, with this research inquiry I sought to add empirical knowledge and insight to the

body of research through the lens of Black women participating in BGR who are

advocating for, empowering, and giving voice and visage to efforts concerned with

improving the health of Black women in the United States.

My intent in this chapter is to present a review of the most pertinent literature

explored for this study and to establish the basis for this study. Major sections of this

chapter include the literature search strategies and the theoretical underpinning used to

ground the study. Subsequent sections include the utility of social media technology for

health promotion. Included also is an emphasis on the application of social media technology to improve physical activity for Black women in the United States and how the use of social media technology can serve as a tool to promote health and social justice. The literature review also contains detailed information regarding the methodology and theoretical framework that I used in this study.

<div align="center">**Literature Search Strategies**</div>

In an effort to become familiar with the context of this research, I conducted a literature review. A literature review comprises a comprehensive search and subsequent reading of books, journal articles, and online articles to gather an in-depth understanding of the topic under study. The strategy for investigating the literature began with a comprehensive search gathering information from various sources beginning with books on the major topics, such as Black women's health and social media technology. Next, I reviewed sources such as dissertations from Walden University and other dissertations that contained pertinent content on the research topic from other peer reviewed journal articles, magazines, and other online sources such as blogs. I also obtained information from public libraries and the local university library. I accessed online libraries through the Walden University Library and Fayetteville State University library in addition to other online university libraries. Search engines included Google Scholar, and other databases consisted of CINAHL, SAGE, NIH/NIM, NCBI, MEDLINE, PubMed, EBSCO, and ProQuest. Key terms used to amass literature on the topic included: *African American women, Black women and health promotion, physical activity, exercise, social*

media, social networking technology, perceptions, experiences, phenomenology ,and lived experiences.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

In this study I explored the utility of social media platforms as a tool to improve physical activity among Black women in the United States. The significance of this subject arises from the persistent trends of poor health and social injustices experienced by Black women in the United States. There is limited research explicitly exploring the lived experiences of Black women and their use of social media technology as a tool to promote health by improving their physical activity (Pekmezi et al., 2013). Therefore, I focused the literature review on relevant terms and concepts that informed the study, including the SCT, which was used as the theoretical lens to help develop and design the research questions.

Theoretical Foundation

Social Cognitive Theory

SCT took shape initially from a book written in 1931 by Holt and Brown theorizing that the process of learning was driven by the need to fulfill psychological demands such as desires and emotions (Holt & Brown, 1933). This was later changed in 1941 to the social learning and imitation theory, which posited that learning was motivated by drivers, rewards, cues, and responses (Miller & Dollard, 1941). Further expansion on the work conducted by Miller and Dollard (1941) on social learning took place by the Canadian psychologist Bandura, who conducted experiments examining aggressive behavior in children in 1961 and 1963 (Bandura, 1977). These experiments,

called the Bobo doll experiments, led Bandura to propose the social learning theory

(SLT), which posited behavior as being learned through mental processes that occur

between a person's environmental stimulus and their behavior (Bandura, 1977). His work

suggested a correlation learning process taking place between a person observing a

behavior and imitating the behavior using the key element of self-efficacy, in which

people think about their actions and the consequences of their behavior (Winett et al.,

1999). Then in 1986, Bandura renamed the SLT to SCT, which is considered to be an

interpersonal theory with emphasis on reciprocal determinism. Bandura (1986) theorized

there being a continuous interaction between personal, environmental, and behavioral

factors. Bandura's research put emphasis on the how a person's way of thinking impacts

their learning behavior and how it is influenced as a result of a triadic interaction between

a person's environmental, behavioral, and personal experiences (Bandura, 2004). Core

structures of SCT include knowledge, perceived self-efficacy, outcome expectations,

goals, perceived facilitators, and impediments that operate through intrinsic triadic

interactive processes. Bandura (2004) suggested that health is both a personal and social

matter.

Munhall & Chenail (2008) posited that the use of theory in qualitative research

methods serves as underpinning to guide the inquiry. In this study, SCT was a guide to

help build support for this study and as a way to investigate the conceptual basis for

understanding the lived experiences of the women in this study. In looking at similar

studies where the constructs of SCT were used in connection with physical activity, a

meta-analysis consisting of a ten-database search conducted by Young, Plotnikoff,

Collins, Callister, & Morgan (2014) revealed 44 studies used SCT models of physical

activity. The analysis looked at studies with the use of SCT to explain physical activity

behavior, the efficacy of studies using relevant samples or methodology, and studies in

which SCT and physical activity were significantly linked (Young et al., 2014). By

conducting a methodological quality assessment, studies were examined for the criteria of

participate selection, study design, measurement, and analysis (Young et al., 2014).

Results indicated the overall quality of methodology in the studies to be poor, the

methodological characteristics in the studies showed significance, and the association of

SCT and physical activity in the studies was consistent across all models (Young et al.,

2014). While this study confirms the SCT framework as being beneficial for explaining

behavior in the context of physical activity, the researchers also mentioned the challenges

with methodological quality and suggested the need for more high-quality studies (Young

et al., 2014).

There are various theoretical and conceptual perspectives that can be used to help

understand human behavior. Based on the previous review, I deemed the use of the SCT

as a suitable approach for providing insight on human behavior. In addition, other reasons

for choosing this theoretical lens of SCT included the application of this theory for

examining social media usage in relationship to social cognitive determinants of personal,

environmental, and behavioral factors. Bandura (2002) posited social cognition as

involving the capacity to interact with others and the world, including how we process,

store, and apply that information in our social interactions. SCT is a broad theory of

human behavior that may be applied to how media affects behavior. To help

contextualize and provide insight about the key constructs, I selected SCT. The constructs

of this study centered on the knowledge or awareness that Black women have regarding

the risks and benefits of physical activity and what their perceived self-efficacy or power

was in being able to control their own health behaviors. Also, the study covered what

expectations they have about their health outcomes in relationship to participating in

BGR group and their health goals and plans as a result of participating in BGR. Other

questions were how the participants perceived the use of social media as a tool for

helping them achieve increased activity and what challenges they faced in trying to

improve their health through physical activity.

Barriers to Physical Activity

Engaging in **r**egular physical activity is one approach that can support improved

health outcomes for Black women in the United States. However, the trend of inactivity

among Black women continues placing them at risk for major health complications like

heart disease and obesity (CDC, 2016; Pekmezi et al., 2013; Versey, 2014). Research

regarding barriers to physical activity is limited, and more studies that explore barriers

between Black women and physical activity are needed. A recent inquiry conducted on

the barriers of physical activity for Black women in the deep south found traditional

interventions used to motivate physical activity mostly concentrated on community-based

programs (Pekmezi et al., 2013).

However, challenges for Black women in community-based programs were

identified as lack of group participation due to time, lack of energy and motivation, and

the expense of traveling to participate in center or community-based activities (Pekmezi

et al., 2013). Versey (2014) conducted a theoretical argument mapping the issue of hair as a barrier for Black women not getting enough physical activity. In another study conducted by Hall et al. (2013), the study points out 38% of Black women totally avoided physical activity because of their hair. Another study cited the lack of transportation to gyms, parks, and other places to exercise as being one reason Black women did not exercise (Tussing-Humphreys, Thomson, Mayo, & Edmond, 2011). Joseph et al. (2015) analyzed 42 studies categorizing them into intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental/community barriers of physical activity for Black women. Various barriers were identified including intrapersonal barriers such as lack of motivation and concerns of appearance (Ingram, Wilbur, McDevitt, & Buchholz, 2011; James et al., 2012; Pekmezi et al., 2013). Some interpersonal barriers were identified as Black women having limited social support and having no workout companion (Evans, 2011; Im et al., 2012). Environmental/community barriers included challenges such as not having sidewalks to walk safely, facilities such as parks and recreational to use, and positive culturally relevant role models (Doldren & Webb, 2013; Joseph et al., 2015). These studies identify various barriers to physical activity for Black women and continued efforts and approaches to improve physical activity among Black women in the United States. are needed. Versey (2014) posited that social media technology may be a means for facilitating interventions that influence health behaviors and promote physical activity among Black women. However, there is a considerable gap in knowledge about the lived experience of Black women and health promotion interventions such as social media technology to improve physical activity.

Social Media Technology and Health Promotion

The use of social media technology as a tool to promote healthy behavior and for health-related purposes is rapidly being adopted in the healthcare arena (Korda & Itani, 2013; Maher et al., 2014). BGR is an example of a group using social media technology to positively impact and motivate Black women to improve their physical activity. Therefore, gaining a deeper understanding into how social media technology is being used to promote health behaviors is significant. Findings from research conducted by Joseph et al. (2015) reported there was a reduction in sedentary behavior and improved physical activity with the use of Facebook and text messaging in a physical activity program for Black women. Furthermore, a meta-analysis evaluating how useful and effective social networking sites were on changing health behaviors noted positive effects in changing health behaviors and interventions promoted positive health outcomes (Laranjo et al., 2015). Researchers also discuss the capacity social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and mobile media with transforming society's communication landscape (Fox, 2011; Korda & Itani 2013; Jones & Fox, 2009; Madden et al., 2013). The changes in the communication landscape range from the widespread use of social media as a tool for gathering health information (Fox, 2011), to the progression of connectivity through the use of online collaborative applications such as Google +, Twitter, and Pinterest (Kumar, Novak, & Tomkins, 2010; Turban, Strauss, & Lai, 2016). Social media platforms are now seen as part of the national standard demonstrating the influence and power they are having on society (Sadovykh, Sundaram, & Piramuthu, 2015). The utility of social media platforms includes a wide range of activities from inciting activism to

sparking national attention about concerns of police misconduct through applications like

Twitter and Facebook to instructional blogs and interactive application used by schools,

businesses, churches.

The use of social media technology has rapidly been amalgamated as an

emerging, innovative, and interactive source for obtaining and sharing healthcare

information (Korda & Itani, 2010; Fox, 2011). There is also increasing information in

academic literature detailing the utility of social networking technology for promoting

health (Maher et al., 2014; Webb et al., 2010). In a systematic review by Maher et al.

(2014), interventions that focused on changing health behavior were studied for their

effectiveness. Researchers identified 2,040 studies with 113,988 participants and

interventions included commercial, research-based, and multicomponent health online

social network websites (Maher et al., 2014). The conclusion of the review suggested

while the use of social media interventions have potential, more evidence on the ways in

which people use and experience social media technology, and how to use social media

for mass dissemination is needed. This inquiry adds knowledge to the body of research

by providing the interpretations of experiences as lived by Black women who use social

media. In addition, Korda & Itani (2013) reported social media as rapidly becoming a

preferred way to reach and engage the public but also mention research within the health

promotion and education realm is still evolving with the need for continued research in

this area. Furthermore, Galehbakhtiaria & Pouryasouri (2015) point out the integration of

online environments are increasing though little research is being conducted surrounding

the dynamics of what motivates online participation with emphasis on understanding the

lived experience of the users. This research aids in supporting the concerns mentioned by describing interpretations of what inspires the participants to use social media.

Social Networking Technology and Health Disparities

Research on the capacity of social media technology to reduce inequitable and disparate health continues to emerge (Chou et al., 2012). According to Gibbons et al. (2011) social networking technology is a communication tool that can be used to link and involve diverse audiences for various reasons, such as health promotion. Shivers (2014) describes social networking sites that are tailored to the Black population have the capacity to foster online communities where interaction and communication about relevant subjects, issues, and concerns can take place. In addition, Webb et al. (2010) discuss the prospect of social media technology as a plausible method for health promotion and education. Versey (2014) suggests that more research is needed to assess the feasibility of using social networking sites and online communities to support better health endeavors for Black women.

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Summary

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This study stems from a concern for the poor health outcomes and the inequitable health Black women in the United States face. Also, from a desire to find effective and sustainable ways to improve and promote healthy behaviors for Black women. Social media technology provides an opportunity to engage and incite Black women to improve their health, but the technology is relatively new. Also, there is little existing research that focuses specifically on the linkage between the lived experiences of Black women and social networking technology. Therefore, this research study seeks to fill a gap in

knowledge by providing information on the lived experience of Black women in the

United States. and social networking technology. The following chapter will include a

comprehensive review of the methodological details regarding how the

research will be conducted.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of Black women in BGR who are using social networking to improve their physical activity. This chapter provides the specific research methods used to collect data for this study. I discuss in detail the key procedures of this study, which include the major sections of research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, participant selection, instrumentation, and procedures for recruitment. This is followed by sections on participation, data collection, data analysis plan, issues of trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, ethical procedures, and the summary.

