

FURTHERING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS IMPACT
THROUGH TWO STUDIES

by

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(Under the Direction of Stacey Neuharth-pritchett)

ABSTRACT

Social media is a multifaceted experience increasingly prevalent in the daily lives of individuals. Social media intersects with both the personal and professional lives of individuals and allows for opportunities and challenges. Although studies have examined social media, there is a gap in literature regarding personal and professional use of social media. This dissertation addresses gaps in literature through two studies, one investigating the personal use of social media and the second investigating social media use in schooling contexts. The first study explored the personal use of Instagram and its relationship with body image related constructs including body image, body image perception, and body dissatisfaction, and disordered eating. Results suggested a relationship between Instagram and body image related constructs, specifically related to awareness, internalization, and media pressure. Results also suggested there were positive body image trends occurring on Instagram. Both findings are important for understanding how Instagram influences body image related constructs and the different factors that can contribute to or help to mitigate influences on these constructs.

The second study explored the use of social media platforms in a professional setting by investigating the perceptions of educators and pre-service educators through qualitative

interviews. Results suggested that the perceptions of participants were important to understand, revealing benefits, challenges, concerns for privacy and ethical consideration, and the level of support from administration. The results from the second study suggested that educators have specific perceptions about using social media in the classroom. These findings add to the literature by documenting teacher perspectives as, prior primarily had examined perceptions of students.

INDEX WORDS: social media, Instagram, body image constructs, educators' perspectives

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and my friends who have supported and encouraged me throughout my entire collegiate career. To my parents and my husband, I want to thank you for always believing in me and for inspiring me to work hard, and to reach the goals that I set for myself a long time ago. You all have been by my side throughout this journey and have shown nothing but support and love. Thank you for teaching me the value of education, the importance of hard work, and the rewards of accomplishing your dreams. Also, a big thank you to my parents who raised me as a Georgia Bulldog. As the great Larry Munson once said, there is no institution more worthy of envy, no institution worthy of such loyalty, as the University of Georgia. Without you, none of this would be possible and forever, GO DAWGS!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The use of social media and social networking sites (SNS), described as any number of technological systems related to community and collaboration, has increased dramatically in the past decade and has continued to evolve across different types of technology platforms (Hasiloglu et al., 2020; Jootsen, 2012; Sutherland et al., 2020). A variety of social media platforms have been developed to promote engagement such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat, among others (Parks, 2017). This increase in social media affords individuals myriad ways to differentially utilize the different platforms. These media platforms allow users to share information, form communities, expand global networks, and provide real-time updates and/or news (Jootsen, 2012). Each platform is attractive to individuals for different reasons as the platforms use social media in various ways for unique audiences (Parks, 2017). For example, platforms such as Instagram offer opportunities for individuals to connect with others and share information or pictures about their own lives (Shah et al., 2019). People also engage with the platforms for additional reasons other than forming connections and use the platforms to check in on the news or scroll through entertaining content (Parks, 2017). There have also been numerous initiatives to propose alternative education-oriented tools or to reach students in schools through these platforms (Emerick et al., 2019; Mao, 2014).

Interest in social media centers on a number of factors, including its potential benefits and costs for use inside and outside of the classroom. The benefits of social media have been well documented through numerous studies (Bardacka et al., 2018; Manca & Ranieri, 2017;

Rodriguez-Trina et al., 2020). In an individual's personal life, social media can be utilized to promote connectedness and foster relationships with others while also allowing chances for people to view things outside of their environments with ease (Parks, 2017). In the academic and educational world, social media has provided benefits including educators and students achieving social connections and professional support as well as a new and innovative way to utilize the internet in the classroom (Bardacka et al., 2018; Manca & Ranieri, 2017). Although the benefits offered by social media are well documented through the research literature, other research indicates using social media has challenges and potential costs (Hasiloglu et al., 2020; Sutherland et al., 2020). The driving force behind the two current studies is to investigate the potential costs and negative impact social media might have for individuals in their personal and academic lives; however, it is also of interest to review the benefits that have been documented to understand why certain aspects of social media might be beneficial.

As noted above, the two studies are aimed at exploring the potential costs or challenges of social media in two different settings: in the personal lives of individuals and in the educational environment. The potential costs and challenges have been well documented in both settings. The focus regarding the personal lives of individuals is to review the impact of social media, specifically Instagram, for the development of certain mental health concerns such as body image, body image perception, and contributions to forms of disordered eating. Prior research has documented such concerns are rising as the use of social media is increasingly prevalent across males and females across all age groups (De Coen et al., 2021; Goldschmidt et al., 2016; Rodgers et al., 2020). Furthermore, a growing body of research has paid attention to the effects of social media, such as comments and/or likes, on users' perceptual consequences especially that of body image perceptions (Fardouly & Holland, 2018). Studies note the impact

of social media on body image is dictated by two mechanisms: the internalization of the thin idealness depicted by the media and the social comparison with one's own body (Fardouly & Holland, 2018). Research to investigate these two mechanisms has revealed that things such as time spent on photo-related activities including liking or commenting directly relate to comparing one's own appearance to others, often resulting in negative feelings (Fardouly & Holland, 2018; Kim, 2021; Kim & Chock, 2015).

Given that social media might play a role in influencing body image perception, it is important to investigate why and how different social media platforms influence individuals or the development of body image concerns. The body of research surrounding body image concerns has focused mainly on one social media platform, Facebook, as Instagram is a more recent platform. More information is needed to increase our knowledge about how Instagram, which is specific for sharing, liking, and commenting on photos posted by individuals, is related to body image concerns. Additional studies, like the one included here, are needed to further our understanding of how the nature of Instagram is central to the development of body image concerns. Understanding the ways in which different factors from social media might prevent or exacerbate negative effects of media exposure on body image or body dissatisfaction is important to facilitate the prevention of future problems (McLean et al., 2016).

Another focus is the interest in the use of social media in the classroom. Interest in this usage stems from shifting sources of information to be used in the educational world and classroom setting. Research surrounding social media's use in classrooms has documented both positive and negative results (Hasiloglu et al., 2020; Sutherland et al., 2020). Studies exploring social media use integrated in classrooms and in broader coursework are trending more positively, suggesting that it can be a useful tool to promote learning (Hickerson & Kothari,

2016). For example, in a meta-analysis conducted by Piotrowski (2015), results indicated that of the 29 dissertations focused on social media analyzed, only two were found to demonstrate a negative relationship on learning and that students of all educational levels reported positive views on the application of social media use in the classroom. Other benefits suggest ways in which social media can allow an interactive and intriguing way for educators and students to share resources and information with others, collaboration, and the opportunities for students to learn on demand (Chugh, 2018; Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012; Gikas & Grant, 2013). It is important to investigate the potential benefits of utilizing social media in the classroom as it has been documented to be a tool that can be useful to enhance learning (Gikas & Grant, 2013).

Although there have been benefits linked to social media in the classroom, social media use also presents a unique set of challenges for educators. The literature has cautioned educators that with the advantages of using social media in the classroom comes an equal and opposite set of possible disadvantages, and for many instructors, the latter outweighs the former (Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning at Harvard University, 2018). These disadvantages or challenges range from an impact on cognition including distraction, inattention, and less motivation or students using social media platforms to engage in dishonest academic activities such as cheating (Emerick et al., 2019; Tindell & Bohlander, 2012). Additionally, there are unique challenges for educators using social media as it applies to them including (1) lack of training, skills, credibility, and support, (2) privacy, risk, plagiarism, and copyright violations, (3) time scarcity, and (4) intellectual property rights (Sutherland et al., 2020). Research has documented that educators are often unfamiliar with the best practices to use and implement social media in the classroom in appropriate ways; therefore, running into the types of challenges mentioned above (Fenwick, 2016). It has also been found that institutions expect educators to be

current and use social media in the classroom; however, there is a lack of professional development workshops on social media and guidance given from administrative boards (Vie, 2017). Sutherland et al. (2020) also found a gap between the educators and support from the institutions, such as higher education universities or administrative boards at various educational levels, when using social media in the educational setting. Researchers have urged educators to address this gap calling for the establishment of nuanced guidelines to help educators feel confident in using technology in the classroom and to navigate the virtual boundaries associated with doing so; however, there is still an apparent gap in the literature that needs to be further addressed (Brady et al., 2015). Given this gap in both research and in the duties of institutions to educate and guide instructors, it is important to investigate and to understand how we can help support those who wish to, and might be expected to, use social media in the classroom.

Due to the nature of the challenges faced by educators using social media in the classroom, it is important to understand their perceptions. As it is the responsibility of the educators using social media in the classroom, it is imperative that research investigates teachers' perceptions about its use. Although there is a concern for teachers' perceptions for using social media in the classroom, much of the research has focused on the perceptions of students with more limited research dedicated to the perceptions of educators (Brady et al., 2015). Much of the literature conducted on perceptions and attitudes of using social media in higher education has considered the views of students but have not assessed the views of educators (Dirjal et al., 2022). Additional issues present in this limited literature center mostly on whether educators perceived the media improved learning or whether the educators enjoyed using it (Dirjal et al., 2021; Kara et al., 2020) rather than a focus on the perceptions of how educators feel about the potential concerns regarding specific challenges, such as privacy and ethical issues. It is often

expected by institutions or administrative boards that educators should be competent in their use of digital technologies, such as social media, in the classroom and be equipped with the tools to apply technology appropriately for themselves and their students (Kansu & Oksuz, 2019); however, this expectation is challenging for educators to live up to due to the unsupportive nature of administration, lack of training, and other areas of concern (Sutherland et al., 2020). This is cause for concern is important to investigate given technology in the classroom is becoming increasingly used, and although educators are eager to integrate these digital technologies like social media into the classroom, they do not know how to implement them appropriately. Further, their perceptions of technology utilization have been well understudied (Dirjal et al., 2022; Kansu & Oksuz, 2019; Sutherland et al., 2020).

The use of social media in the classroom becomes further complicated with challenges of privacy and ethics for both students and educators. Privacy is one of the most challenging issues embedded within social media and SNS making it equally challenging for educators and students (Obar & Oeldorf-Hirsch, 2020; Steinfeld, 2016). Some studies have documented the initial perceptions of educators regarding privacy and ethical issues that they might encounter when using social media in the classroom. Manca and Ranieri (2017) found educators perceived a lack of technical support and infrastructure from the institutional level regarding which practices are best to address ethical and privacy concerns. Furthermore, Kara, Cubukcuoglu, and Elci (2020) conducted a study which included narratives produced by educators indicating fearful perceptions of privacy and ethical issues leading to personal experiences for the need for ethical codes and terms of reference for privacy and participation to be provided by the institution in the first week of classes. Lanclos and Phipps (2019) noted it is imperative that educators understand the ethical benefits and consequences of social media use, in addition to privacy concerns, to

help mitigate the fearful and negative perceptions educators might have when handling concerns of privacy and ethical considerations. Again, however, there is a lack in the research literature for documenting and understanding the perceptions of educators surrounding these areas of safety and different ways to help educators serve as models for their students and to protect everyone in the social network environment (Lanclos & Phipps, 2019). For this reason, the apparent gap in literature needs to be addressed as it is the educator's responsibility for maintaining ethical and privacy standards for both themselves and their students, inside and outside of the classroom (Hickerson & Kothari, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

This dissertation aims to address these areas, and gaps in the research literature regarding social media warranting further inquiry and investigation through two studies. Because social media is becoming more prevalent in society, it is important to address these gaps for both development of mental health concerns, as seen in the first study, and the impact it can have in the classroom, as seen in the second study. Chapter 2 will explore the concepts of body image, body image perception, and body dissatisfaction, and disordered eating, specifically reviewing how they have been and are influenced by different types of social media. In this chapter, an overview is provided of different studies conducted to explore social media as it relates to these concepts, with a particular focus on the gaps in the literature that have become evident and that need to be addressed. This chapter will also outline the proposed participants, data procedures, measures, and analyses for that study. The purpose of this first study is to investigate and understand how a specific social media platform, Instagram, is related to body image constructs including body image, body image perceptions, and body dissatisfaction, and forms of disordered eating. Chapter 3 will be used to provide an overview of previous studies and to

highlight the existing gaps in literature as it relates to educators' use of social media in the classroom, the challenges and benefits that come along with it, and most importantly, to address the perceptions of educators. In addition, this chapter will contain the proposed participants, data procedures, measures, and analyses for this study. The purpose of this second study is to understand educator perceptions about social media and to provide understanding for future research to address these concerns and to call for institutions and administration to provide assistance and guidance for our educators as they are becoming increasingly expected to integrate social media into their classrooms.

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CHAPTER 2

ANALYZING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INSTAGRAM AND BODY IMAGE, PERCEPTION, BODY DISSATISFACTION, AND DISORDERED EATING

The use of social media and social networking sites (SNS) has increased dramatically in the past decade and sparked growing concerns regarding its effect on mental health (Marks et al., 2020). One of the primary emerging health concerns is use of social media and its impact on body image, body image perception, body dissatisfaction, and contributions to forms of disordered eating (McLean et al., 2016; Rodgers et al., 2020). As social media use increases so do concerns related to health-related factors (De Coen et al., 2021; McLean et al., 2016). Prior research has investigated the impact of social media on body image and yielded results indicating a negative relationship between social media use and body image perception. McLean and colleagues (2016) investigated whether exposure to thin-ideal media would reduce body image satisfaction and found that individuals were likely to compare their own bodies to those seen in media resulting in diminished body satisfaction. Kim (2021) conducted a study assessing the impact of comments on social media posts as they relate to body dissatisfaction and found that body dissatisfaction was determined by two different mechanisms, social comparison to one's own body and an internalization of the thin-idealness depicted in social media, both of which were related to body dissatisfaction. Ryding and Kuss (2020) conducted a systemic review of social media as it related to body image perception and found that individuals who engaged in upward comparison or comparing oneself with individuals who are perceived to have superior positive characteristics such as being thin, have a higher rates of negative body image. Such individuals

also are less likely to be satisfied with their own body image when comparing themselves to perceive thin ideals.

Despite the findings regarding social media and the constructs of body image, perception, body dissatisfaction, and disordered eating, there is a need for additional research to investigate how social media platforms, specifically Instagram, relates to these constructs. Much of the current literature focuses on platforms such as Facebook to review the link between social media and body image (De Coen et al., 2021; Kim et al, 2015; Veldhuis et al., 2014); however, fewer studies assess Instagram as it relates body image. This is likely due to the Instagram platform becoming prominent after Facebook's launch (Kim, 2021; Stein et al., 2021). Given research findings documenting the negative impact social media can have on body image and associated constructs, it is important for future research to investigate and to understand the relationships and influences Instagram can have. The purpose of the current study is to further explore these relationships and impacts by highlighting and investigating this newer platform, Instagram, that more readily is used today by the young adult population. Additionally, Instagram serves as an exemplar of image-based social media. It is important to understand if Instagram might exacerbate or hinder effects of media exposure on body image and related constructs so that researchers can facilitate any identified current or future problems (Kim, 2021; McLean et al., 2016). An additional goal of the current study is to investigate whether there is a new trend related to social media and positive body image. This trend is becoming prevalent in society, and few studies have been conducted to assess whether this usage trend is related to higher body satisfaction. The current study aims to investigate both the negative and potentially positive outcomes of the use of Instagram as such use relates to body image, body image perception, body dissatisfaction, and disordered eating.

Body Image, Perception, Dissatisfaction and Disordered Eating

Body image is a well-researched construct, yet its definition has a diverse and rich history spanning nearly a century exposing insights into predictors, correlates, and consequences (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). Body image is a multidimensional construct including cognitive and perceptual aspects about how an individual views one's own body (Bailey et al., 2017).

Furthermore, body image has been described as a psychological experience that is not exclusively tied to one's own physical appearance but includes things such as self-perceptions and self-attitudes (i.e., feelings, thoughts, behaviors, and beliefs) (Cash & Pruzinsky, 1990).

Prnjak and colleagues (2021) define body image as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, affective, perceptual, and behavioral aspects of an individual's subjective experience of their own physical appearance. Thoughts about body image are perceived to be on a continuum ranging from positive to negative. Positive body image is operationalized into three parts that include an individual's ability to cope with threats to positive body image, attentiveness and awareness to body experiences, and appreciation of appearance and functionality of one's own body (Menzel & Levine, 2011). Negative body image is conceptualized as an individual experiencing negative emotions and thoughts about one's own body (Tylka, 2011). It is important for researchers to understand the continuum to investigate the range of perceptions of body image.

Given that there are a variety of definitions for body image, researchers have found it challenging to agree on one clear definition (Bailey et al., 2017; Thompson et al., 1999). In body image research, if participants understand the construct of body image differently than researchers, or if researchers understand the construct differently from fellow researchers, information about body image might be skewed (Bailey et al., 2017). This lack of congruence

can result in differing opinions of body image as they relate to the study and/or programs geared to understanding and promoting positive body image (Bailey et al., 2017). The researcher of the current study will take measures to mitigate these challenges, which are discussed in a later section. Despite challenges to defining body image, research has documented that social media does influence individuals' body image and body image concern. It is important to understand body image from a broader perspective and across a diversity of population to include elements beyond weight or appearance (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). Studies suggest there is a relationship between social media platforms and body image (Kim, 2021; Ryding & Kuss, 2020; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015); however, there is still a gap in the literature focusing on Instagram as a specific platform related to body image. Furthermore, the positive body image trend outcomes are lacking in the research literature. The goal of the current study is to look beyond physical appearance and to understand the multidimensional nature of body image and how it relates to the use of Instagram by reviewing relationships among a diverse population. An additional goal of the current study was to investigate the continuum of positive and negative body image to see how those perceptions relate to the use of Instagram and whether more positive or more negative dimensions have more of an impact on body image.

Body image perception can be defined as how an individual views or perceives their own body image in comparison to what counts as the ideal body within their own cultural and social settings (Healey, 2014). Body image perception is similar to body image in that it is a multifaceted construct incorporating cognitive and affective aspects (Greene, 2011). Body image perception is the mental image or picture an individual has of the body or how accurately an individual perceives the body shape/size constituting the perceptual component (Greene, 2011). The cognitive aspects of body image perception include attitudinal factors or the thoughts and

feelings about the shape or size of one's body image or body (Greene, 2011). Different techniques have been used in the literature to measure body image; however, newer methods such as constant stimuli or signal detection theory have emerged as the most commonly used techniques (Greene, 2011). Although these techniques are important, an extensive overview of the techniques is beyond the scope of this paper and will not be used in the current study.

Studies have investigated the relationship between social media and body image perception indicating both negative and positive relationships. Recent studies have highlighted the effects of social media on body image perception establishing the main impact of media body image on individuals' own negative body image perception explained by two mechanisms: the social comparison with their own body and the internalization of the thin idealness depicted in the media (Fardouly & Holland, 2018). Various studies have documented the negative impacts of social media on body image perceptions such as time spent on photo-related activities such as liking or commenting and how it relates to comparing one's own to other's appearances often resulting in negative findings (Fardouly & Holland, 2018; Kim, 2021; Kim & Chock, 2015). Veldhuis and colleagues (2014) found that when body images posted on social media are realistic, attainable, or desirable, such images produced a positive effect on weight-related attitudes and beliefs and perceptions about one's own body image. Research indicates that it is how the depicted body is contextualized that determines the ideal perception of the body therefore influencing one's body concerns or their perceptions of body image (Kim, 2021). The findings from the research literature illustrate how body image perception can be influenced by the use of social media; however, much of this literature has focused on platforms such as Facebook rather than Instagram (Fardouly & Holland, 2018; Kim & Chock, 2015). Because of the nature of Instagram focusing on images and the relationship between images and body

perception, it is important for future research to understand how this platform impacts body image perception. The current study aims to investigate the way Instagram influences body image perception by reviewing the focus of posting images to the platform and how such posting is related to body image perception, whether negatively, positively, or both in a diverse population.

