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Student Perceptions of the Impact of Social Media on College Student Engagement

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Student Perceptions of the Impact of Social Media
on College Student Engagement

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Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation work to my parents, George and Brenda Richardson. Thank you for the support and encouragement you always show me. I appreciate your active presence and unconditional love. It is an honor to be your daughter. [CBLR]

I also dedicate this dissertation work in memory of my grandfather, USMC Drill Instructor and Bugler, Sgt. George H. Richardson, Jr. who was an advocate and practitioner of continuous education. May his legacy continue to drive my passion for learning and challenge me to push limits in every aspect of my life.

With love and admiration for each of you.

Earned. Never given. – USMC

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My final acknowledgement is to all educators who are passionate about helping students obtain a higher level of understanding and advanced skills they will carry throughout their lives. Thank you for all that you do every day.

Abstract

This research study explores student perceptions of the impact that social media has on the student engagement of college students. Research has shown that student engagement has a direct correlation to student success. This study provides a brief outline of conceptual framework considerations by identifying applicable theories of student engagement. It is important to understand the role of social media on student engagement as educators strive to assist students with enhancing their student success. Research participants completed a survey to obtain information regarding the types of social media they use along with their understanding of student engagement and the impact social media has on their engagement. Participants responded to selected-response questions and open-ended questions regarding their perceptions of their social media usage and the impact of the usage on student engagement. This study advances our understanding of college student perceptions of the varying impact that social media has on their student engagement.

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Chapter 1

Research Overview

Introduction

College campuses provide a variety of disciplines, courses, and activities/events for students to attend. Students have specific requirements for each general education course and then later within their major, minor, and/or collateral courses. Many college professors encourage classroom discussions and active participation as part of the course. There are campus events that students can voluntarily attend that range from academic content to entertainment/social events to leadership opportunities. There are also events that students may be required or expected to attend as part of their course(s).

In considering the advancements in technology and the generational characteristics of college students today, students have become accustomed to accessing information immediately through utilizing the internet and social media. Most college students have smartphones or other wireless devices, that allow them to update their statuses, post a tweet, or even post a selfie as they walk to and from class. Some professors have even incorporated social media into their courses, while others stress in their syllabus that cell phones should be powered off during class. The shorthand of texting can be found in

correspondences of students, faculty, and staff. While attending an academic or athletic event, many students are so consumed in the virtual world of social media, they are unaware and seem disengaged from what is occurring in the real world, right in front of them. Another instance of observation is when students are seated with peers, or close friends, yet those students are on their phones instead of interacting with those who are physically present.

With students so connected with and through social media, the researcher contemplated the effect that social media had on the students. Various research has examined social media as a facilitator and communication tool that can be utilized to improve learning and assist with the college transition and adaptation (DeAndrea, Ellison, LaRose, Steinfield, & Fiore, 2011). These observations along with initial research set the thought process in motion to conduct a research study on student engagement. Social media can create connections and interactions among peers, which can enhance the college integration and learning experience (Gray, Vitak, Easton, & Ellison, 2013). The communications are social and academic focused and are shown to increase persistence and social adjustment for college students. Lederer (2012) states that the use of social media in learning environments increases student engagement, builds communication skills among students and faculty, and assists the students in building a professional profile. Some of the disadvantages of social media use in learning environments are the possibility of becoming a distraction in the

learning process, discourages face-to-face communications, and there is a concern and caution of misuse of social media such as with cyberbullying (Lederer, 2012). There is a digital divide between supporters and critics of social media integration into the classroom and further concern about equality and opportunity of access and usage of social media technologies for all students (Guy, 2012). As we acknowledge the wide-usage of social media, we must consider using social media as an educational tool to facilitate and enhance the learning environment for students. On an individual level, social media is used by students for personal and social use; some researchers question whether implementing social media in academic course will serve as a supplement to learning or will create a structural shift in the way students learn (Tess, 2013).

Social Media and Student Engagement

There are many perspectives concerning why it is important to study student engagement. When students are engaged, faculty and students can both benefit as noted below:

It is in the best interests of both students and academic staff to have highly motivated, engaged students that complete their studies. For the lecturers, such students give incentive to them in their teaching practices, and encourage more innovative and creative ways of achieving optimal outcomes in both learning and teaching. For the students, remaining engaged throughout their studies will ensure optimal performance, and is

likely to generate grades that will enhance their future career advancement. (Errey & Wood, 2011, p. 29)

Teaching students who are engaged can motivate and encourage their professors to become more active and creative as they share their wealth of subject knowledge with their students. Students who are engaged will benefit by deepening their understanding and achieving better student outcomes that could assist them in their future endeavors.

Social media is a complex, multi-layered term. "Understanding social media critically means, among other things, to engage with the different forms of sociality on the Internet in the context of society" (Fuchs, 2014, p. 6). In 2013, a list of the most accessed websites in the world was compiled. A few of the websites included on the list are Google, Facebook, YouTube, Yahoo, Amazon, Twitter, BlogSpot, and LinkedIn. Many of these websites combine media, information, communication, and social networking (Fuchs, 2014).

Since students have changed so much over the past couple of decades, we must attempt to understand these changes in order to engage students. Most students today have been exposed to a digital world throughout their lives. Students desire constant connection and communication and an environment that supports these desires (Taylor & Parsons, 2011).

Problem Statement

There is difficulty for colleges with sustaining student engagement. Despite careful considerations in curricular and co-curricular program coordination, students may attend and participate, but their level of engagement may vary or be non-existent. Student engagement has been researched in various ways in higher education for several years. Student engagement has been found to contribute to a student's overall college success, affects retention rates, and can influence the atmosphere of the campus community. Alexander Astin's (1999) theory posits that the greater the involvement of the student, the more motivated and engaged the student will be throughout their college career. This will enhance the college experience for the student and lead to a higher level of student learning and personal development. Student engagement has been researched in various ways in higher education for several years. Student engagement has been found to contribute to a student's overall college success, affects retention rates, and can influence the atmosphere of the campus community. Astin's (1999) theory conveys that the greater the involvement of the student, the more motivated and engaged the student will be throughout their college tenure. This will enhance the college experience for the student and lead to a higher level of student learning and personal development.

Many students attend campus events but they are interacting with social media during the events. Some students in class do not interact with the professor and/or their peers with discussions or course-related requirements. It

may be difficult for some students to not have social media constantly accessible while they are in class, especially if the instructor has asked that students not be on their phones. Student engagement is observed in students asking and responding to questions, participation and discussions, through interactions, following directions, and/or reacting to the content.

This lack of engagement, or disengagement, could negatively affect the overall success of the student, their interactions with peers, and/or their personal growth and development. A possible cause of this problem is that college students arrive on campus with a knowledge base, behaviors, and routines that they have learned and chosen over many years. Most of these students are considered adults (chronologically speaking) for the first time in their lives and they are solely responsible for how they utilize their time and effort. Most students today have grown up with and become reliant on technology and social media. Students may not understand how to properly use social media in effective ways for academic and developmental purposes. There is also a concern of how students protect their privacy on social media communications (Junco, 2014). Students may use their phones during course instruction, walking to and from classes, and while attending campus events and activities. An instructor may have little to no participation from a student during class with discussions and interactions pertaining to the subject content. Students attend campus events but are constantly on their phones instead of participating or interacting with event or activity. Junco (2014) notes that multitasking becomes

more of a phenomenon with social media as students work towards dividing attention and task switching. This study examined student perceptions regarding social media usage and whether this usage has an impact on student engagement. Since the majority of college students use social media, it is important to obtain a better understanding of how these social media technologies can be used in constructive ways for student learning (Junco, 2014). The use of social media in academically focused ways has been linked to student engagement, campus involvement, college adjustment, and academic performance (DeAndrea, Ellison, LaRose, Steinfield, & Fiore, 2011). Perhaps this study which explored the perceived impact social media has on the student engagement of college students will assist in a better understanding and possible techniques or methods to improve student engagement. These techniques or methods will be incorporated with social media to have a positive impact on the engagement of college students. The data obtained from surveys provides insights for improving or strengthening student engagement through social media. It is important that students have quality interactions that support their learning and personal development. Students will learn from their peers and by interacting with faculty and staff. Students who are engaged are invested in their own learning and enhancing their student success.

Research Question and Statement of Purpose

The research question for this study is what is the perceived impact of social media on the student engagement of college students. The purpose of this

research was to describe the perceived impact that social media has on the student engagement of college students. In noting what appears to be a form of possible dependency with social media, the researcher began to consider what impact social media has on student engagement. Incorporating the use of social media effectively for academic courses will be considered if social media supplements learning and not simply serve as an additional unrelated tool. The findings will be shared with colleagues who may be interested in implementing social media within academic and non-academic activities and events. The results will also be shared with student participants and other students as self-reflective and discussion topics. This study will provide valuable data and findings while exploring the impact that social media has on student engagement.

As technology has become more prevalent and accessible to college students, the researcher has embraced using new software programs and search engines. However, the researcher stood firm that cell phones did not have a place in the classroom. The syllabus clearly noted that cell phones should be powered off and not visible during the class. Over the past few years, the researcher has acknowledged that college students are constantly using their cell phones out of habit and what students perceive as a necessity. Some colleagues allow students to tweet questions to them during class. Even though there is resistance to using cell phones in the classroom, the researcher was open to using social media networks to increase student engagement, which would enhance student success.

Research has found that academic and co-curricular engagement has an impact on the psychosocial development and academic success of students (Junco, 2014). Social integration is a factor that each institute has an opportunity for impact. If a student feels connected with their peers, faculty/staff, and the college or university, the student will have a stronger commitment and higher level of integration as they are motivated to reach their personal goals (Tinto, 1993). In considering Chickering and Gamson's (1987) principles for good practice in undergraduate education, social media can increase the student-faculty contact, encourage student cooperation, lead to continued active learning with discussions, promote prompt feedback, increase time on task, communicate high expectations through modeled educator use, and broaden the ways a student learns (Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, 2011). It is important to understand also what the student themselves believe about the impact of social media on their student engagement as we consider research that has been conducted since the influx of social media advances.

This study asked student participants to self-report their daily social media usage and answer questions about their student engagement. Participants considered their social media usage and whether it has an effect on their student engagement in preparing, studying, and participating in courses and activities. These perceptions are important to better understand the reported or possible underlying connection that social media may have with the student engagement of college students.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, social media will be defined as any platform that allows users the ability to publish, share, and access information (Murthy, 2013). For the purpose of this study, student engagement will be defined as the time and effort students devote to academic and co-curricular activities that may be linked to the expectations of the university (Kuk, 2009).

Within the literature various definitions will be presented but for the purpose of this study, the researcher has listed major terms along with their complete definitions:

Facebook. An online social network site established in 2004 where individuals share pictures, personal information, and joins friends (Hew, 2011).

Instagram. An online photo-sharing service that enables users to take pictures with their mobile devices, add a variety of filters, and post their pictures to a stream (Junco, 2014).

Social media. A web service that allows users to sustain a profile within a enclosed system; electronic tool that provides users with ability to publish, share, and access information (Murthy, 2013).

SnapChat. A mobile photo- and video-messaging application that allows users to set a limit on how long a recipient can view a photo or video

before it is deleted from the from the mobile device. A unique feature of SnapChat is the ability to doodle and add text to picture and video, which gives users the ability to easily create memes (Junco, 2014).

Student Engagement. Student engagement represents the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities (Kuh, 2009).

Twitter. A micro-blogging service that is limited to 140 characters. It provides a platform for connections of information to be made through the use of hashtags (Murthy, 2013).

Conceptual Framework

This action research study will refer to selected applicable theories to ground the study. Chickering and Gamson (1987) identified the following indicators of engagement called the:

Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education. These principles include student-faculty contact, cooperation among students, active learning, prompt feedback, time on task, high expectations, and respect for diverse talents and ways of learning.

Chickering and Gamson (1987) identified the *Seven Vectors of Student Development* within his development theory. The seven vectors include the

following: (1) developing competence; (2) managing emotions; (3) moving through autonomy toward interdependence; (4) developing mature interpersonal relationships; (5) establishing identity; (6) developing purpose; and (7) developing integrity.