Research Design and Rationale

The research questions for this study took shape after a review of the literature that revealed a gap in research. The central research questions concerned the lived experience of Black women using the social networking site BGR to encourage physical activity and how Black women participating in BGR viewed social networking technology as a motivator to engage in physical activity. Creswell (2013) described the design of the research as being the blueprint for a research study that helps to organize and guide the various aspects of the research study. There are a variety of design for conducting research such as qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. The process used for determining which approach best suits the research study is critical. I selected a qualitative approach based on my research problem which was to explore the communal meaning individuals ascribe to a social problem. Constructed from a framework

established by Crotty (1996), four predominant interrelated questions were used to

underpin the qualitative research design for this study. The question focused on the

epistemology, the theoretical perspective, the strategy to connect the methods to the

research outcomes, and the techniques or procedures used in the study. Different from the

structure and specificity of quantitative research that seeks to quantify data, qualitative

research is part of a systematic process comprised of a flexible style that provides insight

into human effects such as behavior, beliefs, principles, and social environments

(Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Other characteristics of qualitative research design include

a postpositivism approach that recognizes scientific and reasoning and centers on

significant aspects of human life that may be deep or hidden. Such research is also

considered a soft science that uses subjective and inductive reasoning to reveal the

participants' perspective (Isaacs, 2014; Creswell, 2009). There are various research

approaches that fall under qualitative research design such as ethnography, grounded

theory, narrative, and phenomenology (Creswell, 2013). These qualitative approaches,

while different, share in being largely exploratory and investigative (Creswell, 2013).

This qualitative phenomenological study aims to describe and interpret the

meaning and essence of the human experience (Creswell, 2013; Rudestam & Newton,

2007; van Manen, 1990). The core phenomenological concepts include describing the

lived experience of several individuals about a shared phenomenon from the lens and

voice of the participants (van Manen, 1990). In other words, the researcher attempts to

gather composite descriptions of the lived experiences from the participants to gain a

deeper understanding of their reality. My intent with this study was to explore and

examine the lived experience of Black women utilizing social networking technology to improve their physical activity from the perspective of the women who have experienced the phenomenon. I selected a qualitative phenomenological research as the most appropriate design to gain an understanding regarding the experiences articulated from the participants' subjective experience. The central phenomena of the research centered on the subjective descriptions of what Black women were experiencing using social networking technology to improve their physical activity. The aim of the research was to identify the essence of the shared experience from the participants. This included both reflective and affective information as it is described and perceived through the words used by the participants to articulate their experiences based from their viewpoint.

Role of the Researcher

According to van Manen (1990), phenomenological research is a way to uncover, analyze, and interpret a detailed meaning of a person's experience for the purpose of better understanding the reality of that experience. I focused this inquiry on the experiences of Black women who are members of BGR and use social media technology to improve their physical activity. My role as the researcher was to conduct semistructured interviews, collect the data, conduct thematic analysis, extract and interpret findings, and summarize and report results. I was a participant observer by establishing myself as a member of BGR and becoming involved in the activities of the members by engaging in organizational activities while observing the organizational environment. Whiting, Symon, & Chamakiotis, (2016) highlighted the significance of being a participant observer to contextualize the participant's experience as part of the

fieldwork process that is used to facilitate the researcher in learning about the activities of the participants from a position within the group. In addition, to develop a holistic understanding of the lived experiences, my role as the researcher also included observations of the activities of the BGR and the interviewees. I observed visual, verbal, and nonverbal communication exchange of the activities of BGR along with the in-depth interviews of the participants. I was also an active and reflective learner linking professional and academic scholarly research to real-world situations for the purpose of improving the human condition.

Finally, the terms of this study were made explicit to all participants with regards to their role and to my role as the researcher. None of the participants are expected to have any professional affiliation to include being supervised, instructed, or any other position of influence held by the researcher with regards to the participants.

Methodology

Participant Selection

Selecting the right participants for this study was an integral part of the research process. Purposive sampling is a technique in which only those participants who have experienced the research phenomenon under study are selected to take part in the study (Englander, 2012). My intent with this phenomenological study was to gain an understanding of the described experiences of Black women using social networking technology to improve their physical activity. Therefore, only participants who had experienced the phenomenon and met the research criteria I established for this study were selected. Also, in keeping with the practice of phenomenology, criteria for

participant selection included Black women over the age of 18 years living in the United States who were active members of the social networking platform BGR and had increased their physical activity as a result of the influence of the site. Active members were identified as participants who had posted pictures within the last 3 months, made comments to other members or commented about current events happening within the group in the last 3 months, or had been involved in other site activities such as responding to or helping organize events or providing educational information to members. Lastly, participants must have consented to be part of the study and have been willing to describe and discuss their inner thoughts and feelings about the subject under study.

Number of Participants

Englander (2012) proposed that in phenomenological inquiry the concern centers on obtaining sufficient knowledge about the shared experience of participants regarding a phenomenon, rather than seeking representativeness of a population for the purpose of making generalizations as is seen in quantitative inquiry. Thus, the impetus of this phenomenological inquiry was less concerned with sample size number and more focused on acquiring saturation of the quintessential meaning of the phenomenon from the participants' viewpoints. Creswell (2009) suggested a sample size of 3-10 as being sufficient. Consequently, the goal of this inquiry was to pursue rigor by conducting interviews on a minimum of 10 participants to maximize the likelihood that data collection would contain rich and robust information.

Instrumentation

The research question drives the methodology for how data is collected, structured, and examined (Polit & Beck, 2004). Data collection instruments such as interviews, observations, focus groups, and other sources such as diaries and pictures are commonly used in phenomenological research (Berg & Lune, 2012; Creswell, 2013; Johnson, Avenarius, & Weatherford; 2006; van Manen, 1990). The primary data collection instrument utilized for this inquiry was semistructured interviews rather than historical or legal documentation. The basis of phenomenological research is to understand the essence of an experience from the perspective of the participants (Lewis, 2015). The perspective is that of a participant's constructed viewpoint about an experience rather than information obtained from the past or an objective outsider stance. According to Englander (2012), in-depth interviews are a way for researchers to collect subjective and intersubjective detailed information about an experience. The use of semistructured interviews allows flexibility for both the researcher and the interviewee in data collection efforts (Englander, 2012).

In addition to interviews as a source for data collection, I also used participant observation as a data collection method. Participant observation is a research activity that involves active looking (Johnson et al., 2006). With active looking, the researcher becomes close enough to the environment and circumstances of the participants to observe, capture, and understand the realities of the shared phenomenon (Johnson et al., 2006). In essence, as a member of BGR, I can read, respond, and engage with other members of the social networking group on the BGR Facebook page. Within the BGR

social networking environment there are various activities to take part in from reading

posts made by other members, participating in upcoming running events, and viewing

photos taken at group events. My goal as being a participant observer was to achieve

deeper insight and obtain a more detailed understanding of the social networking

environment. Mehra (2002) noted that when a researcher assumes the role of an insider in

a study under investigation there is a potential for them to introduce bias. Subsequently,

to address the concern of bias in this study, I relied on data from interviews, observations,

and information gathered from the literature review to gain a comprehensive

understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. This strategy is referred to as

triangulation in which different methods are used to gather and converge research data to

gain a better understanding and increase the validity of the study (Johnson., et al;

Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012).

Researcher Developed Instruments

The basis for using interviews as a research instrument for this study was

determined after conducting a purposive literature review of the principles and practices

of phenomenological inquiry. Interviews are the primary method of data collection in

qualitative research, used to encourage the participants to share recollections of their

views, thoughts, feelings, and experiences (Englander, 2012; Johnson et al., 2006).

Specific to a phenomenological research design, the researcher seeks to gain a deeper

understanding of the lived experience regarding a phenomenon from the perspective of

the participant (Kvale & Brinkman 2008). Interviews are designed to elicit narrative

descriptions and free flowing conversation from the participants making interviews an

ideal approach for data generation. Interviews can be unstructured in which a general

topic about the research subject is planned, but there are no prearranged questions or

order in which questions are asked, and the themes emerge from the informal

conversation (Crosby, DiClemente, & Salazar, 2006). A typical approach to interviewing

in phenomenological inquiry is to use semistructured interviews because they have a

flexible format and ask fairly open-ended questions (Crosby et al., 2006). Based on the

central research questions, I used a list of semistructured questions to guide responses

from the participants about their individual lived experience regarding the research

phenomenon. The interview guiding questions (Appendix B) focused on eliciting the

essential meaning and understanding about the phenomenon from the voice and

perspective of the participants.

Determining if the instrumentation being utilized to conduct the research is, in

fact, measuring what it was designed to measure is a significant part of the research

process known as content validity (Salkind, 2010). In quantitative design, the validity and

reliability are based on the accuracy of data analysis techniques such as correct sample

size and statistical procedures and calculations (Creswell, 2013). Validity and reliability

in qualitative research is focused on the research strategies used to heighten

trustworthiness and sufficiency of the measurement instrument (Lewis, 2015). For

example, it should be determined whether the interview questions provide thorough

answers to the research questions and capture the important concepts and aspects the

researcher was trying to achieve (Johnson et al., 2006: Lewis, 2015). The study was

intended to bring to light the experiences provided by innovation of social media

technology as a tool to improve physical activity of Black women. Participants were

asked semistructured, open-ended interview questions to allow free and honest

descriptions of their unique lived experience about the phenomenon from their

perspective, thus supporting the validity of the research instrumentation (Englander,

2012; Kvale & Brinkman, 2008).

There are several techniques that can be used to determine if the use of interviews

as a data collection instrument can generate enough data to answer the research questions

and manage bias. One such technique step is a pilot study which can be used to assess the

validity of the research instrumentation in qualitative research. In a pilot study, the

investigator performs a small-scale trial run of the interview process and procedures to

determine if the questions provide adequate responses and are reasonable (Chenail,

2011). A pilot study is considered useful in helping the investigator hone the

instrumentation and limit researcher bias (Creswell, 2013). However, there are challenges

with conducting pilot studies such as pilot participants and their interview data cannot be

part of the main study nor approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Thus,

potentially prolonging research efforts and limiting research participants may occur

(Kvale & Brinkman, 2008). Another strategy known as interviewing the investigator can

also be utilized to assess the data collection instrumentation. This approach entails the

investigator assuming the role of the interviewee and a potential interviewee to act as the

investigator (Chenail, 2011). The objective being to mimic the actual interview

environment that will be used in the real research environment with the choice of

conducting the interview from start to finish or stopping to reflect on the questions and

responses as the interview progresses. The interview is recorded, and the entire process is reviewed and analyzed with adjustments and modifications made by the investigator. Another approach used to further refine the research instrumentation is the interpersonal-process recall (IPR), here the interviewer makes notes of their thoughts and feelings while listening to the recorded interview (Kagan, 1980). This study will rely on the use of investigating the interviewer and IPR to test and manage the instrumentation and minimize bias. Also, in planning instrument development, consideration is given to the need for returning to the participants for follow-up. Because phenomenological research emphasizes the need to understand fully the experience of the participant, asking follow-up questions for clarification may be necessary. As such, the need to clarify participant's descriptions will be reviewed with the participants and addressed as part of the project information form.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The Agency for Healthcare Research Quality (2012), points out a variety of challenges associated with recruiting participants for research studies that can range from the inability to recruit enough participants of a target population to locating credible research participants. The following section provides clear details pertaining to the strategies that will be utilized for the recruitment, participation, and data collection in this study. The objective being to lessen the likelihood of challenges by providing a plan of action to guide and address potential challenges.

This study centers on the use of internet-based technology therefore, I will integrate facets of online technology for recruiting, participation, and data collection

procedures. The aim of this study is to recruit participants that represent a specific subset

of the target population and provide information-rich interviews that give substantive

insight about the subject under study. Creswell (2009) describes this approach as

purposeful sampling where participants are selected because they have had significant

experience with the phenomenon being studied. Recruitment of participants will be the

sole responsibility of the researcher and the use of semistructured interviews will be the

primary source for data generation and will include a relatively homogenous group of

research participants. Recruitment procedures for this study will include: contacting the

administrator or representative of BGR; providing information regarding the nature of

this study and asking permission to advertise for the purpose of recruitment on their

website. In addition, A recruiting Facebook page will be established that provides

information to those persons who are interested in participating in the study. Also, on the

page will be a link where potential participants can inbox me directly for further

information about the study. The recruiting Facebook page will also encourage people to

share and post the study information on their Facebook page. In addition, I will place or

hand out flyers at various faith-based and community-based organizations where women

gather such as church information boards, beauty salons, local gyms, and at running

events in the community.

