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Measuring Rural P-12 Teachers' Attitudes, Perceptions, and Utilizations of Social Media

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Abstract

Social media continues to evolve and change the way people interact, learn, and communicate. As social media continues to grow in importance within societies, it is critical to better understand how teachers view social media as an educational resource. This quantitative study examines the general attitudes, perceptions, and utilizations of social media among P-12 teachers in a rural school district. Findings indicate that most teachers view social media as a high risk proposition for student use in the classroom, but do see social media as potentially useful and relevant to learning in the P-12 classroom.

Keywords: Survey Research, Social Media, Teachers, Rural Education

Introduction

A corpus of literature in the field of education research advocates for the integration of social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram in the P-12 classroom to enrich teaching and learning (Abe & Jordan, 2013; Carpenter & Krutka, 2014; Mao, 2014). Publications exploring the domain of social media use for educational purposes are generally divided into two thematic strands. The first focuses on disseminating pedagogically coherent strategies designed to leverage social media to foster 21st century skills that are applicable and transferable beyond the classroom (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2009; Elavsky, Mislen, Elavsky, 2011; Varier, Dumke, Abrams, Conklin, Barnes, & Hoover, 2017; Kenna & Hensley, 2018; Hoffman, 2017). The second highlights the opportunity for educators to join informal professional learning communities by actively and passively engaging with other teachers, scholars, and experts (Carpenter &Krutka, 2014; Coleman, Rice, & Wright, 2018; Essary & Szecsi, 2018; Langhorst, 2015; Li & Greenhow, 2015; Trust, Krutka, & Carpenter, 2016).

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No doubt that publications in both camps share innovative ideas for leveraging social media's multimodal functionality to enhance teaching and learning. However, after reviewing a number of refereed education publications (e.g. Carpenter &Krutka, 2014; Coleman, Rice, & Wright, 2018; Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2009; Elavsky, Mislen, Elavsky, 2011; Kilinc et al., 2018; Kenna & Hensley, 2018; Hoffman, 2017; Langhorst, 2015; Li & Greenhow, 2015;Varier, Dumke, Abrams, Conklin, Barnes, & Hoover, 2017;Trust, Krutka, & Carpenter, 2016; Sturm & Quaynor, 2020; Yigit & Tarman, 2013) that advocate for the integration of social media, it is apparent that many draw directly on secondary teachers' perceptions of social media (Johnson, 2014). There is a dearth in extant literature that reports the attitudes and perceptions of social media from P-12 teachers, thus creating a gap in the understanding of K-5 and early middle school teachers' attitudes and perceptions toward social media. Without this foundational knowledge to inform future research and practitioner pieces, scholars may lose focus of keeping their proposed strategies/utilizations relevant and representative of the educators they are writing for by making implicit assumptions regarding teachers' perceptions of social media in general.

As research and scholarship related to teachers use of social media continue to proliferate, progress toward identifying P-12 teachers', not just secondary teachers', perceptions and attitudes toward social media is salient. This article seeks to make initial strides toward filling a gap in the literature, specifically by measuring the general attitudes, perceptions, and utilizations of social media by P-12 teachers in a rural school district in the southeast United States. First, we provide readers with parameters of what constitutes social media by drawing form the definition provided by the SAGE Handbook of Social Media Research Methods (2016). Next, we briefly review relevant literature involving social media for educational purposes, as well as extant literature highlighting the impacts of social media on rural school districts. In doing so, we aim to situate the reader in the context ofwhat is currently happening in the field of educational research that focuses on social media, thus subsequently establishing a salient claim for our descriptive study. Our study seeks to extend the understanding of social media use by P-12 educators beyond 'how' and even 'why' they use social media in their classrooms, but rather exploring 'what' general attitudes, perceptions, and concerns toward social media they hold. This knowledge will ideally extend the foundational understanding of social media use in education, while informing future scholarship and ideally making it more relevant and pragmatic to P-12 teachers of diverse disciplines and school contexts.

Literature Review

Social media has become a blanketed term to encompass a number of online platforms that allow for connectivity and engagement among users. Due to this reality, delineating social media from other online applications and interactive websites has become increasingly arduous. Sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat idiosyncratically blur the lines between communication, entertainment, and news, while others such as Pinterest and Pocket serve primarily as curation tools that allow for some level of connectivity with other users. Broad descriptions of what constitutes a platform as being social media can be problematic in the realm of research, as some individuals may think a certain platform is social media, while others may not and vice versa. According to The SAGE Handbook of Social Media Research

Methods (2016) the following three characteristics are used to define a platform as being social media:

1. Have the capability to support user-generated content in forms such as images, text, videos and statuses (such as geolocation check-ins).
2. Provide a means for users to connect with one another (through follows or likes on Twitter, friendship connections on Facebook, or checking in with Foursquare).
3. Support various means for members to engage with one another in the form of collaboration, community building, participation, sharing, linking and other means.
    (Sloan & Quan-Haase, 2016, p. 6)

The characteristics presented above are not the end all be all characteristics that should be used to define something as social media, especially as other web platforms and applications are beginning to use similar functionalities. For example, Google and Microsoft Outlook both offer dynamic functionality through their email and cloud services that meet all three of the aforementioned characteristics. Users can communicate and interact with other users on the same interface by liking emails, sending instant messages, sharing content, pictures, videos, music, and other documents through their cloud services (i.e. Google Drive and SharePoint). As technologies continue to update and change, the characteristics mentioned by The SAGE Handbook of Social Media Research Methods will be updated as well. However, these characteristics are useful when providing readers a definition of social media for the purposes of this survey research project.