Body dissatisfaction is the negative self-evaluation of one's own appearance or an inconsistency between one's real body and the idealized body (Jiotsa et al., 2021; Vuong et al., 2021). Body dissatisfaction is experienced across the lifespan, most prevalent and crucial during the adolescent and young adult period, and differently by gender (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2003; Vuong et al., 2021). Males typically tend to focus on appearance through a lean and muscular lens whereas females tend to focus on a thin appearance ideal (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2003). Thompson and colleagues (1999) describe body dissatisfaction with a tripartite influence model in which different factors including pressure from family members, peers, psychological processes (e.g., social comparisons and appearance-ideal internalization), and media contribute to the emergence and maintenance of body dissatisfaction. Although an extensive amount of research investigated body dissatisfaction, social media has given new insights into how individuals can become dissatisfied with their bodies. For example, Instagram affords users the ability to digitally retouch their images, often to reflect specific beauty and thinness ideals (Shah et al., 2019). Furthermore, Instagram provides the ability to like or comment on others' posts. Given such behaviors, individuals become fixated on the numbers of likes or comments they get which can in turn, entice individuals to post images of themselves that conform to appearance ideals in hopes of gaining recognition and approval from others (Stein et al., 2021). When individuals fail to gain the likes or comments they hope to receive from their posts, levels of

body dissatisfaction can be heightened (Vuong et al., 2021). Additionally, the highly visual nature of such platforms and their stimuli means individuals are more consistently exposed to unrealistic appearance and body image ideals when engaging with celebrities and peers on social media which can also contribute to an increase in body dissatisfaction (Stein et al., 2021).

Social media and platforms such as Instagram have emerged as a new avenue for promoting the endorsement of and aspiration to achieve Western appearance and beauty standards (e.g., muscularity in males and thinness in females) in the transmission of sociocultural appearance pressures that increase and promote body dissatisfaction (Vuong et al., 2021). Given the vast literature dedicated to highlighting evidence for the negative impact of social media as it relates to body dissatisfaction, it is important for future research to investigate these relationships. It is also important to understand how gender is connected to body dissatisfaction as it relates to Instagram given that all males and females equally use social media (Jootsen, 2012). Despite prior findings in the literature, much of the literature has focused on Facebook or other platforms in which posting images is not the main goal of using the platform; however, it is important to understand how Instagram and a focus on posting pictures is related to body dissatisfaction. Therefore, the aim of the current study is to investigate the relationships between body dissatisfaction and Instagram use in a diverse population.

Disordered eating is another important construct to assess when investigating the relationship between Instagram and individuals' use of the platform. Disordered eating behaviors (DEBs) are characterized by the full range of eating-related problems, including unhealthy weight control behaviors such as inducing vomiting, dieting, and food restriction in addition to being eating behaviors (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Additional risky eating behaviors related to DEBs might include excessive exercising, binge eating, purging, the misuse

of laxatives or other related substances, and other various behaviors (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Eating disorders (EDs) are also included in this section as they are defined as chronic irregular eating or eating-related habits and include, but are not limited to, a range of categories such as bulimia nervosa, anorexia nervosa, and binge eating (DSM-5-TR; American Psychiatric Association, 2022b; Brownell & Walsh, 2017).

Similar to the body dissatisfaction, tripartite and dual pathway models have been used to investigate how individuals develop EDs or DEBs by incorporating environmental factors, such as the pressures from social media, to consider how social pressure about physical appearance might become a determining factor in the development of eating patterns (Jiotsa et al., 2021). Due to its nature, Instagram provides additional opportunities for the two mechanisms of social comparison and the internalization of beauty and thinness ideals, both linked to instrumental in developing EDs and DEBs (Jiotsa et al., 2021). Several studies have investigated the impact of social media on risky eating behaviors and have suggested that social media exposure might foster body dissatisfaction and result in risky eating behaviors by highlighting and broadcasting thinness ideals for individuals, especially those seen in the Western culture (Field et al., 1999; Stice et al., 1994). However, there is research to investigate how newer social media platforms, such as Instagram, impact these mechanisms and how the photographic and image nature specifically is related to forms of risky eating behaviors, EDs, and DEBs. The current study aims to address these questions related specifically to the social media platform Instagram in a diverse population.

Purpose of the Current Study

Given the vast literature on social media use and the influence it might have on body image, body image perceptions, body dissatisfaction, and disordered eating, studies are

warranted to examine the use of the specific social media platform Instagram and how it relates to these constructs. Prior studies have highlighted the negative influences social media can have on these constructs; however, much of the literature has been dedicated to platforms other than Instagram. Because Instagram serves as an exemplar of an image-based social media platform, it is warranted for studies to investigate how body image constructs are influenced specifically by a platform such as Instagram. Additionally, research has only viewed these constructs stemming from a psychopathology lens rather than reviewing whether positive relationships between body image related constructs and social media use might be evident. The current study sought to add a broader overview of all the body image related constructs to gain a deeper understanding of how Instagram influences and impacts individuals who utilize the platform. The current study aimed to investigate these relationships and add greater depth to the research literature about social media use and body image by utilizing two different instruments. The current study aimed to address any existing gaps in the literature and to provide new insights specifically related to the social media platform Instagram. Additionally, the current study aimed to conceptualize the constructs of body image and the use of social media among a diverse population to review all relationships, whether negative or positive, that emerged between Instagram and body image. Overall, this study hoped to add to our understanding of how social media, specifically Instagram, influenced the different constructs related to body image to address the potential benefits and consequences that might arise when using such a platform. The current study aimed to highlight ways in which negative body image and related constructs can be mitigated and investigate solutions and ways to combat future occurrences of such constructs. Furthermore, the current study investigated the positive body image movement that is becoming increasingly apparent in today's society to understand the implications of such a movement as it relates to

individuals' views of their own bodies. The purpose of the current study was to explore social media as it relates to body image and related constructs including body image, body image perception, body dissatisfaction, and disordered eating in a sample of students attending the University of Georgia and used quantitative surveys.

Research questions included:

1. Is more frequent use of Instagram related to higher levels of awareness as it relates to body image related constructs?
2. Is more frequent use of Instagram related to higher levels of internalization as it relates to body image related constructs?
3. Is more frequent use of Instagram related to higher levels of media pressure as it relates to body image related constructs?
4. Is the movement of positive body image prevalent among Instagram users? What types of positive body image trends are seen on Instagram?

Method

Data Procedures

After gaining approval from the University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, the current study used two instruments to collect data from an undergraduate educational psychology research participant pool. The surveys were administered to the participant pool through the online free survey format, Qualtrics and were accessible to students via a link in the research sign-up system. The data collected from both measures remained confidential and participants were made aware of their confidentiality, the purpose of the study, and why they were being asked to participate. Data collected were stored by the researcher in a confidential manner and

was only used for the purposes of the current research study. No participants were identified, and survey data are only be presented as group results.

Participants

Participants included students who were enrolled in the University of Georgia's undergraduate educational psychology research participant pool. The research participant pool was open to all students who were enrolled in the system to complete studies. The participants received credit for each part of the study they completed being awarded 0.5 for completing the first survey, the adapted MMIS survey, and awarded 0.5 for completing the second survey, the EDE-Q 6.0. A total number of 288 participants completed the first survey; however, 46 of these participants did not complete the second survey or withdrew from the study completely. Because it was imperative that participants completed both surveys for the use of data collection, these 46 participants were removed from the final count. The total number of participants who completed both surveys and whose data collection was used for the purpose of the study was 242. Further demographics were not measured in the surveys, meaning there is no information on gender or ethnicity. This choice was made by the researcher as they expected most of the participants to be female, and the ethnicity or diversity of the population was not being investigated in the research questions. The researcher recognized that this information might be useful for future studies and addressed this in the limitations.

Measures

The measures for the current study included two surveys. The first survey was an adaptation of a pre-existing measurement, the Multidimensional Media Influence Scale (MMIS) developed by Cusumano and Thompson (2001). The survey used both quantitative and qualitative questions in the form of rating scales and additional questions. It should be noted

when participants were asked to complete this survey, explicit instructions were given by the researcher for participants to only think about Instagram when completing the survey and exclude thinking about other social media platforms. An additional measurement tool that was used was the Eating Disorder Examination Questionnaire (EDE-Q 6.0) which is an adaptation of the Eating Disorder Questionnaire developed by Fairburn and Beglin (1994; revised 2008) to assess eating behaviors and risky eating patterns. The two measurements are described in detail below.

Modified/Adapted MMIS Survey Instrument. For the current study, an adaptation of the MMIS was used by the researcher to investigate the relationships of Instagram on body image perception and body image comparison. Developed in 2001 by Cusumano and Thompson, the MMIS measures five dimensions of media influence including: (1) awareness of media's promotion of thin ideal, (2) internalization of or adoption of media's publicized ideals as personal standards of attractiveness, (3) importance assigned to media as a valuable source of information about attractiveness, (4) tendency to compare one's own body to images promoted in the media, and (5) perception of the pressure from media to emulate the look promoted by its models and actors. As the survey was developed in 2001, many of the questions focus on magazines or movies when comparing body images; however, because the current study aims to address the influence of Instagram specifically, the researcher modified the questions to relate to Instagram. For example, questions from the MMIS such as "I would like my body to look like the actors I see in movies" or "I compare my body to the actors I see in movies" were modified to include questions such as "I would like my body to look like the models I see on Instagram" or "I compare my body to the users I see on Instagram." Additionally, the researcher modified the 3-point Likert scale (1- *Disagree*, 2- *Not Sure*, 3- *Agree*) originally used in the MMIS to

represent a broader 5-point Likert scale to be written as the following: 1- *Strongly Disagree*, 2- *Disagree*, 3- *Neither Disagree or Agree*, 4- *Agree*, 5- *Strongly Agree*.

The researcher made an additional adaptation to this survey instrument to include additional questions such as descriptive questions, open-ended questions, and questions that could receive an answer of “yes”, “no”, or “sometimes”. Due to the sensitive nature of discussing body image perceptions and body image comparison, the researcher felt that implementing open-ended survey questions was most appropriate to collect in lieu of collecting interview data. This process allowed participants to remain anonymous whereas interviews might have felt more invasive for the participants answering the questions of a sensitive subject. The additional survey questions were geared toward investigating patterns of body image perception and body image comparison specifically how it is related to Instagram. These were included in a pilot survey that was conducted in Summer 2023 to review whether the researcher collected the types of data needed for the study. The pilot study produced sufficient results, and aided the researcher in determining that the measures appeared to work well and were understood by the participants. Pilot data also helped to investigate the qualitative portion. The eight additional questions about Instagram included the following open-ended questions: “How much of your daily time do you spend on Instagram?” (item 12); “What types of accounts do you choose to follow on Instagram?” (item 13); “What is your primary purpose of using Instagram (i.e., to post photos, to review content, entertainment, etc.)?” (item 14); “At what age did you begin using Instagram?” (item 15); “Do you think about your body/body image when you see the bodies of others on Instagram?” (item 16); “Do you digitally retouch any of your photos before posting them on Instagram?” (item 17); “Do you see positive body image trends on Instagram?” (item 18); “Describe the positive body image trends you see happening on Instagram.” (item 19). The total

number of items on the survey was 19, where the first 11 items were the items on the MMIS, which were quantitative, and used a Likert scale, and the final 8 items were the additional questions, which were qualitative and quantitative, and was investigated by the researcher. Further information detailing the way the items were analyzed is included in a later section.

Although the MMIS has demonstrated reliability and validity through repeated analysis, the researcher conducted their own analysis for reliability and validity for the modified version of the survey instrument. The researcher aimed to utilize the survey instrument in a pilot survey and to collect and measure internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha to examine the reliability of the existing three subscales (internalization, awareness, and media pressure) and content validity, in addition to developmental care and external reviews, as validity evidence. Further information on how reliability was assessed is included in a section below.

Eating Disorder Examination Questionnaire (EDE-Q 6.0). The current study aimed to address the relationship between the use of Instagram and the presence of risky eating behaviors or patterns. The EDE-Q 6.0 was administered within the same participants who complete the MMIS survey. This questionnaire contained a 28-item self-reported questionnaire designed to assess the severity and range of features associated with eating disorders using four subscales: restraint, eating concern, shape concern, and weight concern. These subscales were not used by the researcher, but the researcher noted that these are important. The measure also provides a global score by summing the four subscales and the resulting total is divided by the number of subscales (i.e., four). The global score was not used by the researcher as the subscales were not calculated, but the researcher noted that this is important. The 28 items assessed the total score of participants questionnaire and included items such as "Have you had a definite desire to have a totally flat stomach?", "Have you felt fat?", and "Have you felt a strong desire to lose weight?"

(Fairburn & Beglin, 2008). The questionnaire asked participants to consider the past 28 days and to select a response on a 7-point scale representing a range of days with 0 indicating *No Days*, 3 indicating *13-15 Days*, and 6 indicating *Every Day* for 22 of the items: items 1-12, 19-21, and 22-28. These items were determined to be ordinal because they were measured on a 7-point Likert type scale. The other six items were open-ended questions where participants indicated a numerical answer to a question (i.e., “Over the past 28 days, how many times have you exercised in a “driven” or “compulsive” way as a means of controlling your weight, shape or amount of fat, or to burn off calories?). These items were determined to be continuous because they measured times or days.

The reliability of this tool was assessed using internal consistency and demonstrated reliability across multiple studies (Bardone-Cone & Boyd, 2007). Additionally, reliability was assessed using a test-retest reliability and found that the reliability was high for both men and women (Reas et al., 2006; Rose et al., 2013). The validity of this tool was assessed using construct validity which measured the degree to which the questionnaire actually measures the specific trait or attribute it is intended to measure and was described in multiple studies (Carey et al., 2019; Grilo et al., 2015; Rand-Giovanetti et al., 2020). Validity of this tool was also assessed using convergent validity which measured the degree to which two measures of the constructs that theoretically should be related are in fact related and was found to have high convergent validity with the more recently developed ED-15 (Accurso & Waller, 2021). Additionally, concurrent validity which measured the correlation of the measure with others measuring the same concept was assessed and was found to have moderate to high concurrent validity with the Eating Problems Checklist (Dalle Grave et al., 2019). Finally, discriminant validity which measures the lack of correlation with opposite concepts was assessed and was found to be highly

accurate in discriminating between individuals with and without an eating disorder (Mond et al., 2004).

Although the questionnaire contains four subscales, the researcher chose not to look at each subscale, but rather the total sum of what was scored. The purpose behind the choice not to use the subscales or the global score was for two reasons. First, the questionnaire is primarily used to assess eating disorders from a diagnostic standpoint, which is beyond the scope of the researcher as they are not qualified to utilize the questionnaire in this manner. Second, the research questions were not related to the different subscales or the global score on the EDE-Q 6.0 but were rather looking to investigate the subscales of the adapted MMIS survey (awareness, internalization, and media pressure). For these two reasons, the researcher chose not to use the subscales, or the global score seen on the EDE-Q 6.0, but rather collected the total sum of the entire questionnaire. The questionnaire is freely available to use and can be administered either in-person or electronically.

Analyses

As previously described, the current study sought to understand a variety of constructs related to body image, including perception, comparison, dissatisfaction, and disordered eating as they relate to the use of the social media platform Instagram specifically in terms of awareness, internalization, and media pressure. The quantitative portion of the survey data collection was analyzed using a software program, SPSS, to review all responses indicated by the Likert scale nature or quantitative questions. Descriptive statistics and the measurement of frequency were used for the eight additional questions which included both qualitative and quantitative items.

Reliability of MMIS

The researcher chose to use an adapted version of the MMIS and assessed the reliability of the modified version. The items included in the current study did not vary from their original item, as the only adaptation was to update the place, Instagram instead of magazine or television, where body image would be perceived. Cronbach's Alpha was used to check for reliability as it measures internal consistency of a survey or questionnaire, and ranges between 0 and 1, with higher values indicating the survey or questionnaire is more reliable. A value of 0.7 for Cronbach's Alpha is typically seen by analysts as a sufficient level meaning values at this level or higher are sufficiently consistent to indicate the measure is reliable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The researcher tested for reliability for each of the subscales on the adapted MMIS using the SPSS software. The first subscale, awareness, included items 1, 3 and 5 and had an internal consistency with this sample of 0.743 indicating that this subscale was reliable. The second subscale, internalization, included items 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11, and had an internal consistency with this sample of 0.900 indicating that this subscale was reliable. The third subscale, media pressure, included items 2 and 4, and had an internal consistency with this sample of 0.856 indicating that this subscale was reliable. Each subscale was seen to have an acceptable reliability meaning the survey items were performing the way they were intended.

Bivariate Correlations

Because the study was intended to investigate the relationship between Instagram use and body image concerns, a bivariate correlation analysis was utilized to determine the specific relationships existing between body image related constructs and the use of Instagram for each one of the subscales seen on the MMIS. A bivariate correlation was run for each subscale from the adapted MMIS separately as the researcher was interested in each of the outcomes by the

established subscales. In this case, each of the independent variables were the subscales from the adapted MMIS survey (i.e., awareness, internalization, and media pressure) and the dependent variable was the total score on the EDE-Q 6.0. The researcher chose not to use a multiple correlation because the researcher did not want to investigate the overall relationship between the variables, and therefore, did not control for other variables, but rather looked at each specific subscale. The choice for using a bivariate correlation for each subscale was to investigate the relationship between awareness and body image related constructs, internalization and body related constructs, and media pressure and body image related constructs while not wanting to investigate the relationship between all subscales and body image related constructs which were all conducive to the research questions. Additionally, a bivariate correlation was run for each of the subscales from the adapted MMIS survey (i.e., awareness, internalization, and media pressure) and time spent on Instagram. For these bivariate correlations, each subscale represented the independent or predictor variable and time spent on Instagram in minutes represented the dependent or outcome variable.

There are a variety of ways to investigate the correlations using a bivariate method. First, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient can be used to measure the linear association between the two variables with a value between -1 and 1 where -1 indicates a perfectly negative linear relationship between the two variables, 0 indicates no linear correlation between the two variables, and 1 indicates a perfectly positive relationship between the two variables. The null hypothesis, $H_0: p = 0$, means there is no statistically significant relationship between the predictor variables, the three subscales of the adapted MMIS survey, and the response variable, EDE-Q 6.0. The alternative hypothesis, $H_1: p \neq 0$, means there is a statistically significant relationship between the predictor variables, and the response variable. The Pearson product-

moment correlation, or Pearson's r , is used to describe the linear relationship between two quantitative variables and requires the data to meet certain assumptions. First, both variables are on an interval or ratio level of measurement. The second assumption to be considered is that data from both variables followed normal distributions, normality, and that the data contained no extreme outliers. If outliers should occur, then these are reviewed for excluding them from the data set. Another assumption is that the data is from a random or representative sample. Finally, it should be an assumption that a linear relationship between the two variables is expected and that each observation in the dataset should have a pair of values. The assumptions for this type of correlation were assessed by the researcher and were found to be violated in that the three independent variables, the subscales, were ordinal, while the dependent variable, the total sum on the EDE-Q questionnaire, was continuous.