Prospective participants recruited for inclusion in this study were selected based

on the following criteria:

- Be an African American or Black woman over 18 years of age.

- Currently live in the United States.

- Be a self-reported member of either BGR for at least three months.

- Have reported or shared increasing their physical activity since becoming a member of BRG by engaging in one or more activates such as (a) posting miles ran or walked; (b) taking part in group activates such as marathons or other running events; or (c) posting to the discussion board personal activities they participated in as a result of being part of BGR, or posting pictures of themselves engaging in group activities on the website.

For participants who agree to participate in the study and meet the selection criteria, a consent form will be emailed to them to sign and return via email using an electronic signature. Data collection will be conducted through online interviews by video conferencing, multichannel meeting, or immersive 3-D environment such as Google hangouts or Skype. The date and time will be agreed upon and set up by email and clarification of which videoconferencing tool will be used to conduct the interview i.e. Google hangouts or Skype. Contingencies for interruptions during the interview which can be caused by dropped internet connections or other factors will be addressed in the consent form and other arrangements for the interview will be made through email or by phone. Also, in the event the interview needs to be rescheduled, alternative times will be arranged via email or phone. The duration of the interviews is expected to be around 30 minutes, but the process could take longer. All interviews and possible follow-up questions will be recorded or documented based on the mode of communication selected by the participant to include online communication tools such as Google hangouts, Skype, or written email responses. Research participants will be made aware and agree

upon the research procedures with the possibility of follow-up questions or probes for clarification or to gain a deeper understanding of their experience.

There are also additional concerns when recruiting and conducting online interviews such as how will the researcher verify the participant's demographic information and how will the researcher know that prospective participants have access to the technology needed to take part in online interviews (Salmons, 2010). To address these concerns the researcher will arrange to talk to and conduct a technology test run with each participant of the research study prior to the actual interview. Furthermore, once selected, prospective participants will also fill out the demographic questionnaire form (Appendix A) and email it back to the researcher prior to the scheduled online interview.

As a part of the research process and to facilitate rigor and the trustworthiness of the study, a strategy for how the research participants will disengage from the study and the plan for research dissemination will be established. Morrison, Gregory, & Thibodeau (2012) posited that careful consideration should be given to how participants will disengage from a research study. To ensure research participants are cognizant of the details surrounding the ending practices of the study the information will be discussed as part of the informed consent. In addition, details regarding the dissemination of the research findings will be posted on the Facebook page established for this study and the BGR website. The contact information of the dissertation Chair, the IRB spokesperson, and researcher will be made available and discussed with the informed consent in the event there are questions or concerns about the research study needing to be addressed by the participants.

Data Analysis Plan

Phenomenological data analysis or phenomenological reflection as termed by van Manen (1990) provides insight into how to collect, examine, organize, and transform the data in order to uncover the essence of the participant's experience in phenomenological research. In effect, the participants tell their story about the subjective experience of the phenomenon under study as it happened from their lens and point of view and the researcher uncovers their experiences through the translation and transcription of their experiences into data (Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty, & Hendry, 2011). There are various approaches for conducting data analysis in qualitative research. Data analysis can be conducted through a written analysis in which the researcher serves as the information coder to the use of computer software programs that can code the gathered research information (Creswell, 2013; Englander, 2012). Rudestam & Newton (2007) point out that conducting data analysis does not have to follow one specific procedure but recommend having an outline or general directions for how the analysis will be carried out. The use of Tesch's (1992) method for data analysis will serve as the outline for this phenomenology study.

Data analysis in phenomenological inquiry begins with the process of bracketing. The researcher brackets or sets aside their preconceptions or personal assumptions in an effort to extract the truest reality of the participant's experience about the phenomenon under study (Englander, 2012; Johnson et al., 2006; Yuskel & Yudel, 2015). To gain understanding into the experiences of the participants in this study, the researcher will recognize this as an iterative process and become engrossed in the data collected from the

interviews by reading and rereading them in an attempt to achieve familiarity and understanding. In addition, and to support Tesch's (1992) outline, data collected from this study will also be analyzed through the utility of the software program Nvivo 11. Nvivo 11 is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) program that serves to support the researcher in analyzing large volumes of unstructured qualitative data (Zamawe, 2015; QSR International, 2015)). The multifunctional program assists researchers in helping to manage qualitative data by arranging, categorizing, and identifying themes in the data and provides query and search engine functions (Creswell, 2013). In addition, Nvivo 11 also interfaces with different types of information formats including videos, rich text, and social media data (Zamawe, 2015). Data gathered from the open-ended research questions in this study will be used to provide textual descriptions of the participant's experience regarding the phenomenon under study. The themes generated from that data are hoped to provide explicit structure to the meaning of their lived experiences.

Issues of Trustworthiness

A critical investigation of research is necessary and should be completed to establish the trustworthiness of the research study (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Lincoln and Guba (1998) posit using the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, to establish the trustworthiness of the research. Research is conducted for a variety of reasons to include testing and developing theories, exploring different procedures, comparing approaches, determining significance, or providing insight about human behavior (Englander, 2012). To establish the trustworthiness of this

phenomenological study the criteria of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity will be used.

Credibility

Member check or informant feedback will be one strategy used to establish the credibility of this research study. Member checking is a technique whereby the researcher asks the participants about the accuracy of the information collected by reinstating or summarizing the participants articulated words throughout the interview (Birt et al., 2016). In addition to member checking, the use of field notes will be used to ensure internal validity. According to Koch (1994), the notes or journal are not only about the verbal and non-verbal responses of the participants, but they also serve as a way for the researcher to reflect on their awareness in the study. External validity or transferability seeks to know if the research finding can be applied to other contexts or situations (Shenton, 2004). In qualitative inquiry, the research findings do not concentrate on producing broad claims or generalizations for a larger population, but rather the focus is on the transferability of the research to other contexts or settings (Shenton, 2004).

Transferability

Transferability will be demonstrated in this study by conducting in-depth interviews to gain rich descriptions from the research participants about their experiences with social media to improve their physical activity and then member checking those experiences for clear comprehension. In addition, transferability will be demonstrated by referencing other scholarly research studies that utilized similar elements, methods, and or approaches throughout my study.

Reliability

Reliability in qualitative research seeks to determine whether the research can be conducted again or repeated (Cileszek, 2014). To assess the reliability of this study, triangulation, which refers to the utilization of two or more methods for investigating findings will be used. This study will use overlapping methods observations and in-depth interviewing.

Objectivity

Objectivity which is comparable to confirmability are the steps a researcher takes to ensure the aptness of the data in the study are unbiased and neutral (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Streubert-Speziale & Carpenter, 2003). Holloway and Wheeler (1996) determined that when credibility, transferability, and dependability are met then confirmability is accomplished. Therefore, objectivity will be established through the internal validity, external validity, and reliability, of the research study. In addition, the use of auditing criteria developed by Holloway and Wheeler (1996) will be used which includes examination of ethical procedures.

<div align="center">**Ethical Procedures**</div>

Ethical considerations when conducting research are significantly important and especially critical when doing research with marginalized populations such as children, women, and minority populations. Ethics is a word derived from the Greek word "ethos" which means character. When conducting research, ethics or character are concerned with the researcher's actions with the participants of a study (Streubert-Speziale & Carpenter, 2003). There have been instances in history where human research has caused

considerable harm to research participants through unethical research practices of researchers such as with incidence of Tuskegee experiments. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the researcher to protect the rights of the participants These unethical practices in human research have prompted the actions of institutions to govern human research endeavors such as the Belmont report which provides guiding principles for conducting human research highlighting the respect for persons, beneficences, and justice.

I will be using computer-mediated communications (CMC) through the capacity of online technology applications of Google hangouts or Skype to conduct interviews. Therefore, and in addition to following the fundamental principles for conducting interviews in person the dimensions of conducting interviews online will also be followed. I will adhere to the necessary permissions, policies, and procedures to protect the rights of participants as required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University. Also, I will complete any state regulations to ensure the protection of the participants such as the "Protecting Human Research Participant" form. Furthermore, to respect the dignity and privacy of the participants no direct questions about private matters such as mental health or sexual orientation will be asked. I will also ensure that the content within the interview and the exchange of information remains scholarly and in accordance with research guidelines. Each eligible participant will be informed about the study and sign a consent of agreement to participate in the study. It will be explained that the study is completely voluntary and that they can withdraw at any point or time they deem necessary without any penalty. An introduction letter, informed consent, and

demographic form will be sent to the participants through email. Data collection

confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy will be upheld by assigning pseudonyms as

identification of participants. Interviews will be one on one and conducted from my home

office of which will be locked during the research study and double locked when I am not

at home. Recorded interviews will be kept on my personal computer which is protected

by two levels of passcodes. Once the research study is completed all information will be

uploaded to a password protected jump drive and destroyed after five years per university

protocol. During all aspects of this study, I will make every effort to ensure complete

privacy and confidentiality to ensure all the participants' information is kept safe.

Summary

The intention of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive description of the

steps and procedures taken to conduct this qualitative phenomenological research study.

This chapter is broken down into sections and sub-sections that detail how the researcher

plans to operationalize the study to address the research questions. Major sections include

the research design, the role of the researcher and participants, the methodology,

instrumentation, data analysis plan, and ethical considerations. The subsequent chapter

will present the results of the phenomenological research study conducted.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the abstract and intuitive phenomenon gathered from the composite descriptions of lived experiences by Black women in BGR who used social networking technology to improve their physical activity. Social media or computer-mediated technology allow individuals, groups, and organizations to communicate and connect through various internet-based platforms such as social networking sites like Facebook, videocasting, and podcasting (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Researchers are providing growing evidence that suggest the utilization of social media can be an excellent tool for health promotion (Korda & Itani, 2013; Maher et al., 2014; Park & Calamaro, 2013; Whitaker, Stevelink, & Fear, 2017). BGR is an innovative supportive community of health-conscious women utilizing a variety of online social media platforms, such as Facebook and photo sharing, to successfully reach, inspire, and encourage healthy behavior through physical activity. Considering the impact health disparities and inequality are having on Black women, who have higher risk of morbidity and mortality from chronic health conditions such as obesity, heart disease, and diabetes, exploring successful health promotion efforts like BGR is significant. According to the founders, the BGR community was started to address the obesity epidemic and subsequent comorbidities associated with obesity among Black women by promoting health through running (Wegner et al., 2016). While multiple factors contribute to the state of health for Black women across the nation, inadequate physical activity has been identified as being a significant contributor (Joseph et al., 2015). The BGR community,

which began in 2009, currently has a following of over 250,000 women nationwide who

are part of an effort to improve health outcomes for Black women (Wegner et al., 2016).

While research studies about the use of social media for health promotion purposes are

growing, there is little research that provides detailed explanations of what Black women

in BGR experience with using social networking technology to encourage healthy

behavior through physical activity. As such, this study was driven by a gap in the

literature regarding composite experiences and perceptions surrounding this

phenomenon. In this phenomenological study I sought to gain a deeper understanding of

their reality using two primary research questions that provided the framework for

constructing this study.

This chapter reveals the results of the research question findings. Sections are

organized to provide specific details about the approach taken and the strategies used to

answer the two primary research questions. Sections in this chapter consist of

interviewing the investigator, research setting, demographics, data collection, data

analysis, research results, and the summary.

Interviewing the Investigator

After receiving IRB approval (approval # 03-21-17-0233162), I conducted a pilot

study inquiry known as interviewing the investigator. This process is a technique used in

a qualitative inquiry that can help provide essential information for the research study and

is used to test the adequacy of the research protocol, to determine if the interview

questions need further clarification, and to assess potential researcher bias (Chenail,

2011). It is also suggested as a technique to use when the researcher is closely associated

with the population they are studying or when the researcher is part of the population

itself. As the instrument for data collection in this phenomenological study, it was vital to

determine if the methods and procedures utilized in the study would work the way I had

envisioned them to work. Moreover, while procedures for conducting face to face

interviews have similarities to conducting interviews online, some differences needed to

be tested prior to conducting the actual interviews. For example, because I would be

using iPods to record my interviews, I had to check to see if the iPods could clearly and

correctly record the participant's voice if they moved or had background noise. Also, the

pilot test was done to see if any clarification or changes to the research questions,

interview protocol, or procedures were needed. Therefore, a run through of what the

research participants would encounter during the interview was essential.