By examining the impact of social media on student engagement, the researcher explored the developing competences as the participants communicated and responded to the researcher as part of their interpersonal competence. Intellectual, physical, and interpersonal competences developed throughout the college experience can be noted through using critical thinking skills, involvement, and communications. Many of these communications for college students occur through social media. Also within student development, students learn and develop their ability to manage their emotions and reactions. From course discussions to social settings, students manage their emotions and reactions at different levels and in different ways. As students gain their independence and become more self-sufficient, they come to find that they do need others as they gravitate towards interdependence. Students form new relationships and begin making decisions about the specific activities and events they will attend, they will be moving from autonomy to interdependence. Students will not only be establishing an actual identity but students will also be making decisions about their virtual identity and social networking presence. Their purpose will become more focused as they find meaning in their interests and relationships that support those interests. Students will also begin

developing integrity and they formulate their own values and standards.

(Chickering and Gamson, 1987; Dickson, 1991; Junco, 2014).

Astin (1984) developed the *Student Involvement Theory* which is centered around the involvement of students. Student involvement “refers to the amount of the physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (p. 518). Students may become involved in their studies, extracurricular activities, and/or interactions with faculty and staff. The *Student Involvement Theory* explains that students must be engaged in their environment to advance in their personal development and to achieve a higher level of learning. In considering this theory, if students can utilize social media to create an environment where they are more comfortable to interact with their peers while discussing and sharing information about the course, this could lead to a higher level of learning for the students. According to Astin (1999) “the theory of student involvement is more concerned with the behavioral mechanisms or processes that facilitate student development (the how of student development)” (p. 522).

Vincent Tinto (1993) developed the Retention Theory as he studied and analyzed student retention. There are numerous aspects that can have an effect on student retention. If a student feels isolated, as if they do not fit in, or if they are struggling with connecting their past knowledge with the new knowledge; this can have an influence on whether a student is retained or not.

Methodology

This research study allowed the researcher the opportunity to select a topic and obtain informative data through a systematic process. After identifying and narrowing the topic of student engagement, the researcher selected one factor within student engagement to explore. This research provided data and findings that will guide educating students regarding the impact that social media can have on student engagement and provided information needed to explore whether the researcher can effectively incorporate social media into the college classroom to enhance student engagement.

Participant Selection

In determining participant selection, it was decided that a random selection of student perspectives would be important to the study. Some of the students were in the process of acclimating to the college life as freshman and would provide valuable data. Upperclassmen would provide an interesting perspective since they have already attended college courses and events. Students in college have more freedom in choosing how they will spend their time and possibly set the tone for the type of student they will be for the remainder of their time in college. In acknowledging the past enrollment statistics, the participant pool consisted of students from various geographical areas within the state (with the possibility of a few exceptions). There was also an array of major areas of study among the participants. The study consisted of ten student participants.

For the purpose of this study, the research participants provided data regarding their use of social media, perspectives of student engagement, feedback concerning the impact social media have on their student engagement within their higher education experience. After students were given information pertaining to the study and provided answers to any questions, students were asked to sign a consent form, if they choose to participate.

Research Site

The study was conducted at a public university in a rural area of a southern state. The university is a comprehensive institute that offers a broad range of undergraduate majors, professional schools in education and business, and graduate programs in business, education, psychology, and nursing.

More than 96 percent of the campus student population are residents of South Carolina and many of these students are first-generation college students. The latest published total enrollment was 3,944, which consisted of 1,175 men and 2,796 women. Of that total, 1,907 are White (not of Hispanic origin), 1,779 are Black (not of Hispanic origin), 54 Hispanic, 46 Asian, 2 Native Hawaiian, 12 American Indian, 66 Internationals, 34 two or more races, and 44 unknown. Within this total enrollment, there are 44 South Carolina counties represented, 33 states represented, and 21 countries represented. There are approximately 1,530 students who resided on campus and 2,414 commuter students.

Research Question

The responsibilities of the researcher as a university employee has

allowed the opportunity to work closely with college students in various ways. Interest in campus-related topics and knowledge of higher education current topics focused the research topic on student engagement.

“At the intersection of student behaviors and institutional conditions is student engagement. We focus on student engagement because it represents aspects of student behavior and institutional performance that colleges and universities can do something about, at least on the margins, whereas many other factors such as precollege characteristics are typically beyond the direct control of the student or the college or university” (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006, p. 8). When students first arrive at college, this creates an opportunity for faculty and staff to encourage and set the tone for student engagement. These students are trying to acclimate to the college campus and will be looking to the faculty, staff, and their peers for guidance and modeling.

There are many recommendations and suggestions available for increasing student engagement. The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of a specific factor on student engagement. Specifically, the study will explore the following question: What is the perceived impact of social media on the student engagement of college students? Student participants will be questioned about their perceptions of the impact of social media on their college experience, their level of classroom engagement, and academic achievement.

Sources of Data Collection

Data analysis should be carefully considered and properly conducted. The results and conclusions of a research study develop from the purposeful collection, examination, organization, and compilation of the data.

Mertler (2014) defines descriptive statistics as “simple mathematical procedures that serve to simplify, summarize, and organize relatively large amounts of numerical data” (p. 169). “The goal of inferential statistics is to determine how likely a given statistical result is for an entire population based on a smaller subset or sample of that population” (Mertler, 2014, p. 174).

For the purposes of this research study, the researcher obtained data pertaining to social media usage and its perceived impact on student engagement. Participants were asked to self-report information about their own behaviors and their understanding of the behavior of others as it pertains to social media and student engagement.

Chapter Summary

This chapter covered the introduction of the research by identifying the research question and purpose of the study. The conceptual framework was addressed to assist in understanding the purpose of the study. Chapter 2 explores the related literature that frames this study. Chapter 3 defines the methodology and relative information pertaining to the research. Chapter 4 details the findings of the study and provides graphical representation of the

data. Chapter 5 provides an overview and discussion of the study as well as implications of the findings and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

This study examined significant factors impacting social media and student engagement within one south eastern college campus. The literature review sought to examine the current crisis of high engagement of social media among college students and its impact on their college experience, their level of classroom engagement, and academic. This chapter includes an organization of the literature review, and examines the literature relevant to this study according to the research questions.

The literature review for this chapter began with a broad overview of student engagement to highlight how student engagement is defined and manifests in the college environment. The review has been divided into the following subheadings: Student Engagement Defined, Perspectives and Approaches to Student Engagement, Shift in Research, Importance of Student Engagement, Theoretical Base, Higher Education Technology Integration, Social Media use among College Students, Social Media and Student Engagement, and Chapter Summary. Student engagement is a highly relevant concept in higher

education and has been the focus of the college student experience for many years. Why is student engagement important in higher education? Student engagement has been found to contribute to a student's overall college success, affects retention rates, and can influence the atmosphere of the campus community.

The purpose of this literature review is to describe the related literature on social media and the impact that it can have on the engagement of college students.

Student Engagement Defined

In determining the historical formulation of the term engagement, Axelson and Flick (2011) found a modification from its initial definition of a "moral, often legal, obligation" to a less rigid definition of "condition, or act, of being so occupied" (p. 40). At the moment of measurement, a person is considered to be engaged if they are completely present. Interestingly, the term engagement was originally a legal obligation and transformed into meaning someone who is present. However, today engagement as it is related to students has its own set of definitions because it has been found to be so important to student success.

Students can be engaged formally and informally within the classroom and outside of the classroom. This act of engaging can occur with faculty-student interactions as well as with peer interactions (Lester, 2013). Students can be engaged with subject content, a particular assignment, or class discussion while

in the classroom. A student can also be engaged in a student organization, campus event, or leadership opportunity. This engagement can occur in an official or relaxed setting and with their instructors and/or their fellow classmates or friends.

Kuh (2009) states that "Student engagement represents the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities" (p. 683). Students who have predetermined plans and goals will place emphasis on the elements needed to accomplish those. They may devote unlimited time and effort to ensuring that they achieve their aspirations.

As colleges and universities examine and measure student engagement, the definition is revisited and formulated to meet individual campus needs. "The definition of engagement is being redefined in more specific ways as institutions examine multiple aspects of engagement in pursuit of increased levels on campus" (Lester 2013, p. 2). There are so many variations to student engagement and how it can be measured. Student engagement can be accessed within a classroom, an academic discipline or program, co-curricular activities, or even by student characteristics. Once the decision is made regarding the component of student engagement that will be studied, then an appropriate measure is determined. Researchers need to also decide what will constitute student engagement and what will be view as disengagement.

There are four elements that exist when student engagement occurs. Students will be attentive and focused, committed, persistent, and will seek meaning and value as they learn and complete assignments. Sometimes the terms engaged and involved are used interchangeably. When a student is engaged, they are also involved. However, a student can be involved without being engaged. The major variance is that students who are engaged will connect with the assignments or content (Schlechty, 2011).

The most widely known measurement for collecting student engagement data since its creation in 2000 for college students is the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). This instrument has five benchmarks that are used: level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interactions, enriching educational experiences, and a supportive campus environment. The purpose of the survey is to provide institutions with data that can be used to continuously make needed improvements. It also serves as a means of documenting good practices and in support of public advocacy. Initially the NSSE was used in several smaller colleges but it is now used annually at several hundred colleges and universities. The National Survey of Student Engagement is sent to first-year and senior students. There are five sections to the survey: participation in educational activities, institutional requirements, college environment features, background information, and the student's educational and personal growth since beginning college. These results give colleges and universities the opportunity to understand more about the students

on their campus and to make any needed adjustments or additions to provide students with the instruments that they need to be successful (Kuh, 2009). Many studies that are researching student engagement will use the National Survey of Student Engagement or parts of the survey as a data collection source. The questions and answer responses are written in such a way that the respondent clearly understands the questions and the answers provide pertinent information needed for data analysis. The National Survey of Student Engagement ask students to respond to questions about the focus on program and activities “that support student learning and persistence. The eight items that make up this scale ask students about academic support programs, encouragement of diverse interactions, and provision of social opportunities, campus activities, health and wellness, and support for non-academic responsibilities” (2013).

Perspectives and Approaches to Student Engagement

Some researchers attempt to define student engagement by the approaches they use to understand engagement. However, as with the definition of student engagement, there are varying opinions on the number and naming of the approaches. In an article by Kahu (2013), there are four approaches identified to define student engagement. The approaches that have been identified are the behavioral perspective, the psychological perspective, the socio-cultural perspective, and the holistic perspective. The behavioral approach looks at instructional practice, psychological looks at the internal process of an individual, the socio-cultural looks at the student experience social context, and

the holistic perspective in which a few researchers attempt to join the diverse areas of theory and research.

“One constant across the myriad conceptualizations of engagement is that it is multidimensional. Yet, agreement on multidimensionality differs from agreement on the number and types of engagement dimensions, which ranged from two to four” (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008, p. 370). Engagement is usually categorized by having two or three components. The two component model will typically include affective/emotional and behavioral. The affective or emotional subtype would incorporate components such as, sense of belonging, interest, and identification. The behavioral subtype would incorporate components such as, effort, participation, and conduct. The three component model would add a cognitive subtype. The cognitive subtype would incorporate components such as learning goals, self-regulation, and learning investment. In addition to the two and three component models, other researchers suggest that there are four subtypes in classifying engagement. Those four subtypes are academic, behavioral, cognitive, and psychological (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008).

Most of the research within the topic of student engagement concentrates on observable indicators such as those found in academic and behavioral engagement. Cognitive and psychological engagement are determined by internal indicators that are not observable. (Appleton et al., 2008).

Shift in Research

Often previous studies and programs would identify students who were disengaged and then implement strategies in an attempt to re-engage them. More recent studies have additionally been geared towards identifying learning needs of students in attempt to make modifications to engage students (Junco, 2014; Kettlewell, Southcott, Stevens, & McCrone, 2012; Taylor & Parsons, 2011). Students today have become accustomed to constant and immediate communication. Because of advances in technology and changes in society over the past couple of decades, the learning goals and preferences of students are also changing. "Student engagement has become both a strategic process for learning and an accountability outcome unto itself" (Taylor & Parsons, 2011, p. 4).