Education Research Involving Social Media

As mentioned earlier, education research exploring social media has largely advocated for theory-laden classroom strategies, as well as the use of social media as an informal teacher professional development resource. In regard to the former, some of the strategies highlighted in the research include: fostering communication, collaboration, civic engagement among students (Kenna & Hensley, 2018; Tarman et al., 2019), engaging students in differentiated literacy activities, engaging students to be critical consumers of news, and to mitigate confirmation bias by following multiple news sources. In regard to the latter, literature supports the engagement in the informal professional development opportunities afforded by social media, i.e. Twitter chats such as #edchat or #sschat. These serve as 24/7 learning and support resources for those who decide to utilize them. Initial strides have been made by researchers to identify the underpinnings of social media use for educational purposes by asking important questions such as why and how P-12 educators are using social media (Carpenter & Krutka, 2014; Krutka& Carpenter 2016). Albeit these questions are important to this area of research, they may be a bit premature as they adorn implicit assumptions regarding teachers' general perceptions of social media.

Despite the abundance of innovative strategies available to leverage social media's functionality in the classroom, if a teacher does not implicitly view social media as a beneficial learning too klit is unlikely to be implemented in their instruction. Identifying teachers' personal perceptions and assumptions of social media is critical because it will help researchers,

administrators, and policy makers understand if teachers' even view social media as a viable teaching resource. Advocating for pedagogical and professional strategies involving social media without first knowing how teachers' feel about social media seems short sided and potentially redundant.

Social Media & Rural School Districts

Social media continues to evolve and increasingly define various aspects of modern culture. As a whole, people are also becoming gradually more dependent on social media platforms' multimodal functionality to stay connected, informed, entertained, and/or a combination of all three. One of the benefits of social media's multimodal functionality and connectivity features is that it stands to benefit various school contexts, including rural school districts with limited resources and isolation barriers. Despite the rise of technology integration initiatives, such as one-to-one programs which provide individual students in a school or district with a device to use throughout the year, not all schools receive this luxury. As a response to the reality of the school context, some teachers and school districts have established a bring your own device (BYOD) program (Rizzo, 2013; Williams, 2014), which permit students to use their personal device for school work. This has shown to be beneficial as utilizations of the students' personal phones to access the Internet and social media platforms in a monitored and constructive learning environment (Lee & Molbash, 2014; Miller & Cinnamon, 2013; O'Brien, Barker,& Ellsworth, 2013; White, 2020).

BYOD requires careful planning and facilitation on behalf of the teacher (Rizzo, 2013; Williams, 2014), specifically setting aside time to teach students how to responsibly and respectfully engage on social media. While barriers of isolation and lack of resources that have historically plagued rural school districts may remain present, social media integration has the potential to create an ease of access. This would allow students in rural districts to practice crucial twenty-first century skills, such as collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creation (Varier et al., 2017). Thus, familiarizing and educating students on how to appropriately use social media may transcend a rural classroom beyond the "four walls" by offering rewarding learning experiences that also employ 21st century skills via a relevant and relatable medium. Furthermore, the use of social media in the classroom can create teachable moments for educators to emphasize the increasingly important principles of digital citizenship and the potential perils of Cyberbullying or other inappropriate social media postings. As with any new teaching strategy, integrating social media into a classroom takes time and should never be implemented on a whim. However, when implemented with fidelity, the results can lead to students having a better understanding of how to responsibly navigate the complex world of social media despite their school context or other barriers (Ertmer, et.al, 2012).

On the other hand, social media integration can also be beneficial for rural school district teachers that may sometimes face isolation or are not receiving adequate professional development. Thacker (2017) highlights the stark reality that social studies professional development for teachers is marginalized. Moreover, some rural teachers may be the only teacher for their content area across multiple grade levels, thus having limited access to a

professional learning community (PLC) in their school or district. Social media presents the opportunity to offer some assistance to this situation through the presence of virtual PLCs on platforms like Twitter. Teachers may engage and contribute to communities of learners made up of education professionals and scholars related to their content areas any time and from anywhere. Virtual PLCs housed in social media platforms, like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram may potentially assuage the feeling of isolation that rural teachers can sometimes experience by serving as a virtual space for collaboration with other educators.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework employed in this study is concerns-based adoption model (CBAM), beginning with the assertion that teacher attitudes and perceptions towards change and innovation are diverse and complex (Hall & Hord, 1987). Hall & Hord (1987) define *concern* as:

> the composite representation of the feelings, the preoccupation,
> thought and consideration given to a particular issue or task.
> Depending on our personal makeup, knowledge, and experiences,
> each person perceives and mentally contends with a given issue
> differently; thus, there are different kinds of concerns (Hall & Hord,
> 1987, p. 61).

Hall and Hord's (1987) CBAM framework includes Stages of Concern, which include, (1) unconcerned; (2) informational; (3) personal; (4) management; (5) consequence; (6) collaboration; and (7) refocusing (Hall & Hord, 1987). This framework is germane to our study, which focuses on measuring P-12 educators' attitudes, perceptions, and utilizations of social media use. It allows the researcher to analyze the data findings through contextual lenses to better understand the personal influences and concerns that may impact P-12 educator perceptions attitudes, and utilizations of social media integration in the classroom. Moreover, it allows for informed training programs associated with technology integration, like social media so as to address the diverse concerns of teachers.

Purpose of the Study

It's important to note that the researchers do not refute the notion that social media can and does serve as an enriching tool to support teachers in both their pedagogical practice and professional development. Rather, the purpose of this survey instrument is to measure the attitudes, perceptions, and utilizations of social media by P-12 teachers in a rural school district. There are currently no instruments that measure the general attitudes, perceptions, and utilizations of social media (specifically) by P-12 teachers. Instruments that have been created to measure attitudes, perceptions, and utilizations of social media by teachers have mainly targeted secondary teachers (Johnson, 2014). Reasons for this focus on the secondary level could potentially be attributed to the fact that most social media platforms require their users to be at least thirteen years of age before legally signing up for an account (Childnet, 2018). Despite the age restriction set by social media platforms, that does not necessarily mean that teachers cannot still employ content published and shared on social media to supplement their lessons. Thus, this survey research study seeks to better understand the perceptions of social

media as an instructional tool by P-12 teachers in a rural school district. This data will provide generalizable results that can be drawn upon to strengthen future studies that advocate for the use of social media, while also supporting school districts in their endeavors to provide meaningful and relevant professional development that involves social media.