　　　I enlisted Marget, which is a pseudonym name, to be the interviewer for this

study. Marget met the criteria established to be a participant in the research and selected

because of the breadth of her experience with the research population and her

understanding and familiarity with qualitative research designs. I developed the

demographic survey questionnaire (Appendix A) and the informed consent form on

Google forms. Once the potential research participants read an overview of the study on

my established research Wix webpage and wanted to take part, they could click on the

hyperlinks that would take them to the demographic survey and the informed consent.

Once research participants completed the demographic form, there was a reminder for

them to complete the consent form. Once the consent form was complete, there was a

message notifying the research participants that I would contact them within 24 hours by

e-mail to arrange an interview time. It was essential to ensure the flow of this process could be done with ease for me being able to recruit research participants successfully.

Marget was able to successfully move through the entire process from going to the Facebook page, linking to my WiX webpage, and hyperlinking to the demographic survey and then the consent form and sending it to my e-mail. Next, we conducted the interview online using Google hangouts, followed the interview protocol, and used the approved interview guiding questions with her role as the interviewer and mine as the interviewee. The interview lasted 45 minutes and was audio recorded only on two iPods. Throughout the interview, timeouts were taken to allow for discussion and reflection on any aspect of the interview procedures and the appropriateness of the questions. We both took notes during the interview that included our thoughts on the interview process, the interview questions, and any personal thoughts we encountered. There were no significant issues with using any of the online features, and Marget felt the process went smoothly. We discussed the use of a feature on Google hangouts that allows for both real-time, face-to-face video and audio communication or using audio communication only with a fixed picture screen. Because the interviews were going to be audio recorded only, we discussed and agreed that the decision would be left up to the participants, as either way would be suitable and not impact the interview in any way. After the interview with Marget was completed, we shared and discussed our notes about the pilot interview and agreed that the research interview questions and protocol were sufficient for the study. I transcribed the interview, uploaded it into a QSR Nvivo 11 software program, and analyzed the data in the same manner as I was going to do with the participants'

interviews. I also kept an audit trail that included the steps taken and notes on my assessment and observation of the interview process and incorporated the suggestions into my actual study design.

Research Setting

The setting for this study was an example of an emerging method using relatively recent technology to conduct research. I conducted online interviews using Google hangouts or Skype, which are online communication platforms with video chat capabilities that can provide synchronous or real-time face-to-face interaction with the research participants. Hanna et al. (2011) suggested the use of modern software such as a Webchat software program that can provide a viable way to conduct interviews.

Participants were asked on the demographic survey if they preferred to use Google hangouts or Skype for the interviews and were informed that the interviews would be audio recorded only. All of the participants except for one elected to use Google hangouts, and none of the participants selected Skype. One participant stated she was unfamiliar with how to use and set up Google hangouts or Skype but was familiar with the use of Facetime, which is a similar web-based video conferencing application developed by Apple for use with Apple products. There was only one participant who requested to use Facetime for the interview, and because interviews were audio recorded, it did not influence the interpretation of the study results. No personal or organizational conditions developed that affected the participants or their experiences during the interviews. The use of this technology had many benefits such as ease of access and the flexibility of scheduling interviews. However, some unforeseen challenges did develop

during the interviews. One challenge encountered was with having to reschedule an interview due to a severe thunderstorm which caused a power outage that lead to loss in the internet connectivity. a connection with the participant.

Demographics

The demographic characteristics included in this study consisted of age, marital status, income, city and state, and level of education. Table 1 provides details of the characteristics of each participant. Participants in this study ranged from ages 23 to 62. All the women actively participated in BGR, and the majority were from the East Coast. Six of the participants were single while seven were married. Most of the women worked full time and most had a bachelor's degree or higher.

Data Collection

After obtaining IRB approval and completing the prepilot testing, the data collection process began. Recruitment began soon after with the distribution of recruitment flyers (Appendix C) to five local community centers established in my research plan. I also published my Facebook page, which provided a brief overview of the study with a hyperlink to my webpage.

Table 1

Demographic Information of Participants

Name	State	Age	Highest Education	Marital Status	Employment Status
Alexa	Florida	62	BA	S	Full-time
Clara	Georgia	38	BA	M	Full-time
Dorothy	Georgia	44	Some college	S	No
Evelyn	Florida	52	BA	M	Full-time
Jeanie	North Carolina	47	Some college	S	No
Katherine	Texas	45	BA	M	Full-time
Mae	Florida	43	MS	S	Full-time
Mary	Georgia	40	BA	M	Full-time
Mattie	North Carolina	34	Some college	M	Full-time
Nadine	South Carolina	25	BA	S	Full-time
Octavia	North Carolina	23	BA	S	Full-time
Regina	Georgia	36	Diploma/GED	M	Part-time
Sarah	Virginia	55	MS	M	No

I published my Wix webpage, which was created on the Wix website builder. It provided detailed information about the research study and had hyperlinks to the informed consent and demographic survey. The webpage also listed my contact information, which included my e-mail address and phone number for prospective participants to get in touch with me if they had any questions or concerns. The informed consent and demographic survey were created separately in Google forms with hyperlinks to the PNER Study Gmail account established specifically for this study. This process was done to ensure participants could easily connect with me on Google hangouts for the interviews as well as to maintain their confidentiality. It also helped to provide a straightforward way to interact with the participants if any follow up was needed or as a way for them to contact me quickly by e-mail. Once participants

completed the informed consent and the demographic survey and selected submit, a

notification was sent to my e-mail account. In turn, I contacted them by e-mail within 24

hours to set up a time convenient for them to conduct the interview.

Figure 1. Screenshot of Facebook recruiting page for volunteers.

Interviews

In all, thirteen participants took part in semistructured interviews which were the

primary approach for data collection, and no participants withdrew from the study. The

interviews provided a means to gather narratives about the participants lived experiences

using a purposive sampling technique. Before conducting each interview, I went through

an interview protocol checklist. The checklist served as a guide to ensure interviews were

consistent and conducted in a logical sequence for each participant to support the

transferability of my research findings. The steps included: introducing myself, giving a

brief overview of the study, and a review of the informed consent information. I also

reiterated the study as being voluntary with the participants having the choice to stop or

withdraw from the interview at any time. In addition, I discussed with each participant

that the study was confidential and that they would be assigned a three-digit number

which would serve as a pseudo identity to protect and safeguard their name and eliminate

a way to link their identifying information to them. I also explained that the information

they provided during the interview would be kept safe and secure with only myself and

my committee having access to the data. I also asked if I could contact them by email for

any follow-up questions or to clarify any information. Dissemination of the results were

also discussed, and I informed the participants that a summary of research results would

be available on my Wix recruitment webpage. I also offered to send a summary of the

results after the study was completed to them by email, if they requested. Lastly, I

discussed with each participant the interview procedures as flexible and relaxed they

could ask questions, stop and start if needed, asked questions, or contact me if they

needed.

Interviews took place from April 26 to October 8, 2017. All the women who

participated met the research participant criteria, they all agreed to the research

procedures, all questions were addressed prior to conducting the interview and none of

the participants withdrew from the study. The interviews lasted between 25-55 minutes

and consisted of semistructured interview questions that focused on the participants'

experiences with the research phenomenon of the study. Interviews were audio recorded

using the procedures as described in the methodology section. Also, confidentiality was

maintained, and participants were de-identified (see Table 2) using pseudonym names for this report.

   Data collection went as planned, but as expected I encountered a few obstacles. One incident happened when the participant who was unable to submit the demographic form. She emailed me and stated she got an error code after trying several times to send the form through the google hyperlink. This issue was resolved immediately by going to the Wix webpage site and reloading the page. I then tested the submission process to ensure no further problems with the connection existed. No other participant mentioned any challenges with submitting the forms through the hyperlink. I also conducted periodic checks with each site to make sure all the online sites were connecting correctly. Another problem I encountered with another participant was the loss of our Google hangouts connection halfway through the interview due to a severe thunderstorm. She called me on the phone, and we picked the interview back up where we left off with no further challenges.

Table 2

Participant Identifier

Participant	Identifier
1	Mae
2	Dorothy
3	Katherine
4	Alexa
5	Regina
6	Clara
7	Nadine
8	Mary
9	Sarah
10	Jeanie
11	Octavia
12	Evelyn
13	Mattie

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis began with phenomenological reduction. According to Tesch's (1990) strategy, this is where the researcher attempts to set aside any preconceived notions and bias to focus on the participants' experience. The goal of data analysis was to reduce, organize, and interpret data collected from interview transcripts and memos to uncover and understand the essential meaning of lived experiences from the participants about the research phenomenon. I used a systematic iterative method to inductively code and reduce interview transcripts into relevant categories and then further refined and coded categories until themes emerged. This iterative process of generation and reduction was continued until no new themes developed. Data were organized and

analyzed around themes using the eight stages of analysis based on Tesch's strategy as follows:

Step 1. After each interview, I would listen and re-listen to the recoding several times while it was still fresh in my mind to become familiar with the content and to try to get a sense of the participant's thoughts and viewpoint. I also independently transcribed the interviews having to start, stop, and rewind the recorded interviews several times to ensure the participants' verbatim statements were written. This also gave me another opportunity to immerse myself into the data further. Interview transcripts were consistently organized based on the research question, interview guiding question, and the participants answers into a word document using the formatting recommended by Nvivo for coding. Then the transcripts were uploaded into QSR Nvivo 11 Pro software program which helped me manage and organize the transcript data. Once this process was complete, I read the interview transcript in its entirety and repeated this process with each interview. In addition, I also recorded transcript notes about thoughts that came to mind and transcribed the notes for each participant interview and placed them in a node labeled p-transcript notes.

Step 2. I selected three interview transcripts to use for the initial interpretation of the data and to gain a general understanding of the participants views. After reading the initial transcripts several times significant phrases, words, and any thought-provoking content was placed into a node file and labeled "Main content". A text search query for the words and phrases that frequently occurred in the interview transcripts was also conducted using a Nvivo application. The text search query identified similar words or

phrases based on content in all the transcripts. I also identified data from the transcripts that was different or unique that stood out.

Step 3. After gathering the significant statements into the main content nodes, I read through the content again and placed content into new file nodes based on interrelated information in the data. For example, I selected statements and phrases from the participants that focused on issues surrounding them being encouraged. From there significant statements were read and reduced into new file nodes based on the formulated meaning (see Table 3). I also created a new file node for statements that did not fall into the new category of nodes I labeled them "Other", and for content that was different, it was labeled the node "Unique".

Step 4. In this step, I placed the similar and relevant data into new node categories or clusters and provided a general topic heading for each category.

Step 5. After reading through the data in each new node category topic, I combined similar data into groups and reduced the category topics based on related data and developed new node categories.

Step 6. After I reduced the data sufficiently, I then found the most descriptive words to use as titles for the themes that emerged from the data analysis.

Step 7. The data from each theme was reviewed along with the notes I kept throughout the interview process to obtain a complete picture of the study.

Step 8. All the steps in the data analysis were iterative, and a comprehensive review of all the steps was conducted.

Table 3

Selected Examples of Significant Statements and the Formulated Meanings

Significant statements by participants	Formulated meaning
Everybody that I interacted with has been friendly, nice, and they share their little tidbits, what works for them, health tips, eating tips. So, everybody that I have met through BGR has been nice and helpful with my exercise journey and, so it's been a very positive experience.	Encouragement from members of BGR is described as a positive experience
And I see myself do things that I never even could conceive myself doing before. When you start hanging with people that are doing it and you see people doing it. You say to yourself, I can do that.	Motivation from other BGR members
Well I know on their Facebook page, if you're part of the group, all you have to do is go in there and literally write one comment and everybody sees what you're doing. And it's like you know if you're a part of their social media page, if you follow them and they follow you back, which is what they do and it's very easy you to connect with those women, and its woman just like women all over the world.	Features of the BGR Facebook page helps women feel supported

Presentation of Research Results

From the transcripts of the research participants, significant statements about the reality of their experiences were extracted, analyzed, and meanings were formulated into clusters resulting in six composite themes to address the central research questions. The research results are presented using a linear thematic format beginning with the research

question followed by the emerging themes, the meaning of the theme and then the

supporting evidence which revealed the participant's thoughts and ideas articulated in

their own words. Quotes from the participant's words were used to ensure an accurate

reflection of the participants' experience were captured. Eleven interview guiding

questions (IGQs) were constructed to direct the interview conversation and to gain deeper

insight from the participants about the research phenomenon. Figure 2 provides an

illustration of the alignment of the IGQs with the themes that emerged to answer the

research questions. The themes are as follow:

- Theme 1: Cognitive Connectedness

- Theme 2: Encouraging Environments

- Theme 3: Health and Physical Activity as Perceived by Participants

- Theme 4: Meet-up Motivation and Cultural Identification

- Theme 5: Facebook Features Facilitating Fitness

- Theme 6: Social Networking Promoting Social Health

Research Question   **Interview Guiding Questions**   **Themes**

How did you learn about BGR and what motivated you to become a member?