"At the intersection of student behaviors and institutional conditions is student engagement. We focus on student engagement because it represents aspects of student behavior and institutional performance that colleges and universities can do something about, at least on the margins, whereas many other factors such as precollege characteristics are typically beyond the direct control of the student or the college or university" (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006, p. 8). When students first arrive at college, this may serve as the best opportunity for faculty and staff to encourage and set the tone for student engagement. First-year students are attempting to acclimate to the college campus and will be looking to the faculty, staff, and their peers for guidance and

modeling. They are adjusting to new schedules and routines, possibly new living environments, and many will be making their own decisions for the first time as an adult. These adjustments can cause student at time to feel anxious, homesick, isolated, and lost. Other first-year students will embrace this new freedom and use this time to explore and define themselves as adults and individuals.

Students who born between 1982 and 2002 are often referred to as the Net Generation, the Millennials, and even the iGeneration. These students are multitaskers and they have become accustom to using text, instant messaging, and video messaging as a means of communicating with others. Although this type of communication does not replace face-to-face interactions it does allow for communication without time and geographical barriers. Pletka (2007) created a program My So-Called Digital Life where over 2,000 middle and high school students were given digital cameras to document and record their lives for one month. Pletka has conducted several research studies and assembled information pertaining to the Net Generation. Pletka found that this generation is constantly available and interactive. They share information and expect immediate retrieval of information since social media has become so intertwined with their lives. Pletka discovered that students wanted to be part of the community and engage within this community because they felt connected to each other. Many of the students developed friendships through the program interactions. These students also reported that they learned from each other and felt that they had a support

system among those in the program. The program itself allowed students to exchange and advance their knowledge base and communication skills. This also served as a platform to express their ideas in a way to obtain feedback from their peers. Pletka determined that the Net Generation students prefer educational environments that are more individualized and allow for immediate feedback. Incorporating social media would allow for flexibility and personalization for the classroom and coursework. It would also provide a platform for students to share information, ideas, or questions with the ability to receive immediate feedback and/or responses.

Importance of Student Engagement

There are many perspectives of why it is important to study student engagement. When students are engaged, faculty and students can both benefit. These students will make connections with materials that have learned previously and with the new material they are being exposed to. These students will also increase their communication and leadership skills as active learners. Their independence will also flourish as they find meaning and value in their studies.

Research has shown that student engagement fluctuates more within a campus community than it does among campus to campus comparisons. There are also some identifiers of students that could make them more susceptible to being less engaged than their peers. Examples of these identifiers are first-

generation, male, commuter, or transfer college students (Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006). This is an important point to consider. College and university campuses are quite different from one to the next. There are also as many difference in the student body. In reviewing studies and information of student engagement, it is essential to remember that student engagement can vary more within a campus itself than in comparison with other campuses. Therefore, what works for one campus and student body, may not be feasible to even contemplate for another campus.

Student engagement is important because it generates learning and can serve as a predictor of student success and retention. Students who are engaged are typically capable of adapting to receive support from their instructor and the faculty-student interactions during instruction allow the instructor to gauge if the subject content is being received as intended. This ability can be vital to the success of a student. When a student can comfortably ask questions of their professor, this will support their student learning and understanding. If a student can accept constructive criticism from a professor, this can be very useful in their future as a student and as a future employee. Student engagement can also lead to achieving student outcomes and skill development, a more interactive and advanced learning environment, and improved student motivation (Reeve, 2012). Instructors can support student engagement by facilitating independent thinking and motivating interests of their students. Since students can access information from so many online sources, faculty can build off of this capability to allow

students opportunities to support independent thinking. Social media can be used by have students discuss various assignments, share information with their peers, or by blogging about their findings and connections with subject content. Faculty can also support student engagement by modifying approaches to strengthen engagement in the classroom. When students feel a sense of community with their environment they are more likely to be engaged.

Budgen, Main, Callcott, and Hamlett (2014) conducted a study to address issues of retention and engagement of first-year students in Australia. The participants were assigned to groups that were each led by two peer mentors. The participants were given a survey to collect demographical information and preliminary impressions of the university support system and involvement. At the end of the first year, students were given another survey and they also participated in focus groups. Even though the study did not find a significant difference in retention rates, it did demonstrate successful implementation of the mentoring program. First-year students created new relationships and became involved and engaged in activities. Many times first-year students can feel disconnected as they begin college. This mentoring program created a community among the first-year students and its mentors. Participants attended activities with their mentors which expanded on this feeling of community and also gave the participants are opportunity to be engaged in activities outside of academics. An unplanned perk of the study was the betterment of the mentors. They enhanced their leadership skills, renewed their motivation, and formed

beneficial relationships with peers and staff involved with the mentoring program (Budgen, Main, Callcot, & Hamlet, 2014). As the mentors served in their roles, they were able to gain valuable experience as they worked with the first-year students and those associated with coordinating and implementing the program. This study reestablished the importance of connections and relationships are to student engagement. When students feel that they are a part of a community, they may feel a sense of ownership and feel more compelled to contribute. As they form relationships, they will become more comfortable with sharing information and idea and also with asking questions and contributing to the curricular and co-curricular experiences.

Theoretical Base

In considering the theories that can be applied to student engagement, there are many theories that are directly and indirectly related to student engagement. As the definitions of student engagement evolved, so did the theories. These theories provide information that is important in understanding students and the role that engagement can have on their learning and success.

Chickering and Gamson identified the following indicators of engagement called the:

Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education. These principles include student-faculty contact, cooperation among students, active learning, prompt feedback, time on task, high expectations, and

respect for diverse talents and ways of learning (as cited in Kuh, 2009, p. 684).

This study will examine indicators of engagement. As social media is introduced into the curriculum, the student-faculty should potentially increase because there will be various tools for communicating with the instructor. Social media usage will also require that students communicate and discuss course content among their participating peers. The use of social media will also give students an opportunity to increase their active learning and will allow access to prompt feedback from the instructor, their peers, or anyone who may be following the social media application. There will be high expectations of students as social media is used to supplement their student learning and in turn, the students will have expectations of the instructor to be knowledgeable of the social media and to use it effectively. Since certain social media tools allow others to view information that is shared or discussed, respect for diversity and ways of learning will be stressed among the participants. Chickering and Gamson wrote that the time students spent on their coursework is interconnected with how their student success. Chickering identified the Seven Vectors of Student Development within his development theory. The seven vectors include: (1) developing competence; (2) managing emotions; (3) moving through autonomy toward interdependence; (4) developing mature interpersonal relationships; (5) establishing identity; (6) developing purpose; and (7) developing integrity (Dickson, 1991).

By examining the impact of social media on student engagement, the researcher will also be able to explore the developing competence as the participants communicate and respond to the researcher and peers as part of their interpersonal competence. As students form new relationships and begin making decisions about the specific activities and events they attend, they will be moving through autonomy through interdependence. Students will not only be establishing an actual identity but students will also be making decisions about their virtual identity and social networking presence. Students will begin to develop integrity and they formulate their own values and standards.

Alexander Astin developed the Student Involvement Theory which is centered on the involvement of students. Student involvement “refers to the amount of the physical and psychological energy that that the student devotes to the academic experience” (Astin, 1999, p. 518). Students may become involved in areas such as their studies, extracurricular activities, and /or interactions with faculty and staff.

The Student Involvement Theory explains that students must be engaged in their environment to advance in their personal development and to achieve a higher level of learning. In considering this theory, if students can utilize social media to create an environment where they are more comfortable to interact with their peers while discussing and sharing information about the course, this could lead to a higher level of learning for the students. There are five tenets that aid in defining student involvement. The first one is the involvement

requires physical and psychological energy. The second tenet is involvement occurs along a continuum. The third tenet is involvement has quantitative and qualitative features. The fourth tenet is that development is proportional to quantity and quality of involvement. The fifth tenet is that educational effectiveness is related to the capacity to increase involvement (Astin, 1999).

According to Astin (1999) "the theory of student involvement is more concerned with the behavioral mechanisms or processes that facilitate student development (the how of student development)" (p. 522). Due to his research, modern engagement research has been widely attributed to Astin (Axelson & Flick, 2011).

Vincent Tinto developed the Retention Theory in which he studied and analyzed student retention. There are numerous aspects that can have an effect on student retention. If a student feels isolated, as if they do not fit in, or if they are struggling with connecting their past knowledge with the new knowledge, can have an influence on whether a student is retained or not. Tinto found that it was vital to assist students with social and academic assimilation to increase the success of student retention. Tinto claimed that persistence is a key component of student engagement and student engagement has a positive correlation to student retention. He found that when students did not form relationships with their peers or faculty/staff, they were more prone to withdraw and not return. (Harper & Quaye, 2009).

This study examined whether the social media has an impact of their student engagement along with the reported use of social media. First-year students often will struggle with fitting in with their new peers and within the new campus environment. Students may not feel comfortable asking questions or participating in their initial college courses. However, social media can allow students to correspond with their instructor and their peers without the added pressure of being face to face with their peers. Participants of this study, were asked to share information about their specific social media use and their perception of its impact. Social media may provide an opportunity for students to learn from others as they learn and discuss these connections and deepen their own understanding their peer learning.

Higher Education Technology Integration

Technology has had a place in classrooms for quite some time. In 1910, a Catalogue of Educational Motion Pictures was published by George Kleine and made available to school libraries through a rental program. However, most school did not have the financial means to rent these movies much less provide the equipment needed to show them. The first noted movie shown in 1910 was in Rochester, New York. By 1917, Chicago had implemented a visual arts department in their school district. By 1931, there were film and media departments in twenty-five states. "Classroom use of films became a symbol of progressive teaching approaches" (Cuban, 1986). Of the information available, it seems that motion films were not used frequently for various reasons: not

enough equipment, teachers not trained on the equipment or film use, and difficulty in finding a subject-related film.

Also in 1920, the Radio Division of the U.S. Department of Commerce implemented educational radio stations to provide classroom teaching via the radio. BY 1945, many school districts and state departments were providing radio programs to assist teachers with instruction. The equipment for broadcasting a radio show was much affordable and accessible that the motion film equipment but many schools still could not afford the equipment and/or could not work the radio programming scheduled times within their school schedules (Cuban, 1986).

Instructional television entered the scene from 1954-1983. The Ford Foundation invested money for instructional education for educational advancement. Through their funding, over \$20 million in 250 school systems and 50 colleges by 1961. Instructional television was used to teach an entire class, supplement class content, or aid in the teaching (Cuban, 1986).

In the early 1980s, machines later known as computer were being used in exclusive classrooms. During the 1990s, computers could be found in almost every school district even if they only had a limited quantity for district use. By 2000, the student to computer ratio was 5 to 1 with a 1 to 1 ration being strongly encouraged by school districts in 2010.

Technology is everywhere today. We can search articles online without going to library, shop from the comfort of our couch, and connect with family

and friends from anywhere in an instant. Students have become accustomed to using technology for a variety of activities and social networking. Information technology is rapidly changing in ways that we cannot even imagine today. It is important to understand how to use technology and social media as they will serve as resources and tools for students and as they become professionals in their careers (Gardner & Jewler, 1997).

In the 1950s and 1960s, large computers were being used for administrative positions at some research institutions. Many faculty members began using computer in the 1960s due to approval of research grants they had applied for. Individual faculty members started using computers to more easily process data and by 1992 massive amounts of material and information were available through the world wide web. By 1996 over 50 percent of freshman students had access to computers on their college campuses and 25 percent of those freshmen had acquired their own computers (Smith, 2006). Video simulations and smartboards were introduced into classrooms and labs. The majority of students and faculty today have various forms of devices used for student learning and social interactions. Some faculty members have already incorporated social media into their classrooms while others are either feeling the pressure to make changes or they have decided not to build social media in their curriculum. Adding social media would require the professor to ensure that they understand the media application, how to use it from an instructor and students perspective, and possibly some basic troubleshooting. The introduction of any

new technology will require that the instructor is properly trained on its use and then a training session and/or tutorial is held with the participants. Students who have prior knowledge of using the social media tool will need to also attend this training to ensure that the participants are exposed to the same training.