Although Pearson's correlation coefficient can be used in correlations, it can only be used when both variables are an interval or ratio measurement and are continuous. The three different subscales representing the independent variables were each an ordinal measurement because each subscale used Likert-type items which cannot be considered an interval or ratio type of measurement. The dependent variable, the EDE-Q 6.0 score, also contained both ordinal and continuous items. Ordinal measurements are a type of data measurement that ranks data in a specific order, where they have naturally occurring orders; however, the difference between is unknown. Because the variables were ordinal, a key assumption of Pearson's correlation coefficient was violated which indicated the researcher needed to choose a different correlation conducive to data that has variables that are both continuous and ordinal. The Spearman's Rank correlation was chosen and was used to describe nonparametric data meaning it does not involve any assumptions as to the form or parameters of a frequency distribution and is used to look at

correlations when one or more of the variables is ordinal. An advantage of the Spearman rank correlation coefficient is that approximate normal distributions for X and Y are not required, and that the X and Y values can be continuous or ordinal. The Spearman's Rank correlation, or rho denoted as r_s , has been known for over a hundred years and is one of the most frequently used nonparametric statistics. Spearman's rho has an intuitive conceptualization as the Pearson correlation between two ranked variables and can serve as an alternative estimator or a type of substitute for the Pearson product-moment correlation in the population (Astiva & Zumbo, 2017). Furthermore, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient can be used if the assumptions of Pearson's correlation do not hold, such as a linear relationship cannot be assumed, if neither of the variables is distributed normally, or if at least one variable is measured on an ordinal scale, or if at least one variable is discrete (Sedgwick, 2014). For the case of the current study, the researcher chose to use Spearman's rank correlation coefficient as there were assumptions from Pearson's correlation coefficient that were violated as seen above and the independent variables items were ordinal while the dependent variable contained both ordinal and continuous items.

Although the different types of correlation coefficients rely on different assumptions, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, or rho, still spans the complete -1 to +1 range with -1 indicating a negative relationship, 0 indicating no relationship, and +1 indicating a positive relationship (Astivia & Zumbo, 2017). Furthermore, the statistical significance test seen in Spearman's rho is still used to reject or fail to reject the null hypothesis as seen in Pearson's r . The researcher chose to set the alpha value equal to 0.05, meaning if a statistically significant Spearman rank correlation is achieved, the researcher can be sure that there is less than 5% chance that the strength of the relationship that was found, denoted as the ρ coefficient, happened by chance if the null hypothesis were true. The null hypothesis, $H_0: \rho = 0$, means there is no

statistically significant relationship between the predictor variables, the three subscales of the adapted MMIS survey, and the response variable, EDE-Q 6.0. The alternative hypothesis, $H_1: p \neq 0$, means there is a statistically significant relationship between the predictor variables, and the response variable. If the p-value is less than or equal to the significance level that was set by the researcher, $\alpha = 0.05$, then the researcher can reject the null hypothesis meaning the alternative hypothesis can be accepted indicating there is a statistically significant relationship between the predictor variables, or the three independent variables represented by the three subscales on the adapted MMIS, and the response variable, or the dependent variable represented by the total sum on the EDE- Q 6.0 questionnaire.

The total sum of responses for each subscale was calculated to run a bivariate correlation for each subscale as the predictor or independent variable and use the EDE-Q 6.0 as the response or dependent variable. For this study, there was a set of three different bivariate correlations run, one for each of the three subscales. For each of the three subscales, the total sum of the responses for each subscale was calculated to represent the independent variable. The total of the subscales was determined by the 11 different items on the adapted MMIS survey where all items range from a score of 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2, (*disagree*), 3 (*neither disagree nor agree*), 4 (*agree*), to 5 (*strongly agree*). The total sum for the first predictor or independent variable to be calculated was from the subscale awareness. The awareness subscale contained the following items: (1) “People who I see on Instagram that are in good shape are better looking than people I see on Instagram that are not in good shape.” (3) “When using Instagram, clothes look better on people who are thin.” and (5) “When using Instagram, clothes look better on people who are in good shape.” The total sum from the awareness subscale which can range from the lowest score of 3, and the highest score of 15, was used as the predictor or independent variable and was run using

a bivariate correlation with the score on the EDE-Q 6.0 serving as the outcome or dependent variable.

The next predictor or independent variable that was calculated for a total sum came from the internalization subscale. The internalization subscale contained the following items: (6) “I try to look like the models I see on Instagram.” (7) “I learn how to look attractive by looking at the models on Instagram.” (8) “I compare my body to the people I see on Instagram.” (9) “I would like my body to look like the models I see on Instagram.” (10) “I would like my body to look like the people I see on Instagram.” and (11) “I try to look like the models and people I seen on Instagram.” The total sum from the awareness subscale which can range from the lowest score of 6, and the highest score of 30, were as the predictor or independent variable and was run using a bivariate correlation with the score on the EDE-Q 6.0 serving as the outcome or dependent variable.

The third predictor or independent variable that was calculated for a total sum came from the media pressure subscale. The media pressure subscale contained the following items: (2) “Looking at Instagram makes me want to diet or lose weight.” and (4) “Looking at Instagram makes me want to diet.” The total sum from the media pressure subscale which can range from the lowest score of 2, and the highest score of 10, was used as the predictor or independent variable and was run using a bivariate correlation with the score on the EDE-Q 6.0 serving as the outcome or dependent variable.

Additionally, as noted above, a bivariate correlation was run for each of the subscales from the MMIS survey and time spent on Instagram where the subscales served as the independent or predictor variable and time spent on Instagram in minutes served as the dependent or predictor variable.

The piece of the current study in the forms of additional question items was analyzed according to the type of question or item it was. For example, for the three open-ended items (items 13, 14, and 19), the researcher used a coding technique to look for emerging or common themes and identifying those themes. Responses to the open-ended questions were recorded and documented in the survey platform that was utilized to provide the researcher with data to investigate the common themes given by participants. The researcher allowed the themes to emerge from the data and categorized them into groups or codes determined by the types of individual responses that are recorded. For example, one of the open-ended questions asked participants “What is your primary purpose of using Instagram (i.e., to post pictures, to look at different accounts, entertainment, etc.)? The researcher looked at individual responses that included use of Instagram for entertainment and considered this an emerging category and looked for other emerging categories such as using Instagram to look at what friends are doing. Once the themes were coded and categorized, the researcher chose to report these codes in frequency tables which are included below. Other items included were items that were demographic and quantitative in nature as the responses to these items could be “yes”, “no”, or “sometimes”. For example, one of the questions contained on the survey asked participants “Do you digitally retouch any photos before posting on Instagram?”. The researcher looked at the participants that said “yes”, the participants that said “no”, and the participants that said “sometimes” and calculated a percentage or frequency that represented how the participants answered. This is noted by displaying frequency tables for each of these types of items. For items 12 and 15 descriptive statistics were used. Responses to item 19 were included as direct quotes.

Excerpts from the open-ended questions in the form of common themes were analyzed and included in the final product of the study which supports findings from the quantitative and

qualitative pieces. After analyzing thematic coding, the researcher determined there are sufficient direct quotes that support the themes, specifically as it related to positive body image trends seen on Instagram. The following section provides the analyses of the bivariate correlations and the eight additional questions.

Results

Bivariate Correlation Results

As noted, a bivariate correlation was run for each subscale independently, rather than using a multiple correlation as the researcher was interested in each independent variable, or subscale, specifically rather than the relationship between all variables. The researcher chose to use Spearman's rho to investigate the relationship between each independent variable and dependent variable because the independent variable was ordinal while the dependent variable was both ordinal and continuous. The quantitative results for each bivariate correlation are presented below. It should be noted that for the bivariate correlations run for the subscales and time, one participant was removed from the data collection due to the time the participant indicated was determined to be an outlier (i.e., 14 hours or 840 minutes). Therefore, only 241 participants are represented in the tables.

Awareness

Table 1

Correlation Between Awareness and EDE-Q Score

		Awareness (1,3,5)	Total EDE-Q Score
Spearman's rho	Awareness (1,3,5)	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.270**
		N	<.001
			242
			242

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Internalization

Table 2

Correlation Between Internalization and EDE-Q Score

		Internalization (6,7,8,9,10,11)	Total EDE-Q Score
Spearman's rho	Internalization (6,7,8,9,10,11)	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.548**
		N	242

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Media Pressure

Table 3

Correlation Between Media Pressure and EDE-Q Score

		Media Pressure (2,4)	Total EDE-Q Score
Spearman's rho	Media Pressure (2,4)	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.639**
		N	242

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Time Spent on Instagram

Table 4

Correlation Between Awareness and Time Spent on Instagram

		Awareness (1,3,5)	Time (minutes)
Spearman's rho	Awareness (1,3,5)	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.023
		N	241

Table 5

Correlation Between Internalization and Time Spent on Instagram

		Internalization (6,7,8,9,10,11)	Time (minutes)
Spearman's rho	Internalization (6,7,8,9,10,11)	Correlation Coefficient	1.000 .135*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.036
N		241	241

Note. * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 6

Correlation Between Media Pressure and Time Spent on Instagram

		Media Pressure (2,4)	Time (minutes)
Spearman's rho	Media Pressure (2,4)	Correlation Coefficient	1.000 .093
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.149
N		241	241

Additional Item Results

The qualitative results from the data analyses are presented below and contain the results from the open-ended questions that were asked of participants.

Time Spent on Instagram

Item 12 on the survey given to participants asked: "How much of your daily time do you spend on Instagram?". This item was a descriptive question that allowed participants to indicate their time spent on Instagram. The time indicated by the participants was determined by time in minutes for the purpose of collecting data. It should be noted that one participant was removed from the data due to the time the participant indicated was determined to be an outlier (i.e., 14

hours or 840 minutes). Therefore, only 241 participants are represented in the table. The table below displays the descriptive statistics.

Table 7

Time Spent on Instagram in Minutes

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Item 12 (minutes)	241	300	0	300	84.74	52.479	2754.044
Valid N (listwise)	241						

Accounts Followed on Instagram

Item 13 on the survey given to participants asked: “What types of accounts do you choose to follow on Instagram?”. This item was an open-ended question and allowed participants to indicate what types of accounts they choose to follow on Instagram. The different types of accounts were coded by the researcher and the following codes emerged: (1) friends or family members, (2) celebrities or influencers, and (3) hobbies (i.e., fitness accounts, clothing accounts, etc.). Because participants could indicate more than one answer to the question, the researcher counted the total number of answers to each code meaning the total sum of the answers is greater than 242. It should be noted that within the category of hobbies, 50% of hobbies were related to fitness, clothing/beauty, or food accounts.

Table 8

Frequency of the Different Types of Accounts Followed on Instagram

Type	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Friends or Family	208	59.6	59.6	59.6
Celebrities or Influencers	101	29.0	29.0	88.6

Hobbies	40	11.4	11.4	100.0
Total	349	100.0	100.0	

Primary Purpose of Using Instagram

Item 14 on the survey given to participants asked: “What is your primary purpose of using Instagram (i.e., to post photos, to review content, entertainment, etc.)?”. This item was an open-ended question and allowed participants to indicate what their primary purpose was for using Instagram. The different types of purposes were coded by the researcher and the following codes emerged: (1) entertainment, (2) friends, (3) to post pictures, and (4) to review content. All 242 participants’ answers were included in the data collection to investigate the frequency of the different purposes of using Instagram. The table below displays the frequencies.

Table 9

Frequency of Different Primary Purposes for using Instagram

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	117	48.3	48.3	48.3
	2	48	19.8	19.8	68.2
	3	60	24.8	24.8	93.0
	4	17	7.0	7.0	100.0
	Total	242	100.0	100.0	

Note. 1 represents entertainment, 2 represents friends, 3 represents to post pictures, 4 represents to review content.

Age of Beginning to Use Instagram

Item 15 on the survey given to participants asked: “At what age did you begin using Instagram?”. This item was a descriptive question that allowed participants to indicate the age of

which they started using Instagram. All 242 participants' answers were used to investigate the descriptive statistics. The table below displays the descriptive statistics.

Table 10

Age of Beginning to Use Instagram

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Item 15 (age)	242	17	8	25	12.48	2.305	5.313
Valid N (listwise)	242						

Thinking About Your Body When Using Instagram

Item 16 on the survey given to participants asked: "Do you think about your body/body image when you see the bodies of others on Instagram?". This item was a question that allowed participants to indicate whether they think about their body/body image when looking at Instagram. The data collected was coded by the researcher and the following codes emerged: (1) yes, (2) no, (3) sometimes. All 242 participants' answers were included to investigate the frequency of thinking of your body when looking at others on Instagram. The table below displays the frequencies.

Table 11

Frequency of Thinking of Your Own Body/Body Image when Seeing Others on Instagram

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	142	58.7	58.7	58.7
	2	38	15.7	15.7	74.4
	3	62	25.6	25.6	100.0
	Total	242	100.0	100.0	

Note. 1 represents yes, 2 represents no, 3 represents sometimes.

Digitally Re-touching Photos on Instagram

Item 17 on the survey given to participants asked: “Do you digitally retouch any of your photos before posting them on Instagram?”. Item 17 was a question that allowed participants to indicate whether they chose to digitally retouch any of their photos. The data collected was coded by the researcher and the following codes emerged: (1) yes, (2) no, and (3) sometimes. All 242 participants’ answers were included to investigate the frequency of digitally re-touching photos before posting them on Instagram. The table below displays the frequencies.

Table 12

Frequency of Digitally Re-touching Photos Before Posting Them on Instagram

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	89	36.8	36.8	36.8
	2	147	60.7	60.7	97.5
	3	6	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	242	100.0	100.0	

Note. 1 represents yes, 2 represents no, 3 represents sometimes.

Positive Body Image Trends on Instagram

Item 18 on the survey given to participants asked: “Do you see positive body image trends on Instagram?”. Item 18 was a question that allowed for participants to indicate whether they saw positive body image trends on Instagram. The data collected was coded by the researcher and the following codes emerged: (1) yes, (2) no, and (3) sometimes. All 242 participants’ answers were included to investigate the frequency of whether individuals saw positive body image trends on Instagram. The table below displays the frequencies.

Table 13

Frequency of Seeing Positive Body Image Trends on Instagram

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	139	57.4	57.4	57.4
	2	49	20.2	20.2	77.7
	3	54	22.3	22.3	100.0
	Total	242	100.0	100.0	

Note. 1 represents yes, 2 represents no, 3 represents sometimes.

Describe Positive Body Image Trends on Instagram

Item 19 on the survey given to participants asked: “Describe the positive body image trends you see happening on Instagram.”. Item 19 was an open-ended question that allowed participants to indicate and describe positive body image trends that they saw on Instagram. Because the percentage of individuals who answered “yes” to item 18, which was whether participants did see positive body image trends, was the highest percentage, the researcher felt it was important to include some of the different quotes and themes that were given by participants. Although 20.2 percent of individuals stated there were no body positive image trends, it was important for the researcher to highlight some of the positive body image trends that were seen throughout the data. Many different positive body image trends were seen by the researcher such as healthy body types, promoting different clothing for all body types, seeing untouched and realistic photos, and plus-sized models. The researcher chose not to code these items, as the items were too broad to fit into distinct categories; however, the researcher wanted to include a few direct quotes from participants that highlighted some of the different positive body trends.

One participant noted, “I see people expressing that all body shapes and sizes are normal and beautiful with people showing that unrealistic photos can be beautiful as well.” Another participant stated, “I see a lot of people promoting being healthy, and healthy doesn’t mean skinny or thin like I have seen on Instagram before. It’s about taking care of your body, and people are noting this more and more.” Another participant noted, “Most of the people I see on Instagram try to post real and natural pictures to show their normal bodies and not look better than anyone else and to encourage body positivity.”

Additionally, participants spoke about plus-sized models being used with one participant stating,

I see a lot of plus-sized models being used to show how clothes can look good on anyone. It’s refreshing to see these types of models because they are relatable, and they are confident. It makes a difference that this new trend is becoming more apparent because this is what most of us look like rather than being too thin or unrealistic.

Discussion

Body image concerns and the use of social media have given rise to increased concerns of body image perceptions often resulting in disordered eating habits and behaviors, as well as an increase in negative self-esteem across different age groups and genders (Rodgers et al., 2020). Studies have been conducted to investigate the impact on social media and body image and have found that comparing oneself with individuals who are perceived to have superior positive characteristics such as being thin, have been shown to be associated with higher rates of negative body images as individuals are less likely to be satisfied with their own body image when comparing themselves to perceived ideals (Kim, 2021; McLean et al., 2016; Ryding & Kuss, 2020). Studies have investigated the relationship between body image related constructs and the use of social media platforms and suggested there is a relationship (Kim, 2021; Ryding & Kuss,

2020; Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015); however, many of these studies have looked at Facebook as the primary social media platform meaning there is still a gap in literature focusing on Instagram as the specific social media platform.

The current study aimed to address this gap by specifically investigating Instagram as it is an exemplar of image-based social media, and whether there was a relationship between Instagram use and body image related constructs. The results revealed each subscale was significant and that there is a relationship between Instagram use and body image related constructs. The first subscale, awareness, showed a Spearman's correlation coefficient of .270 with a significance level of $<.001$ indicating there was a weak monotonic relationship between more frequent use of Instagram in terms of awareness and its influence on body image related constructs; however, the relationship was still significant. The second subscale, internalization, showed a Spearman's correlation coefficient of .548 with a significance level of $<.001$ indicating there was a moderate strength monotonic relationship between more frequent use of Instagram in terms of internalization and its influence on body image related constructs and that the relationship was significant. The third subscale, media pressure, had a Spearman's correlation coefficient of .639 with a significance level of $<.001$, indicating there was a strong monotonic relationship between more frequent use of Instagram in terms of media pressure and its influence on body image related constructs and that the relationship was significant.

Each subscale was significantly related to the use of Instagram and the different body image related constructs that were measured by the EDE-Q 6.0 including body image, body image perception, body dissatisfaction, and disordered eating. The first subscale, awareness, was found to have a weak monotonic relationship; however, the relationship was still significant suggesting that higher scores on the items contained in the awareness subscale resulted in higher

scores on the EDE-Q 6.0. The second subscale, internalization, was found to have a moderate monotonic relationship that was significant suggesting that higher scores on the items contained in the internalization subscale resulted in higher scores on the EDE-Q 6.0. The third subscale, media pressure, was found to have a strong monotonic relationship that was significant suggesting that higher scores on the items contained in the media pressure subscale resulted in higher scores on the EDE-Q 6.0. The significant relationships seen between each subscale and the total sum on the EDE-Q 6.0 suggest that higher scores on each of the subscales result in higher scores on the EDE-Q 6.0. This is important because it highlights that these relationships are occurring and indicates relationships that might be considered alarming as these relationships are suggesting Instagram might be contributing to higher levels of problematic body image related constructs such as higher levels of negative body image perception, higher levels of body dissatisfaction, and higher levels of things contributing to risky eating behaviors or disordered eating. Results suggest that Instagram might be adversely influencing positive body image related constructs.