Methods

Research Questions

This research study focuses on examining the attitudes, perceptions, and utilizations of rural P-12 teachers' general use of social media. To measure these constructs, the researchers employed a quantitative approach, which included the use of survey research methods (Johnson, 2014). The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What opinions toward social media do P-12 teachers hold?
2. What personal concerns toward social media do P-12 teachers hold?
3. What are P-12 teachers' perceptions of social media in the classroom?
4. What are P-12 teachers' perceptions of social media on learning and engagement?
5. Is there a statistically significant relationship between elementary, middle, and high school teachers and opinions of social media?
6. Is there a statistically significant relationship between elementary, middle, and high school teachers and personal concerns toward social media?
7. Is there a statistically significant relationship between elementary, middle, and high school teachers and perceptions of social media in the classroom?
8. Is there a statistically significant relationship between elementary, middle, and high school teachers and perceptions of social media on learning and engagement?

Sample

This study employed a non-probability voluntary sampling method (Taherdoost, 2016). The reason for using this sampling procedure is due to the cost and time effectiveness of the technique. The survey instrument was disseminated by an assistant superintendent to approximately 533P-12 teachers in a classified rural school district in the southeast United States.P-12 teachers in the target population were invited to participate in the survey. Sampling participants were informed in the invitation letter that their participation was completely voluntary. The final sample size for this study was N=140. Respondents in this study were P-12 teachers that work in a classified rural school district in the southeastern United States. Participants completed the survey using Google Forms on their own time and on their own computing device. Therefore, the exact site/location of where participants completed the survey is unknown.

Research Instrument
The questionnaire items utilized in this survey research study were constructed by the researchers and were adapted from Johnson's (2014) Mobile Learning Survey for High School Teachers, which measured the attitudes, perceptions and utilizations of mobile technology

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tools. The researchers adapted the survey to measure the attitudes, perceptions, and utilizations of social media as it applies to P-12 teachers in general. The questionnaire items were developed to measure the attitudes, perceptions, and utilizations of social media (specifically) by P-12 teachers, not just teachers in the secondary grades.

To do this, the questionnaire items were framed under six demarcated sections: prior knowledge regarding the use of social media; how they think their students use social media; perceptions of social media utilization in the classroom; perceptions of social media usage on students' learning and engagement in the classroom; faculty opinions on social media use; personal concerns regarding social media (Johnson, 2014). The survey items used in this study are appended (Appendix A) to the end of this manuscript.

In addition to adapting the questions in Johnson's (2014) original survey to be more aligned to social media use specifically and making the survey questions more applicable to P-12 teachers, the response options were also adapted. The original survey used a four-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree with no neutral option. The researchers employed a five-point Likert scale in their reconstruction and adaptation of Johnson's (2014) instrument to limit the feeling of forced choice while taking the survey. The scale response items were as follows: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 =Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree, 0 = Prefer not to answer. The items were pre-tested and reviewed by colleagues prior to the launching of a pilot study to check for reliability and validity of the newly modified survey instrument.

Reliability& Validity

Johnson's (2014) original Mobile Learning Survey for High School Teachers was constructed specifically for the 2014 study as scholarship at the time lacked any reliable, valid, or tested instruments. Items in the original instrument underwent reliability and validity screenings before being disseminated to participants. Fifty-two items were constructed and divided into seven sections using content validity practices to ensure items were representative of extant research literature (Johnson, 2014). Moreover, the original instrument was beta-tested using a convenience sample of twenty teachers that were representative of the intended population (Johnson, 2014). Beta-test participants suggested minor improvements to the instrument, including rewording item sixteen, as well as changing the response options for the question regarding age from reporting exact age to age range options (Johnson, 2014).

To assess the reliability and validity of the modified survey items used in this study, the researchers utilized a focus group of 14 teachers (one from each grade level P-12) who served as critical peer-reviewers. By employing a constant member checking system for each survey item, the teachers in the focus group provided input and feedback regarding information that should be included or removed from the instrument. This procedure informed and aided in the further development of the instrument (Creswell, 2007). Finally, experts in the field of survey research and quantitative research methods were consulted for additional input and to strengthen the validity of the instrument items in the study. A measure of scale reliability was calculated by running a Cronbach Alpha analysis on the modified Likert scale survey items

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disseminated to participants (N=140) in this study. The Cronbach alpha (α =.937) indicated a high measure of internal consistency among survey items.

Procedures

The researchers disseminated the instrument to the targeted school district's assistant superintendent who agreed to forward the instrument to the fifteen principals in the district. The school principals were requested to forward this email with the instrument and informed consent documents to the teachers in their respective schools. The duration of data collection lasted a total of three weeks. There were two follow up reminder emails sent out by the fifteen administrators, one at the end of the first and second weeks to gently remind potential participants to complete the survey. There were no incentives involved with this study due to economic constraints on behalf of the researchers.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this project began with a data cleaning process where non-response and erroneous data were removed from the data set to improve accuracy of the overall analysis. The researchers then employed descriptive statistical analyses using SPSS software to summarize the data collected in this study. Variables in this survey were not cross-analyzed using inferential statistical analyses, since the researchers employed a non-probability volunteer sampling method. This is due to the reality that not every teacher who receives an invitation to complete the online survey will do so. Moreover, given the structure and limitations of this study, potentially broad generalizations from inferential; statistical analyses would be difficult to make or might be misleading.