Instructors should either facilitate this training or attend the training. It is important that an instructor understands how the social media tools are used and displayed from a student perspective. Faculty members would also need to regularly check all applications that they implement because information would be uploaded in various formats. This can be viewed as a downside for instructors because they may have trouble fitting this into their already busy schedules and routines. However, if these tools lead to increased student learning and engagement, then the benefit will be worth incorporating these regular checkpoints. As this practice continues to emerge, we will learn from those who are using social media in their classes and the influence it is having on student learning (Kelly, 2003). Since this is still a fairly new practice and research is growing but currently limited, we will learn what works well and what does not seem to work well, from those who integrate social media into their courses. As more research claims that student engagement can be increased through using social media, there will also be more instructional and supplemental materials to enhance the use of social media which will prove to be helpful to instructors.

“The power of television and video for learning lies in the use of multimedia to engage students visually, cognitively, emotionally, socially, and

civically in facets of the academic content. Visual learning can result in increased engagement as well as increased complexity, depth, and breadth of experience to improve student academic performances” (Lemke,year, pg. 6). Research has shown that the use of education television can increase student engagement if the television episode is relative and specific to the content and if the teacher is appropriately incorporating the televised content. Educational television must be used to supplement and reinforce the material and not as a substitute for subject content. This can help student learning by using visualization and integrating a higher-order of thinking. Another consideration is locating and selecting educational videos that are updated so students are receiving the most current information. Along with this, the equipment would also need to be compatible to the format of the material. It is important also to review the school culture and teacher preparation with using educational as a supplemental teaching and learning resource.

Social Media Use Among College Students

Junco and Cole-Avent (2008) note that current students are more wired and connected through the internet than any other generation has been. The researchers have also found that there are differences among the college students. Females access the internet and social media applications mostly for communication purposes. Males access the internet and social media applications mostly for research and playing games. Junco and Cole-Avent also discover that students do distinguish between the real world and virtual as it pertains to

communication. The advances in technology will continue to occur and college students will come to expect technology to be incorporated into their course work and college experience. This study identified differences in how females and males use the internet once it is accessed.

In research conducted by Junco (2011), the relationship between Facebook and student engagement was studied. There were 2,368 participants who completed surveys from a four-year, public college. A selection of the survey results are listed below:

Students reported spending a mean of 750.75 (SD 642.24) minutes (or 12.5 h) per week preparing for class and spending, on average, 298.50 (SD 438.32) minutes (or 5 h) per week participating in co-curricular activities. Students in this sample spent a substantial amount of time on Facebook. Students:

- Spent a mean of 101.09 min (SD 99.16) on the site per day
- Spent a mean of 74.97 min (SD 86.82) on the site "yesterday"
- Checked Facebook a mean of 5.75 (SD 6.78) times per day
- Checked Facebook a mean of 4.8 (SD 6.71) times "yesterday."

(Junco, 2011, p. 166).

These results gave an estimate of the time spent by the participants in preparing and studying for class per week versus how much time they spent on Facebook on a daily basis. The results for this particular study showed that there was no relationship between the time spent on Facebook and time spent

studying. However, the study did determine that there is a positive relationship between the time spent on Facebook and the time spent participating in co-curricular activities. This is consistent with similar research that has found that those who utilize social networking websites were more involved on campus and had more real-world connections than those who do not use social networking websites (Junco, 2011).

In a 2013 study Junco research inequalities of Facebook use among college students. The survey was sent to students through their university email. The study yielded responses from 2,368 students from a four-year, public institute. The respondents were 64% female and 89% self-identified as Caucasian. The study did not find a relationship with the time spent on Facebook and the respondents' gender, race, or highest level of education for their parent. The results showed that females were more probable to post and tag photos and comment on others' posts. African Americans reportedly would not be as prone to inquire with friends. A positive relationship was found between the level of parent's education and the student posting videos, sending messages, and creating events. This same group had a negative relationship when it came to updating their status. (Junco, 2013b). There was a limitation in this study pertaining to the race of the participants. The demographics were somewhat representative of the university surveyed; however, the African American responding percentage was low at 5% (Junco, 2013b).

Bartow (2014) examined the outcome of five teachers who used social media as part of their classroom instruction. Bartow does note that many schools do not allow access social media applications. Observation notes and detailed interviews provided an understanding of the affect of incorporating social media. An initial hesitation can occur with implementing social media because the instructor may not feel as versed as their students in the use and features. However, the study showed that communications and interactions with the instructor increased while using social media. Through social media such as Edmodo (an online collaboration tool), student participants were more on-task because of reminders and they had access to more information at one time because the teacher could provide students with a large amount of information at one time. The instructors can also place various resource links and supplemental materials within the content of a social media site. As students work though the course content and social media application, they can be a source of information for instructors to learn more efficient and effective ways to utilize social media tools. Some instructors felt that they had less control when implementing social media. Interestingly, the study discovered that some instructors had more control than without social media. Social media use provides evidence of sharing and participation of these tools instead of relying on a student's own admission or other forms of determining if the student has performed the task (Bartow, 2014).

There are numerous social media applications and tools and ways in which they can be incorporated in a classroom. Technology continues to change and advance. These tools can increase communication and give the more instructors more flexibility with their curriculum. Conversely, requiring social media usage would mean selecting the appropriate tool, providing equal access to all students, and continuous review of its use and implementation (Bartow, 2014).

Though Facebook has been used in numerous studies due to its popularity, Twitter has become a contender to Facebook. To have full access to a person on Facebook, you must be friends with each other. With Twitter you can follow someone or they can follow you without you following each other. This has an appeal because others do not have as much access to personal information such as photos. Subsequently followers and non-followers of a Twitter account can view a historical timeline of tweets. Twitter is not focused on friends like Facebook, Twitter is a micro-blogging service. Twitter is also limited to 140 characters and can make connections with others and keywords through the use of hashtags (Murthy, 2013).

Davis (2010) noted that as some schools considered using social networking as part of their curriculum, there were concerns that arose. As schools required social networking sites to be accessed from the campus, they contemplated how they would address privacy and security issues. Another issue is that students regularly change the social networking tool they use. Davis discussed a principal who created a Twitter account to interact with students and

parents. At the time, only 8% of the teenagers were using Twitter. The primary purpose of the principal's Twitter account transitioned into a way for him to communicate with other educators. An instructional technologist that Davis interviewed stated that he viewed Twitter as a massive conference where you can access information anytime during the day. Due to changes in student usage and popularity and advances in technology, the type of social media tool incorporated will need to be carefully chosen. Current statistics and a survey of the potential participants will need to be retrieved before make a definitive decision. As a common practice, this would need to be re-evaluated periodically to ensure that it is a tool that will be useful and effective.

Cotten (2008) discussed the significance of examining the social impact of technology on the well-being of college students. Previous research has found evidence of less depression and loneliness when participants interacted with others. In situations where high gaming or shopping occur, those respondents reported an increase in depression. Due to the low level of research of social impact and well-being of technology, educators must at least acknowledge that the outcome is unknown. Another area that needs to be considered is addiction with social media and/or cell phone use. Some claim that the problem lies in self-regulation and not with an actual addition. With the increase in cell phones used by young adults and the variety of technology tools, further research needs to be conducted to understand the influence (Cotten, 2008).

High level multitasking has become a key component of college students today. These college students are looking for personalization and immediate responses. Salas and Alexander (2008) examined a college campus that has embraced numerous technology items to communicate with prospective and current students. Some of these items are instant messaging for their admission and financial services, iTunes U for course podcasts, and clickers to record in-class immediate responses. Another important technology piece is student tracking. Tracking can help identify at-risk students and allow colleges and universities the chance to intervene and provide the student with assistance. This type of tracking supports initiatives to improve student retention (Salas and Alexander, 2008).

Currently, the two most popular social media tools are Facebook and Twitter; there is ample research that has been conducted on these tools. However, with changes in technology and advancement, Facebook or Twitter could easily be replaced as MySpace was several years ago (Clem & Junco, 2015). At the time of this 2015 article, 94% of teens indicate that they use Facebook. Facebook can be used as a course management tool, share resources, and as a tool for online discussions. Since there is no cost to using the platform itself, it is a very useful addition to learning management. The success of using this tool begins with the facilitator. With proper use of events, pages, posts, and overall management, this tool can be beneficial to student learning (Clem & Junco, 2015). Students can share class notes, create events, participate in

discussions, and communicate with their professor. Research has shown that there can be a positive relationship between using Facebook as a learning tool and student engagement. Research has provided varying results on the relationship between Facebook use and academic averages.

Twitter has been used in classrooms as a learning tool. Students have used twitter to send and receive information and to access past discussions. Research has shown that students like using Twitter because it is easy to access and the information is provided in a short announcement versus them having to access an entire blog of information. Students must use precise and condensed writing in order to relay information in 140 characters. The use of Twitter can promote collaborative leaning among a class, more than one class, and/or a community within Twitter. As with Facebook, the facilitator is the most important component to the use of Twitter. When Twitter is set up and used effectively, it can successfully supplement student learning. Research has shown that Twitter use as a learning tool can lead to increased interactions and engagement (Clem & Junco, 2015).

Since most students are already using Facebook and Twitter on some level, they do not have to learn how to use a new learning tool completely. For example, if students are asked to use Blackboard, they will need to learn how to access information, how to read and post information, and how to navigate between the various pages for discussions, assignment, and documents. If Facebook or Twitter is used as a learning tools, students should still be given a

tutorial to make sure everyone is using it in the same manner, but because the majority of the students use these two types of social media, the training will not be a daunting for students or professors. Although research has been conducted on the usefulness of Facebook or Twitter as an educational learning tool, more research will need to be conducted to truly understand the effect and influence it has on students and learning (Clem & Junco, 2015).

Social Media and Student Engagement

In a study by Kirschner and Karpinski (2010), they examined the relationship between Facebook and the student participants' academic performance. Students completed a survey that consisted of open and closed questions about their demographics, studying and involvement activities, and computer and Facebook usage. The researchers found that those who utilized Facebook did not spend as much time studying and had lower averages than the participants who did not utilize Facebook. The daily usage of the internet was the same whether the participant was accessing Facebook or not. It was discovered that classification and major field of student did not have an effect on the participants' use of Facebook, their academic average, or the amount of study time (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010). This study discovered fascinating data in the time spent on the internet. The amount of time that was spent on the internet was reportedly the same for participants who were using Facebook as those who were not. It would be of value to know what parts of the internet those students were accessing. Whether this time was spent on searching for study materials or

accessing other social media tools, the study showed that they had higher academic averages and studied more. If their internet usage was documented, a future study could identify if this routine led to higher averages and more time spent studying for another participant group.

The inception of Twitter in 2006 established “a microblogging service and a social networking Web site” (Junco & Chickering, 2010, p. 13). Within three years, Twitter had an increase of users by 660 percent. Junco and Chickering agree that incorporating social media can promote positive learning environments as well as psychosocial development. However, disadvantages such as privacy issues and the potential for harassment must be acknowledged due to the detrimental effect this could place on a student. Higher education campuses must be clear and concise on their mission statement, policies, and expectations in regard to social media. If social media is incorporated in a responsible manner, the benefit could enhance student success and personal development (Junco & Chickering, 2010).

Junco, Heiberger, and Loken (2010) note that research findings have found connections between student engagement and technology. However, further research needs to be conducted that focuses on relationships among the use of social media and student engagement. In a study conducted by Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, the purpose was to examine the possible relationship between the use of social media, specifically Twitter, and any effect its use had towards student engagement and learning. Specific class-related activities were

performed using Twitter by the student participants. Some of these activities were continuations of classroom discussions, event reminders, and study group coordination. The researchers selected nineteen questions from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) as their pre-test and post-test engagement evaluation. The study results found that there was an increase in student academic performance, improved correspondences between faculty and students and among peers, and active learning was utilized (Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, 2010).

Since students have changed so much over the past couple of decades, we must attempt to understand these changes in order to engage students. Most students today have been exposed to a digital world throughout their lives. Students desire constant connection and communication and an environment that supports these desires (Taylor, 2011). Numerous studies with college student participants within the past decade restricted their social networking focus to Facebook. Facebook was recognized as the most popular social media application of college students. College students viewed Facebook as a social networking tool to stay in contact with current friends. This did not reflect some beliefs that Facebook could promote engagement of students learning (Hew, 2011). However, in a study by Mbodila, Ndebele, and Muhandji (2014) in a South African University found that a large portion of their student recipients thought that Facebook increased their engagement allowed them to be more knowledgeable about the classroom information. The participants completed

surveys and min-surveys that provided information about the respondent themselves, their preferred device to access social media, their Facebook use, and the student's opinion of the influence of Facebook on their engagement. The question arises, is it the practice of using Facebook as a tool that can enhance student learning as a sole source or does its addition serve as a supplement to other practices and these work together to increase student engagement? This study concludes with a note that further research should be examine other forms of social media and the possibility of combining social media tools with other learning tools, such as BlackBoard.