Because all three variables or subscales were significantly related and showed a relationship with Instagram use and body image constructs, this is important to consider that Instagram use might contribute to or influence body image related constructs. As the use of Instagram continues to increase, it is important to understand how the use of Instagram can impact body image related constructs as the results from the current study suggest that there is a relationship that exists. The influence on body image related constructs is important to continue to investigate as it relates to social media platforms, such as Instagram, as platforms are emerging as a new avenue for promoting the endorsement of and aspiration to achieve beauty standards in the transmission of sociocultural appearance pressures that increase and promote

body dissatisfaction (Vuong et al., 2021). The current study suggested there is a relationship between Instagram use and body image related constructs which is important for future studies to investigate the impact of Instagram on these constructs. Results also indicated that more than 50% of participants stated they think of their own body/body image when seeing others on Instagram, meaning that there is social comparison when using Instagram which might contribute to influencing body image related constructs.

Additionally, bivariate correlations were run to investigate the relationship between the subscales and the time spent on Instagram. The results indicated that time spent on Instagram was not related to either the awareness subscale or the media pressure subscale; however, time spent on Instagram was significantly related to internalization indicating a weak monotonic relationship. The results from these findings indicate that time spent on Instagram might not be specifically contributing to or influencing body image related constructs in general; however, future research could be conducted to further investigate whether time spent on Instagram influences body image related constructs.

The researcher was also interested in additional results from the additional items contained in the survey to investigate the different factors related to using Instagram to explore how these might be utilized in future studies. First, the amount of time was investigated to review the average amount of time participants spent on Instagram a day in terms of minutes. Results indicated that the average amount of time spent on Instagram a day is 84.74 minutes. The time spent on Instagram might be an important factor to determine whether more time spent on Instagram influences body image related constructs; however, this went beyond the scope of the current study and should be explored in future studies. The types of accounts followed on Instagram were also of interest to the researcher. Results indicated that the majority of accounts

followed were friend accounts, while celebrities or influencers were also common. Accounts related to hobbies were seen in responses, with 50% of accounts for hobbies were related to things such as fitness, clothing/beauty, and food accounts. The different types of accounts followed on Instagram might be important to understand in determining if different types of accounts followed on Instagram might influence body image related constructs (i.e., would users of Instagram who follow celebrities and influencers be more likely to have higher rates of body dissatisfaction or negative body image perception?); however, this went beyond the scope of the current study and should be explored in future studies. The researcher was also interested in the different primary purposes of participants for using Instagram. Results indicated that 48.3% used Instagram for entertainment, 19.8% for connecting with friends, 24.8% to post pictures, and 7.0% to review content. The primary purpose of using Instagram might be important to understand in determining if different purposes of using Instagram influences body image related constructs (i.e., would users of Instagram who primarily use it to post pictures have higher rates of body dissatisfaction or disordered eating compared to those who use it to connect with friends?); however, this went beyond the scope of the current study and should be explored in future studies. Finally, the researcher was interested in the age of when users began to use Instagram. Results indicated the average age of when users began to use Instagram was 12.48. The age of beginning to use Instagram might be an important factor to determine if the age of beginning using Instagram differs in terms of influencing body image related constructs (i.e., does use at a younger age contribute to higher body dissatisfaction or negative body image?), which future studies might wish to explore.

While there is concern for the use of Instagram and body image related constructs, the results from the study also suggested that there might be positive body image trends occurring on

Instagram. Results showed that over 50% of participants indicated they do see positive body image trends happening on Instagram, and provided information on what these trends might look like. It is important that positive body image trends might be occurring, and it is important for future studies to be conducted to investigate these trends to review what they might look like or how they contribute to helping mitigate concerns related to body image constructs.

Implications

Much of the literature has documented that social media platforms can contribute to higher levels of concern related to body image constructs (De Coen et al., 2021; Stein et al., 2021; Vuong et al., 2021); however, this literature has focused on Facebook in which posting images or seeing images of others is not the main goal of using the platform. This study went beyond the current literature by investigating body image constructs as they specifically relate to Instagram where posting photos and seeing images of others is the main goal of using the platform. The results suggested that the use of Instagram does contribute to body image related constructs in terms of awareness, internalization, and media pressure. These findings are important in that they suggest Instagram might be a unique platform that might have an impact on body image related constructs which is important for future studies to investigate. The findings also suggested that there might be positive body image trends that are occurring on Instagram, which is important for future studies to address in terms of investigating what trends are occurring and how these trends might impact body related constructs and might contribute to helping mitigate concerns related to body image constructs for individuals who use Instagram.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although there were promising results from the study, additional research is needed to continue to explore and refine the impact of Instagram and body dissatisfaction. The current

study had limitations that need to be addressed in future research studies. First, the study was conducted with a population of college age students. Future studies might investigate the relationship between Instagram and body image related constructs with all age groups to investigate the relationship in a broader population. Second, the current study did not ask participants to indicate their gender. As concerns for body image related constructs is often seen to be higher in females, this is important for future studies to consider. Future studies are needed to investigate whether there is a difference in levels of concern related to body image constructs and Instagram use for different genders. Third, the current study did not ask participants to indicate their ethnicity. Studies have shown that Western culture encourages thin idealness, and that beauty is a fixed concept determined by one thing, being thin (Bakhshi, 2011; Cheney, 2010; Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010). It would be important for future studies to investigate how the ethnicity of different individuals, particularly those who are not from a Western culture, influences the use of Instagram and body image related constructs. Finally, the prevalence of positive body image trends was touched on; however, it was not deeply investigated in the current study.

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CHAPTER 3

ANALYZING SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE CLASSROOM: BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES; PRIVACY AND ETHICS, AND EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVES

Social media is a platform that is becoming increasingly used in the lives of all individuals to communicate with others, form personal and professional connections with others, and expand global communities (Parks, 2017). With an increase in the use of social media, studies have begun to investigate how social media influences different aspects of our daily lives. One area of investigation is in education and the potential to use the tool to enhance learning (Sutherland et al., 2020). Social media has been used as an alternative education-oriented tool or an alternative way to connect with and reach students (Emerick et al., 2019; Mao, 2014). Studies have indicated educators are paying more attention to trends in social media in the classroom by incorporating podcasts, wikis, social networking sites, and blogs into the classroom curriculum (Elavsky et al., 2011). Some educators require students to engage with social media through various platforms to engage in peer discussions, to connect with professionals in their perspective fields, and to create original content (Hickerson & Kothari, 2017). Multiple studies addressed the potential benefits (i.e., providing enhancing critical thinking opportunities) and challenges (i.e., the potential to dull motivation for learning) of incorporating social media into the learning (Manca & Ranieri, 2017; Rodriguez-Trina et al., 2020; Sutherland et al., 2020). Other studies examined the perceptions of students in their use of social media in the classroom (Gikas & Grant, 2013; Mukherjee & Clark, 2012; Shaw, 2017) but a limited number of studies have investigated educators' perceptions of social media use (Dirjal et al., 2022; Kara et al.,

2020). Few studies have been conducted on using social media in the classroom and issues of privacy and ethics (Blyth, 2015; Obar & Oeldorf-Hirsch, 2020; Tseng et al., 2019). Despite some study of the use of social media in the classroom, there is a lack of literature addressing educators' perceptions of using social media in the classroom, their perceptions of potential benefits and challenges, and ways in which they can appropriately address obstacles when privacy or ethical considerations arise (Hickerson & Kothari, 2017; Sutherland et al., 2020; Vie, 2017). Because the empirical literature notes social media is becoming increasingly used in the classroom, it is important for new studies to investigate and to understand how this specific tool is related to educational and academic outcomes for students, as well as, for educators.

Potential Benefits and Challenges: What We Know

Several studies have identified the benefits of using social media in the classroom. A growing body of research highlights the collaborative potential of different social media platforms as especially beneficial with respect to learning both critical thinking and rote knowledge (Gikas & Grant; 2013; Hickerson & Kothari, 2016). Other studies note the benefits to enhance learning through: (1) promoting many forms of responsive and collaborative learning, (2) providing access for students and instructors, and (3) increasing the facilitation of student-peer and student-teacher communication (Emerick et al., 2019). Abe and Jordan (2013) found social media has a distinct ability to bridge the lines between offline and online communication while also providing a way for individuals who are geographically, financially, or physically unable to attend an in-person class to access and engage in learning. Elavsky and colleagues (2011) found additional benefits for youth where social media can be used by students who may be uncomfortable speaking in a classroom setting by providing students with an alternative way of contributing by posting their responses or ideas to a social media platform such as Twitter.

Chugh (2018) noted another benefit for instruction where social media can be used for sharing class-relevant resources such as examples of visual artworks (e.g., photos, short videos, 3D posts) as well as links for students to access. Chugh (2018) also highlighted the nature of social media systems having a media-ad or bill-board advantage which places content in front of students meaning students are more likely (and more naturally) inclined to notice course-relevant material posted on social media than it is that students will check on other resources. Gikas and Grant (2013) found social media platforms can be beneficial for connecting with others, especially with group collaboration projects. Shaw (2017) seconded these findings stating that social media allows users the ability to interact with the platform in real time through of variety of actions which might be useful for group projects including promoting multi-communication including games with other classmates, video calls, voice calls, and types of messaging/commenting/liking on the group projects. Overall, research suggests social media can be an important tool for instruction in class and a new, exciting instructional technique that can be utilized by both students and educators (Emerick et al., 2017). Although benefits have been documented in the literature, the aim of the current study is to further explore these benefits to investigate whether educators still find them to be benefits in the classroom and to explore if new benefits are present.

Despite the findings in the literature for the benefits of using social media in the classroom, there also have been challenges and risks well documented throughout the research literature. One of the biggest challenges or debates regarding using social media in the classroom is whether it hinders or improves learning (Hickerson & Kothari, 2017). Studies have found that social media in the classroom can distract students' attention from their coursework and dull their motivation for academic activities and instruction (Emerick et al., 2019). Other studies have

offered similar warnings in that texting and social media use distractions interfere with students' ability to self-regulate (Kuznekoff & Titsworth, 2013). The interference with students' ability to self-regulate affects their cognitive learning abilities that are necessary for processing information, which include short- and long-term memory, metacognition, and attention and working memory. Losing capacity in any of these areas undoubtedly impacts other areas and can distract from students' learning (Kuznekoff & Titsworth, 2013). Other researchers have expressed concern about social media use and the effects of clandestine classroom social media use on others as students have admitted to being distracted in class while peers are engaging on their phones or other devices to use social media (Tindell & Bohlander, 2012). Additionally, there is concern that students might engage on social media and their phones to cheat on tests using information stored on their devices (Tindell & Bohlander, 2012). These types of challenges are important to understand as they can detract from students' learning. Understanding these barriers can push educators to seek appropriate ways to use social media in the classroom without distracting from the overall learning outcomes. The current study aims to further investigate the different challenges of using social media as such challenges relate to student learning outcomes by understanding the ways in which social media is used by educators in the classroom and reviewing which aspects of social media use educators believe are helpful for learning and which aspects inhibit learning outcomes.

Privacy and Ethical Considerations: Why It is Important

The challenges mentioned above only document the impact of social media on learning outcomes; however, there are additional challenges that are unique to the educator who uses social media which will be addressed in the current study. Educators face challenges such as (1) intellectual property rights; (2) a lack of training, skills, credibility, and support from the

institution; (3) time scarcity; and (4) most importantly, privacy, risk, plagiarism, copyright violations, and ethical considerations (Blyth, 2015; Sutherland et al., 2020; Vie, 2017). Privacy and ethical considerations of using social media in the classroom present unique challenges for educators and are important to understand when using such tools in the classroom.

Privacy is one of the most challenging issues embedded within social media making it equally as challenging for educators and students (Obar & Oeldorf-Hirsch, 2020; Steinfeld, 2016). Privacy is an integral element in the dynamics of social relationships when an individual's privacy is endangered or threatened, it risks social practices and relationships and individual freedom (Steinfeld, 2016), which also can be applicable to the classroom. Additionally, privacy can become a challenge for educators and students because social media use is often used in two different realms: outside the classroom space, or personal use, and inside the classroom space (Blyth, 2015). Educators are likely to use social media in their personal lives and provide information that can be accessed on the Internet (Sutherland et al., 2020). Educators might face privacy issues in this realm when their uncensored publicity or personal information is readily available on social media which can be damaging to their reputation in the eyes of the administration and their students (Blyth, 2015). It is important for educators to understand and familiarize themselves with policies and privacy settings on social media platforms for them to help decrease the chances of the information being accessed by the wrong audience.

Educators must also be aware of the challenges with privacy for using social media inside the classroom. Inside the classroom is traditionally a private setting where students and educators can experiment with coursework, ideas, thoughts, and beliefs; however, the use of social media can provide instances where this privacy can be broken (Blyth, 2011). Additionally, it is the responsibility of the educator to ensure the privacy in the classroom for both themselves, and

their students; however, even when careful strategies are employed by educators to ensure the privacy of their students' content on social media, lapses of security and data breaches are almost unavoidable (Blyth, 2011). Certain laws have been passed in the United States, such as the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) and the Family Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), designed to regulate the data protection of individuals; however, it is argued these privacy laws do not adequately address privacy concerns of students or educators (Marin et al., 2021). Furthermore, these acts were enacted prior to the advent of many technologies including social media that are integral components in education today and the data-related decision making that is often delegated to schools and institutions provides a limited accountability or transparency regarding data practices and privacy (Marin et al., 2021). The current study aims to explore whether these acts can still be appropriately applied to using social media in the classroom and to investigate whether future policies and legislation should be enacted that are geared specifically toward social media use.

Studies have documented strategies useful for protecting the privacy of educators and students when using social media in the classroom. Blyth (2015) suggests four strategies to permit privacy in the classroom when using social media including: (1) education-oriented services, (2) teacher or institution created social networking sites (SNS), (3) pseudonyms, and (4) privacy settings. Employment of these strategies for both educators and students must be accompanied by solutions offered to the teaching community that are easily implementable, realistic, ethical, easily understood, and where personal information is kept safe and secure (Blyth, 2015). Other strategies include providing opportunities to gain data literacy and privacy perspectives, personal data empowerment, tactics to manage privacy policies, and pedagogical strategies to build upon the informed pedagogical choice of technologies considering data

privacy (Marin et al., 2021); however, it is worth further investigation to see if educators are actually implementing these strategies, whether educators feel comfortable employing the strategies, whether educators know these strategies exist or if they are offered workshops by the institutions regarding these strategies, and whether the educators feel supported by institutions and administrative when using the strategies (Blyth, 2015; Sutherland et al., 2020; Vie, 2017). Given the importance of privacy, the purpose of the current study is to address these questions and investigate the imperative need for data privacy awareness, recognition, and beliefs about privacy to be further understood and developed for all educators, including pre-service teachers, throughout their training (Blyth, 2011; Blyth, 2015; Marin et al., 2021).

Because it is the responsibility of the educator, student, and the institution to teach these strategies and encourage the use of them, it is important to reflect on such strategies through opportunities such as workshops or professional development courses, as well as the encouragement of the emergence of new strategies (Vie, 2017); however, it is apparent in the literature that these workshops or classes are inadequately provided for educators and students alike (Kansu & Oksuz, 2019; Sutherland et al., 2020; Vie, 2017). The current study aims to address this gap in the literature to highlight the need for institutions and administrations to provide appropriate training and guidance for current and future educators and students when utilizing social media in the classroom. Additionally, the perceptions of support for enacting the most appropriate and effective privacy strategies should be investigated which is conveyed in a later section.

Another central challenge for educators, when using social media in the classroom, is the ethical considerations that must be considered. Educators are responsible for maintaining ethical standards of their discipline both inside and outside the classroom which applies to the use of

social media. A statement of ethics from the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) highlights the importance of educators to act ethically in demonstrating respect for students, respect the confidential nature of the relationship between students and educators, and the avoidance of discriminatory treatment, exploitation, or harassment of students. An emphasis regarding the confidential relationship between educators and students presents questions of how this relates to social media such as if content on social media is public, do both parties (i.e., students and educators) waive the right to confidentiality or to what level educators can ethically engage with their students on social media inside and outside of the classroom environment (Hickerson & Kothari, 2017)? Additional ethical questions for educators to consider are how to address students who inappropriately use social media in the classroom or associate the coursework with an inappropriate social media post such as by using a hashtag (Hickerson & Kothari, 2017).

Furthermore, ethical implications educators might face when using social media in the classroom relate to when students cross the boundaries of what is appropriate, especially regarding forming relationships with students. Social media provides opportunities to promote social networking, facilitates student communication, and encourages research (Baker, 2013); however, social media also provides opportunities for educators and students to cross professional boundaries which can lead to unethical outcomes (Daigle, 2020). For example, some ways which students can cross professional boundaries include sharing private and personal information with an educator, posting inappropriate content related to coursework on social media, and “friending” or attempts at making personal connections with educators on social media platforms (Daigle, 2020). It is challenging for educators to encourage the use of social media in the classroom while still expecting students to adhere to ethical and professional

boundaries as it can be confusing for individuals as personal and preferences for using social media are different (Henderson & Dahnke, 2015). Furthermore, students can give educators confidential information about their lives on social media or educators can see posts from students on social media, even if not by choice, which can lead to blurred ethical lines (Hickerson & Kothari, 2017).

Educators play an important role in influencing and encouraging social media use in the classroom, and it is their ethical responsibility to have consistency when enforcing social media policies (Daigle, 2020). The ethical considerations and challenges faced by educators using social media that have been detailed earlier in this review are important to understand for providing and equipping educators with appropriate strategies when encountering these issues. Educators play a critical role in the success of students and will inevitably form relationships with students. Social media presents unique challenges to these ethical considerations of forming relationships given its nature of being public and breadth of opportunities to cross into unethical lines (Baker, 2013). Platforms that encourage friend requests, such as Facebook, can blur ethical guidelines meaning it is necessary for educators to maintain integrity in practice, retain authority, and to act ethically and professionally about the nature of the student and educator relationship (Daigle, 2020). Educators should also be aware of inappropriate use of social media as it relates to the classroom or students using coursework material in inappropriate posts on social media (Baker, 2013; Daigle, 2020). Despite documented research noting the responsibility is placed on the educator for maintaining appropriate ethical guidelines for both themselves and their students, a lack of support from institutions and administration seen throughout the literature is a problem that educators face when dealing with the ethics of social media (Sutherland et al., 2020). Because maintaining ethical and professional standards is imperative and because it is the

responsibility of the educator, it is important for research to address these gaps to enhance educators feel adequately supported and are aware of appropriate strategies to implement to ensure ethical considerations are of utmost importance when using social media in the classroom. The aim of the current study is to address these gaps and to highlight the need for further support from administrations and institutions. Furthermore, the perceptions of educators regarding the ethical considerations of using social media in the classroom will be addressed in the current study, which is detailed in a later section.