How has being part of BGR encouraged you to participate in the physical activity and exercise?

Cognitive Connections

What factors influenced you to be physically active and to exercise?

Encouraging Environments

What is the lived experience of Black women using the social networking site on BGR to encourage physical activity?

Can you tell me about your experience with BGR?

Meet Up Motivation and Cultural Identification

Can you describe the journey of your physical health?

Can you describe what being healthy means to you?

Health and Physical Activity as Viewed by Participants

What does it mean to you to be physically active? motivated you to become a member?

How has being a member of BGR, and the use of social media Helped improve your health and physical activity

What significance does the use of social media have in increasing your physical activity and promoting your health

Facebook Features Facilitating Fitness

How do Black women participating in BGR view social networking technology as a motivator to engage in Physical activity?

Describe how you feel about your health and physical activity since becoming a member of BGR

Social Networking Promoting Social Health

Are there other types of social media platforms you use specifically to learn about and improve your health
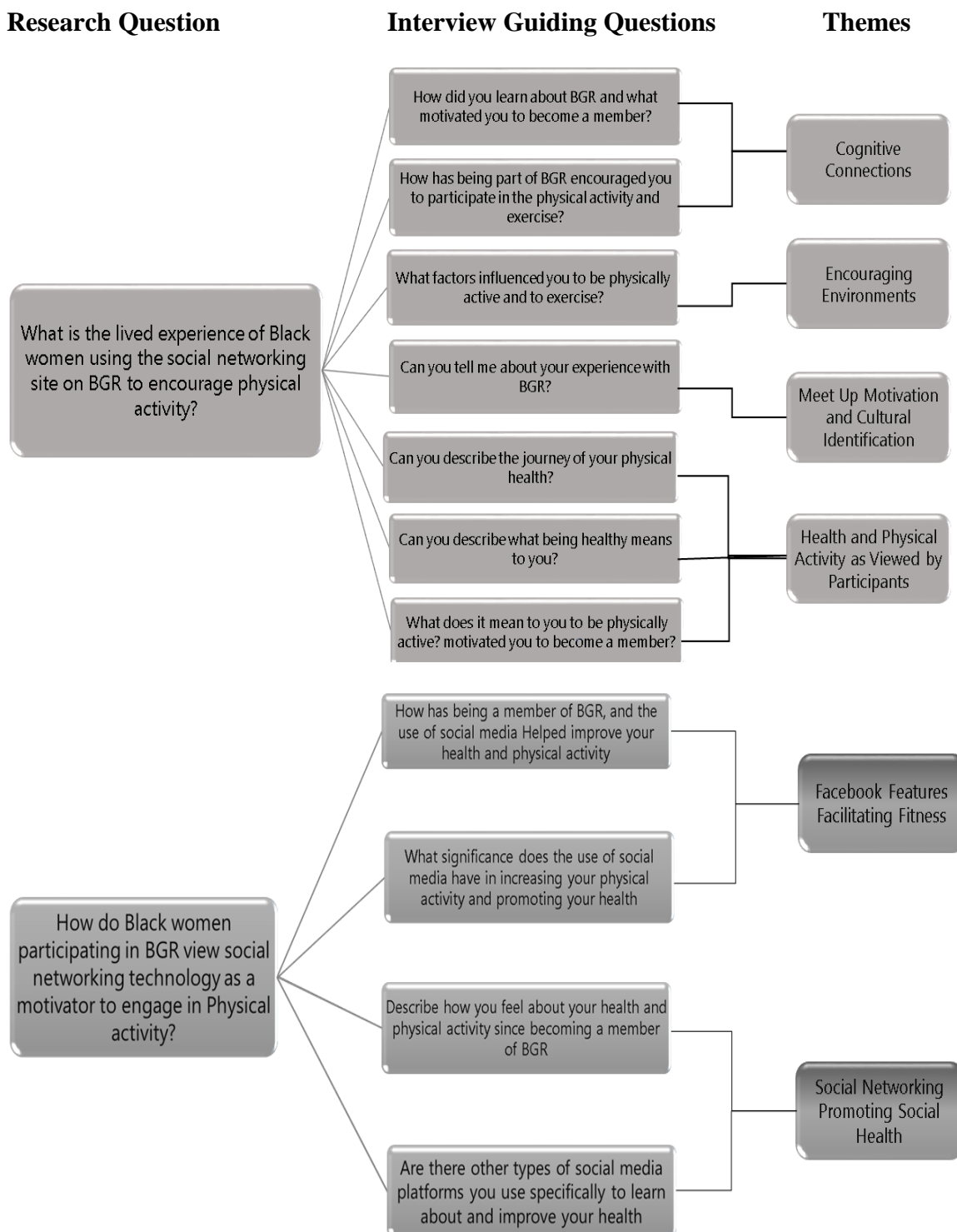
Figure 2. Alignment of research questions, themes, and interview guiding questions.

Research Question 1:

RQ1: What is the lived experience of Black women using the social networking

site on Black Girls Run to encourage physical activity?

The intent of this question was to gain an understanding of the experiences of

women in BGR about how social networking on the BGR site helped to encourage them

in their physical activity. There were a total of four themes to emerge from the analysis of

the transcript data to address this research question. The emerging themes included (1)

cognitive connection, (2) encouraging environment, (3) meetup motivation and cultural

identification, and (4) health and physical activity as viewed by the participants.

Theme 1: Cognitive connectedness. In this theme, cognitive connectedness was

the feeling of belonging to and connecting with a community of women in BGR in both

the online and face to face environment who share, support, and encourage healthy

behavior through running. Each of the 13 women in the study answered the question of

how being part of BGR encouraged them to participate in physical activity and to

exercise. Nine out of 13 women described what they experienced that helped them be

physically active using terms like a sisterhood or sharing a close connection with other

women in the BGR community. For example, Nadine, a 25 years old member of BGR

from South Carolina talked about how being part of the BGR community encouraged her

to run by saying,

It really motivated me, I feel a sense of sisterhood because I've connected really

well with the ladies in my group that I run within Rockville and these ladies are

older than me and they're running marathons all over the world, and so that's very

motivating and keeping me going and involved.

Also, Regina and Clara discussed their view of what helped them in explicit terms

comparing their connection with the other women to that of a sisterhood. Regina said,

So that for me it was sort of that sisterhood, that bond. It didn't matter that I was

to slowest, it didn't matter, but I walked, it didn't matter that I was out of breath, it

was just my page my race, and everybody was going to cheer you on. And that is

what set it for me making sure I became a part of Black Girls Run. Showing my

daughter's, making sure I tell my friends. You know I've connected with people in

different states that I didn't even realize we're in different states. So, it's not

always on the pavement that we meet with each other were sisters outside of

Black Girls Run. We've connected as friends we've connected in life we've

connected in other things. It isn't just Black Girls Run, but that was the start of it.

Clara noted, "It's been totally like a sisterhood, it's been a sisterhood and it's really

been something that I needed at that point in time in my life." Other participants

referenced the connection to being soul sisters. For example, Mary said, "So, we have a

soul sister group, so running to me is ministry. I have developed friendships that started

on the pavement where we are now traveling buddies, prayer buddies, business partners."

Sarah stated,

Now with my soul sisters on the BGR page we now travel together. And, we push

each other to the next level, and we have a saying... don't drink the Kool-Aid. So,

we just finished a tri-halfathon, which is three half marathons in three days in

three states. So, I really think that I would have never had an interest to do, and so being exposed to new physical activities and obtainable goals, achievable goals.

Several of the other participants shared that having a connection with or sharing a sense of connectedness with other women in the BGR community played a significant role in helping them to be and maintain their physical activity and exercise health. Alexa discussed her feelings saying,

You kind of get to a point where everybody looks for you. If they don't see you on the pavement they become, they worry. And they're concerned they know they remember what your "why" was, the reason why you wanted to start, and they are going to remind you of that, and they are going to get you back out there. And you kind of get to a point where you are not only doing it for yourself you are doing it for those that are depending on you to be there for them as well.

Evelyn stated, "It's just the mere connection of being with another African American woman. I met a lot of women who I have made connections with on the pavement as well as off the pavement". Mae talked about her connection saying,

Because when I started this, that was not what I was looking for because I'm a loner. I am very much alone loner. But when you start, and you start doing some of the same things with the same people you automatically make connections with those people. And they're so supportive that it's a culture and I think that it's taught here and it's a really, really, really, good one.

Theme Two: Encouraging environments. Encouraging environments is a theme that emerged from participants describing how interacting in positive and supportive

atmospheres both on the BGR social networking site and face to face events promoted

health and fitness within the BGR community. This theme emerged from responses to the

questions asking participants what factors influenced them to be physically active and to

exercise and how has being part of BGR helped them to exercise. Each of the 13

participants responded to the questions, and most of the participants described factors

such as encouragement and support that they experienced within the BGR community

that helped to inspire and influence them to be physically active. For instance, Mary who

lives in Georgia is 40 and is an active member of the BGR community stated,

"Everybody is encouraging no matter what your level of exercise is. Whether you're a

walker, whether you walk jog, whether you jog, or whether you run."

Katherine talked about her view of about how the BGR Facebook page and

meetups impacted her. She said,

So, I think it has multiple facets of getting people to be excited and want to come

because the more people you start to know, the more people that are kind of in

your corner to help encourage you and vice versa, so I think it really helps to

encourage and motivate people to stay consistent.

Octavia described her experience running her first marathon stating,

The first one I completed there was about like twenty girls at the finish line

waiting to cheer me on and that was amazing. It was not any expectation, and as a

loner, it is not even something I needed. But it was such an amazing feeling.

Regina noted,

One walk that I did, I'll tell you there were two or three people that actually came

back two and three times for me. They ran it, and they came back twice to make

sure where I was. And then two of them came back and walked to the end of it

with me even though they had already come back twice before to check on me.

Another participant in the BGR group spoke emotionally about the

encouragement and support she encountered with a friend she connected with through

BGR during a challenging time in her life. She said,

One of the ladies she I reached out to her because I was having a moment in

January and February where I signed up for two races, and I didn't follow through

with them because I had experienced a lot of death and loss in my family. So, I

was kind of very low where I wasn't motivated. And I reached out to her and

asked if she could kind of encourage me, and she texted me and called me every

morning every Tuesday and Thursday morning to get up, and she would call me

to get up so I could run at 5 am.

There was also specific discussion about receiving encouragement from both the

online environment and on the pavement where members of the group would meet-up to

run together. For example, Mattie, Alexa, & Mae commented on their thoughts on the

BGR Facebook page: Mattie noted, "I can see what other women are doing in the group

and it will encourage me to push myself harder." Alexa said,

Many of us fall off but we pick back up and go back to the basics, that's always

back to the basics. It's a nonjudgmental zone for us, very supportive, encouraging,

and pictures speak volumes, so I like to post pictures. So, we can see each other's

journeys and progress, and challenge each other in a healthy and competitive way

and venue.

Mae stated, "I think with the pictures and the different activities that they post it kind of

fosters the community and camaraderie".

Theme Three: Health and physical activity as perceived by participants. This

theme was elicited from the responses of women in BGR to two IGQs that asked them to

describe what being healthy meant to them and what being physically active meant to

them. Each participant responded to these questions giving context to what their

perception of health and physical activity was. Four of the participants characterizing

being healthy as a positive state that included spiritual, mental, emotional, physical,

balance. Mae, who is a 43, single, employed full time, lives in Florida, and an active

member of BGR indicated that

being healthy to me I think is not just your body physically, but I think also about

your mind being healthy, and your spirit being healthy, and there's a balance . . .

and when it comes to emotional health, I think that ties into the balance as well."