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A selection of the survey results are listed below:

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Students in this sample spent a substantial amount of time on Facebook.

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(Junco, 2012a, p. 166).

These results give an estimate of the time spent by the participants in preparing and studying for class per week versus how much time they spent on Facebook on a daily basis.

These results also showed that there was not a relationship between the time spent on Facebook and time spent studying. However, the study determined there is a positive relationship between time spent on Facebook and time spent participating in co-curricular activities. This is consistent with similar research that has found that those who utilize social networking websites were more involved on campus and had more real-world connections than those who do not use social networking websites (Junco, 2012a).

Junco (2012b) conducted a study that would produce a large collection of data to include more detailed information regarding participants’ Facebook usage and the amount of time spent learning and on coursework. The participants were asked to complete a survey of questions where they would provide estimates of how they spent their time on various applications or activities. The findings did report that as time spent on Facebook escalating, those participants had lesser academic averages. “This finding is congruent with both Astin’s (1984) and Chickering and Gamson’s (1987) theories that the amount of time engaged in academic work is predictive of academic success” (Junco, 2012b, p. 194). The study did not find a relationship between the amount of time a participant

studied and the amount of time they were on Facebook. Junco states that future research should explore studies that could possibly pinpoint what factor(s) does influence the relationship of time spent on Facebook and a lower academic average.

In 2013, a list was compiled of the most accessed websites in the world. A few of the websites included on the list are: Google, Facebook, YouTube, Yahoo, Amazon, Twitter, BlogSpot, and LinkedIn. Many of these websites combine media, information, communication, and social networking (Fuchs, 2014). This data would need to be updated regularly to account for new social media tools and for shifts in those that are accessed the most.

Haeger, Wang, and BrckaLorenz (2014) studied data to determine the possible influence of social media on the student engagement of first-generation college students. The data was collected from the 2012 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) along with additional questions regarding social media of first-year and senior college students. It was found that first-generation students who were classified as first-year or first-generation students are on social media less often than those who are not first-generation. The research also noted that when first-year or senior first-generation college students were utilizing social media, it was to connect with family members more often than with friends from home or new friends. The study results showed that the first-generation student participants were “using social media less to make friends in college, maintain relationships with peers, and learn about opportunities and

activities supports the notion that first-generation students are not building the same level of capital through social media as their peers are" (Haeger, Wang, & BrckaLorenz, 2014, p. 6). The importance of this finding is that first-generation students may not be accessing information that could be useful in their interactions with peers and faculty/staff and they are not taking advantage of opportunities available to them as college students. As these students apply for graduate or professional programs or a position following graduation, the lack of connections made with faculty and staff could also affect their ability to secure guidance throughout the process and recommendations needed for their admission or employment (Haeger et al., 2014).

A research study examined the use of Twitter and its ability to increase student learning through engagement (Evans, 2014). The participants' responses showed that as the time increased that was spent on Twitter, those students became more engaged in university activities. The study also highlights that it is difficult to determine whether the use of Twitter caused an increase in student engagement or if the students who were more engaged utilized Twitter more often (Evans, 2014).

With studies such as this one, students are asked to self-report the amount of time that they have spent on the specified social media tool. Junco (2013a), conducted a study to compare actual and self-reported Facebook usage. The participants were asked to respond to a survey to answer questions regarding their Facebook. The respondents were then asked to download a link

to monitoring software that would record their active Facebook use for one month. The software also recorded the time spent on other tools such as Twitter and search engines. Of the 110 survey participants, 49 downloaded the monitoring system with 4 of those later withdrawing from the study. The results discovered that students overestimated the time that they were spending on Facebook by 2 hours when their self-reported and actual times were compared. Junco attributes this discrepancy by identifying various reasons. Students could be overestimating due to considering their active and inactive Facebook time or the students may feel like they are on Facebook more than they actually are. Also, the monitoring software only documented the time spent on Facebook while on their computer, so mobile devices would not be accounted for. Another reason could be that students are unsure of how to appropriately estimate the time that they spent on Facebook. This study is a reminder that self-reporting provides estimates and not actual data. However, even with the addition of the monitoring software for this study, it could not account for the time on Facebook on other devices such as phones or a tablet (Junco, 2013a). This would be difficult to find a tracking device that could record the actual date from any device that a student uses. The other issue is that students may not be open to a monitoring device that needs to be downloaded to their computer or device. There may be concerns of privacy of their personal information. Since self-reporting is the most used way of reporting the amount of time spent on social media, it would be beneficial to provide students with a log to complete and monitor their

own usage for an allotted amount of time before they have to answer the survey. This would at least provide students with a better sense of their actual time than an estimate at the time of the survey provides. Further research on tracking tools may also be helpful in obtaining a more realistic answer of the time that participants spend on the selected social media tool.

Social media is a complex, multi-layered term. "Understanding social media critically means, among other things, to engage with the different forms of sociality on the Internet in the context of society" (Fuchs, 2014, p. 6). A vast amount of research has been conducted on social media, but there is still more research that would need to be conducted before we can understand the influence its use has on students and society. There are critical questions that need to be addressed. What influence is social media having on communication, collaborations, and community? Fuchs (2014) believes that there are two questions that should be addresses when implementing social media in any manner. First, who will benefit from the use of social media and will there by disadvantages to user or others? Second, if this benefits a class or group of students, will it disadvantage or do harm to others? With any study, it is important to address ethical considerations not only of the participants but also any foreseeable considerations to others.

Chapter Summary

This research studied the perceived impact that the use of social media

has on the student engagement of college students. With social media being so accessible to our students, it is important to understand the impact that it has on them. The information from this study can be used to identify not only ways in which students are utilizing social media but also any affect that it has on the engagement of those students.

The participants are undergraduate college students. Participants were asked to describe their social media usage to obtain information about the types of social media utilized and the amount of time spent on various social media networks. Participants also complete a daily social media log that allowed them to self-report the data for this study. Questions regarding social media usage and student engagement were asked within the survey. The researcher was prepared to embrace each opportunity to enrich the study and obtain results and conclusions that could provide useful knowledge and information for educating today's college students. Chapter 3 provides more information regarding the methodology of the study.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Defining and Perspectives/Approaches

There are varying definitions of student engagement. Kuh (2009) states that “student engagement represents the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities” (p. 683).

Some researchers attempt to define student engagement by the approaches they use to understand engagement. However, as with the definition of student engagement, there are varying opinions on the number and naming of the approaches. In an article by Kahu (2013), there are four approaches identified to define student engagement. The approaches are the behavioral perspective, the psychological perspective, the socio-cultural perspective, and the holistic perspective. The behavioral approach looks at instructional practice, psychological looks at the internal process of an individual, the socio-cultural looks at the student experience social context, and the holistic perspective in which a few researchers attempt to join the diverse areas of theory and research. “One constant across the myriad conceptualizations of engagement is that it is multidimensional. Yet, agreement on multidimensionality differs from agreement

on the number and types of engagement dimensions, which ranged from two to four” (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008, p. 370). Engagement is usually categorized by having two or three components. The two component model will typically include affective/emotional and behavioral. The affective or emotional subtype would incorporate components such as, sense of belonging, interest, and identification. The behavioral subtype would incorporate components such as, effort, participation, and conduct. The three component model would add a cognitive subtype. The cognitive subtype would incorporate components such as learning goals, self-regulation, and learning investment. In addition to the two and three component models, other researchers suggest that there are four subtypes in classifying engagement. Those four subtypes are academic, behavioral, cognitive, and psychological. Most of the research in student engagement concentrates on observable indicators, such as those found in academic and behavioral engagement. Cognitive and psychological engagement are determined by internal indicators that are not observable. (Appleton et al., 2008).

Shift in Research

Students today have become accustomed to constant and immediate communication. Because of advances in technology and changes in society over the past couple of decades, the learning goals and preferences of students are also changing (Taylor & Parsons, 2011). With many of the student identity development model, like the theories published by Astin and Chickering and

Gamson, were created with the offline/real world. With the advances in technology and social media, students now have the opportunity to develop and create identities and at times multiple identities, through the virtual and social platforms (Junco, 2014). Through self-presentation, students are able to create an image that reflects their aspirations. Students may be more comfortable in communicating and sharing information online. These current elements must be considered as factors within identity development (Junco, 2014).

Research Method

Utilizing the most appropriate and effective data collection approach is critical to any research study. In obtaining qualitative data, which are more narrative, researchers may conduct observations, interviews, or have the participants complete journal entries (Mertler, 2014). The researcher decided to use surveys where students could self-report their responses to a pre-determined list of questions. Some open-ended questions were included to allow for students to more openly share their perceptions. Qualitative research is a more flexible design where quantitative is a more fixed design. The researcher was also able to look for underlying values, beliefs, or assumptions in collecting broad and open-ended data, with qualitative data. (Choy, 2014)

“Using multiple sources of data can enhance your inquiry as you gain different perspectives from different strategies,” (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014, p. 134). This allowed the researcher to acquire rich data that could benefit the current study and possibly lead to future study areas.

In considering the format for data collection in this study, the researcher decided that interviewing the students could possibly lead to students attempting to provide answers they believed the researcher wanted to record. The researcher compiled and administered electronic surveys with several questions of various formats pertaining to social media and their student engagement. Participants responded to survey questions that provided insight into the impact of social media, perceptions and understandings, and additional information that was relative to the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research was to describe the perceived impact that social media has on the student engagement of college students.

Obtaining data from surveys and the research process itself provided considerations and knowledge about the impact social media has on student engagement. The data obtained provided information and a better understanding about the perceived relationship between social media and student engagement from the college students point of view.

The diversity/social justice component of this study considered the socio-economic status, race, and gender of participants. Research has found that student engagement is an indicator of student success. In an attempt to increase student success by providing opportunities for all students, this research looked at student engagement and the impact that social media has. Students should

have access to the same opportunities and privileges for success regardless of their socio-economic status, race, or gender.

Research Objective

The research objective was to describe the perceived impact social media has on the student engagement of college students. While acquiring data pertaining to social media usage, the researcher acknowledged that there could be correlations between the self-reporting of participants and their usage during course time, their feelings of engagement or disengagement, and their self-reported perceptions. This research provided pertinent and useful information regarding the impact of social media on the student engagement in a higher education.

Research Design

Randomly selected college students were contacted and provided with information about the study along with a request for their participation. The information provided to the participants explained the purpose of the study, the format and type of questions that will be asked, and a statement about the confidentiality of their name and data collected through the survey. Once students agreed to participate, they were asked to maintain a daily log of the time they spend on specified social media networks (see Appendix B). This information was entered by participants into the electronic survey. There are several applications that can track social media use, for the intent of managing time. However, the researcher wanted to ensure that any tracking would be

useful, acquire no costs to the participant, will provide the data that may be needed, and would not cause any foreseeable harm to the participant or their mobile or desktop device. The recommended method was for participants to manually note the time spent on social media by self-reporting on the daily log.

Student participants also received an electronic survey containing questions to determine their use of social media, their perspective of student engagement in general and in regards to their own student engagement, and their impression of the usefulness of social media to enhance student engagement (see Appendix A). In considering and preparation for this study, it was important to note that not all participants will be of the same social class. Some students may have more accessibility to social media through personal devices than others may have. The paradigm of Ethics of Critiques focuses on inequities and social justice. It will be essential to note who will benefit from this research and address any participant or student who may have a silent voice or not represented (Shapiro and Stefkovich, pg. 15). However, at times, social media can give voice to someone who has felt marginalized in social spaces. This newfound outlet can have advantages and disadvantages.

Students were asked about their social media usage, definitions of engagement, and their perception of the impact social media has on student engagement. These questions allowed the researcher the opportunity to gain perspectives of the participants perceived impact social media has on their student engagement.