Educators' Perceptions: A Gap in the Literature

Educators are stepping into a new world of digital technology, including social media, where it is becoming increasingly incorporated in educational settings along with other advances such as artificial intelligence. This movement has certain implications for educators as they become accustomed to utilizing media tools for instructional purposes in the classroom setting. Educators are expected to have certain skills for implementing social media in the classroom such as digital competence (DC) or digital citizenship. DC can be defined as the set of skills, attitudes, and contents that are required when using information and communications technology (Calvani et al., 2008) that equip educators with the skills to use social media in constructing pedagogical knowledge for improving students' learning in the classroom in addition to providing guidelines to help navigate safety and ethical concerns when they arise (Ramirez-Montoya et al., 2017). Digital citizenship is defined as "acting in the awareness of every danger within the framework of ethical and universal rules in the internet environment" (Adyin, 2015, p. 142) and encourages students and educators to respect the classroom environment, intellectual rights, and themselves; while also teaching critical thinking to protect students from engaging in inappropriate behavior online in the classroom, bad content that can surface in an online

environment, and the privacy of the students and educators (Kansu & Oksuz, 2019). Although studies indicate the importance of educators knowing and acquiring these skills, there is an apparent gap in literature in the support from institutions to properly adhere to teaching educators these skills, thus resulting in hesitant and apprehensive perceptions of educators in not only knowing about the skills, but in the best ways to implement them (Sutherland et al., 2020; Vie, 2017).

Furthermore, there is a lack of studies noting perceptions of educators using social media. Some have noted teachers not being appropriately equipped with how to implement certain and required skills for social media use while others have examined general perceptions of using social media for learning. Much of the research literature surrounding social media has been conducted to understand the perceptions of students who use social media in the classroom with little studies dedicated to assessing the views of educators (Dirjal et al., 2022). Within this small body of studies, the research has centered on whether educators enjoyed using social media or if they found social media helpful for students' learning without paying attention to important concerns such as privacy and ethical considerations (Dirjal et al., 2022; Kara et al., 2020). A few studies have investigated the perceptions of educators on privacy and ethical considerations. Kara and colleagues (2020) invited a group of educators to provide narratives of their perceptions as related to privacy and ethical considerations and found that educators indicated fearful perceptions of privacy and ethical issues leading to personal experiences and a need for ethical codes and terms of reference for privacy and participation to be provided by the institutions. Lanclos and Phipps (2019) noted in their study this gap in the research literature and urged educators to help mitigate fearful and negative perceptions of using social media in the classroom by understanding the ethical and privacy benefits and consequences of social media

and how to use appropriate ways to address the handling of concerns of privacy and ethical considerations. Brady and colleagues (2015) also draw attention to issues such as a lack of institutional resources, institutional culture, instructor capacity, and negative perceptions about social media as well as issues with ethical and privacy boundaries that warrants further investigation in the literature to understand educators' perceptions. It can be argued that the responsibility of protecting the privacy and ethics of both students and educators falls into the hands of the educator themselves or the institution (Blyth, 2015); however, the perceptions of educators indicate a lack of training from institutions meaning they are not well-equipped on how to implement best practices related to privacy or ethical considerations or how to address obstacles when they arise (Sutherland et al., 2020; Vie, 2017). The current study aims to address these gaps in the literature to understand educators' perceptions of social media, specifically in terms of privacy and ethical considerations, while also providing a call for institutions to address the fears and hesitancy and to provide professional opportunities such as professional workshops, professional development courses, or extra guidance (Vie, 2017) geared toward teaching educators best practices when using social media in the classroom.

Purpose of the Current Study

Given its recency within literature and the increasing use in the classroom, further studies are warranted that examine the multiple aspects of social media use in the classroom including the following: potential benefits and challenges, privacy and ethical considerations, and the perceptions of educators. The current study sought to add greater depth to the field by utilizing a comprehensive methodology with a qualitative instrument which explored and investigated these aspects. In addition to exploring the different aspects of social media in the classroom, the current study also examined the gaps in the literature that currently exist, with special attention

being placed on the privacy and ethical considerations (Blyth, 2015; Diagle, 2020; Hickerson & Kothari, 2017) as well as the perceptions of educators (Brady et al., 2015; Vie, 2017). Overall, this study aimed to increase our understanding of the new and upcoming ways social media is being used in the classroom, address the potential use of social media use in classrooms in the future, and provide insight into how educators perceive using social media in the classroom, in addition to identifying the needs and ways institutions and academic boards can help give guidance to educators and students when using social media. The purpose of the current study was to explore social media as it relates to the classroom in a sample of pre-service teachers from a university located in South Georgia and current teachers at various in-service school locations using qualitative interviews, with an analysis to complement the intended types of measurement methods.

Research questions included:

1. What do preservice education students understand the benefits and challenges/risks of using social media in the classroom to be?
2. What do current educators understand the benefits and challenges/risks of using social media in the classroom to be?
3. What are the privacy and ethical considerations of using social media in the classroom and what are the best ways for preservice and current educators to appropriately address these considerations when the considerations are encountered?
4. What are the perceptions of preservice and current educators for using social media in the classroom and what ways are perceived that academic institutions or boards can help prepare or guide them for using social media in the classroom?

Method

Data Procedures

After gaining approval from the University of Georgia Institutional Review Board and the Institutional Review Board from the university located in South Georgia, the current study used a qualitative interview protocol to collect data from the recruited participants. Interviews were conducted via Zoom. The data collected remained confidential and participants were made aware of their confidentiality, the purpose of the study, and why they were being asked to participate. Data collected were stored by the researcher in a confidential manner and were only used for the purposes of the current research study. No participants are identified by name, and survey data are only presented as group results.

Participants

Participant Group One

There were two groups of participants that were interviewed by the researcher. One group of participants included five current teachers from various schools located in different communities in Georgia and Kansas. The demographics of the participants included one male and four females. The male participant and three female participants identified as Caucasian/White. The fourth female participant identified as Latinx. Each participant's description is provided below. Additional background information from each participant is provided below using the number of the order in which the respondents participated in the interviews.

Participant One

Participant one identified as female and as Latinx. She is currently an educator at a Title I elementary public school located in Georgia. She is a fourth-grade educator who teaches students

who are approximately nine and ten years old. She is an English as a Second Language (ESOL) endorsed teacher who teaches mathematics, science, social studies, and English. The majority of her students are Spanish speaking, either as their first language or their preferred language. She is currently in her second year of teaching.

Participant Two

Participant two identified as female and as Caucasian/White. She is currently an educator at a public high school located in Georgia. She is a high school teacher who teaches biology to ninth grade students with the age group of students who are approximately 14 to 15 years old. She additionally teaches AP biology courses to junior and senior grades with the age group of students who are approximately 16 to 18 years old. She has been teaching for 19 years and has been at her current school for the past 16 years.

Participant Three

Participant three identified as male and as Caucasian/White. He is currently an educator at a public high school located in Georgia. He teaches biology and chemistry. He teaches biology to ninth and tenth grade students who are approximately 14 to 15 years old. He teaches chemistry to tenth, junior, and senior grades who range in age from 15 to 18 years. He is currently in his second year of teaching.

Participant Four

Participant four identified as female and as Caucasian/White. She is currently an educator at a public high school located in Georgia. She teaches English literature to all ninth-grade students and has two sections of honor students, both of which are in ninth grade. She teaches ninth grade students who are approximately 14 to 15 years old. She is currently a second year teacher.

Participant Nine

Participant nine identified as female and as Caucasian/White. She is currently an educator at a public elementary school located in Kansas. She teaches all subjects including mathematics, English, social studies, and science to fourth graders who are approximately nine to ten years old. She is currently in her fourth year of teaching.

Participant Group Two

Pre-service educators were also interviewed by the researcher. Specifically, these participants included four pre-service teachers from a university located in South Georgia. All participants were enrolled in an undergraduate course focused on middle grade learners in Fall 2023. At the time of the interviews, participants were undergraduates enrolled in their junior semester ranging in age from 19-20. Each participant had completed at least 30 hours of field work specifically in grades four through eight teaching either math, language arts, sciences, or social studies. They were required to teach a three-to-five-day lesson plan as the primary teacher and had experience in the field. Throughout the course from which the pre-service educators were drawn, each educator would complete 75 hours of field experience. The demographics of the participants included two females, and two males and each of the four participants identified as Caucasian/White. Each participant's information is included below. Each participant will be labeled with the number of the order in which they participated in the interviews.

Participant Five

Participant five identified as a female and as Caucasian/White. She has field experience teaching middle grade students ranging from fourth through eighth grade in all different subject areas including mathematics, science, and English. The age range for the group of students she has had field experience with is approximately 10 to 15 years old. She is currently placed with all

middle grade students. She is gaining field experience at a public school in Americus Georgia, in Sumter County.

Participant Six

Participant six identified as a female and as Caucasian/White. She has field experience teaching middle grade students ranging from fifth through eighth grade and has primarily taught mathematics. She is currently placed in a fifth-grade classroom where the age range for the group of students is approximately 10 to 12 years old. She is gaining field experience at a public middle school in Americus, Georgia, in Sumter County.

Participant Seven

Participant seven identified as a male and as Caucasian/White. He has field experience teaching middle grade students ranging from fourth through the eighth grade and has taught science and mathematics. He has not had field experience with fifth and seventh grade students. He is currently placed in an eighth-grade classroom where the age range for the group of students is approximately 13-15. He is gaining field experience at a public middle school in Americus, Georgia, in Sumter County.

Participant Eight

Participant eight identified as a male and as Caucasian/White. He has had field experience teaching fifth, sixth, and eighth grade and has taught English and mathematics. He is currently placed in a sixth-grade classroom where the age range for the group of students is approximately 11-13. He is gaining field experience at private school, which includes all grade levels on one campus, in Americus, Georgia, in Sumter County.

The table below represents the participants.

Table 14

Participant Information

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Grade Level	Age of Students	Subjects Taught	Years Experience	School Type
1	Female	Latina	4 th	9-10	Mathematics, Science, Social studies, English, ESOL	2	Public, Rural
2	Female	Caucasian/White	9 th , 11 th , 12 th	14-18	Biology, AP Biology	19	Public, Urban
3	Male	Caucasian/White	9 th – 12 th	14-18	Biology, Chemistry	2	Public, Urban
4	Female	Caucasian/White	9 th	14-15	English	2	Public, Urban
5	Female	Caucasian/White	4 th – 8 th	10-15	Mathematics, Science, English	N/A	Public, Rural
6	Female	Caucasian/White	5 th	10-12	Mathematics	N/A	Public, Rural
7	Male	Caucasian/White	8 th	13-15	Science, Mathematics	N/A	Public, Rural
8	Male	Caucasian/White	6 th	11-13	English, Mathematics	N/A	Private, Urban
9	Female	Caucasian/White	4 th	9-10	Mathematics, English, Social Studies, Science	4	Public, Urban

Note. N/A is indicative of participants who are not current educators, but are gaining field experience in those grades.

Measures

Due to the existing gaps in the current literature, specifically those assessing the perceptions of educators (Dirjal et al., 2022), the data collection tools for the current study were developed by the researcher rather than utilizing a pre-existing measurement. Using a qualitative

methodology in the form of interviews, the researcher was immersed in the data collection as the interviewer. The approach to the qualitative methodology was phenomenological in nature as the interviews were intended to understand the specific phenomenon of social media use in the classroom. The interviews followed a semi-structure approach.

Phenomenological Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is, “the systematic collection, organization, and interpretation of textual material derived from talk or conversation. It is used in the exploration of meanings of social phenomena as experienced by individuals themselves, in their natural context” (Malterud, 2001, p. 483). A type of qualitative research approach is known as phenomenology, or the search for meaning of a specific phenomenon, such as the perceptions of using social media in the classroom. The approach of phenomenological research is rooted in the philosophical works of Husserl, Heidegger, and Ricoeur and is based on several assumptions, which were considered and enacted upon by the researcher throughout the duration of the study. The assumptions of phenomenological research include (1) the investigator is part of the experience being studied and the values of the investigator plays a role in the investigation, (2) participants and investigators are partners and share knowledge, (3) meaning and knowing are social constructions that are incomplete and developing, (4) bias is inherent in all research and should be articulated at the beginning, (5) common forms of expression (e.g., words or art) are important, and (6) meanings may not be shared by everyone (Grossoehme, 2014). This method was chosen because the researcher wanted to study what an experience means to an individual and was not used to generalize findings, but rather collect rich data to inform a phenomenon. This approach was the most appropriate because this research was conducted to investigate the

perceptions and how people experience the idea of using social media in the classroom by looking at deep and rich data to support these experiences.

The goal of phenomenological research is to gather thick descriptions of the participants' perceptions and experiences which are rich in imagery and detail rather than to generalize findings to the population (Grossoehme, 2014). Because of this, the number of participants needed to conduct this type of research was not large and was purposefully sampled. The researcher has adhered to this sampling technique in choosing nine participants who were relevant to the research questions being asked and who had experience in the classroom and were knowledgeable about teaching. Because the research questions asked about using social media in the classroom, it was important to have participants who had experience in the classroom so that they could share their thoughts on benefits and challenges, privacy and ethical considerations of using social media in the classroom, and whether they perceived support from administration. If the participants did not have adequate time in the classroom, their perceptions of using social media in the classroom could not be adequately addressed or measured. The researcher ensured that both groups of participants had adequate time in the classroom in that the pre-service group of participants have had at least 30 hours in the classroom and that the current educators had teaching experience and were still currently teaching.

Researcher Role. In the qualitative approach to research, the researcher is not a disinterested outsider who merely observes participants without interacting with them or being immersed in the research (Grossoehme, 2014). The researcher is affected by and affects the data being collected. The object of qualitative research is to explore the views of participants on certain things and is built on feelings, opinions, and individual experiences where the data is interpretative in nature (i.e., the end result is the product of the subjective interpretation of the

data) (Scalcau, 2021). One of the major concerns is related to the researcher's degree of subjectivity when analyzing the data collected from a qualitative approach because when interpreting the data, researchers bring along their own experiences and identity which means the findings of the research might be influenced by a variety of reasons (i.e., previous experiences, age, sex, etc.) (Scalcau, 2021). Because of this, qualitative researchers must continuously acknowledge the things that could influence their interpretation of the findings, recognize that they cannot be entirely impartial, bracket their biases, and ensure that they do not manipulate the findings to obtain or support a particular result (Scalcau, 2021).

The role of the researcher is immersive in this type of study. The researcher was fully immersed with the participants in the interview process by engaging in questions and dialogue throughout the interviews and recognized that the process in which they interviewed participants (i.e., body language or tone) could impact the data collected. The researcher recognized that they come with biases, previous experiences, and prior knowledge and ideas about the phenomenon that is being studied. Specifically, the researcher has negative views of social media use in general and acknowledged this bias. To prevent the biases from impacting data collection, the researcher used reflexivity and bracketing throughout the duration of the study. The researcher practiced reflexivity by reflecting on the biases that are present in addition to practicing self-awareness to ensure these biases do not impact the study. The researcher practiced bracketing by setting aside personal biases or experiences with social media, as well as setting aside preconceived notions or knowledge about the topic to allow for the most objective standpoint possible. If personal biases began to arise during the study, the researcher journaled these biases and talked to the other investigator of the study to look for when biases arise and how to put these biases aside when being immersed in the research with the participants.

Interviews. Qualitative interviews allowed for investigation of the role and perceptions of preservice and current educators using social media in the classroom. Interviews explore experiences of individuals by using a series of questions and answers to explore the meaning individuals give to their experiences (Grossoehme, 2014). Interviews in qualitative research can be structured in which a pre-determined set of questions is asked of participants with no deviation permitted by the interviewer or semi-structured where there is a pre-determined set of questions that guide the interview, but the interviewer can ask follow-up questions (Grossoehme, 2014). The use of semi-structured interviews allows the interviewer to pursue topics that might arise during the interview that might be of interest to the interviewer or seem relevant to the topic. The researcher chose to use interviews rather than alternative forms of qualitative research such as observation, analysis of participants' social media accounts or focus groups for a few reasons. First, the purpose of interviews is to understand each individuals' perception of using social media in the classroom which is indicative of a phenomenological approach to qualitative research. Interviews are the most common means of gathering data to understand a phenomenon and its meaning (Grossoehme, 2014) and the researcher believed interviews produced the richest data to be collected.

The researcher perceived an observation approach to this research would not produce the data that would help to answer the research questions. The research questions aligned with the perceptions of using social media in the classroom rather than looking at how they might be using it in their classroom. Additionally, the participants of the study were not guaranteed to be using social media in the classroom or required to do so. This meant that an observation of a participant who did not use social media in the classroom would yield data results that would not help answer the research questions. Furthermore, a participant might feel pressure to use social

media in the classroom in a certain way that is appealing to the researcher which may have skewed results. Again, the purpose of this study was not to investigate how educators use social media in the classroom, but their perceptions of how they feel about using social media in the classroom thereby eliminating observations as an adequate data collection tool to answer the research questions.

An in-depth analysis of participants' social media accounts, texts, or journals was not believed by the researcher to be an adequate way to collect data from the participants. The researcher was not interested in the daily use of participants' social media accounts whether in the classroom or outside of the classroom environment. This does not align with the research questions of the perceptions of using social media in the classroom. The analysis of social media accounts of the participants would be invasive as social media accounts are often private and contain personal materials from participants that are not relevant to the research questions. Because the researcher was interested in perceptions of social media use in the classroom, analyzing artifacts of participants' social media use would not lend beneficial results as they do not align to the research questions.

The use of focus groups is an alternative approach to data collection for qualitative research; however, the researcher felt this did not align with the overall goal of the study. A focus group is normally built around a specific topic and allow for open discussion of responses among participants which can allow for gathering data on social interactions between participants, to clarify a process, or to gather data on an entire range of responses to a topic (Grossoehme, 2014). The researcher was not interested in investigating any outcomes from a focus group, but rather the perceptions of each individual. Furthermore, the researcher determined two groups of participants, one group of pre-service educators from Georgia

Southwestern State University and one group of current educators from various schools, from whom to collect data. The decision to split the groups up depending on their level of teaching and age range was imperative in understanding the differences that might arise between the two groups. The researcher perceived a focus group could cloud these perceptions in that one group might have completely different perceptions of using social media for a variety of reasons (i.e., those in the older group are not comfortable or do not know how to use social media in the classroom as compared to the younger group who might have grown up with social media and feel much more comfortable using it), but might alter these perceptions to appeal to the other group. Additionally, the two groups come from different colleges or various school locations in different regions of the state where geographical considerations might have made it difficult to implement a focus group. The researcher was not interested in the social interaction among participants or understanding the process of using social media in the classroom. Rather, the focus was on individual perceptions of using social media in the classroom thereby indicating that a focus group would not be the best approach to collecting data.

Interviews were given to several participants and the number of participants and who completed these interviews was determined by using a purposeful sampling approach. The interviews were conducted one-on-one via Zoom and provided a further investigation into the different aspects of social media in the classroom by hearing the narratives of individuals in hopes of understanding challenges, benefits, privacy and ethical considerations, and their own perceptions. Research has indicated the use of interviews and narratives has been helpful in furthering the understanding of educators and the use of social media (Kara et al., 2020) and the purpose of the interviews for the current study was to capture the stories, narratives, and

perceptions of those in the intended population. The interviews were recorded, with participants' consent, transcribed, and reviewed for emerging themes, words, or conceptions.