Findings

As previously mentioned, 533 certified P-12 teachers in the targeted rural school district were invited to participate in this research study. A total of 146 teachers completed the survey. However, after the data cleaning process, which involved removing incomplete survey responses only 140 valid responses were analyzed. This yielded an approximate 27% rate. Table 1 displays a further breakdown of participants by the grade level they taught. Of the 140 participant responses analyzed, 41.4% of participants identified as elementary school teachers, 21.4% identifying as middle school teachers, and 37.1% identifying as high school teachers.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondent in Percentages

Variable	*N=*	Sample Percentage
Grade Level		
Pre-K – 5th Elementary School	58	41.4%
6th – 8th Middle School	30	21.4%
9th -12 High School	52	37.1%

Faculty Opinions of Social Media

Research Questions:

1. What opinions toward social media do P-12 teachers hold?
5. Is there a statistically significant relationship between elementary, middle, and high school teachers and opinions of social media?

Table 2 displays a distribution of responses to nine items that seek to measure P-12 teachers' opinions of social media. The mean responses from elementary, middle, and high school teachers for a plurality of these items fell into the neutral or disagree categories. Items 34 and 36 were the only items with positive mean responses from all three grade levels. Item 35 and 39 received positive mean responses from middle and high school teachers, but not elementary. Lastly, a MANOVA statistical analysis was run. It was determined through Pillai's Trace that there was no statistically significant difference (p= .635) between elementary school, middle school, and high school teachers in regard to Faculty Opinions of Social Media.

Table 2: Distribution of Responses to Faculty Opinion Items in Percentages

Faculty Opinions of Social Media Items		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Prefer not to answer.	Mean	SD
33. Social media can be a valuable tool for collaborative learning for students.	Elementary	1.7	6.9	31.0	53.4	5.2	1.7	3.10	1.119
	Middle	3.3	16.7	30.0	46.7	3.3	0.0	3.07	1.081
	High	3.8	11.5	21.2	59.6	3.8	0.7	2.90	.975
34. Social media can be a valuable tool for collaborative learning for teachers.	Elementary	0.0	3.4	10.3	69.0	15.5	1.7	3.91	.823
	Middle	3.3	10.0	16.7	56.7	13.3	0.0	3.67	.959
	High	3.8	5.7	17.3	51.9	21.2	0.7	3.81	.971
35. Use of social media in the classroom would lead to increased instances of cyber bullying.	Elementary	0.0	15.5	34.5	34.5	12.1	3.4	3.33	1.098
	Middle	3.3	0.0	43.3	36.7	16.7	0.0	3.63	.890
	High	3.8	3.8	35.7	44.2	15.4	1.4	3.63	.929
36.Videos, podcasts, and blogs shared on social media are valuable tools for teaching.	Elementary	0.0	1.7	15.5	58.6	20.7	3.4	3.88	.993
	Middle	3.3	13.3	13.3	56.7	10.0	3.3	3.47	1.167
	High	1.9	3.8	15.5	69.2	9.6	0.0	3.81	.742
37. School districts should lift bans and allow schools to use social media in P-12 schools	Elementary	8.6	19.0	17.2	0.0	3.4	3.4	2.71	.973
	Middle	16.7	20.0	16.7	6.7	0.0	0.0	2.77	1.135
	High	13.5	23.1	17.1	0.0	1.9	1.9	2.62	.993
	Elementary	3.4	15.5	37.9	37.9	3.4	1.7	3.17	.976

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38. The use of social media in the classroom would increase my students' engagement in learning activities.	Middle	3.3	30.0	33.3	30.0	3.3	0.0	3.00	.947
	High	5.8	19.3	38.5	30.8	5.8	0.0	3.12	.983
39. Direct messaging and posting on social media weakens students' writing and verbal skills.	Elementary	0.0	13.8	41.4	31.0	12.1	1.7	3.36	.986
	Middle	6.7	13.3	13.3	46.7	20.0	0.0	3.60	1.163
	High	0.0	11.5	21.2	53.8	13.5	0.0	3.69	.853
40. Direct messaging is a form of communication that is becoming very effective.	Elementary	0.0	17.2	27.6	44.8	8.6	1.7	3.40	.990
	Middle	3.3	30.0	26.7	36.7	3.3	0.0	3.07	.980
	High	1.9	19.2	40.4	34.6	3.8	0.0	3.19	.864
41. Direct messaging is often substituted for oral conversation.	Elementary	0.0	1.7	6.9	44.8	44.8	1.7	4.28	.894
	Middle	0.0	0.0	20.0	46.7	33.3	0.0	4.13	.730
	High	0.0	1.9	3.8	51.9	42.3	0.7	4.35	.653

Personal Concerns

Research Questions:

2. What personal concerns toward social media do P-12 teachers hold?
6. Is there a statistically significant relationship between elementary, middle, and high school teachers and personal concerns toward social media?

Table 3 displays a distribution of responses to five items that seek to measure P-12 teachers' personal concerns regarding social media. The mean responses from elementary, middle, and high school teachers for items 44 and 46 fell into the agree or strongly agree categories. Item 42, which asked whether teachers would be willing to receive PD for social media use receive positive mean responses from elementary and high school teachers, but not middle. The mean responses for the remaining 'personal concern' items from elementary, middle, and high school teachers fell into the neutral or disagree categories. Lastly, a MANOVA statistical analysis was run. It was determined through Pillai's Trace that there was no statistically significant difference (p=.196) between elementary school, middle school, and high school teachers in regard to Personal Concerns.