Participants were asked if they thought their social media usage had an impact on their student engagement. Participants also had the opportunity to discuss the format of courses and whether they had been enrolled in courses where social media had been incorporated within the course(s). There was an acknowledgment by the researcher that some subject content areas may have a difficult time incorporating social media networks into their content. However, obtaining the participants' feedback was useful to the study. The participants were asked what, if anything, would increase their student engagement and if they think that student engagement is important to their success.

The length of the study began with the initial contact and sharing information regarding the study. Participants relayed their willingness to serve as volunteer participants. Students were sent instructions along with the suggested daily social media log. Students were then sent an email containing instructions and a link for the electronic survey. The survey did not have a time limit but would need to be completed before closing out the website. The participants' portion concluded with the submission of the survey responses. The data collection part was complete within in three weeks from the initial contact. To maintain confidentiality of the participants, each student will be assigned a number that will accompany any of the documents associated with their responses.

This research also considered diversity elements within the study. More than ninety percent of the students were born and raised within the state the

southern public college research site is located. Of those enrolled, approximately 85% of students received financial assistance in the form of scholarship, grants, loans, etc. This statistic highlighted that the majority of the students attending have financial need and do not have the monetary means themselves, or from their parent/guardian or other individuals to cover college tuition and expenses. It is important to have training and access to resources for all students. Some students may have limited skills or had little to no practice with the social media networks. Students were given clear instructions so the data is useful and the research study itself did not create added pressures for the participants. Participants were asked to keep a daily log of their social media usage by making numerical notations on the provided log sheet. For students who did not have a personal computer or smartphone, the instructions noted the location of accessible will be able to use the computers available on campus.

Typically, 35% of the student population is first-generation college students at the research site. The National Survey of Student Engagement (2013) has reported that many times the students who are not engaged and do not continue with college are first-generation, male, transfer, and/or commuter students. Increasing student engagement of these students becomes important in retention and student success. This report shows on average, there are more differences with student engagement within a college campus itself than compared to other college campuses.

The student population of the research site was 69.3% female and 30.7% male. Junco and Cole-Avent (2008) note that females typically use social media for communicating and educational purposes while males access the internet for completing skilled-tasks or for entertainment purposes. Of those enrolled at the research site, the student population self-identifies as 48.35% Caucasian, 45.12% African-American, 1.37% Hispanic, 1.17% Asian, .30% American Indian, .05% Native Hawaiian, and the others listed 2 or more of other. The student population is heavily weighted with female students. Since males are in the at-risk group of student engagement and persistent, the male participant will provide valuable information for this research. There are mostly Caucasian and African-American students; this may become a limitation to the study in considering the diversity within the participant pool outside of these two groups.

In this study, the researcher also acknowledged the concept of digital inequality. Some students may decide not to use social media because they are disenfranchised possibly because of their ethnic, racial, or even socioeconomic backgrounds. Other students may be conscientious objectors who chose not to use social media (Junco, 2014). Educators also need to recognize that there is a difference between access of social media and technology and use of social media and technology. There has been progress towards equalization of access but the use of social media can vary greatly due to sociodemographic characteristics. Students from minority ethnic and racial backgrounds and lower

socioeconomic levels typically are have more disadvantages and digital inequalities (Junco, 2014).

Given that research shows that student engagement is an indicator of student success, it is essential to provide each student with the tools, resources, and opportunities to be successful. By improving or increasing student engagement for all students, students may have more equal distribution of opportunities to succeed as we work towards social justice. Students should have the same opportunity to learn and prosper regardless of their socio-economic status, race, gender, or any other identifier. The perceived impact of social media on student engagement was examined in an effort to provide additional support for student learning, student success, and personal development.

Data Analysis

Various data analysis tools were used for the qualitative data that was collected. The data indicating the number of hours spent on the social media applications was easily represented by providing a table that showed the reported use of each of the selected social media platforms by the participants .

This study provided an opportunity for the researcher to reflect upon several of Chickering's Seven Vectors of Student Development. By examining the impact of social media on student engagement, the researcher was also able to explore the developing competences through the participants' communication and responses submitted to the researcher.

The survey included selected-response questions, questions that used the Likert scale, and open-ended questions. The survey questions utilized self-reporting by the participants so the researcher wanted to represent this data in the most effective way. The researcher needed to carefully code those responses so that they can be categorized and arranged as part of the data analysis.

The researcher printed out copies of each of the individual survey responses by participant number. The selected-response question responses and social media use log were analyzed, the percentage was calculated, and a graphical representation was created for each of these questions. The open-ended response question provided more of a challenge. The researcher manually coded the responses and made notes to look for connecting themes within the responses. After many hours of manual coding, the researcher formulated categories and began placing each response as a puzzle piece into the category that was a best fit. The researcher then reviewed each of those categories to further categorize and define repeating themes within responses. There were some responses that would remain within their own category due to their content.

Further research in data analysis assisted the researcher in determining the best method of finalizing the data analysis that would best represent each data set collected. The researcher exported the open-ended responses from SurveyMonkey into an Excel Spreadsheet. This spreadsheet was then imported into NVivo, qualitative data analysis software, to analyze the data as a way of

checking what the researcher had manually coded. After watching training videos and some trial and error, the researcher was able to manage the data, organize it in a more user-friendly format, and view coding of recurring themes within the data. For this study, NVivo was used after the manually coding as a more efficient way to check and support the manual coding that had been time intensive as the unstructured data was managed, organized, and analyzed.

Chapter Summary

The results and findings from this study will be shared with the student participants and possibly with future students, as well as with colleagues. The findings from this study will be useful in planning future course requirements and expectations and in promoting and planning campus events and activities. The findings and results will also be communicated with specific faculty and staff members on campus who may be able to provide feedback and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 4

Findings and Interpretation of Results

Introduction

The participants of the study are undergraduate students at a local state university. Students were randomly selected and contacted to provide study information and inquire about their willingness to participate. Once participants had asked questions and agreed to participate, the survey was sent to them. The participants were reminded that their name would not be used in the data reporting or research study; this reinforced confidentiality of participation and encouraged students to respond truthfully. Of the twenty-five students who were contacted, there were ten students who responded, completed, and submitted the survey. The survey was sent to participants in an electronic format created through Survey Monkey and emailed to the participant's university email address. The electronic survey was previewed by the researcher and viewed on a mobile device to ensure that the formatting and questions were visible and presented in a user-friendly manner. Of the ten participants, seven identified as female and three identified as male; five identified as African-American and five identified as Caucasian. The college classifications of the ten participants were

six seniors, one junior, two sophomores, and one freshman. Some of the demographic attributes are presented in the tables and charts below:

Table 4.1 Gender of Study Participants

Gender	% of Participants
Female	70%
Male	30%

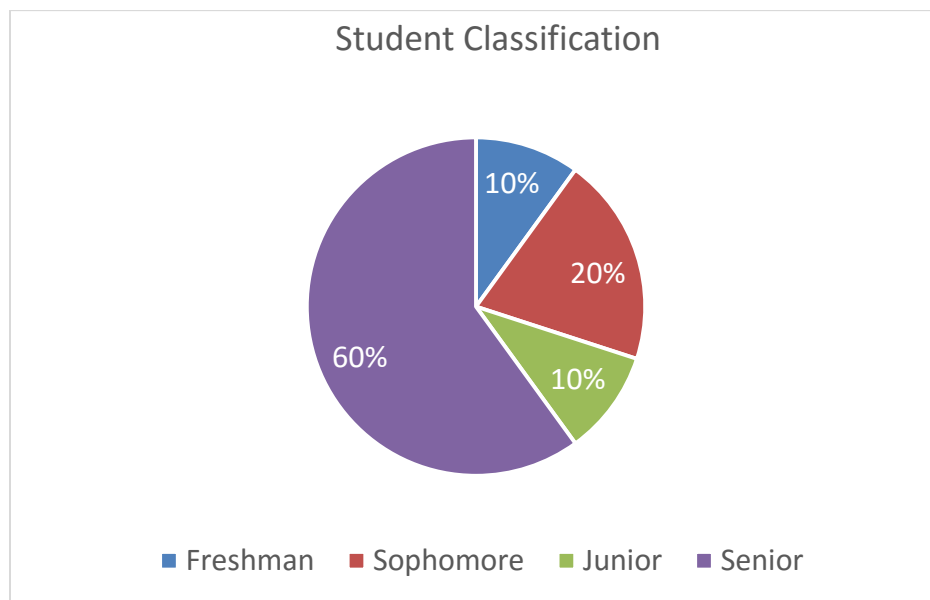


Figure 4.1 Student Classifications of Study Participants

Table 4.2 Race of Study Participants

Race	Self-reported response
Black or African-American	50%
White or Caucasian	50%

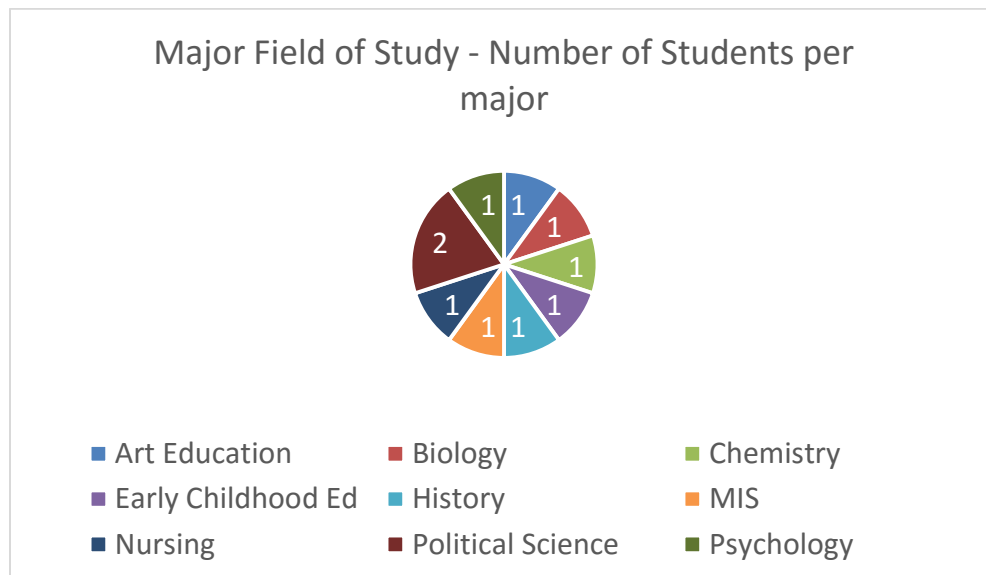


Figure 4.2 Major Field of Study of Study Participants

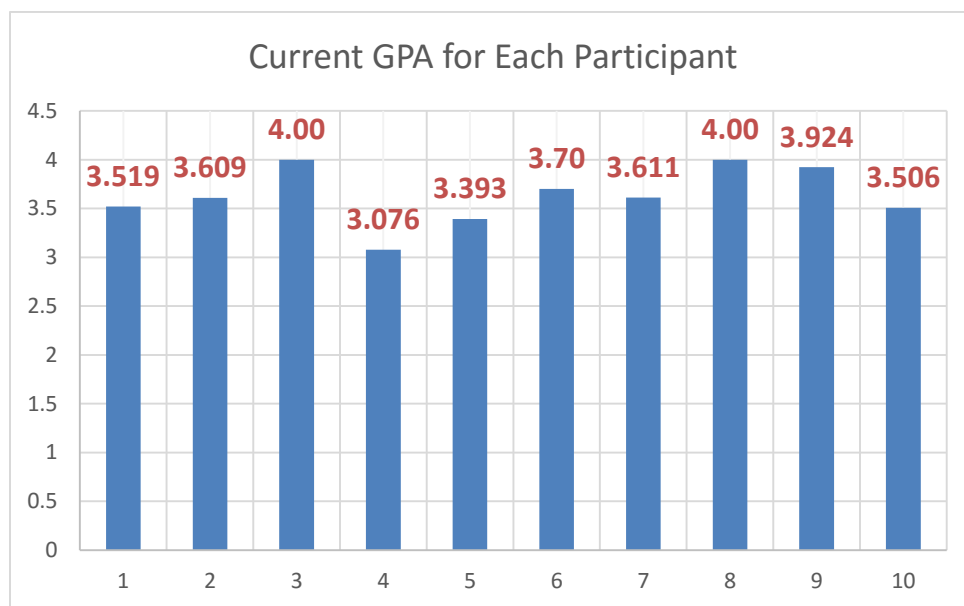


Figure 4.3 Current GPA of Study Participants

Findings of the Study

The findings of the study provided useful data and information. The

survey format was a mixture of selected response, Likert scale response, and open-ended questions. For Question #1, participants were asked if they are first generation college students. The responses to this question are represented in the following graph:

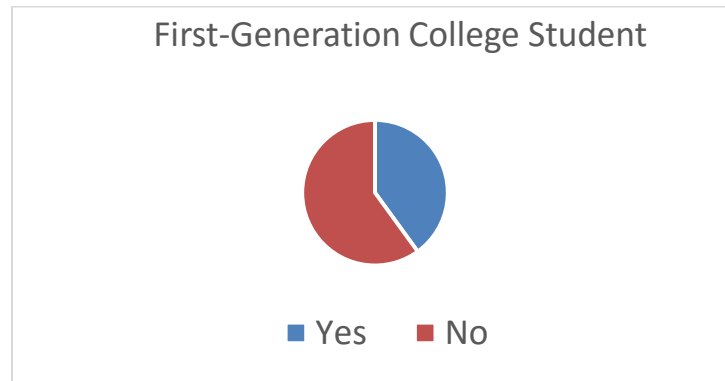


Figure 4.4 First-Generation Study Participants

Question #2 asked participants to identify which of the listed social networks they currently use. The selected social media networks were those most commonly reported in the research for the literature review. The listed social media platforms were: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and LinkedIn which are currently most widely-used. The table that follows displays the responses provided by participants.