There are two types of reasoning that can be used when conducting research: deductive reasoning and inductive reasoning. Both are fundamental thinking processes that relate to knowledge acquisition, in the transfer of knowledge, and developing higher-order thinking skills (Pasztor et al., 2022). Deductive reasoning typically refers to the process of looking at something and drawing conclusions from general statements to specific cases. In other words, this method begins with a general statement or hypothesis, and examines the possibilities to reach a logical and specific conclusion in which an inference or conclusion based on reasoning and evidence can be made (Feeney & Heit, 2007). Inductive reasoning is the process of finding meaningful patterns and formulating novel conclusions and hypotheses about the unknown, as well as generating new knowledge (Pasztor et al., 2022). Rather than moving from a general statement to specific cases, inductive reasoning moves from the particular to the general where derived conclusions are only true with a certain degree of probability (Pasztor et al., 2022). Inductive reasoning oftentimes involves forming categories about a process or experience and using these as general statements (Feeney & Heit, 2007). The process of inductive reasoning for this type of research study was more appropriate than deductive reasoning as the researcher was not wanting to reach a specific conclusion about the perceptions of social media use in the classroom, but rather to represent general conclusions made from the data. The researcher did not begin with a premise that is proven through observations such as in deductive reasoning and used inductive reasoning to extract data from specific and limited observations. The researcher did not wish to collect data that can be generalized or infer anything specific to the greater population, and instead, used inductive reasoning to explore general conclusions obtained from the interviews

made about social media use in the classroom as it is perceived or experienced by a specific group of individuals.

Analyses

Data from interviews were analyzed using a coding technique to look for emerging or common themes and identifying those themes. Interviews were recorded, and transcribed, to provide the researcher with data to investigate common themes given by participants. The method of analyzing data from a phenomenological study was articulated by Giorgi and consists of the following steps. First, the researcher must immerse themselves in the data. To do this, the researcher listened to the recorded interviews and read and re-read the transcribed portions of the interviews (Grossoehme, 2014). Secondly, the texts are coded according to the phrases, words, or sentences that stand out as describing the particular phenomenon or experience under study, and highlighting or extracting sentences that stand out which express outright meaning for the participant (Grossoehme, 2014). The bits of data that are coded are sometimes referred to as a “meaning unit”. Next, similar meaning units or codes were placed into categories where the researcher inferred the meaning behind the participants’ words and articulated it (Grossoehme, 2014). Finally, each of the transformed statements of meaning were combined to provide a few thematic statements that described the phenomenon or experience (Grossoehme, 2014). Excerpts from the common themes that were identified were displayed using direct quotes from the participants that were included directly following the themes to provide further supporting data from the participants.

Results

The results from the interviews were compiled into five overarching themes: (1) benefits, (2) challenges, (3) privacy considerations, (4) ethical considerations, and (5) support from

administration. Each major theme had sub-themes which are included in the sections below. The results were common themes among participants for each overarching theme with direct quotes from the participants that provided supporting evidence for each of the themes.

Benefits

Social media presents its own unique benefits which were explored by interviewing nine participants, five of whom are current educators and four who are pre-service educators. All interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. An open coding technique was used to examine the data for common themes, words, or phrases related to the perceived benefits when respondents considered use of social media both inside and outside of the classroom. This analysis process included reading and re-reading the transcripts and identifying major themes from each participant, and then using those themes to synthesize data into overarching exemplars within the areas of benefits among all participants. Two common themes emerged when coding the data: (1) perceived benefits from educators for students regarding using social media and (2) perceived benefits from educators of using social media as an educator.

Benefits For Students

Social media platforms can be used in the classroom in a variety of ways and allow for new opportunities for both students and educators. All nine participants stated that there are benefits for using social media within the classroom with students. All nine participants said use of social media was engaging and interactive. One participant noted:

They really engage when using social media and technology for projects. It's a really fun and interactive way for all the students to have their own little projects and be able to show their friends and go home and show their mom and dad what they have actually done in class because it's like tech-savvy, and they are all into the world of technology.

Another participant noted, “Social media is fun. It’s goofy. There’s lots of bright colors and different aspects that are really engaging for my students. They love it. They think it’s fun and it helps to motivate them.” Another participant stated:

Social media is a useful tool because that’s something that is engaging to the students, and it motivates them. Especially when compared to old-school kind of lectures and taking notes and stuff. That isn’t as engaging, and it just doesn’t work for them. And mainly, I think that’s because of the attention span thing, and this is what they’re comfortable with and engaged with.

All nine participants noted that a perceived benefit of social media use for students is that it was interactive and engaging.

Five participants stated that a benefit for students using social media is that it is something they are comfortable with. One participant noted:

I think social media is a useful tool because it’s something they’re comfortable with and it motivates them. The old-school kind of lectures and taking notes just doesn’t work for them. Mainly, I think that is because of the attention span thing, and this is why they’re comfortable with it.

Another participant echoed something similar stating:

I think it’s great for students to use social media in the classroom. I think it’s something they are comfortable with and that you have to have in your classroom. The students that are coming through now, they’re at the ages wherever since they’ve been born, you know you’ve had smartphones, iPads, and all that. So, you know, they’ve grown up with it and that’s definitely something they’re comfortable with and something they do very well.

Five participants stated that social media allows for creativity which is beneficial for students. Five participants noted that it presents opportunities for students to complete schoolwork or projects in a different and creative way. One participant spoke about a project that she used for her English which she found very beneficial and that her students enjoyed noting:

I asked them to create a Flipgrid video. They have to pick a song that's school appropriate that I approve and then they're annotating it for different rhetorical devices and then respond to questions such as 'what are some of the rhetorical devices used like ethos, logos, pathos?' on Flipgrid. They use this as their presentation. My kids loved it and thought it was more fun than creating a slideshow or something like that.

Four participants stated that it can also be beneficial for students who are anxious when presenting because it allows them to express themselves in ways other than speaking in front of other students. One participant stated, "It allows for more creativity for the students when they have projects. We made a Flip in one class. It allowed a bunch of creativity for them, especially for ones who have a hard time speaking in front of people."

Seven participants stated that a benefit of social media is that it allows for different ways to teach students things and for students to re-learn things. One participant noted:

I think it offers a different mode of learning and re-learning things. Rather than just hearing me lecture again or re-reading their notes, I think social media is a better opportunity to re-engage with the materials than these students would typically provide for themselves. And opportunities to re-learn things in different ways is always helpful for the learning process.

One participant who taught ESOL at her school noted that it can be beneficial for teaching students who might not speak English as their first language stating:

I like it for my kids specifically, teaching kids who don't speak English as a first language because I can find videos on social media sites, such as YouTube, that are in English and Spanish. Or if it's just in English, there are Spanish subtitles. And so that's a really great resource for me and it helps give some of my kids a break from having to constantly translate or just hear another language.

Another participant noted:

It's a good resource for my students. I think that YouTube videos do enhance course materials for students because it's a resource they could go back to if they missed the smaller-level items while the subject was being taught in class. They can hear the materials from a different source other than me.

All seven participants noted that a benefit of social media is that it provides new opportunities for students to learn and re-learn and serves as a resource that students can easily use.

Benefits For Educators

All nine participants stated that there are benefits for using social media for educators.

All nine participants noted that they use social media in their classroom to show educational videos and offer supplemental materials. One participant stated:

I use social media on the platform YouTube to show educational videos. In one lesson, we started off with TED talks and I would pull them up on YouTube so they could watch them. And then I gave them the transcript. And so that just kind of helped them be able to hear about the subject from someone other than me. I also use educational videos for explanatory purposes. For example, we watched a video about the 20-time projects and we used YouTube to show the students good examples of presentations, bad examples of presentations, or things like that.

Another participant spoke about how it is helpful for her science students noting:

I use educational videos as another way for them to learn about something. I've found videos are helpful just to kind of show them some of the steps that are involved in things. There are some days where we watch videos, especially for the smaller portions and the more micro side of my stuff with biology.

Another participant stated:

I use a lot of videos on YouTube to help my kids understand things like science. Lots of Bill Nye videos and Crash Course videos. Crash Course videos are great, and I use those a lot, especially when I was teaching science and social studies.

Four participants stated that they use social media to create their own videos for students and found this to be a helpful tool. One participant noted:

In light of everything that happened in 2020, a lot of my lesson plans at that point, I turned into videos so that way the kids could have access to them. We had a lot of kids that would have to be out being quarantined, and the videos were really, really helpful to them. So, I use YouTube to create the videos and everything that I have of my lecture recordings and things like that I post on our learning management system so kids can access that as needed.

Another participant echoed something similar stating:

I record myself giving lectures on YouTube for students that are absent or record activities or notes or practice problems and upload those. I try to make sure information is accessible as possible for students who are absent chronically or absent once or twice a day.

One participant gave an example of when she used social media to record herself explaining:

I ended up making YouTube videos of myself explaining a lecture. I was out for two days, so I recorded these videos of me explaining what happened in the reading that day just to make sure everybody was on the same page and then the kids have access to this. Four participants noted that social media can be beneficial for recording lectures and providing students with information that they can access at any time.

Eight participants stated that social media was beneficial for connecting with parents. One participant did not comment on this topic. Eight participants noted that there are platforms or social media apps that can be used by the educator to connect and communicate with parents. Examples of the platforms that were mentioned included ClassDojo, Parent Squared, Group Me, Remind, and others. Eight participants noted that social media platforms are an easy way to send out information to the parents of students or to the students themselves. One participant stated:

I use ClassDojo. The teacher can communicate with a whole group of students' parents. But you can also add in the students as well so they can see whatever you're sending out. So, like you would say 'Here's the newsletter for this week for the entire seventh grade.' So, it's just kind of more informative to let the parents know what is happening for that week. What are we doing? Do we need supplies? If you need something, that's how you can ask as a group. It also is a big help for parents because the child you know sometimes will say 'well they didn't tell us we were doing that.' Well, we sent this out. You know you have access to it and so does your parent.

Another participant noted:

ClassDojo is the app I use. It's where parents can join, and kids have their own avatars. And so, I can input information about their kids, about their behaviors, good and bad. I can send notes to parents. It's like texting them without giving them my personal phone

number. I love ClassDojo. We can post class stories. I can send out information to certain parents, groups of parents, specific parents.

Another participant spoke echoed something similar noting:

ClassDojo is really cool because I feel like it's the most convenient and most direct way to contact parents about specifically behavior rather than writing out a long email or sending home a slip of paper that may or may not actually get to them.

One participant stated, "I use Remind Messaging as a particular piece with my Science Club to send them information about meetings and things like that which is really helpful." Another participant noted, "Teachers in my county have thing called Parent Square and it's a way for them to just message because the teachers are so busy and the parents are at work, and it's just an easier way of communication for everyone." All eight participants spoke on how social media platforms could be a beneficial tool for communicating with parents and students and a helpful resource for sending out information.

Six participants stated that a benefit of using social media in the classroom is that it can help alleviate work for teachers. One participant spoke about educational videos that can be found on social media noting, "It can be less time-consuming for the teachers if they can find others' videos out there that they don't have to create themselves and stuff." Another participant explained why educational videos are helpful stating:

Just giving them an option to choose what works best for them instead of spending maybe 30 minutes of your time on a whiteboard going through one way of solving a problem. Right there you'd have three, four, five 10-minutes videos explaining one way. And that allows educators to save their time by not having you know to stand up there and do the 30 minutes.

Another participant stated:

YouTube videos are great and social media allows us the ability to do more than just worksheets because it can be more interactive and engaging. And it allows me some freedom to not have to translate everything and so that alleviates a lot of stress and work from my plate and saves me time.

One participant explained why using Flipgrid was beneficial noting, “I see myself using this again as both like a time saver for me and an opportunity for me to grade something maybe not in front of the students or while they’re presenting an opportunity to think on something later.”

Another participant spoke about using social media to create projects stating:

They would really engage in those projects. They know what they’re doing on a computer. It saves me time because they’re not going to have to ask me a million questions like they were if we were doing a poster board project with finding hot glue, finding staplers, finding highlighters, like all that stuff. Everything is right in front of them, and they know how to use it.

All six participants perceived social media tools could be useful to help alleviate work in the classroom.

Challenges

The different perceived challenges regarding the use of social media were explored by interviewing nine participants, five of whom are current educators and four who are pre-service educators. Two major themes emerged after coding the data: (1) perceived challenges for students, and (2) perceived challenges for educators. Each major theme had sub-themes which will be described in the sections below.

Challenges For Students

All nine participants stated that there are challenges for students when using social media. From the challenges specifically related to students, two common themes emerged: (1) distractions/distractibility, and (2) engaging in social media in an inappropriate manner. All nine participants stated that social media platforms and use of these in the classroom can lead to students becoming distracted. All participants indicated that they took measures to help prevent students from becoming distracted. One participant stated:

I don't let students use social media just because they're at that age where it can be detrimental to their learning, or it can be like a kind of interruption to their education because they get distracted and are more focused on what's going on with social media rather than getting their assignment done through social media.

Another participant echoed something similar noting:

Distractions are just a big thing with social media, especially in that age group, because they want to be with their friends, you know and giving them internet access is an easy way for them to figure out somehow to contact their friends, meaning this is taking away from their learning.

One participant explained why she doesn't allow social media platforms in her classroom explaining:

I absolutely think it is a distraction for my kids. That's a reason I've blocked YouTube, and I've blocked a ton of other stuff. And on social media on their computers, there are games that they can play. I've figured all of them out and I'll block it. I tell my students you are never going to play that game because that's a distraction. And so, I've done Clever, iXL, Epic Books, stuff like that which are educational tools that we use every day. If it's blocked, then it can't serve as a distraction.

Another participant noted that the engagement aspect of social media can lead to distractions noting:

So, I do think the fact that it is so engaging can become a distraction if you're only used to being that highly engaged in using or doing something through social media on the computer or whatever, then everything else seems super lame. I don't even allow my kids to have Chromebooks during indoor recess because all they do is play games on social media. Even though they're playing games together, that's not the point of recess. So, I told them using Chromebooks would never be an option for indoor recess because the distractibility and the intensity of it is the only thing I could think of. Nothing good.

All nine participants perceived the distractibility that can occur with social media is a challenge for students and can be harmful to their learning.

Another theme that emerged from the data was the challenge of students using social media in an inappropriate way or seeing inappropriate things when using social media. Seven participants stated concern regarding what students can be exposed to on social media. Two participants stated that this is a concern, however, they had not experienced inappropriate use of social media by students. Seven participants noted that it is a challenge for using social media with students because students can be exposed to inappropriate things or use social media in an inappropriate manner. One participant explained an occurrence of a student seeing an inappropriate subject on social media stating:

I think safety is a big thing because the things that they're exposed to on there are not age appropriate. For example, one time I saw my students playing a game on social media with their friends. It looked like a racing game, but then I saw a cop pull somebody over and asked them if they'd been drinking. And I was like, 'nope, this is not a game for

elementary students.’ It’s so hard to control for things like that because you never know what will be out there. It’s not age appropriate.

Another participant noted that social media platforms are broad and contain a lot of different videos or posts. She gave an example of when this happened inside her classroom explaining:

I had a student where a kid got really upset about something and she goes, ‘I’m going to kill myself.’ Fourth grade. She’s nine years old. And I paused and said ‘I don’t think you know what that means’ and I pulled her aside and asked if she knew what it meant. And she said, ‘well my favorite YouTuber said it’. So, of course I called her mom, but it really was shocking to see what these kids can see or get on social media. Social media is great because you can see a lot of things, but social media is bad because you can see a lot of things. And for the developmental ability of a nine-year-old, you know there’s some things that aren’t developmentally appropriate.

One participant stated, “social media is dangerous. I think that with social media, students can get exposed to stuff that’s inappropriate a lot earlier than maybe we did. It’s hard to control everything that they see.” Another participant echoed this noting, “it’s bad because kids can use social media, and they don’t necessarily know what’s appropriate to put on the internet, what’s appropriate to look at on the internet and what’s not appropriate.”

Seven participants perceived a challenge to using social media for students is the risk of the students being exposed to materials that are inappropriate.

Challenges For Educators

All nine participants perceived challenges for using social media as it relates to the educator. Seven participants noted it is challenging for educators to monitor and control what their students are seeing on social media. Two participants explained they had not used a

monitoring system because they were not the primary educators, and this fell outside of the realm of their responsibility. Seven participants noted that there were programs that could be used to monitor what students are seeing on their computers and different ways to block certain websites or social media platforms. Seven participants stated that although these programs exist, it is challenging for educators to monitor and see what students are always doing and it is challenging to ensure the blocking of inappropriate materials. One participant noted:

So, we do have ways that we can monitor some of the things kids have up on their computer, but it's hard to see exactly what they're doing. And so, a lot of this with the social media would probably have to be on their phone, and that's something I can't always monitor. I have a big group of kids, it's a challenge for me to keep tabs on every kid at all times.

Another participant noted something similar stating:

It is a great resource for teachers to have to be able to monitor students' computers. You know, you can pull up the computers through different security things, and you can see what they're doing. I have between 20 and 24 kids every day. That's a lot to see everyone's screen and tabs and all of that. So, I mean it's hard to keep anyone away from doing something on the computer.

One participant noted:

There are some things the teachers and the supervisor in the school have on their computers. But they have a list, and it shows what the students are on. This is great, but if they constantly are having to monitor it, monitor this student, monitor this site, that can be time-consuming for a teacher and it's hard to look out for everybody.

Three participants noted the challenges of blocking things when using social media. Three participants noted that it is hard to control blocking up things like certain sites or advertisements that are embedded on social media platforms. One participant noted:

There are some filters and things like that which are used to block certain sites, and if there is a site that we as teachers know is blocked for the students, then we don't want them to be able to have access to it. But this can be tricky because you have to block the site as a whole. For example, you can't block specific YouTube videos. You can only block the entire site meaning no access to YouTube. This doesn't work. I want my kids to be able to use YouTube, so I can't block it entirely, but that means I also can't control blocking things or ads on YouTube that I don't want my kids to see.

Another participant echoed something similar stating:

Any of the school-issued devices, I can limit the websites they go to. Unfortunately, you can only block an entire website, so I couldn't just block everyone's YouTube channel. You would just have to take it out, the whole thing. A lot of the content on YouTube is often times blocked by our school's firewall system, but there are still instances where things pop up that aren't related to the learning materials. But that's not something I have any control over.

Eight participants stated a perceived challenge when using social media in the classroom is that it is the teachers who take the responsibility of protecting their students. Participants indicated the responsibility to protect students using social media presents itself with challenges and puts the educators at risk. One participant noted:

I think safety is a big one, and it's up to me to teach them about this. Kids don't know what's appropriate, but if they see something inappropriate in my classroom, then that's

my fault. I'm the one responsible and I let that kid see something they weren't supposed to. It's risky to use social media because you and your kids aren't always protected.

Another participant echoed something similar stating:

We assume a risk at a point. That's why I'm super strict about certain platforms like YouTube. I tell them they can play anything else but YouTube. It puts me at risk of a kid watching something they're not supposed to watch, and then a parent coming at me and being like, 'why did you let my kid watch this? Then I say, 'well, I wasn't watching them.' That's neglect on my part.

One participant noted:

I think the responsibility falls on me personally because I'm allowing students in my class. They are using computers, which I allowed them to use. They're on YouTube, which I allowed them to get on. And so, it's like I assume the risk because I think about it similarly to if we're outside at recess and I choose to let the kids do something. Well, I took them outside, I let them do this and I'm assuming the risk and the responsibility of someone breaking their arm. I think the same thing applies to letting kids use social media.

Privacy Considerations

Privacy considerations as they relate to social media were one of the main themes that emerged from the interviews conducted with five current educators and four pre-service educators. There were two major common themes that emerged after coding the data: (1) privacy concerns related to social media use outside of the classroom or using social media in a personal setting, and (2) privacy concerns related to social media use inside the classroom or using social

media in a professional or educational setting. Each major theme had sub-themes which will be discussed in the sections below.