Table 3: Distribution of Responses to Personal Concerns Items in Percentages

Personal Concern Items		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Prefer not to answer.	Mean	SD
42. If the school district allowed students to use social media in the classroom as learning tools, would you be willing to receive	Elementary	0.0	6.9	12.1	70.7	8.6	1.7	3.76	.844
	Middle	13.3	6.7	13.3	56.7	10.0	0.0	3.43	1.194

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professional development and training in the use of such mobile devices?	High	1.9	7.7	21.2	63.5	5.8	0.0	3.63	.793
43. If the school district allowed students to use social media in the classroom as learning tools, would you be willing to use your personal social media account to facilitate student learning?	Elementary	22.4	39.7	12.1	22.4	1.7	1.7	2.36	1.165
	Middle	36.7	26.7	13.3	23.3	0.0	0.0	2.23	1.194
	High	26.9	28.8	5.8	36.5	1.9	0.0	2.58	1.289
44. If the school district allowed students to use social media in the classroom as learning tools, would you expect your school district to provide both you and your students with mobile learning devices and technical support such as data packages, text messaging, educational apps, etc.?	Elementary	5.2	10.3	17.2	44.8	19.0	3.4	3.52	1.260
	Middle	3.3	0.0	13.3	40.0	43.3	0.0	4.20	.925
	High	5.8	13.5	11.5	44.2	21.2	3.8	3.50	1.336
45. If the school district allowed students to use social media in the classroom as learning tools, student use of mobile devices in the classroom and outside the classroom would change the way you communicate with students. Students would have access to your time beyond the traditional school day. Would you be in favor of this?	Elementary	12.1	17.2	29.3	31.0	6.9	3.4	2.93	1.255
	Middle	10.0	20.0	33.3	36.7	0.0	0.0	2.97	.999
	High	11.5	21.2	23.1	40.4	1.9	1.9	2.94	1.162
46. If the school district allowed students to use social media in the classroom as learning tools, student use of social media in the classroom and outside the classroom would change the way you communicate with students. Are you concerned about the possibility of inappropriate communication between teachers and students?	Elementary	3.4	6.9	20.7	39.7	27.6	1.7	3.76	1.144
	Middle	0.0	13.3	13.3	40.0	33.3	0.0	3.93	1.015
	High	1.9	7.7	19.2	51.9	19.2	0.0	3.79	.915

Perceptions of Social Media in the Classroom

Research Questions:
3. What are P-12 teachers' perceptions of social media in the classroom?
7. Is there a statistically significant difference between elementary, middle, and high school teachers and perceptions of social media in the classroom?

Table 4 displays a distribution of responses to eleven items that seek to measure P-12 teachers' perceptions of social media in the classroom. The mean responses from elementary, middle, and high school teachers for a plurality of these items fell into the neutral or disagree categories. Items 18 and 23 received positive mean responses from elementary teachers only teachers, while item 20 received a positive mean response from high school teachers. Lastly, a MANOVA statistical analysis was run. It was determined through Pillai's Trace that there was no

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statistically significant difference (p= .416) between elementary school, middle school, and high school teachers in regard to Perceptions of Social Media in the Classroom

Table 4 Distribution of Responses to Teacher Perceptions of Social Media in the Classroom in the Classroom Items in Percentages

Perceptions of Social Media in the Classroom		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Prefer not to answer.	Mean	SD
13. My students would be more likely to participate in class activities (excluding class discussions) outside of class time if they could do so by using social media.	Elementary	1.7	22.4	27.6	32.8	15.5	0.0	3.38	1.057
	Middle	3.3	26.7	20.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	3.17	.950
	High	3.8	21.2	21.2	48.1	5.8	0.0	3.31	1.001
14. My students would be more likely to engage in class discussions inside of class if they could post their thoughts on social media.	Elementary	1.7	29.3	24.1	37.9	6.9	0.0	3.19	.999
	Middle	6.7	26.7	26.7	40.0	0.0	0.0	3.00	.983
	High	5.8	26.9	25.0	38.5	3.8	0.0	3.08	1.026
15. My students would be more likely to engage in class discussions outside of class if they could post their thoughts on social media.	Elementary	1.7	31.0	31.0	25.9	10.3	0.0	3.12	1.027
	Middle	3.3	30.0	23.3	43.3	0.0	0.0	3.07	.944
	High	5.8	19.2	30.8	38.5	5.8	0.0	3.19	1.011
16. My students would be more likely to ask for help if they could communicate through their social media.	Elementary	1.7	24.1	27.6	43.1	3.4	0.0	3.22	.918
	Middle	6.7	13.3	20.0	56.7	3.3	0.0	3.37	.999
	High	5.8	17.3	11.5	59.6	5.8	0.0	3.42	1.036
17. Social media should be incorporated into classes.	Elementary	13.8	17.2	36.2	25.9	6.9	0.0	2.95	1.130
	Middle	16.7	33.3	26.7	23.3	0.0	0.0	2.57	1.040
	High	15.4	19.2	34.6	26.9	3.8	0.0	2.85	1.109
18. Students should be able to access course materials (syllabus, notes, assignments links) through social media.	Elementary	3.4	10.3	17.2	55.2	12.1	1.7	3.57	1.061
	Middle	3.3	16.7	40.0	33.3	6.7	0.0	3.23	.935
	High	9.6	11.5	28.8	44.2	5.8	0.0	3.25	1.064
19. Students should be able to participate in discussion forums i.e. backchannel chats, groups etc. through social media.	Elementary	1.7	19.0	36.2	41.4	0.0	1.7	3.14	.907
	Middle	6.7	26.7	23.3	33.3	3.3	6.7	2.80	1.270
	High	3.8	11.5	40.4	32.7	3.8	3.8	3.02	1.129
20. It would not require a lot of effort for students to learn how to use social media designed for my class.	Elementary	5.2	13.8	27.6	44.8	8.6	0.0	3.38	1.006
	Middle	0.0	20.0	23.3	46.7	6.7	3.3	3.30	1.088
	High	3.8	13.5	17.3	53.8	11.5	0.0	3.56	.998
21. Learning to use social media for class purposes would be easy for students because they are already familiar with all of the social media functions.	Elementary	1.7	8.6	13.8	53.4	22.4	0.0	3.86	.926
	Middle	0.0	13.3	23.3	46.7	13.3	3.3	3.50	1.106
	High	3.8	1.9	13.5	53.8	26.9	0.0	3.98	.918
22. It would be easy for students to engage in classroom discussions (comment) using social media.	Elementary	1.7	8.6	25.9	53.4	10.3	0.0	3.62	.855
	Middle	6.7	10.0	20.0	46.7	16.7	0.0	3.57	1.104
	High	5.8	7.7	11.5	63.5	11.5	0.0	3.67	.985
23. Social media opportunities would allow both students and teachers to learn and study in anytime and anywhere.	Elementary	1.7	3.4	34.5	50.0	8.6	1.7	3.55	.902
	Middle	3.3	16.7	23.3	43.3	10.0	3.3	3.30	1.179
	High	7.7	15.4	17.3	53.8	5.8	0.0	3.35	1.064