Others offered similar definitions. Dorothy said, "You are in a positive space

whether it be with your physical body, or your mental state, or your spiritual state," and

being "physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually balanced," also "mentally,

physically, and emotionally fit." Jeanie talked about health as being "wholeness that

includes physical health, financial health, and mental health."

Other women perceived being healthy with how they felt. For instance, Evelyn

stated that healthy was "feeling good inside and out, looking good, eating right, and

exercising on a regular basis." For Katherine, it was eating healthy, drinking plenty of water, and most of all being able to feel good and not tired. That's one of my main goals is I want to feel energized, and I think the healthier I am, the more energized I would feel.

With regards to how the women perceived physical activity, each of the 13 women in BGR agreed upon a general meaning of physical activity as being engaged in some form of exercise or intentional movement of the body. For example, Clara stated, "Physical activity is movement . . . whether it's yoga, running, basketball, or swimming, you got to be moving. It means movement."

Mary shared her opinion of physical activity as meaning.

You do some form of physical activity outside of your activities of daily living . . . . not just the walking you do around the day at the grocery store, it's what you do outside of that. Whether it be yoga, or cardio, or dance, or what have you…it's whatever you do in addition to the daily things that you have to complete.

Nadine's response to physical activity was "engaging in, I would say at least . . . 40 minutes of exercise 3 days a week". Alexa said, "It would mean working out . . . just walking and being active and walking at least five times a week for 45 minutes."

Theme Four: Meet-up motivation and cultural identification. The meaning of this theme revealed that women in BGR felt the face to face meet ups and the ability to connect and exchange information online with other women who shared cultural, racial, and physical similarities helped facilitate their physical activity and healthy behaviors. This theme was in response to the questions asking participants to share their experience with BGR and how being part of BGR helps them to be physically active. Katherine who

works fulltime, is married, and is a 45-year-old active member of BGR, shared her experience with being part of BGR stating,

> Just wanting to be a part of it and so it motivates me. I say I can go out there and maybe try that, as I am seeing other ladies doing it, and its ladies from all walks of life. Especially when I see ladies who are 55 + that are running . . . we have some older ladies in our group and they're running just as fast as someone who is 22 and it's just really, really, really, great to see that they're out there and getting healthy.

Mae's response to how she was motivated was,

> when you see other people doing things, it makes you want to do them . . . when you see your friends with BGR posting that they went here, and they went there, and they post pictures . . . it's motivational.

Nadine shared this example of how she felt saying,

> And I reached out to her and asked if she could kind of encourage me and she texted me and called me every morning every Tuesday and Thursday morning to get up, and she would call me to get up so I could run at 5 am. And so, it's just stuff like that that I really, really, love and that has kept me engaged and motivated.

Sarah stated, "I have also found people who can run faster than me, so that motivates me to run more."

Mary talked about how she was motivated from having the BGR Facebook page and the online support. She said,

So, having the same information to keep you motivated on social media as on the website it's kind of like those little reminders. Like even if you thought that like you were a little tired and didn't want to go that day particular that maybe if you see it on social media and see the people who are liking it and saying oh I'll be there, hope to see you all there. It will still kind of motivate you and kind of be something that is interjected into your day where you don't necessarily have to go out and find it it's kind of comes to you.

Participants Dorothy, Jeanie, and Mattie talked about how being with other Black women was also motivational. Dorothy said,

I think it encourages you because you have like a network of people who are kind of the same boat, you're in kind of clique. Trying to get in shape people who are trying to get active want to reach their goals and it's like you are helping keep them accountable as well. So, you don't just kind of go for yourself you go for other people who are running with you.

Jeanie said,

It's real positive and motivating when I see other black women out there working out, it makes me want to work-out even harder. It challenges me to continue to go to the meetups every week, and I'm able to talk to other women who have the same issues that I have.

Mattie stated, "It gives me motivation because I see people who look like me. And it helps me more to focus on knowing that there is somebody else struggling with the same things that I'm struggling with.

Alexa talked about motivation from the standpoint of her helping to motivate other women. She stated,

> To be completely honest, I think I was physically active before I heard about Black Girls Run but when I did to hear about it, it motivated me to want to help others more because I already like to work out, and so it's like I get to be in a club like where people are, where people are all doing the same thing, so you get to spread your joy like . . . yeah you like to work out.. . . . me too. . . and it's kind of like collaborating with people that have the same mind as you do.

Research Question 2

RQ2: How do Black women participating in Blacks Girls Run view social networking technology as a motivator to engage in physical activity?

The focus of this research question was to gain an understanding about the perceptions and experiences from the viewpoint and voice of women in BGR on how the use of social networking technology helped to promote their physical activity and health. From their composite descriptions two themes to emerged to address the research question. The two themes of Facebook features facilitating fitness and social networking fostering a platform for social health unfolded in response to four IGQs from the participants to answer the second RQ.

Theme Five: Facebook features facilitating fitness. In this theme, participants shared how the use of the BGR Facebook applications were influential in supporting their physical fitness and health behaviors. The IGQs asked of the participants to that resulted in this were how has being part of BGR, and the use of social media helped improve your

health and physical activity and what was the significance social media had in increasing your physical activity and health. There was a response from each participant about the features or applications on the BGR Facebook page they found to be advantageous in supporting them to maintain their physical activity. Quite a few of the participants including Nadine, Mae, Jeanie, and Octavia talked about specific features with the BGR Facebook page they found to be beneficial in supporting their exercise health mentioning post and pictures they read and viewed from other participants. Nadine said,

It has encouraged me a lot just going to the Facebook page and seeing people post, you know, the races they have coming up. And people posting their group runs. Like we do pictures and post them to show other people like, look how many of us have come together to run and that can motivate you because it's been times where I did get up to run, and I see a posting, and it is like fifteen women that got up at 5 am in the morning to run.

Mae stated,

I think with the pictures and the different activities that they post it kind of fosters community and camaraderie . . . I think it has multiple facets of getting people to be excited and want to come because the more people you start to know the more people that are kind of in your corner to help encourage you and vice versa. So, I think it really helps to encourage and motivate people to stay consistent.

Jeanie said,

Or that we're encouraging each other by the post, it gives us an opportunity to share our progress. And, it also gives us an opportunity to go back and see how

far people come through pictures. Pictures speak louder than words sometimes or

seeing pictures you can see the progress and seeing what you've accomplished.

Octavia, who is part of the BGR community in North Carolina, stated,

I can see what other women are doing in the group and it will encourage me to

push myself harder. Or I can see ideals that they come up with or things that they

use like their buddy packs. They will put on their page a certain kind of product

and sometimes there are discounts. So, I can see that and order whatever I want or

need.

Evelyn talked about how the post on the BGR Facebook page helped her keep up

with the people and the group activities, and Clara discussed how the ease of access

helped her. Evelyn noted,

It's nice to be able to log on and see what's going on and catch up with stuff.

That's the motivational piece again, and like I said it's mostly with the people that

I connected with on a local level. Seeing them and watching their journey and

being able to share them online and then getting the same support when I do stuff.

Clara said,

and that's how I stay abreast of stuff, and that's how I stay informed. And if there's

something going on that I may not be in connection with people on a day-to-day

basis, but it's nice to be able to log on and see what's going on and catch up with

stuff. And if I want to register with something and they put out a reminder you

know sometimes I may forget it and the date may come, and I'm like yep, I want

to do that, but I totally forget because I get busy with life and then when the local

ambassadors or the local run coordinators send out reminders or post it to their

page, and I see it.

Dorothy noted,

I would say maybe the comments, just to see how other people have been

consistent with BGR and see how their journey has gone because umm running is

not my favorite activity. But what other people say works for them it makes me

want to continue and how they share stories about how they wanted to give up.

So, I guess maybe hearing how people's testimonies and even the pictures as well.

Katherine said,

It's definitely easier with the technology so if I'm in a meeting at 4 o'clock and

let's say the run it today. I can definitely check my phone to make sure we're still

good for the run. Or if something happens. That's definitely helpful and

convenient.

Theme Six: Social networking fostering a platform for social health. This

theme reflects how the women in BGR are utilizing the capacity of social networking

technology to connect, interact, and build healthy relationships with women who are

fostering and supporting a community of health and wellness. This theme emerged from

two IGQs asking participants to describe how you feel about your health and physical

activity since becoming a member of BGR and how has being a member of BGR and the

use of social media helped improve your health and physical activity. Each participant

reflected on ways in which the social networking on the BGR Facebook page provided

both social and informational support for engaging in healthy behaviors like routine

physical activity practices. One participant reflected on how her experience interacting

with the BGR Facebook community inspired her to be consistent. Sarah who is 55 and

lives in Virginia noted,

> I'm almost for certain that I wouldn't be as consistent as I am if it were not for the
>
> Facebook group page. I go on there just to see what they're doing and what's
>
> coming up, so I can make sure I'm a part of. It is something that I want to be a
>
> part of, and I want to continue to be a part of because I know that's what I need to
>
> motivate me to keep going and it feels good once I'm out there.

Dorothy stated,

> In the group I was in, they do several forums. So, they might have someone come
>
> in and talk about healthy eating or how to exercise. We did a clinic about the type
>
> of shoe the right shoes to wear when you are exercising. And so, they would bring
>
> in resources from other places as well, which is good to get people to learn about
>
> it because you might not know what to do or what to eat. You might not really be
>
> healthy, so that's good to educate ladies on.

Clara said,

> You kind of get to a point where everybody looks for you. If they don't see you on
>
> the pavement, they become . . . they worry, and they're concerned. They know,
>
> they remember what you're [why] was, and the reason why you wanted to start,
>
> and they are going to remind you of that, and they are going to get you back out
>
> there. And you kind of get to a point where you are not only doing it for yourself
>
> you are doing it for those that are depending on you to be there for them as well.

Nadine talked about her experience joining BGR. She said, "It's been amazing. . . I think since I joined, this is the most active I have been in my entire life, and I'm 37, and I just joined it last year."

Mary said,

Experience on the pavement is phenomenal. I can't say it enough... you know you've heard stories about people not making walkers feel welcome? But I was fortunate that the first time I was on . . . that there is enough walkers that we do our thing and the runners do their thing, but everybody is just happy that you're on the pavement.

Octavia noted,

You just see people continuously striving and keeping at it. And so, it's been a great to me, a great experience. And you learn from some of the other lady's experiences. As well as you can surround yourself with people that push you that to bring out something in yourself that you never had.

Regina said,

They are really big on no one being left behind. So, if someone is lagging or if they want to walk, they make sure that someone stops someone slows down to bring their sister with them if you will. That's always a good feeling the camaraderie.

Mattie stated,

Many of us fall off but we pick back up and go back to the basics, that's always back to the basics. It's a nonjudgmental zone for us, very supportive, encouraging,

and pictures speak volumes, so I like to post pictures. So, we can see each other's journeys and progress, and challenge each other in a healthy and competitive way and venue.

Discrepant Cases

In an effort to provide comprehensive research findings, identifying and addressing cases, where a participants' viewpoint differs or fails to conform with the emerging views, can help to deepen the capacity of our research findings. According to Miles & Huberman (1994), most research findings have exceptions, identification and investigation of these outliners can serve to strengthen research findings.

The following two viewpoints emerged as being discrepant or different from the majority of the participants responses. All the participants in the study identified positive aspects of being part of the BGR movement. However, one of the participants pointed out something she was not happy with on the administrative level with other running events. She stated,

But they were trying to discourage us from supporting certain runs. Apparently because of, of I don't know something couldn't be worked out personally between them and the run coordinators, and I didn't like that. It made me not want to support BGR it really did.

Another discrepant case was something none of the other participants mentioned about the BGR groups. She stated,

It has cliques, but that's like with everything . . . But once you find other women

that are on the same level that you're on, and women in the group are on all

different levels and just find somebody that you can connect with.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Being able to demonstrate that research findings are truthful and plausible is a

significant aspect of ensuring the trustworthiness of a study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Trustworthiness of this study is explicated through credibility, transferability,

dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

According to Ajjawi & Higgs (2007), credibility and rigor are closely linked and

involve making sure the research results are authentic and believable to ensure the

research findings are genuine and accurate. Throughout the interview, time participants

were asked about the accuracy of the information being collected by reinstating and

sometimes summarizing their articulated words. Also, at the completion of each

interview, the participants were asked if they had any additional information they would

like to discuss, add, or change. Informant feedback was also conducted after individual

transcripts were completed by emailing participants their transcripts and asking to review

and return the transcript by email with any changes they wanted to make. No transcripts

were returned.