Social Media Use Outside of the Classroom

In her work, Blythe (2015) noted that there are two different environments in which social media is used which include outside the classroom and inside the classroom, both of which come with varying privacy considerations. Social media use outside of the classroom describes any use of social media that educators use while they are outside of their school or professional environment and use of social media for personal reasons such as personal accounts on various social media platforms. This theme of educators' use of social media outside of the classroom was evident among the nine participants as all nine participants stated that each did in fact have personal accounts on social media that they used outside of the classroom. Platforms included Facebook profiles, TikTok accounts, Instagram accounts, and other platforms.

All nine participants echoed the idea that privacy considerations must be considered when using social media outside of the classroom and when accessing or engaging on platforms for personal use. All nine participants stated that each of their accounts, regardless of the platform, was set to the highest level of privacy available on the platform. For example, when using Facebook, all nine participants stated that they took steps to secure their profile page by setting it to private where only friends that they have accepted have access to view their profile. Further, all nine participants stated that they chose certain settings on their profile that require other individuals to "add," "friend," or "follow" the accounts that must be approved by the creator of the accounts, meaning each participant can deny or to approve who has access to materials that are contained in the account. One participant noted:

My Facebook is set to approve friend requests whenever I get them and I either accept them, or delete them immediately. An additional way I protect my privacy is if somebody wants to tag me in a picture or something, it asks me permission to view the post, view what's being said before I can access it to be on my timeline or for other people to see it. I like this setting because that way I can always control what's on my timeline and I can make sure something isn't on there that I wouldn't want on there. There are a lot of good privacy options when it comes to requesting and approving things.

All nine participants also stated that they do not accept requests from individuals they do not know or accept friend requests from students under any circumstances.

Due to the nature of the social media platforms, some information is required to set up accounts that will be visible to everyone, or the public. For example, to create an account, it might be required to list your first and last name, username, or other identifying information so that others can find you on the platform. Although there is some information that can be visible to the public, all nine participants indicated that when creating profiles or accounts, they only give out the minimum information that can be seen by everyone, including their students. One participant noted,

All of my accounts are private. If you search for me on the internet, you'll see my name, my profile picture, where I graduated from college, and the current school that I work at. You can see those types of things, but what you what you're not going to see is photos or posts and things like that which are in my profile. For my students they will see, oh she has a Facebook, but they can't see much else other than that. This helps me feel like my personal life is safe and my privacy is protected to the best of my ability.

Another participant noted all of her accounts are private stating:

I have all of my accounts on lock and key when it comes to privacy. I always choose the most private setting for all of them and contain minimum information like you would know I am married, and I have a dog because he's in my profile picture, and you would know nothing else about my life.

All nine participants stated to protect yourself from issues with privacy that you should keep your personal accounts set to the maximum privacy setting, only give out minimum information visible to the public, and set all of the accounts to require "adding," "friending," or "following" from any requests that are received.

Another privacy consideration that emerged in the data was taking great care of what you choose to post on your personal accounts. Eight of the nine participants stated that it is extremely important to protect your privacy on social media use by posting appropriate pictures, posts, or comments. The one participant who did not supply data that fell into this theme was because this participant never posted any types of pictures on any of their accounts. All eight participants stated that when posting pictures of yourself on your personal accounts, you must take great caution of what you are posting to ensure that you are posting appropriate photos. The eight participants also stated that you should exercise caution when posting photos even when the accounts are set to the highest privacy settings because it is the internet, and breaches of privacy can occur. One participant noted:

I feel like my personal information and pictures I post on my personal accounts are pretty private, but somebody has probably found a loophole to all of it, and you know some of it might not be as private as you think it is, so you still need to post appropriate things out there.

All eight participants stated it is important to remember that you are a professional, and that even though you are posting things to your personal account, they need to be appropriate as this reflects you both personally and professionally. All eight noted that privacy breaches can occur, and that if there are inappropriate materials posted to your personal accounts, that this can cause repercussions in your professional life. Six out of the eight participants stated this is even more important to consider protecting their privacy as they are younger teachers and feel more scrutiny and pressure due to their age group. One participant noted:

I keep everything private, and I never post anything inappropriate even when it is just on a page that my friends could see. You must separate your personal and professional life and just be aware of how those two could mesh or blend together. But I just think it's I know that as a younger teacher, I want to cover all my bases so I'm not under the scrutiny of parents who are like 'how come my kid saw a picture of you drinking a glass of wine at dinner the other night? It's easy to explain to them that I am an adult, but I try to avoid these conversations all together by just not posting pictures like that on my accounts in the first place. It helps protect me as a professional and it helps protect my privacy. If it's not on there, then nothing can be said about it.

Another participant noted something similar stating:

My personal life is my private life, but people have a way of finding things on the internet. I want to protect my privacy because it is my reputation and my professionalism. I do post but never anything inappropriate, like I wouldn't go and post a picture of me at a bar or even with a drink in my hand. I am younger so of course I might have a beer or two, but I don't want others to see that and think there's something wrong with that and I think that younger teachers can sometimes be looked at more in terms of like a

microscope by the parents or older teachers because I am so young. So, I'm very careful and cautious with what gets posted.

All eight participants stated that whenever you are posting something online that you need to ensure that it is appropriate, because even though it is private information, privacy is not always controllable on the Internet, and anyone can find things at any time.

Social Media Use Inside of the Classroom

Social media use inside of the classroom refers to using platforms when inside of the classroom by the educator or the use of social media in a professional manner. Examples of social media platforms that can be used inside of the classroom include a variety of different platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Class Dojo, and others. Educators can use social media in the classroom for a variety of reasons including sharing learning resources, educational videos, connecting with students and parents, and other ways. The use of social media inside the classroom comes with its own privacy considerations which was a common theme that emerged when coding the transcripts. All nine participants indicated that it is their responsibility to protect the privacy of the students when using social media in the classroom. Additionally, all nine participants stated that it is their responsibility to educate students about privacy and how to protect themselves both inside and outside of the classroom. One participant noted:

I think that it's beneficial and smart for us to let them be aware of protecting their own privacy and giving them some awareness on you know kind of protecting themselves and their friends and protecting their own privacy because when you are younger, you just think that it's easy to think that anything can go, and you can easily just wipe it all away. So, I think they need to be aware of protecting themselves because that stuff never goes away.

Another participant echoed this by stating:

They get a lesson on privacy on the internet and on social media. They get a lesson on talking to people on the Internet, what is safe information to share, and what's not safe information to share. So, we talk a lot about public versus private information and talk about what is safe when you are in the classroom with me and whenever you are not with me. It's to get them thinking about how important privacy is.

In terms of students using social media platforms when inside of the classroom, all nine participants stated that they take the necessary steps to protect the privacy of the students whenever different platforms are being used. For example, when using platforms such as Class Dojo or Flipgrid, all nine participants stated they made the accounts secure by requiring students to have a link or code to access the profiles which then must be approved by the educator serving as the administrator or creator of the account. One participant noted:

For all of the links to different accounts that I use in the classroom, my students have to have this link, or this join code or something like that. I know that I then have to approve this request from each individual student so that they can become a member. This means that anyone without the code or anyone that I do not approve of can never see the materials posted or the members in the group. This helps protect me as an educator, but also helps protect the privacy of my kids. I don't want anyone out there to have access to the platform, even if it's just videos of math problems. That's not safe for me, my kids or anyone else and it's my job to protect them.

Another participant noted something similar stating:

I use Flipgrid a lot, but it is very secure. We have system settings where no one without an access code can view our class group or any of the videos that students post. I send out

a link individually to the kids and their parents that I have to approve. And even before the students post to the forum, I have to approve their videos so if I see something that is concerning, I can deny posting the video and talk to the student. It's just an extra step in protecting them and their privacy. I mean they're my kids, I have them for eight hours of the day, it's up to me to keep them safe.

All nine participants stated it is the responsibility of the educator to protect the privacy of their students when using social media inside of the classroom, while it is also their responsibility to educate students about privacy when using social media whether inside or outside of the classroom.

Social media platforms offer opportunities to post pictures of individuals to show what they are doing in their lives. This can also be an opportunity for educators to show others what is happening with their students. The posting of student's pictures on social media platforms and the privacy considerations when doing so was a common theme that emerged when reviewing the data collected from the interviews. All nine participants noted that it is crucial to protect the privacy of students if you choose to post pictures of students on social media platforms, noting that it is their responsibility to make sure appropriate steps are taken prior to posting. One participant even mentioned that are laws that have been enacted, such as FERPA, that educators must abide by when considering posting pictures of students although they were unsure of how social media is explicitly addressed. Six out of the participants stated that they would exercise great caution and take the appropriate steps to post pictures of their students on social media platforms. One of the participants stated although they would exercise caution, they would choose to eliminate privacy threats in general by never posting pictures of their students on social media. The other two participants stated that because they are pre-service educators and

don't have students yet, they have not decided whether they will choose to post students' pictures on social media.

Of the six participants that indicated they would consider posting students' pictures on social media, all six stated that they would ensure they had permission from the parents prior to posting. All six participants noted that their school administrations required permission from the parents regarding their child's privacy to either allow pictures of them on social media or to request that their child's picture to never be posted and/or require them to be "blurred out" or have an alternative way of hiding their child's face from a photo (i.e., placing an emoji on their child's face if it is in a group or class photo). One participant stated:

We have a picture list of individuals who request no pictures to be taken. We also have a shared list, so we know who shouldn't have pictures posted. Our administrative side was Infinite Campus where there is a particular item that the parents select to allow pictures or do not allow pictures of my student.

Another participant stated something similar noting:

We have something called Infinite Campus. It's where our grades are, it's where our attendance is. It's a whole class list. You can go in and look up each individual and if they have a little red camera flag by their name, it means media restriction and that the parent doesn't allow their child's photo to be on social media.

Other participants spoke about different permission slips or consent forms that are required by the administration for parents to sign either allowing for or denying photo permission of their child. A participant stated:

So, I do know that they have consent forms for students which contain computer forms to basically acknowledge ‘hey if a picture were to be taken of your students can it be posted on this or posted on that?’ and then the parents can either check yes or no.

Another participant noted “At the beginning of the year, parents are sent out a permission slip that asks whether they’re allowed to post pictures of their students or not.” Again, all six participants noted that it is required to have these forms signed by the parents to allow for posting pictures of students to social media platforms and that it is imperative that they ensure they are checking these forms and exercising caution when posting pictures with students in them. All nine participants stated the importance of following guidelines to posting pictures of students regardless of if you choose to post pictures of your students or choose not to, to protect the privacy both of themselves and their students, and to exercise caution whenever using social media inside or outside of the classroom.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations regarding social media were explored by interviewing nine participants, five of whom are current educators and four who are pre-service educators. Three major common themes emerged after coding the data: (1) teaching students how to use social media appropriately, (2) withholding from engaging with students on social media platforms, and (3) issues with cyberbullying. Each major theme had sub-themes which will be described in the sections below.

Teaching Students How to Use Social Media Appropriately

Of the nine participants, eight stated that it is their ethical responsibility to educate students on how to use social media appropriately both inside and outside of the classroom. Participants noted they are the primary contact for their students when they are in the classroom

and that this role provided an opportunity for educating students on what is an appropriate use of social media and what is not. Seven out of the eight participants stated that they took time out of their teaching to explain appropriate use of social media both inside and outside of the classroom and of what students should be cautious. One participant stated, “So I think if our job is to prepare them for the real world, I think that understanding what’s safe and what’s not safe and what’s appropriate and not appropriate on the internet through social media is a crucial understanding.” Another participant stated she employed a lesson plan titled “Common Sense Media Lessons” for her grade level at least three times per semester because she perceived that educating students on how to use social media is vital and that it should be a continuously taught life lesson. Elements that the participants included in these lesson plans that noted where students should exercise caution included adding people on social media of whom an individual is unfamiliar, engaging with anonymous people on social media platforms, posting inappropriate pictures and/or comments, and the understanding of the digital footprint or timestamp that social media leaves.

Eight participants cited the anonymity and dangers of engaging with people with which one is unfamiliar. Because social media allows individuals to connect with each other anonymously or under a fake name, students can be subjected to engaging with people who can be potentially dangerous. Eight participants recognized this and explained to their students to be cautious of who they communicated with online and advised students to ensure that they know the person and to not give out any personal or private information. One participant gave explicit lessons to her students on talking to people on the internet, what is safe information to share and what is not safe information to share noting that “you are only to accept friend requests from somebody who you’ve given your username to in this classroom that you personally know.”

Another participant stated, “students need to really be informed of what is good to put out there and who to talk to. You shouldn’t be accepting random friend requests or sending pictures of yourself to random people because this is not safe.” Eight participants perceived it was their ethical responsibility to educate students about friending people on social media both inside and outside of the classroom. Additionally, all nine participants spoke with their students about posting pictures or comments and explained what is and what is not appropriate. Social media behaviors such as hurtful comments to other students, posting pictures of one’s self in an inappropriate manner, and posting pictures of others in an inappropriate manner were addressed by all nine participants. Again, all nine participants perceived that because they have their students the majority of the day and are their teachers that it is their ethical responsibility to teach their students safe ways to use technology and social media.

Four out of the eight participants stated how important it was to educate students about the timestamp or the digital footprint that social media leaves. The digital footprint refers to the notion that once something is posted on social media, it can be traced even if the post is deleted or hidden. One participant explained this to her students by stating that something that you posted years ago could bring a negative connotation to being accepted to a college or university. Another participant stated to her students that “once you put something out there, there’s no taking it back. This is the internet where everything is traceable and can be found by anyone at any time.” Four participants also explained to their students that what the students put on the internet or social media platforms can be harmful to them in the future and cautioned them on what they posted. One participant had a conversation with her students to “pause and think before you post. Are you doing this in an appropriate manner? Is it something that you will be ok with tomorrow or in the future?” to help them understand why students should be cautious of

items they post for their current and future lives. All four participants noted that it was ethically important to educate their students about the timestamp and the longevity of things posted on social media.

Engaging With Students on Social Media

Of the nine participants, all nine stated that they withhold from engaging with students on social media. This engagement includes accepting friend requests to various platforms, following students' personal social media accounts, or any other forms of engagement. In fact, seven participants noted that in Georgia there is a law that prohibits teachers or other educational professionals from engaging with students on social media prior to three months after the students have graduated high school. All nine participants stated that if a student does contact them via their personal social media, such as sending a friend request, they immediately delete it or ignore it. All nine participants also stated that if these instances occur, they take the time to explain to students that there is a power dynamic between students and teachers, and that it is unethical to engage with students and that it is breaking the law. One participant explained to her students "you're not friends with your teacher on social media, so I don't want you to be friends with me on social media because I have a personal life aside from teaching that goes beyond the classroom." Another participant told her students "There has to be a boundary because I do exist outside of school and what I do outside of school, I don't necessarily need you knowing unless I choose to tell you myself." All nine participants established boundaries with students and made it very clear of why they could not engage with students on social media when it comes to personal use.

Although all nine participants stated they withhold from engaging with students while were serving as their teachers, eight participants indicated that becoming friends with students

after they have graduated was acceptable and depended on context. One participant stated this was unacceptable no matter the circumstances. An example of a contextual instance was explained by one participant who received a friend request from a previous student so that the student could reach out to thank them for believing in them and for helping them change their life around. The other participants noted that engaging with former students on social media could be appropriate as long as it is based on the context of the situation and the underlying message. Even with it being appropriate, all eight participants noted that they do not post or comment on previous students' personal social media accounts unless they are approached by the student first.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying was a major common theme that emerged among participants' conversations. Cyberbullying refers to an act of harassment or bullying that happens via technology or social media platforms. Of the nine participants, eight stated that cyberbullying was an important issue that should be addressed when using social media. One participant stated that she did not encounter any instances of cyberbullying and accounted that to the age group of her students. All eight participants noted that with the increased use of social media, the prevalence of cyberbullying was also increasing and that was their ethical responsibility to address it and to stop it from happening. The respondents also noted that if cyberbullying was to occur inside the classroom environment, they were the people who are ethically required to step in and protect the students. All eight participants stated that if bullying occurred in the classroom, then they will be the first one to intervene and try to stop it. All eight also indicated that they do get administration involved as well as the parents. The involvement of the administration and the parents was both to protect themselves as an educator and to let other

parties know what was happening in the classroom. One participant stated, “I feel like administration would need to be involved, and especially the parents need to be informed of what is going on with their child and what their child is saying to another child.” Another participant stated, “I feel like taking it to the administration helps protect me and you can get other people’s opinion to know how to handle it going forward and if it was to happen again.” Overall, the eight participants spoke on how cyberbullying is an issue as social media increases and that it is their ethical responsibility to stop it and protect their students.

Support From Administration

Educators’ perceptions of support from administration were investigated by interviewing nine participants, five of whom are current educators and four who are pre-service educators. Two major themes emerged after coding the data: (1) the responsibility of administration and teachers when using social media, and (2) workshops and/or professional learning addressing social media use. Each major theme had sub-themes which will be described in the sections below.

Responsibilities of Administration and Educators

Social media use both inside and outside of the classroom is important to consider for both school administrations and for educators. In her work, Vie (2017) noted the dichotomy of who the responsibility falls for use of social media and if it is the responsibility of the educators using it or if it is the responsibility of the administration to set specific guidelines to be followed. The responsibilities can often be a wide range asking questions such as “who should be responsible for knowing how to appropriately use it or who is responsible for teaching the ways to appropriately use it?” or “if instances occur when using social media, is the educator responsible for handling the situation or is it the responsibility of the administration to step in?”.

Vie noted that both are equally important, but often the responsibility is placed on the educator with minimal support from the administration. This topic of whose responsibility it is was and the support received from administration was one of the major themes that emerged among the conversations with participants.

All nine participants stated that although the use of technology and social media were not required by the administration, it was encouraged in the classroom. All nine participants stated that because social media use is increasing, the administration does encourage it and that it is becoming more apparent both inside and outside of the classroom. Five of the participants noted that their administration was supportive and took responsibility for setting parameters related to social media such as providing guidelines on how to appropriately use it or monitoring what students do on their computers. One participant noted “I definitely feel support from administration, they are always putting out guidelines that fit for different platforms and they keep us up to date. I never feel like I’m breaking any rules in class because the rules have been outlined.” Another participant mentioned:

As an educator, I believe that it is their [administration]responsibility to keep you up to date and to keep you informed and make sure you know that you are doing and stuff like that. I think my administration does a pretty good job with this.

One participant stated:

They have been very helpful over the years. Some things that come from the Professional Standards Commission are being updated, and then our county reviews it and updates things as needed. I think it’s hard with a lot of the social media because it is changing at a pretty rapid pace, but I think that they are doing the best they can.

Five participants also stated that their administration took responsibility for things related to social media in that the administration used programs, such as Securely, to monitor what students are doing on their computers at all times and have the ability to go into the computer and block harmful websites or platforms. Additionally, all five participants stated that they were aware of who to contact if they needed additional support for using social media.