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Perceptions of Social Media on Learning and Engagement

Research Questions:

4. What are P-12 teachers' perceptions of social media on learning and engagement?
8. Is there a statistically significant difference between elementary, middle, and high school teachers and perceptions of social media on learning and engagement?

Table 5 displays a distribution of responses to five items that seek to measureP-12 teachers' perceptions of social media on learning and engagement. The mean responses from elementary, middle, and high school teachers for a plurality of these items fell into the neutral or disagree categories. Items 24 and 28 were the only items with positive mean responses from all three grade levels and item 27 received a positive mean from elementary teachers only. Lastly, a MANOVA statistical analysis was run. It was determined through Pillai's Trace that there was no statistically significant difference (p=.139) between elementary school, middle school, and high school teachers in regard to Perceptions of Social Media on Learning and Engagement.

Table 5: Distribution of Responses to Teacher Perceptions of Social Media on Learning and Engagement

Perceptions of Social Media on Learning and Engagement		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Prefer not to answer.	Mean	SD
24. I believe students can be taught how to appropriately use social media for learning.	Elementary	1.7	3.4	20.7	55.2	15.5	3.4	3.69	1.063
	Middle	0.0	13.3	10.0	73.3	3.3	0.0	3.67	.758
	High	7.7	5.8	19.2	63.5	3.8	0.0	3.50	.960
25. I believe students should be able to use social media as learning tools in my classroom to improve comprehension.	Elementary	0.0	19.0	46.6	25.9	5.3	3.4	3.07	.989
	Middle	13.3	20.0	26.7	36.7	3.3	0.0	2.97	1.129
	High	5.8	23.1	30.8	36.5	3.8	0.0	3.10	.995
26. I believe using social media for learning in my classroom would benefit students' writing skills.	Elementary	8.6	34.5	36.2	15.5	5.2	0.0	2.74	1.001
	Middle	30.0	26.7	16.7	20.0	3.3	3.3	2.30	1.291
	High	11.5	51.9	26.9	9.6	0.0	0.0	2.35	.814
27. I think students would be more motivated to learn if they could use social media.	Elementary	1.7	8.6	25.9	46.6	13.8	3.4	3.52	1.112
	Middle	6.7	26.7	23.3	40.0	3.3	0.0	3.07	1.048
	High	5.8	21.2	21.2	46.2	5.8	0.0	3.25	1.046
28. Students would think it's fun to use social	Elementary	0.0	8.6	19.0	53.4	17.2	1.7	3.74	.965
	Middle	3.3	6.7	23.3	63.3	3.3	0.0	3.57	.817
	High	1.9	7.7	21.2	65.4	3.8	0.0	3.62	.771

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media in my classroom.								
29. I believe using social media as learning tools in my classroom would improve student literacy.	Elementary	3.4	24.1	39.7	25.9	5.2	1.7	3.00	1.009
	Middle	16.7	30.0	26.7	20.0	6.7	0.0	2.70	1.179
	High	5.8	30.8	40.4	23.1	0.0	0.0	2.81	.864
30. I would like my students to be able to use social media to access course content and practice 21st century skills.	Elementary	5.2	15.5	25.9	44.8	5.2	3.4	3.19	1.146
	Middle	13.3	16.7	43.3	20.0	6.7	0.0	2.90	1.094
	High	5.8	19.2	23.1	40.4	11.5	0.0	3.33	1.098
31. I would like to learn more about social media, so that I can incorporate it in my classroom.	Elementary	3.4	20.7	29.3	37.9	5.2	3.4	3.10	1.119
	Middle	10.0	16.7	36.7	30.0	6.7	0.0	3.07	1.081
	High	5.8	34.6	23.1	36.5	0.0	0.0	2.90	.975

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate P-12 teachers' general attitudes, perceptions, and utilizations of social media. The researchers sought to produce initial descriptive data to extend the foundational understanding of social media use in education and support P-12 school administration and professional development coordinators who advocate for the pedagogical use of social media in the classroom. These findings have several implications for P-12 teachers in a rural school context regarding their perceptions and attitudes toward using social media as an educational tool, as well as an informal professional learning outlet.

Rural School Districts & Social Media

During the data analysis, the researchers discovered rural teachers from all three grade levels (elementary, middle, and high school) had more positively efficacious responses to items focused on professional use of social media, rather than student use in the classroom. For example, teachers reported higher average mean responses to item 34, which asked whether or not they felt social media can be a valuable tool for collaborative learning for teachers. However, for item 33, which asked the same question, but in regard to students, the average mean responses were lower. An interesting finding from the data shows that according to item 24, teachers believe that students can be taught how to appropriately use social media for learning. When asked whether or not they would be willing to receive professional development training on how to integrate social media in their classroom, the average responses fell into the neutral or disagree category.