Transferability

Another technique used to ensure the trustworthiness of the study is

transferability. Transferability in a study provides descriptions of the research findings

written in a specific and detailed manner thorough enough to be able to transfer the

information to other contexts (Creswell, 2013). In this study, transferability was

established by using numerous context-rich excerpts from the participant's descriptions

about their experiences during interviews to support explanations of the themes. Also,

specifically, using rich descriptions, is a technique in which a qualitative researcher

provides a robust and detailed account of their experiences during data collection.

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research focuses on being able to verify that the

research findings are consistent and can be repeated (Creswell, 2013). For this study

dependability was achieved by establishing and following an interview protocol and

organizing, documenting, and operating, within the philosophical assumptions, traditions,

and intentions of the phenomenological research paradigm. The pre-pilot test confirmed

the IGQs and interview process was accurate, and my dissertation committee, IRB, and

URR provided insight throughout the research process.

Confirmability

Confirmability is another dimension of trustworthiness that deals with the

assurance of knowing that the research findings in a study are shaped and based from the

participants' articulated experiences instead of the biases or pre-conceptions from the

researcher. To achieve confirmability in this study the process of how data was collected,

the use of Tesch's (1992) method for data analysis, and the research findings were written

in detail providing a trail to show how research findings developed. In addition,

throughout the research process, I used reflection and conducted bracketing to make sure

the views of the participants were expressed in the findings. I bracketed by personal biases before the research study began and kept notes during data collection, analysis, and throughout the final research report.

Summary

The focus of this chapter was to provide details about the research results and included information about demographic data, the pilot study, research setting, data collection, analysis and evidence of trustworthiness. The results of this study provided information about the lived experiences of the research participants gathered through semistructured interviews and analyzed into meaningful, rich textual descriptions about lived experiences and perceptions of using social networking technology to encourage and motivate physical fitness. Narratives from 13women who participated in the study were gathered, and their interviews were transcribed, organized, and analyzed using a systematic method. Significant statements were extracted from the transcripts and formulated into clusters, and the clusters were reduced and developed into six emerging to answer two main research questions. The use of Nvivo 11 software was used to manage and organize the data.

Responses from the participants indicated that the use of social networking technology within the BGR community helped to build an environment that was encouraging, supported a sense of connection, and provided motivation for the women in BGR which was perceived as significant with inspiring them to be physically active and promoting healthy behavior. Furthermore, the women expressed how various features on

the BGR Facebook were regarded as useful tools and applications that supported their efforts to engage in healthy behaviors like running.

       This chapter included the pilot study, research setting, the demographic information, the data collection and data analysis procedures, and the presentation of the research results. Chapter 5 will provide a summary of the research findings and themes that emerged, the interpretation of the research results, the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, implications for social change, and the conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter brings together a brief overview of my research purpose, a discussion of the key findings, and an interpretation of findings within the context of the literature review and theoretical framework, limitations of my study, recommendations for future research, and the implications of this study for positive social change. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the abstract and intuitive phenomenon that comes from the composite descriptions of lived experiences by Black women using social networking technology on BGR to improve their physical activity. Research has well established the numerous health benefits that result from engaging in adequate physical activity such as lowering the risk of cardiovascular disease, reducing the risk of type II diabetes, and better weight management (CDC, 2016; Joseph et al., 2015; Pekmezi et al., 2013). National data indicate that while 34% of Black women in the United States are achieving the right amount of physical activity recommended for adults, 66% are not meeting the recommendations (CDC, 2014a). Moreover, evidence from several studies suggests that chronic health conditions such as the rate of obesity among Black women across the nation is higher when compared to women of other ethnicities and the lack of adequate physical activity was identified as a significant contributing factor (CDC, 2014a; Joseph et al., 2015; Pekmezi et al., 2013; Rashawn, 2014; Versey, 2014). As such, the need for innovative and culturally relevant programs that promote physical activity and healthy behavior among Black women are needed.

BGR is a national health initiative focused on creating a supportive community of Black women to address the disparities in their health (Garms, 2013). This group promotes health and healthy behavior by inspiring physical activity through running with other women who share cultural and physical similarities. It has also created a health movement with a growing membership of over 250,000 women across the country, and BGR is utilizing the capacity of social networking technology as a tool to support their efforts. The emergence of online interactive communication through the use of social media has become a mainstream method of communication that is also rapidly expanding in the health arena (Gold et al., 2012; Korda & Itani, 2013) Social media applications range from using Facebook-based interventions to increase moderate-to-vigorous exercise to engineering social networks to sustain in-person and online physical activity levels (Valle, Tate, Mayer, Allicock, & Cai, J. , 2013; Rovniak et al., 2013). Furthermore, a study conducted by Perrin (2015) on social media use in the United States indicated that three out of four Black women use some form of social media technology regularly. Social networking applications like Facebook use interactive forms of communication that can help people connect, share, interact, and shape their social support networks. Also, given that women in BGR are utilizing the social networking application Facebook as a tool to address their physical activity and health behaviors, insight about their experiences and perceptions with Facebook might provide a more in-depth understanding about what motivates their physical activity and health behaviors. Yet, there is little understanding of the role social networking technology may play in promoting physical activity and healthy behavior among Black women. To investigate this, I designed a

qualitative study to explore the experiences and perceptions of Black women in BGR

who were connecting for a collective purpose of addressing their health behaviors and

wellness and for improving health outcomes for Black women. I also wanted to gain a

deeper understanding of women who transcend notions of stereotypical health behaviors

of inactivity by collecting and analyzing detailed descriptions gathered through the

testament of their subjective lived experiences.

Key Findings

Chapter 4 presented research findings that emerged from a purposeful sample of

13 participants who met the specific criteria to participate in the study. Recruitment flyers

were placed at multiple local community centers, and an online Facebook recruitment

page was developed along with an informational and sign-up WIX web page. I used an

interview protocol to conduct semistructured interviews and used the online

communication platforms of Google hangouts and Facetime that included a video chat

feature. Data were collected, organized, and analyzed inductively with the support of

QSR Nvivo 11 Pro-software program. All participants agreed to share their experiences

and perceptions about the research phenomenon, and the following six themes emerged

from the data analysis.

Theme 1: Health and physical activity as perceived by the participants

I found that most of the participants described health and physical activity with

regards to a harmonious or balanced life, which included their mental, physical, spiritual,

and emotional state. Others mentioned it as a state of holistic health that included the

internal and external balance inside and out to include exercising and eating right, and all

agreed that physical activity was movement with a specific amount of time for being engaged.

Theme 2: Cognitive connectedness

From this theme, I discovered the participants felt the relationships that emerged from connecting with other women online and in face-to-face encounters played a significant role in reinforcing physical activity and positive health behaviors.

Theme 3: Encouraging environments

This theme revealed that the participants believed an essential factor that inspired physical activity was for them to be in physical or virtual surroundings that encouraged positive experiences, healthy behaviors, and healthy practices with other women in BGR.

Theme 4: Meet-up motivation and cultural identification

For participants in BGR, I found that scheduling and meeting at a designated place and time to run with other women who shared cultural, racial, and physical similarities motivated and empowered their behavior and actions about fitness and health.

Theme 5: Facebook features facilitating fitness

I discovered that Facebook was the most utilized and most popular social networking tool for all the women regardless of age and that Facebook features like the posts, pictures, and the calendar used to schedule running times and locations on the BGR Facebook page were significant for promoting their participation in physical activities.

Theme 6: Social Networking fostering a platform for social health

For the participants, I discovered that the use of social networking technology with the BGR movement assisted the women in connecting and interacting and with building healthy behaviors in a community of women focused on improving their health and wellness. All participants agreed the use of Facebook was the most widely used and popular social networking application used by BGR and that Facebook facilitated a platform for supportive social health and interaction in virtual and physical environments for the participants.

Interpretation of Research Findings

Research findings are discussed in connection with the literature review in Chapter 2 and as they relate to the central research questions and emerging themes.

Research Question 1

RQ1: What is the lived experience of Black women using the social networking site on BGR to encourage physical activity?

Cognitive connectedness. The literature review in Chapter 2 identified barriers to engaging in physical activity for Black women living across the country. Evans (2011) noted one of the challenges Black women encounter with being physically active was the lack of or limited social support and companionship, although it is well established that physical activity plays a significant role in improving health outcomes. Researchers have also established that Black women living in the United States are impacted by higher rates of chronic health conditions and earlier death, yet many are not getting enough physical activity, which is a factor contributing to poor health outcomes (CDC, 2013;

Pekmezi et al., 2013, Versey, 2014). Findings in this study provide a different perspective

by sharing insight regarding the experiences of Black women who are engaging in

physical activity. From the theme cognitive connectedness, this study revealed that the

participants experienced a sense of belonging and forming social attachments with other

members of BGR who shared commonalities such as being Black women wanting to

focus of being physically active. They also acknowledged that supportive relationships

and connections with other women in the group played a significant role in helping them

engage in healthy behaviors like running. The women also expressed that the support and

connectedness emerged from both online and face-to-face interactions.

     Encouraging Environments. The results of a study conducted by

Galehbakhtiaria and Pouryasouri (2015) on the topic of social media as a tool for health

promotion identified the integration of online community participation as becoming an

increasingly common approach for people to use as a way to communicate and interact

with each other. Furthermore, their study recognized that while the use of online

communication is growing, more research about what motivates people to interact in

online environments is needed (Galehbakhtiaria & Pouryasouri, 2015). In examining the

theme encouraging environments, this research both confirms the growing and

widespread use of online communication and provides insight into the motivation for

using social networking applications from the women in BGR. All the women in the

study discussed utilizing the BGR online Facebook page as a way to interact and connect

with each other. They described reasons like the ease of access, in which they could go to

the Facebook page at a time that was convenient for them to find out dates and times of

running events. They also discussed what motivated them to engage in healthy activities with other women in BGR, which was being in positive environments both online and face-to-face with other women that supported and encouraged them to live a healthy lifestyle.

Health and physical activity as perceived by the participants. To improve health outcomes for Black women, understanding the factors that influence their behavior is significant. Therefore, to gain an understanding about the thoughts and experiences of women in BGR, I posed questions that focused on their perception of what being healthy meant to them and their meaning of physical activity. The women in BGR voiced a range of answers to describe their view of what being healthy and physical activity were to them. Most of the women characterized being healthy around a state of positive existence that included spiritual, mental, emotional, physical balance and wholeness. Moreover, all the women agreed that physical activity involved movement of the body for the purpose of exercising. Their answers helped provide a more in-depth understanding about their experiences and what they perceived influenced their health behavior.

From the literature, Bandura (2004) emphasized that a person's behavior is influenced by the triadic interaction of their environment, behavior, and experience. In this study, I sought the dynamics of what motivated the use of social networking technology as a tool to increase physical activity. Shivers (2014) suggests that social networking applications when tailored to the Black population have the capacity to foster online communities where interaction and communication about relevant subjects, issues,

and concerns can take place. Consistent with research conducted by Shivers (2014), I found the women in BGR were motivated by the social networking features seen on the BGR Facebook page that aimed to support and increase health and wellness through a health movement focused on running and improving health outcomes for Black women. The BGR Facebook page is culturally relevant and consists of photos and health information featuring Black women of different sizes, shapes, and ages. Information on the BGR Facebook page included ads and information that represented Black women and contained pertinent information such as running events and locations, BGR clothing and gear, and health and wellness information. BGR use of social networking provides an opportunity for a interactive and user-centric interface that allows members to share and connect with each other. The women in this study expressed how the online environment played a substantial role in motivating, supporting, and encouraging their health and physical activity. They discussed how the Facebook page provided a virtual space that was beneficial for keeping them updated on information, times and locations of running events, and could be easily accessed from a phone or computer. They also talked about other factors that kept them active and engaged like viewing the pictures and posts from other women in their community and at national running events.