Table 4.3 Social Media Usage of Study Participants

Social Media Networks	% of participants who use
Facebook	90%
Instagram	70%
Twitter	40%
Snapchat	90%
LinkedIn	0%

Participants were asked to maintain a daily log to determine their usage for the selected social media networks. The findings of this question are detailed in the following table.

Table 4.4 Daily Social Media Usage Log for Study Participants

Social Media Network	Percentage of Students who spent listed hours per day on each social media network			
	0 hours	1 to 2 hours	3 to 5 hours	6 or more hours
Facebook	10%	60%	10%	20%
Instagram	40%	60%	0%	0%
Twitter	80%	20%	0%	0%
Snapchat	20%	40%	40%	0%

Participants were asked to review the number of hours they indicated they spend on each of the selected social media networks. After reflecting on these responses and hour estimates, participants were asked if they were surprised by the self-reported time they spent on each of the social media networks. Of the participants, four indicated that they were surprised of the number of hours spent on social media and six indicated that they are not surprised. The responses are listed in the graph that follows.

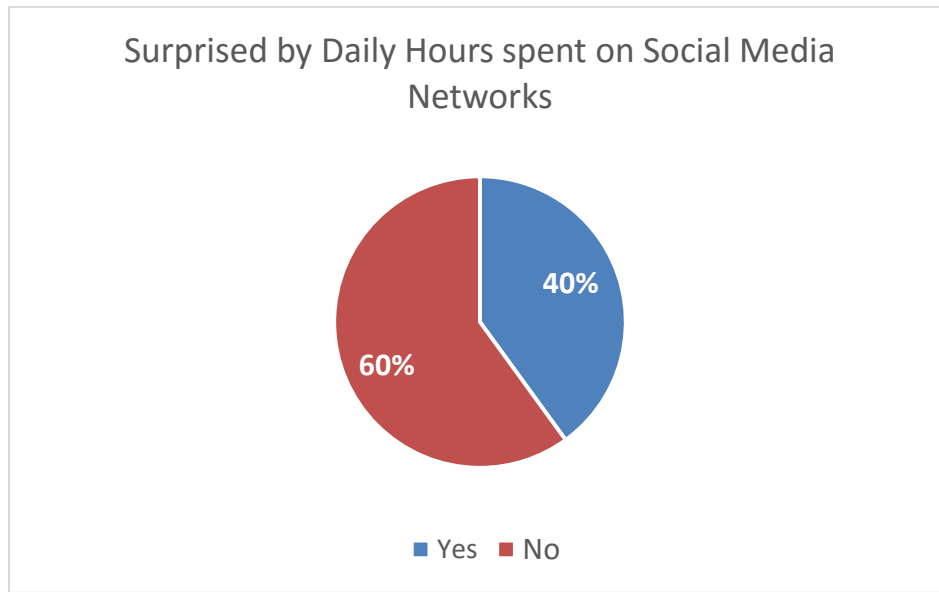


Figure 4.5 Reaction to Daily Social Media Usage

Participants were asked whether they used social media more for academic or for personal/social use. The findings showed that five students use social media for personal/social media purposes only and five use social media for both academic and personal/social use. The responses are represented in the table below:

Table 4.5 Personal/Social vs. Academic Social Media Use

	Percentage of Participants
Social Media for Academic Use	0%
Social Media for Personal/Social Use	5%
Both, Academic and Personal/Social Use	5%

The next survey question asked participants if they currently have or have had professors who used social media to supplement their course. Of the ten participants, six indicated that they have not had a professor who has used social media to supplement their course, four indicated they have had a professor who used Facebook, three who used other social media platforms (not listed as response item), and no respondents have had professors use Snapchat or Instagram to supplement their courses. The responses are listed in the table below:

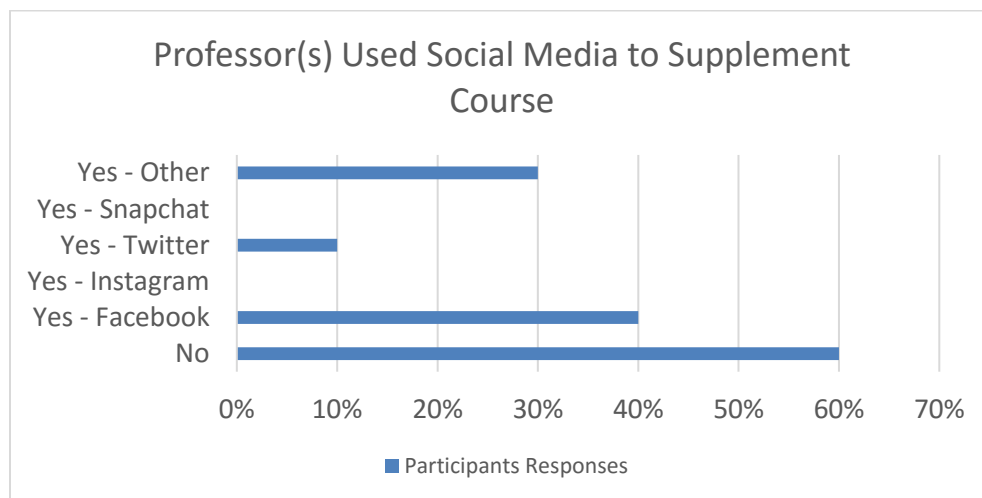


Figure 4.6 Social Media as a Course Supplement

Participants were asked if they thought social media had an impact or effect on their student engagement. Of the ten participants, seven stated that they thought there was a positive impact/effect on their student engagement, two thought there is a negative impact/effect on the student engagement, and

one felt that there was no impact/effect of social media on their student engagement. The findings are also displayed in the graph below:

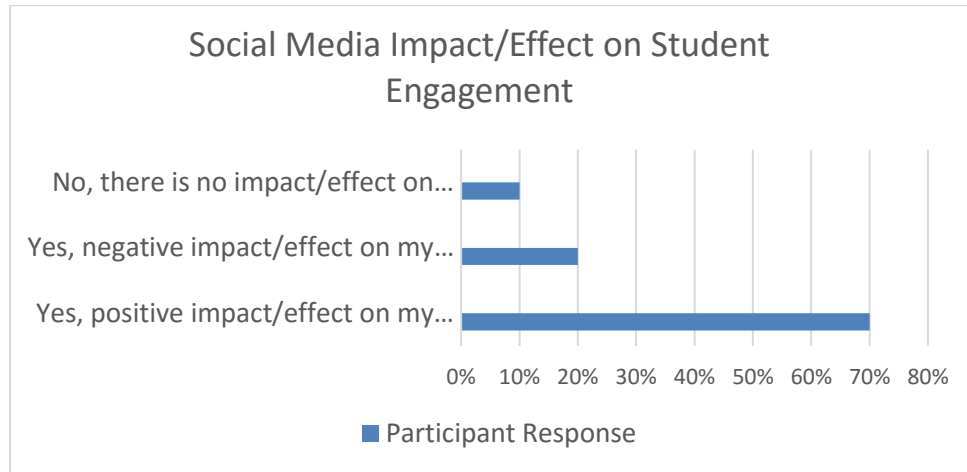


Figure 4.7 Impact/Effect of Social Media on Student Engagement

Participants were then asked if they think they are engaged or disengaged during their classes. Eight of the respondents stated they think they are engaged during course time and two stated that they are disengaged during course time. The responses are indicated in the following graph.

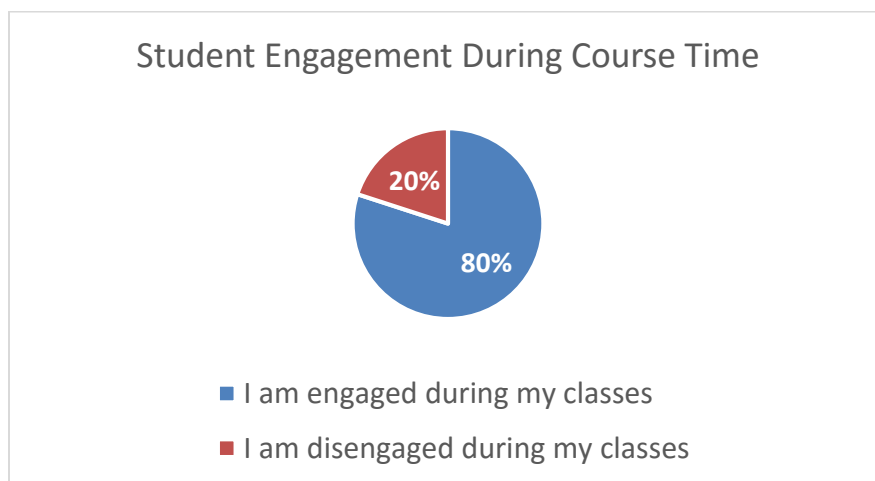


Figure 4.8 Student Engagement During Course Time

Participants were asked to review and consider several statements. Each statement requested that the student respond on a Likert scale to specify strangely agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree for each statement. The first statement asked whether the respondents spend more time on social media than studying. The findings showed that three students agreed with the statement, two students were neutral about the statement, four students disagreed, and one strongly disagreed with the statement. The second statement asked if the respondents spend more time on social media than preparing for their classes. The findings showed that two strongly agreed, two students agreed, one student was neutral, four students disagreed, and one student strongly disagreed with the statement. The third statement asked if students are on social media during their class(es). The findings showed that three students agreed with the statement, five disagreed with the statement, and two students strongly disagreed with the statement. The fourth statement asked if the respondents are on social media during campus events or activities. The findings showed that one strongly agreed, four agreed, two were neutral, two disagreed, and one strongly disagreed. These questions were asked of participants to obtain a better understanding of the student perceptions of their studying habits and actions in the classroom. A Likert scale allowed participants to decide the appropriate range they would select for each of the statements as they considered their social media, studying, and class preparation habits. The results of these questions are displayed in the table that follows.

Table 4.6 Study Participants Social Media Responses

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I spend more time on social media than studying.	0%	30%	20%	40%	10%
I spend more time on social media than preparing for classes.	20%	20%	10%	40%	10%
I am on social media during class.	0%	30%	0%	50%	20%
I am on social media during campus events or activities.	10%	40%	20%	20%	10%

Participants were also asked whether they thought student engagement is important or not. The responses showed that each of the ten participants think that student engagement is important.