While P-12 teachers in this study regard social media as best suited as a collaborative learning tool for teachers rather than students, they do not negate that social media can, in deed, be

positively integrated in the classroom as an education tool. Rather they demonstrate other serious reservations and concerns with social media integration. For example, average mean responses were positively efficacious for elementary, middle, and high school teachers on several items that involved students specifically. These included, item 21, which asked if learning to use social media for class purposes would be easy for students because they are already familiar with all of the social media functions; item 24, which asked if they believed their students can be taught how to use social media in the classroom; and item 22, which asked if teachers thought students could use social media to participate in classroom discussions. However, on item 46, which asked if they were concerned about inappropriate communication between teachers and students on social media P-12 teachers three grade levels showed highly positive efficacious mean responses that fell into the agree and strongly agree categories. Thus, it was not surprising that on item 37, which asked if school districts should lift bands on social media the plurality of P-12 in all three grade levels reported average means that fell into the neutral to disagree categories.

Perhaps, the data are showing that these rural teachers see the value and benefit of social media use for their own informal professional learning and acknowledge the potential pedagogical benefits, while remaining cognizant of potential and present barriers associated with social media as an education tool. With the implementation of social media comes a significant amount of responsibility and work on behalf of the teacher to ensure that its use is enriching learning rather than distraction. Also, the use of social media by teachers, both personally and professionally, can be extremely problematic when not handled correctly, leading to potential suspensions, and even job termination. The reality is that social media platforms open up a line of communication that is not officially controlled or monitored by schools or school districts. Teacher attitudes and perceptions might change if they knew that their school district was in support of its use for educational purposes and exhibited that support by offering professional development opportunities and/or other types of resources. Future research could strive to identify and mitigate barriers to social media integration, while specifically taking into consideration teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and utilizations. This information would enable school districts to provide more support and training regarding the effective and appropriate ways for teachers and students to use social media. Moreover, school districts could employ the instrument used in this study to specifically gauge the attitudes of their teachers and plan professional development accordingly.

Elementary Teachers

Another interesting occurrence during the data analysis was that elementary school teachers had more positively efficacious responses to survey items regarding student and personal social media use than middle and high school teachers. It is not shocking that elementary school teachers would have positive responses towards the personal uses of benefits of using social media. Rather, what is attention-grabbing is that they show interest and value in their students using social media despite their students' age, which typically do not meet the terms and conditions of various social media platforms. As stated earlier, scholarship on social media use in education is largely targeted toward the secondary level. Moving forward, research and

practitioner literature should explore the professional learning needs of elementary level teachers interested in incorporating social media in their classrooms. By producing scholarship that supports elementary teachers in their integration of social media, perhaps values and principles associated with being a respectful and responsible digital citizen can be instilled at an earlier age. Subsequently, education researchers may see a decline in some of the more negative realities of social media use, such as cyberbullying that plagues both middle and high school students.

Conclusion

In this article, the researchers attempted to situate social media attitudes, perceptions, and utilizations in the context of the larger trend of teachers' technology use in the rural classroom, and the even more complex nature of using social media as an education tool. In a nomological sense, the use of social media and its multimodal functionality to enhance teaching and learning across multiple grade levels, disciplines, and school contexts serves to benefit educators, especially those in rural school districts. However, as can be gleaned from this study, rural teachers were not completely on board with implementing and facilitating social media in their classroom. In fact, during the data analysis, the researchers noticed that a plurality of mean responses for survey items in all sections fell into the neutral category.

Findings from this study extends the foundational understanding of social media's presence in education by emphasizing not 'how' or "why' P-12 teachers use social media, but by investigating 'what' general attitudes, perceptions, and utilizations of social media are held by P-12 educators in diverse school contexts, such as rural schools. Understanding how teachers view social media in general is salient because teacher's perceptions and attitudes of social media will likely influence whether or not they see it as educationally beneficial or an appropriate tool to integrate in their pedagogical practice or personal professional development. Information in this study may provide education researchers and P-12 school administration with considerations to provide relevant, pragmatic, and responsive pedagogical and professional practices involving social media for teachers of diverse school contexts.

Based off the data collected in this study, these rural teachers recognize the value in social media, but perhaps also perceive its integration to be risky. Education researchers and school districts should be aware of these attitudes and perceptions and strive to empower and support teachers that are interested in using social media. Maybe in doing so, this will over time change P-12 teacher attitudes and perceptions toward social media from viewing it as risky to viewing it as a positive learning tool that could transcend both their pedagogical and professional practice.

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Appendix A: Survey Items (Modified/Adapted from Johnson, 2014 Instrument)

1. Which of the following best describes your age?

   o   18-24
   o   25-34
   o   35-44
   o   45-54
   o   Over 54

2. Which of the following best describes your ethnicity?

   o   African American/Black
   o   Asian
   o   Hispanic/Latinx
   o   White
   o   Other
   o   Prefer not to answer

3. Which of the following best describes your gender?

   o   Female
   o   Male
   o   Transgender
   o   Other
   o   Prefer not to answer

4. Are you a certified teacher?

   o   Yes
   o   No

5. What grade levels do you teach? Check all that apply.

   o   Pre-K-5
   o   6-8
   o   9-12

6. What is your area of certification? Check all that apply.

   o   Agriculture
   o   Art
   o   Business
   o   English

- o Family and Consumer Science
- o French
- o Industrial arts
- o Mathematics
- o Music
- o Physical Education
- o School librarian/teacher
- o Science
- o Social studies
- o Spanish
- o Special education
- o Speech

7. How many years have you been in education?

- o 1-5
- o 6-10
- o 11-15
- o 16-20
- o 21-25
- o 26-30
- o 31-35
- o 36-40
- o 41 +

8. How many years have you been in your current school? _____

9. What is your highest educational attainment?

o Bachelor's
o Master's
o Master's plus 30
o Specialist
o Doctorate

10. In which type of school do you teach?

- o Public
- o Private
- o Public Charter
- o Public Magnet
- o indicate type:

Section 1: P-12 Teacher Prior Knowledge:

11. I know how to... Please check all that apply.

o   Download a social media application on a mobile device
o   Access social media sites and/or applications on my mobile device/computer
o   Post a comment, picture, or video on a social media application.
o   Like, Share/Retweet another post, image, and or video that is not my own on social media.
o   Send a direct message through social media on a mobile device/computer

Section 2: How do you think your students are using their mobile devices?