Four of the participants stated that they did not feel that their administration supported them or took on the responsibility of educating the appropriate use of social media or providing guidelines on what is and what is not appropriate when using social media. All four participants noted that they perceived responsibility was placed on them and that little to no responsibility fell on the administration. Four participants perceived it was up to the discretion of the educator to know how to use social media and how to respond to instances of misuse of social media rather than having clear and established guidelines set forth by the administration. Four participants noted that they typically navigated the guidelines of using social media by learning what other educators had done instead of getting guidance from administration. One participant stated:

Admin very rarely does anything to support teachers, including the use of social media. Who's protecting the teachers right now? Nobody is. No one's protecting the teachers. It's the teachers protecting themselves from admin, from pushback from admin. It's teachers protecting themselves from parents. And its teachers protecting themselves from a lot.

Another participant echoed this noting:

We have PLs [professional learning] on everything under the sun other than stuff that I feel like actually matters regarding kids' safety and our safety and that's something I'm

really frustrated with right now because we are expected to protect our kids, but then who is protecting us? We need guidelines from the people who are supposed to be supporting us.

All four participants noted that they were unsure of who to contact if they had a question about using social media. All four participants stated how important it was for the administration to accept some responsibility for establishing rules and guidelines when using social media to protect themselves as educators and to protect their students.

Workshops/Professional Development Courses Regarding Social Media Use

Workshops or professional development courses (PLs or PDs) are often given out to educators and other professionals who work in the school environment to provide new knowledge, new resources, and other helpful benefits for educators. Workshops and PL's related to social media use were a common theme that emerged throughout the responses from the participants. All nine participants stated that having workshops to teach how you can use social media, how to appropriately use social media, and the different tools you can use were vital for educators and should be offered by school districts and administration. One participant noted:

I think that these workshops would be great because there's something always new that you can learn out there. And so, I feel like you know what would be helpful for everybody to see what's out there, what they can do with these platforms, and stuff like that. I think that would be very beneficial for everyone.

Another participant echoed this stating:

I think that they would be useful because there's new stuff coming out every day, and we're always changing and constantly evolving. So, I think it is important to have those workshops keeping you kind of in the loop and updated on what was going on. And that

also benefits students if you're caught up and you're doing stuff that they like to do. It helps with their motivation and that type of thing.

One participant stated, "it's like a PL would be great of like 'hey if you don't want people seeing this, here's ways you could hide this.' When we're using social media here's really great tips and tricks." All nine participants noted how important and beneficial these types of workshops would be.

Four participants stated their schools did provide workshops on social media use. The participants noted that these workshops typically take place on days that are provided by the schools to host educator professional learning sessions. One participant noted:

And we'll at times have professional learning days where one of the opportunities is like how to incorporate social media and technology into the classroom. Any a workshop they were like 'here's how to use this type of platform and there would certainly be a tutorial on how to make sure it's private.

Another participant stated:

They wanted us to do these things that they were called Digital Content Stations, which was how they taught you how to use different platforms. I think that while often PDs revolve around technology, it is important to include social media because you have a wide range of teacher understanding about what social media can do.

One participant noted that in his district, there was a specific person who gave these types of workshops for educators explaining:

There is a program in which one person goes around to the primary school, the elementary school, middle, and high. She'd go around to one school a week and do a workshop with a grade level where she would go and she would show them new

programs, how to use them, and the different kind of tools and activities to use with the technology and social media.

All four participants noted that the workshops were helpful and beneficial for educators when using technology and social media inside and outside of the classroom.

Five participants stated that there were no workshops that had been offered to them or that they could participate in. All five participants indicated that these would be helpful, but currently have not been developed by their administration. One participant noted:

We have digital days at our school where the kids are at home doing digital stuff and we, as teachers, are leading professional development. But it's up to us and not so much given by outside sources like administration or like an IT person or something like that. We lead things related to our own classroom, like ELA, but there isn't anything about utilizing social media in the classroom. I think they might have done something in the past, but honestly, I don't think they have ever given anything related to social media. I think this would be helpful, because I think we're talking about being an inclusive classroom, being a culturally responsive classroom, and our students are using it which means we should know how to use it tool.

Another participant noted:

While we have workshops on technology, it's not specific to social media. But because social media is in our lives, it's important to know how to use it. I think workshops would need to focus more on the privacy aspect of it and making sure that you're doing all you can to keep these kids safe and not just safe physically, but safe, like their reputation safe, and make sure they're doing what they're supposed to. And these workshops would make

sure everybody in the whole school has been covered on this and is on the same page about social media.

Three participants stated they have approached the administration on multiple occasions about creating and implementing workshops specifically for social media use and that it should be required for educators to attend. All three participants received pushbacks from the administration where the administration allocated the lack of workshops to being too time consuming to create. One participant noted, “the whole excuse is ‘well there’s just not that much time.’ or ‘oh we’ll see what we can do, and then move on with our lives and completely forget about doing anything about it.’” All five participants stated the importance of these workshops and perceived that it is crucial that administration should be providing these for educators. One participant remarked, “I think, you know as teachers we are expected to keep up with the times and have to evolve, and I think our admin should be held to the same standards and doing the same thing.”

Discussion

Social media is a multifaceted experience that is becoming increasingly prevalent in the daily lives of individuals across the globe. One such aspect that social media use is being integrated into our lives is its use in the educational setting for both students and educators. There have been multiple studies in the literature that have investigated the use of social media in the classroom as an alternative education-oriented tool which provides for both benefits and challenges for educators and students (Emerick et al., 2019; Hickerson & Kothari, 2017; Mao, 2014). Studies also have indicated that some educators require students to engage with social media platforms for things such as connectivity, engaging in peer discussions, or creating original content and that educators are paying more attention to ways in which to use social

media in the classroom (Elavsky et al., 2011; Sutherland et al., 2020). Although educators are aware of the use of social media in the classroom, there is a gap in the literature of educators' perceptions regarding social media in the classroom as many of the studies have investigated the perceptions of students rather than focusing on educators (Dirjal et al., 2022; Kara et al., 2020; Shaw, 2017). Furthermore, there is a gap in literature specifically as it relates to the issues of privacy and ethical considerations when using social media in the classroom (Blyth, 2015; Obar & Oeldorf-Hirsch, 2020; Tseng et al., 2019). Additionally, the support from administration for using social media in the classroom was another apparent gap in the literature (Vie, 2017). The current study sought to address these gaps by identifying the perceptions of educators as they relate to benefits, challenges, privacy and ethical considerations, and perceived support from the administration.

Benefits of social media include enhancing learning by providing access for students and instructors, increasing communication between students and teachers, and promoting alternative ways for collaboration and learning (Emerick et al., 2019). Additional benefits noted in the literature include providing ways for individuals who are unable to be physically present in learning spaces to access and to engage with materials; allowing for students who are uncomfortable speaking in a classroom setting to express their learning; and using social media as a way to share class relevant materials such as educational videos, photos, or posts (Abe & Jordan, 2013; Chugh, 2018; Elavsky et al., 2011).

The purpose of the current study was to investigate whether the participants stated similar or different benefits they found when using social media. The results from the analysis of interview data suggested educators and pre-service educators did find many of the same benefits. Participants recognized benefits from social media and noted that it was a fun and alternative

way to present materials to students and was engaging and interactive. Participants echoed other benefits noted in the literature regarding social media as an alternative educational tool which can be used to modify teaching and for students to re-learn content. Results also indicated that participants felt social media was a beneficial tool for connecting with students and served as a way for communicating with students. Participants noted that they used social media as a tool to show educational videos and offer supplemental materials for students, which was a benefit found in earlier studies (Chugh, 2018; Elavsky et al., 2011; Emerick et al., 2019). Results also revealed additional benefits that went beyond the scope of previous research. One such benefit was the communication with parents and the ease of which social media platforms allow for such communication. Another benefit specifically for the educators was that use of social media can help alleviate work for teachers by providing help with documentation, providing students with other professional's educational videos, and allowing students to create projects on social media rather than traditional approaches (i.e., providing materials such as paper, pencils, etc. versus providing students with a platform that contains everything students will need).

Different challenges associated with using social media in the classroom have been documented in prior research. Many studies have investigated whether social media use in the classroom hinders or improves learning, noting that the use of social media in the classroom can dull students' motivation for academic instruction and activities and can distract students' attention from their coursework (Emerick et al., 2019; Hickerson & Kothari, 2017). Other researchers have found that students have admitted to being distracted in the classroom when using social media or when their peers are using it (Kuznekoff & Titsworth, 2013).

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the perceived challenges related to using social media in the classroom for both students and educators. The results from this

analysis indicated the participants felt there were similar challenges noted by prior research. We found that participants thought social media use in the classroom can lead to students becoming distracted and can dull their motivation in an academic setting. We also found a challenge that went beyond the scope of the previous research in that participants perceived that social media could be used in an inappropriate manner or that students could see inappropriate things on social media regardless of the safety measures that were put in place by the educators. This finding is important because the inappropriate use of social media or students being exposed to inappropriate content is vital to protecting the safety of the students and educators. The participants noted that it is challenging for educators to monitor and control what their students see on social media, which was not addressed in previous literature. Furthermore, we found a challenge specifically related to educators in that it is the teachers who take the responsibility of protecting their students. This notion was not explored in prior studies but is important for educators to understand that if it is their responsibility, then they need to be aware of the consequences and actions needed to be taken for both educators and students to use social media appropriately in the classroom.

Privacy has been investigated by prior research and has been noted as one of the most challenging issues embedded within social media for both students and educators (Obar & Oeldorf-Hirsch, 2020; Steinfeld, 2016). Studies have noted that privacy occurs when using social media outside of the classroom space, or personal use, and inside the classroom space, or professional use (Blyth, 2015). Educators face privacy issues in the realm of both spaces where their personal information can be readily available on social media which can be seen by the public, which can lead to issues with educators personal and professional lives (Blyth, 2015). Although studies have documented privacy considerations, there are gaps in the literature as they

specifically relates to the professional and personal use of social media for educators and students (Blyth, 2015; Sutherland et al., 2020; Vie, 2017).

The purpose of the current study also was to investigate and to address gaps in the literature regarding privacy considerations when using social media outside and inside of the classroom, specifically from the educators' perspective. We found that participants echoed the findings of previous literature noting that privacy is imperative when using social media for personal use. The findings went beyond previous literature as participants spoke about the importance of setting their social media platforms to the highest level of privacy and the different steps they took to secure their profiles and their privacy settings. Participants also noted that they didn't allow for any individual to engage with them on their platforms, stating they would need to approve any request meaning they could control who had access to their personal platforms. This need for privacy and security on different platforms is an important finding because it highlights the perceptions of educators to protect their privacy and the steps future educators can take to ensure they are protected. Additionally, participants spoke about protecting the privacy when using social media inside of the classroom. We found that participants stated that it is their responsibility to protect the privacy of themselves and of their students when using social media inside of the classroom. Protecting the privacy of students was something that was not highlighted in prior studies; however, we found new insights into how educators can protect the privacy of everyone involved in the classroom including requiring students to have links to platforms or having consent when posting pictures of students on social media platforms in an academic setting. This is important for current and future educators to understand and ensure they are protecting themselves and students. Another main theme we found that has not been explicitly addressed in previous literature was the idea that it is the educators' responsibility to

inform and educate their students about privacy. This is an important finding because this highlights how educators perceive it is their duty to begin and to continue to teach students about privacy as it relates to social media.

Ethical considerations as they relate have been discussed in previous literature. Social media provides opportunities to social network; however, it also provides opportunities for educators and students to cross professional boundaries which can lead to unethical outcomes (Baker, 2013; Daigle, 2020). Platforms can encourage things such as friend requests or followings, which can blur ethical guidelines, meaning it is the responsibility of educators to maintain integrity in practice, and to act ethically and professionally about the nature of the student and educator relationship (Daigle, 2020). Prior studies have investigated these types of ethical considerations; however, there are still gaps in the research related to these relationships, and other ethical considerations.

The purpose of the current study also was to investigate the perceptions of educators as it relates to ethical considerations when using social media and address gaps in the literature. By examining the data, we found similar findings in that participants stated it is unethical to friend or engage with current students on any type of personal social media platforms. We found that participants also thought if instances occur where they were friended it was important to educate students on why this is not ethically appropriate due to the power dynamic of the student-educator relationship, and that it is breaking the law. The findings of educators' perceptions of engaging with students on social media as unethical and illegal are important for current and future educators to understand because it helps protect them and their students. These findings highlight how educators believe it is unethical and that these instances should be handled in appropriate manners. Additionally, we found an important ethical consideration stemming

beyond known studies in that it was perceived to be the educators' responsibility to teach students how to use social media appropriately. Our findings indicated that educators play a vital role in taking time to explain appropriate use of social media both inside and outside of the classroom. This is an important finding for current and future educators as they serve as the primary contact for students when they are in the classroom, and that it is ethically their responsibility to help students understand what is safe and what is not safe in helping to protect their students. This was a finding that was not addressed in prior studies but is important for educators to understand moving forward. Another ethical consideration we found that was not addressed in the literature as it related to social media was the instances of cyberbullying. We found that with increased use of social media, educators perceived the prevalence of cyberbullying is increasing and that it is educators' ethical responsibility to address it and stop it from happening. This is important because as cyberbullying is increasing, educators need to be aware of it, and learn of ways in how to appropriately and ethically respond when instances occur.

The use of social media in the classroom has sparked debate in the literature concerning who is responsible, and who is responsible for teaching educators how to appropriately use social media. Although studies indicate the importance of educators knowing how to appropriately use it, there is a gap in the literature in the support from institutions to adhere to teaching educators' skills, resulting in hesitant and apprehensive perceptions of using social media in the classroom or who to contact if questions arise (Sutherland et al., 2020; Vie, 2017). Furthermore, there is a gap in the literature regarding the perceptions of educators about the support or lack of support they receive from administration such as providing workshops, guidelines, and other resources as it relates to social media (Vie, 2017).

Because there was an existing gap in the literature, this study was aimed at investigating the educators' perceptions about the support they received from administration. We found that all educators felt that support was needed from the administration, specifically workshops or professional workshops should be given to teach how you can use social media, the different tools you can use, and how to appropriately use social media both inside and outside of the classroom. This finding is important because it highlights the perceived need from educators for administration to provide these workshops, many of which are not being offered to educators currently. The results from the data collected were interesting in that the support from administration was split down the middle with one section of participants feeling they did have support, while the other section didn't feel like they had support. Support from administration included having explicit guidelines and rules for using social media, in addition to having a person to reference if they had questions. The lack of support from administration included having no clear guidelines or a person to contact if questions when using social media were to arise. The researcher allowed for a hypothesis to emerge after coding the data and hypothesized that these findings were due to where the school was located, and the demographics of the location (i.e., rural versus urban; poor versus affluent districts). The researcher hypothesized that schools located in more rural areas or those located in poorer districts indicated less support from administration due to things such as budgets, time, and other resources. The findings from this are important because it highlights a discrepancy between different school locations, or districts, and the willingness of the administration to educate and to aid regarding social media use. We found that all educators felt like they needed to be supported by administration and that it is important for all school administrations to be diligent in providing support for all educators regardless of the school or district in which they teach.

Implications

Much of the literature regarding social media use as an educational tool has documented benefits, challenges, privacy and ethical considerations, and support from administration (Hickerson & Kothari, 2017; Manca & Ranieri, 2017; Sutherland et al., 2020; Vie, 2017). However, much of the research that has investigated these things has focused on the perceptions of students rather than the perceptions of educators (Dirjal et al., 2022; Kara et al., 2020). Additionally, the small amount of studies that have examined the perceptions of educators have asked questions about educators' enjoying the use of social media or if they find it helpful for students without paying attention to important concerns such as ethical and privacy considerations (Blyth, 2017; Dirjal et al., 2022; Kara et al., 2020). This study went beyond the current literature by investigating the different aspects of social media as they specifically relate to the perceptions of educators by conducting in-depth interviews to understand the different aspects of social media both inside and outside of the classroom. Privacy and ethical considerations were also explored in a deeper way to understand the perceptions of educators about these important aspects of social media use that have been primarily unaddressed by previous literature. Although the study was conducted using a qualitative methodology and results cannot be generalized, there are implications from the findings. The perceptions of educators go far beyond the idea of whether educators enjoy using it or if they find it helpful as evidenced by all the different themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data. The perceptions of educators on privacy and ethical considerations emerged as primary concerns and are important to reconcile for both current and future educators to protect themselves and their students from inappropriate use of social media.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although there are promising results from this study, additional research is needed to continue to explore and refine the perceptions of educators using social media. For example, this study contained a small group of only nine participants which is not conducive to generalizing the perceptions of all educators regarding social media use. Another limitation was that the population contained only one individual over the age of 40, while all others were under 40. This is a limitation in the fact that the population might have been more comfortable using social media platforms as they have more experience with it, while an older individual might not have the same knowledge or comfortability using social media platforms. Future studies should investigate whether there is a difference when using social media platforms by obtaining a population representative of a wider range of age groups. Additionally, the population contained all Caucasian individuals, except for one participant who identified as Latinx. It is important for future studies to obtain a population with more diversity as this could impact the perceptions of individuals when using social media. Further exploration of this phenomenon is needed to continue to understand the perceptions of educators regarding using social media. Future studies might consider using a more representative and larger population, in addition to using different methodologies such as quantitative approaches.

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CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

The current study was aimed at investigating the use of social media platforms in two different settings: in the personal lives of individuals and in the educational environment. Social media is becoming increasingly prevalent in its daily use and allows for individuals to connect with others and utilize the different platforms for different ways for different audiences (Parks, 2017). Personal use of social media was investigated in the first study by exploring how the use of Instagram is related to body image related constructs among individuals. The personal use of social media was investigated, and results suggested there is a relationship between the use of Instagram and body image related constructs specifically as it relates to awareness, internalization, and media pressure. Results went beyond previous literature that mainly has investigated the impact of Facebook on body image related constructs. These findings are important for future researchers to consider continuing to explore the relationship between Instagram and body image related constructs in order to help determine what factors contribute to concerns related to body image constructs and ways in which understanding these factors might help to prevent or exacerbate the negative effects of media exposure on body image related constructs (McLean et al., 2016). Furthermore, the study investigated positive body image trends occurring on Instagram and found that these are occurring. Future studies should be conducted to investigate these trends, again, exploring ways in which to help mitigate concerns related to body image constructs among Instagram users.

The use of social media in an educational environment was also explored through the second study. While social media has been explored in this environment, the research has mainly focused on the perceptions of students rather than looking at the perceptions of educators (Dirjal et al., 2022; Kara et al., 2020; Shaw, 2017). The current study went beyond current literature to investigate the perceptions of educators when using social media in the classroom in terms of benefits, challenges, privacy, ethical considerations, and support from the administration. The findings from the study suggested that educators find both benefits and challenges in using social media. Furthermore, the study investigated in depth the privacy and ethical considerations for using social media in the classroom from an educators' perspective and found specific concerns. Additionally, the support from administration was investigated, and again, showed that educators have concerns about the level of support they might receive from administration. Based on the results, future studies should be conducted to continue to explore the perceptions of educators when using social media in the classroom.

Both studies investigated the construct of social media and how it can impact personal and professional lives. The results from each study were important because they give direction for future studies to continue to investigate how social media plays a vital role in two different settings. Each study had its own limitations, which were noted, with suggesting future research to address these limitations. As social media use continues to evolve and reside in the lives of individuals, it is important for future research to evolve and investigate it. The results from the two studies were promising and support the need for additional research to investigate social media both in the personal lives of individuals and how it can be used in educational contexts.