Meet-up motivation and cultural identification. From the literature review, Chou et al. (2012) suggested there is the potential use of social media technology for health promotion and communication to improve reach, interaction, and communication among marginalized populations such as ethnic minorities. Other studies also support the use of social networking technology as a tool to reach at-risk populations to promote

health (Shivers, 2014; Versey, 2014; Watson, Robinson, Harker, & Arriola, 2016). The findings in this study add to the body of knowledge by providing information about the experiences of Black women in BGR, who are part of a marginalized population within the United States and are using social networking technology as a tool to improve their health and physical activity. Based on the theme meet-up motivation and cultural identification, I found that women in BGR felt the ability to interact and exchange information online with other women who share cultural, racial, and physical similarities helped facilitate their physical activity and healthy behaviors. Social networking technology like Facebook has created a unique opportunity for Black women to communicate and share information about topics that are significant to them such as hair. For example, Versey (2014) mapped research around the perspective of hair as a reason for Black women not being as physically active. Her study also suggested considering further research on social and online networking sites to improve physical activity among Black women. The findings in this study align with research by Versey (2014) regarding social networking creating a virtual space and atmosphere where women could share and interact with others about topics that were important to them. The findings in this study uncovered that the women in BGR found the Facebook page provided a place of well-being where they could visually and virtually identify with women sharing their cultural attributes and the drive to live healthier lives. For example, one woman talked about the BGR Facebook page and her experience with the social networking site as being positive and motivating when she saw other black women sharing posts and working out. She

talked about how it made her want to work out even harder and challenged her to continue to go to the meet-ups every week.

Research Question 2

RQ 2: How do Black women participating in Blacks Girls Run view social networking technology as a motivator to engage in physical activity?

Facebook features facilitating fitness. Joseph et al. (2015) explored the use of culturally relevant social networking technology as an intervention to promote physical activity in a physical activity program targeting Black women. The researchers in this study used a randomized pilot study tailored Facebook and text messaging program for Black women to evaluate if they would promote physical activity among the women (Joseph et al., 2015). Their study reported that the use of technology-based interventions was linked to positive outcomes, like the participants in their study increasing their light to moderate physical activity. The findings in this study regarding the theme- Facebook features facilitating fitness; the women shared how the use social media applications helped facilitate their physical fitness aligns with the study conducted by Joseph et al., 2015). In this study, I discovered that the women in BGR described the Facebook page to be influential in helping them to be active. Furthermore, this study goes beyond identifying the usefulness of social networking technology of Facebook to uncover specific features about the Facebook page that the women in BGR found to be most helpful. For example, most of the women shared that there were applications such as photosharing, having a central place to go to find out information about running events, and having the local BGR calendar that provided information at the local and national

level about running details as being particularly useful in helping them remain informed and engaged in their physical health.

Social networking fostering a platform for social health. The innovation of social networking technology like Facebook has grown in popularity with over 2.34 billion social media users worldwide (Statista, n.d.). Social networking sites like Facebook offer a variety of features that allow users to connect, interact, and communicate with individuals or groups from next door to the other side of the world. It supports a range of applications from instant messaging, posting and sharing information and pictures, to a feature called Facebook live which allows users to share events that are happening in real-time. Furthermore, social networking technology is easy to use and can be accessed from a smart phone, tablet, or computer making it an ideal communication tool. As discussed in the literature review the use of social networking technology has established its place in the healthcare arena. Researchers support it as a tool for various purposes such as recruiting participants for research purposes (Whitaker et al., 2017). Social networking technology has also been commended for successful health promotion interventions (Gold et al., 2012; Nguyen et al., 2013; Staffileno et al., 2017). Moreover, from the literature Evans (2011) and Im et al. (2012) discussed the lack of social support as a barrier to exercising whereas Pekmezi et al. (2013) noted in their study that having social support from friends was beneficial in helping Black women be physically active. Consistent with previous research, the women in this study reflected on how connecting, interacting, and build healthy relationships, which included the online environment, encouraged their healthy behaviors and fitness.

Theoretical Considerations

In this study, the use of Bandura's (2004) SCT was used as a theoretical framework to explore and understand the use of social networking technology as a tool for health promotion among Black women in BGR. The SCT is a commonly applied framework for examining physical activity behavior (Joseph et al., 2015; White, Wojcicki, & McAuley, 2012; Young et al., 2014). Core constructs of the SCT focus on individual health behaviors and how people attain and maintain behaviors based on the dynamic and reciprocal interactions between environmental, personal, and behavioral factors (Bandura, 2004; Glanz et al., 2002). As such, the emerging themes and findings will be examined based on the core constructs of the SCT.

Environmental factors are those factors physically external to the people that may influence their health behavior (Bandura, 2004). This study identified environmental influences in the three of themes which included encouraging environments, cognitive connectedness, and meet-up motivation and cultural identification. With the theme encouraging environments, environmental influences were considered those activities where women in BGR would show up at local and National events to run with other women in the group or they would come out to running events to support and encourage other women in the group. Also, environmental influences were experienced when women in the BGR group would post, make comments, or upload pictures about members in the group on the BGR Facebook page about things that occurred at running events. With the theme cognitive connectedness, environmental influences were described by the participants as experiences of connecting or a sense of sharing and

relating to and with other women in BGR who were linked by their desire to be physically active. The theme meet-up motivation and cultural identification reflected environmental influences through the participants being inspired and motivated by people and other BGR members to be physically active at meet-ups. These influences included physical environments at local and National running events and virtual environments in online interactions with other Black women who shared cultural similarities.

Personal factors according to Bandura (2001) are cognitive, affective, and biological events that are constantly interacting and influence each other to influence a persons' behavior. The theme health and physical activity as viewed by the participant focused on the personal awareness and understanding of their experiences of what being healthy and physical activity meant to them. In this study, the women discussed their knowledge of health and the factors they felt influenced them to be physically active. The participants articulated their experiences of being healthy and described their journey as one that ebbs and flows, others mentioned it as being a roller coaster, and yet others stated it as being a journey that is consistently evolving. They also discussed how being part of BGR supported their efforts to live healthier lifestyles.

Joseph et al. (2015) discussed behavior as constantly being influenced by multiple and interrelated factors within a person's social and physical environment, and that the environment provides observational and behavioral models for learning behavior. The theme Facebook features facilitating fitness and social networking promoting social health reflected on these concepts. According to Bandura (2001), observational learning occurs by observing the actions of others. In this study, participants discussed how the

BGR Facebook page provided a way to see and interact in a virtual environment by sharing post and pictures of running events that helped some of them to participate in running events they had never participated in before like 5K and 10K marathons. Bandura (2004) describes behavioral capabilities as having the knowledge and skills to achieve a behavior. With the theme social networking promoting social health, behavioral capabilities were discussed in terms of promoting physical activity and health. Participants discussed how being a part of a social environment like BGR and having the ability to connect and interact with other women played an integral part in influencing their physical health and the health of the other women who participated in BGR.

Limitations of the Study

The main limitation of this research was the small number of participants involved in this study. This study used a purposeful sampling strategy which focuses on collecting in-depth details from selected participants who have experienced the phenomenon being studied. Thirteen women participating in BGR utilizing social networking technology to improve their physical activity were part of this study. As such, because of the limited number of participants and the sampling strategy used, it is unknown whether the findings in this inquiry reflect the perceptions and experiences of all the women in BGR and therefore is not intended to be a generalization of all participants of BGR. Selection bias is another limitation to be considered along similar lines because it is unknown if participants who chose to participate in this study differ from those who chose not to participate in this study.

Recommendations

Continued strategies and initiatives focused on improving health outcomes for Black women in the United States are still needed. The sample size of this study was small and so to better understand the efficacy of social media and networking technology have with improving physical activity further research that has a larger sample size is warranted. This study is also limited, it is one of few studies focusing on positive aspects of the lived experiences of Black women who are improving their health. More research is needed to gain greater insight into these experiences. Also, expanding a phenomenological study to include other groups like "GirlTrek" and "BlackWomenDoWorkout" who are using social networking technology to improve health outcomes for Black women may provide a deeper understanding about how to reach and improve health for Black women across the nation. This study utilized a few web-based features such as a Facebook and a Wix webpage for recruitment and Google hangouts for interviews. However, there are other applications and social networking platforms that can also be used such as Instagram and web chat software that are cost effective and have the potential to reach a larger audience. This study was also a qualitative approach that focused on lived experiences, but a mixed method study might offer information regarding specific features of social networking technology that Black women find effective for improving their health.

Implications for Positive Social Change

This phenomenological study explored the subjective lived experiences of Black women who are part of BGR that are using social media technology to improve their

health. As such, this research contributes to positive social change by adding to the body of research the experiences and perceptions that can facilitate health improvements and outcomes among Black women for public health. Potential contributions of this study include advancing public health knowledge, inspiring a platform for ongoing research and exploration into health promotion efforts, and interventions that will improve health and lessen the health disparity gap for Black women. Also, this study can support a public health research praxis where the experiences of Black women are at the forefront of efforts to promote their health and improve their health outcomes.

Conclusion

There are several studies that point to the lack of sufficient physical activity among Black women as a factor that contributes to chronic health conditions such as obesity. And, while many factors influence health finding innovative approaches and interventions that foster healthy environments, reduce the health disparity gap, and improve health outcomes for Black women are needed. This study explored the use of social networking technology as a tool for health promotion in an environment that focused explicitly on inspiring health and fitness among Black women. All participants in the study were active members of BGR which utilizes the capacity of social networking technology to inspire a movement of health and fitness among Black women. Using a qualitative phenomenological method of inquiry an exploration into the lived experience of the participants using social networking technology to improve their physical activity and health was conducted. The findings of this study suggest being part of encouraging environments and feeling connected with other women who share common attributes and

goals were factors that influenced physical activity and healthy behavior. Also, the

women expressed how receiving inspiration and help from other women helped to

support their fitness efforts. The meet-ups were considered a source of motivation that

included both online environments and at the running meet-up locations. In addition,

there were several features of the BGR Facebook page that the participants acknowledged

as encouraging healthy behavior. Some of the women mentioned how seeing pictures and

reading post from other BGR members helped to support their physical fitness. This

research suggests that social networking technology can be a tool to promote healthy

behavior. So, when it comes to finding effective approaches and interventions to

encourage and inspire physical activity and healthy behavior among Black women, then

utilizing social networking applications like Facebook should be considered.

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Appendix A: Demographic Information

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Date_____

Name_____

City/State _____/_____Phone #: _____

Email address _____Birthdate: _____

Marital status: Married___Single___Widowed___Divorced___

Employment: Y/N: Full time___Part time ____ Unemployed: ___

Highest level of education: No high school degree_____
High school diploma/GED_____
Some college_____
College degree or higher_____

Yearly income: 0-$9,999_____ $10,000-$14,999_____ $15,000-$29,999____

$30,000-59,999____ $60,000-$79,999____ $80,000-$99,999__ Above $100,000___

Do you prefer to use ◯ Google Hangouts or ◯ SKYPE to conduct the interview?

Thank you

Appendix B: Interview Guiding Questions

Interview Guiding Questions

1) What does health mean to you?

2) How do you feel about your health in the past and presently?

3) Describe what physical activity means to you?

4) How much time did you engage in physical activity in your past?

5) How often did you engage in physical activity in your past?

6) In the past, was your physical activity mostly light, medium, or moderate
   intensity?

7) How much time did you engage in physical activity now?

8) How often do you engage in physical activity now?

9) What is the intensity of your physical activity currently light, medium, or
   moderate?

10) What are other social networking applications you use specifically for your
    health? i.e.

    Facebook, Fitbit, etc.

11) Describe your experience as a member of BGR?

12) What are the factors that motivated you to become a member of BGR?

13) What would you describe as being most beneficial about BGR that helps you stay
    physically active?

Appendix C: Research Recruitment Flyer

Are you a member of Black Girls Run?

If so, I would love to hear about your experience as a member of

Black Girls Run **with using social media to improve your physical activity.**

I NEED VOLUNTEERS WHO:

➢ Are Black or African American women over the age of 18
➢ Use social media to help increased your physical activity *and*,
➢ Have been part of the **Black Girls Run** group for 2 or more months and participated in at least one of the following activities:

✓ Participated in online discussion by posting comments about any topic on the Black Girls Run Facebook site
✓ Participated in group activities such as Meetups or group sponsored running events
✓ Posted a picture(s) at a Black Girls Run group function or special event
✓ Posted a video at or about group information or any event on Black Girls Run Facebook discussion board
✓ Helped organize or create information on the Black Girls Run website or participated in any of the Black Girls Run activities

WHAT TO EXPECT

As a study participant, you will read and submit online an informed consent form (this form will give you detail information about the research study), complete a brief demographic survey online that should take less than 10 minutes, and then schedule a time to be interviewed.

The interview will be online using Google hangout or SKYPE and last around 30-45 minutes or longer depending on your answers. The interview will be recorded and consist of interview questions like: *Describe what physical activity means to you*?

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