12. I think my students are... Please check all that apply.
o   Downloading and engaging on social media applications on their mobile devices/computers.
o   Using social media to connect with peers and other related experts something they didn't know or didn't understand during class
o   Setting alerts/reminders on their social media settings when someone posts something
o   Direct messaging a classmate through social media during class
o   Direct messaging a classmate through social media about the class content
o   Direct messaging a classmate through social media about the teacher's ability
o   Direct messaging a classmate through social media about the level of engagement in the class (i.e. I'm bored, this is cool, etc.)
o   Taking pictures or videos related to assignments and posting them on their social media accounts (i.e. Snapchat, Instagram)
o   Using social media as a collaboration tool for course success.
o   None of the above
o   I don't know
o   Other: _____

Section 3: Perception of Mobile Device Utilization in the Classroom

13. My students would be more likely to participate in class activities (excluding class discussions) outside of class time if they could do so by using social media.

o   Strongly Disagree
o   Disagree
o   Neutral
o   Agree
o   Strongly Agree
o   Prefer not to answer

14. My students would be more likely to engage in class discussions inside of class if they could post their thoughts on social media.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

15. My students would be more likely to engage in class discussions outside of class if they could post their thoughts on social media.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

16. My students would be more likely to ask for help if they could communicate through their social media.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

17. Social media should be incorporated into classes.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

18. Students should be able to access course materials (syllabus, notes, assignments links) through social media.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

19. Students should be able to participate in discussion forums i.e. backchannel chats, groups etc. through social media.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

20. It would not require a lot of effort for students to learn how to use social media designed for my class.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

21. Learning to use social media for class purposes would be easy for students because they are already familiar with all of the social media functions.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

22. It would be easy for students to engage in classroom discussions (comment) using social media.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree

- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

23. Social media opportunities would allow both students and teachers to learn and study in anytime and anywhere.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

Section 4 Perception of Mobile Device Usage on Students' Learning Engagement in P-12 Classrooms

24. I believe students can be taught how to appropriately use social media for learning.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

25. I believe students should be able to use social media as learning tools in my classroom to improve comprehension.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

26. I believe using social media for learning in my classroom would benefit students' writing skills.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

27. I think students would be more motivated to learn if they could use social media.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

28. Students would think it's fun to use social media in my classroom.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

29. I believe using social media as learning tools in my classroom would improve student literacy.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

30. I would like my students to be able to use social media to access course content and practice 21st century skills.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

31. I would like to learn more about social media, so that I can incorporate it in my classroom.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral

- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

32. Choose the statement that most resembles your attitude toward incorporating social media in your classroom.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

Section 5 Faculty Opinions on Social Media Use

33. Social media can be a valuable tool for collaborative learning for students.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

34. Social media can be a valuable tool for collaborative learning for teachers.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

35. Use of social media in the classroom would lead to increased instances of cyber bullying.

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

36. Videos, podcasts, and blogs shared on social media are valuable tools for teaching.

o Strongly Disagree
o Disagree
o Neutral
o Agree
o Strongly Agree
o Prefer not to answer

37. School districts should lift bans and allow schools to use social media in P-12 schools

o Strongly Disagree
o Disagree
o Neutral
o Agree
o Strongly Agree
o Prefer not to answer

38. The use of social media in the classroom would increase my students' engagement in learning activities.

o Strongly Disagree
o Disagree
o Neutral
o Agree
o Strongly Agree
o Prefer not to answer

39. Direct messaging and posting on social media weakens students' writing and verbal skills.

o Strongly Disagree
o Disagree
o Neutral
o Agree
o Strongly Agree
o Prefer not to answer

40. Direct messaging is a form of communication that is becoming very effective.

o Strongly Disagree
o Disagree
o Neutral

Waters, S. & Hensley, M.., *Mesuring Rural P-12 Teachers'
Attitudes, Perceptions, and Utilizations of Social Media*

o Agree
o Strongly Agree
o Prefer not to answer

41. Direct messaging is often substituted for oral conversation.

o Strongly Disagree
o Disagree
o Neutral
o Agree
o Strongly Agree
o Prefer not to answer

Section 6 Personal Concerns

42. If the school district allowed students to use social media in the classroom as learning tools, would you be willing to receive professional development and training in the use of such mobile devices?

o Strongly Disagree
o Disagree
o Neutral
o Agree
o Strongly Agree
o Prefer not to answer

43. If the school district allowed students to use social media in the classroom as learning tools, would you be willing to use your personal social media account to facilitate student learning?

o Strongly Disagree
o Disagree
o Neutral
o Agree
o Strongly Agree
o Prefer not to answer

44. If the school district allowed students to use social media in the classroom as learning tools, would you expect your school district to provide both you and your students with mobile learning devices and technical support such as data packages, text messaging, educational apps, etc.?

o Strongly Disagree
o Disagree
o Neutral

- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

45. If the school district allowed students to use social media in the classroom as learning tools, student use of mobile devices in the classroom and outside the classroom would change the way you communicate with students. Students would have access to your time beyond the traditional school day. Would you be in favor of this?

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer

46. If the school district allowed students to use social media in the classroom as learning tools, student use of social media in the classroom and outside the classroom would change the way you communicate with students. Are you concerned about the possibility of inappropriate communication between teachers and students?

- o Strongly Disagree
- o Disagree
- o Neutral
- o Agree
- o Strongly Agree
- o Prefer not to answer