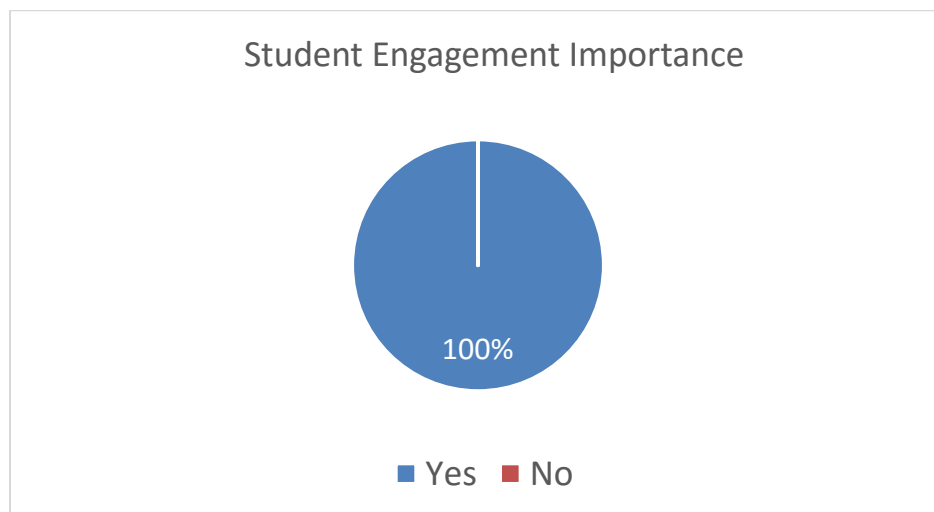


Figure 4.9 Student Engagement Importance

Participants responded to several open-ended question. Students were asked to define student engagement in their own words. This question received varying responses, as expected.

- "Students interacting and paying attention to what is happening in the class and enjoying it so much that they become active students."
- "Participating in activities, whether that be in the classroom or on campus."
- "Student engagement takes place when the professor allows the class to do hands-on work in class. Asking the students questions about the subject at hand is also a form of positive student engagement."
- "Student engagement means the mutual cooperation and relationship between two or more students."
- "Being involved in the school."
- "How well a particular class event/activity can hold a student's attention over any other thing going on. In a broader term. Student engagement can refer to the ability of a student to participate in overall campus activities."
- "Interacting with your peers or other students on and off campus events."
- "Being engaged in class, knowing what is going on and doing the best you can."

- “Student engagement is being involved on campus, and being involved in class, and being able to make friends on campus.”
- “Student engagement means keeping students engaged in the activity that you have set aside for them. This means that they are directly listening and participating in class.”

Participants were also asked to define student disengagement in their own words.

- “When student do not interact with each other or their professor, or take initiative to try to learn or follow the professor/lecture-engage in the discussion.”
- “When a student isn’t participating in class or on campus activities.”
- “Student disengagement takes place when the professor fails to try and include everyone in the class discussion.
- “Disengagement means the interrupted or no initiative to acknowledge another person.”
- “Not caring at all.”
- “If a student is instead paying attention to a third part event, not directly involved with that is happening in the class. If the broader term of disengagement is used, disengagement is when a student does not participate in any campus events.”
- “Not interacting in student activities or with your peers in general.”

- “Not knowing about anything going on in class and getting your work done.”
- “Student disengagement is not being involved in anything and just going through the motions at school.”
- “Student disengagement means students are participating in side conversations, looking at their phone, doodling, and unaware of what the professor is teaching.”

Students were asked to briefly explain why they think student engagement is important or not important.

- “It IS important because students can build themselves and their networking and relationship skills when they interact with other students. Confidence can be built, people can get more involved, and also have an opportunity to speak what’s on their mind and not hold it on or to themselves. Communication is very important in someone’s life and having social skills and being social. It is also important in the classroom setting because it helps the student, overall, be successful and also makes the professor become better because they feel that students are listening and care about what is going on within the classroom.”
- “When a student is engaged, they are learning and creating opportunities for themselves.”

- "Student engagement is very important because the more active students are during class discussions the better grades they make. This also will affect how a graduated student (alum) performs in his career."
- "I think it allows the students to enhance their social skills that are needed for everyday life as a college student."
- "it is important because you go to school, so you should know what's going on."
- "A student who is completely disengaged from classroom and campus events can have a hard time finding others to socialize with."
- "I think it's important because students should feel like they are a part of something great and not just going to class, work and then home every day."
- "Without being engaged in class you wouldn't be able to pass."
- "I think student engagement is important because it is necessary for students to be engaged to be happy."
- "It is important for the student so that they can successfully understand the material. It is important for the teacher so that he/she does not have to keep repeating class discussions over and over again. Also so that they have a good grades."

Participants were asked to consider and describe how they know if someone is engaged or disengaged in the classroom or with activities/events.

- "People will ask and answer questions; their body will behave in certain ways such as your head nodding, etc and people will make eye contact and perform better overall when being engaged in class."
- "This is usually judges by phone usage."
- "When a student keeps eye contact with a professor that usually shows that they are engaged."
- "If the student is called upon for class discussions and can appropriately contribute to the discussion, then that student is effectively engaged in a discussion."
- "They may or may not be paying attention."
- "Grades and how much they socialize with others."
- "Usually when I go to events there is rarely anyone there. Or when there are events and no one knew about it. Or when someone is always doing the same thing every day and they are always stresses. You know they need to get out and let off some steam."
- "They are alert and aware of what's going on and their grades reflect how engaged they are."
- "You know someone is not engaged because they are loners and don't look happy."
- "The student would be looking down, sleeping, no eye contact, slouching, etc."

The next open-ended question asked participants what would increase their student engagement. The responses of the students follow:

- "Professors adding more interactive lessons and discussions in the classroom into the class agenda and not as much lecture."
- "I'm not sure."
- "A professor should ask more questions to the class instead of lecturing the entire period. Group projects during class also increases engagement."
- "More effective teaching and more intriguing class discussions."
- "More things occurring that I'm interested in."
- "Events tailored more to my interests, I can only enjoy so many basketball games."
- "More student events. Fun student events, I think if students saw staff and other students getting excited about events then maybe more people would come."
- "Having fun in class and hands on activities."
- "I actually feel like I am very engaged on campus but I think the university social media could try and promote other organizations' events."
- "Getting out of my seat and having to actually get out of the desk wakes me up and makes me listen more so that I can know what is going on."

The last survey question asked participants if they think their social media usage impacts their student engagement. This question was presented last to make connections with the other questions participants had considered regarding student engagement and social media throughout the survey.

- "Yes. Unfortunately, in the classroom it does impact me negatively because I may not pay attention as well when I distract myself for that time with social media but when I'm promoting events and organizations on campus and sharing info with and from other students, it positively impact it."
- "In class yes, on campus no."
- "I do not think that social media impacts student engagement."
- "No not personally, but it may affect others."
- "Somewhat because that's usually how I find out about events, programs, etc. I also can be distracted during class because I want to check my phone to see if I have missed a notification, request, or anything."
- "I do not."
- "Yes, I usually don't see anything about student engagement on social media so I think that would actually be a better way of getting the word out so everyone would know and go to things."
- "Sometimes but I know when I need to put my phone down and get work done."

- “Social media makes it easier to be engaged because it is easier to see what events are going on and it makes it easier to get in contact with people.”
- “No, personally I am trying to stay off of social media due to over usage.”

Interpretation of the Results

The findings of this research provided the researcher with valuable perspectives of the college students who participated. The researcher has examined research pertaining to the levels of student engagement of college students but this study allows for some insight into the thinking process of the respondents. Students were also asked to track daily usage and self-report the time usage on the survey.

The findings showed that student participants have varying understandings of the meaning of student engagement. The findings also showed that many students view student engagement to be the same as student involvement within their definitions and responses. The same can be said for the definition of disengagement since students would typically be using their initial definition of student engagement to gauge this answer by.

Within the findings, there are four main themes that are central to the study: student, student engagement, class, and social media. Students are a key part of student engagement. The findings showed that participants felt that

students who were active and maintain attention to the class and instructor were more engaged. Participants also indicated that more class discussions, hands-on activities, and questions are important to student engagement. Some of the suggestions to increase student engagement assigned responsibility to the instructor which reinforces the importance of student-faculty relationships student success (Harper & Quaye, 2009).

Even with the varying participant definitions of student engagement, responses centered on the positive, active engagement of students who are attentive and participate. One of the responses discussed the importance of a college student enhancing their social skills and communication through student engagement. These observations are reflective of Chickering's Seven Vectors of Student Development and Astin's Student Involvement theory. The vectors pertain to how the student develops confidence, establishes their identity, and develops purpose (Dickson, 1991). Astin's Student Involvement Theory states that the student must be engaged in their environment to progress in their student development (Astin, 1999).

The findings showed that participants feel that the classroom learning environment itself can impact student engagement. Four of the participants have been enrolled in courses where the instructor used social media to supplement their courses. Three of the ten respondents indicated that they are on social media during class time. Each of the ten participated indicated that student

engagement is important and 80% reported they are engaged during class time. Another finding was that several of the participants would like to have more interactive and interesting discussions and lessons within the course and less lecture-based formats. Some of the participants also discussed out of the classroom events and activities in reference to student events. Respondents noted the importance of interacting with peers, socializing, and participation in campus events and activities. They think that social media could be used more effectively to promote campus events and activities which would lead to an increase of student involvement and engagement.

The analysis of social media focused questions and responses also provided remarkable data. The findings showed that 30% of respondents spend more time on social media than studying and 40% agree (or strongly agree) that they spend more time on social media than preparing for classes. Another point of interest is that 30% self-report being on social media during class time and 50% self-report being on social media during campus events/activities. The majority of the participants (70%) feel that social media has a positive impact on their student engagement.

One of the participants stated that social media has a somewhat negative affect on their student engagement. When in the class room, the student does not feel as engaged because they are distracted by the thought of postings, notifications, or other social media updates that they are missing while not being

able to access their social media networks. Another respondent indicated that they could be distracted as they are thinking about an event that will be happening which prevent them from being engaged in the classroom. One participant commented that sometimes social media impacts their student engagement but they make a conscious effort to set their phone aside to complete course work. Another participant said they are staying off of social media because they had noticed over usage.

Chapter Summary

Participants reported their daily use of selected social media networks.

The findings showed that nine participants use Facebook, eight use Snapchat, six use Instagram, and two use Twitter. This is a point of interest as using social media as a course supplement or as a communication pathway for students. The participants who reported the highest daily social media usage are active on each of the four listed social media networks.

The students who indicated they are disengaged during class time also reported some of the lowest social media usage. One participant noted that social media has a negative impact on their student engagement also reported that they are disengaged during class time but only noted approximately four hours of daily social media usage. The two students who admitted to using social media during class also noted that they use social media for personal/social use;

one of these participants specified they are disengaged during class time while the other is engaged during class time.

The average daily use of social media for female participants was seven hours and for male participants was also seven hours. The average use of social media for black participants was 5.2 hours while the average daily use for white participants was 6.2 hours. The two students who reported being disengaged during class time, also indicated that they think social media has a negative impact on their student engagement.

As with any study that requires student self-report, the data is dependent upon those responses. The self-reported responses are estimates and cannot be guaranteed as accurate. Students could overestimate or underestimate their usage, especially if they are using multiple devices and if they do not account for each time that they access social media networks. When answering the survey questions, it is also important that the students answer honestly and not respond in the manner they believe they are expected to.

In comparison to other research, student engagement can be difficult for a student to assess, especially when the definitions for each student is based on their understanding on student engagement. In line with other studies, half of the respondents indicated they use social media for personal/social use while the other use social media for personal/social use and for academic purposes.

Chapter 5

Summary and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter provides a summary and discussion of the study. The major points of the study are reviewed and implications of the findings are discussed. Suggestions for future research are also presented along with concluding remarks.

Focus of the Study

The focus of the study was student engagement and the perceived impact it has on the student engagement of college students. The importance of student engagement was researched along with factors that may have an effect on student engagement. Most college students have access to personal mobile devices and have become frequent users of social media networks. The impact of social media on college student engagement was selected as the topic of the study.

Overview of the Study

Students were randomly selected and then contacted about the study. The purpose of the study, the format and type of questions, and how the collected information would be used was discussed with the potential

participants. The researcher used an electronic survey and maintained confidentiality to acquire forthright information from the student participants. The survey responses were collected from the ten students who agreed to participate and submitted their responses.

Summary of the Study

The study was conducted to obtain detailed information about the perceived impact of social media on the student engagement of college student. Students were randomly selected from a complete listing of the current attendees. The initial selection was twenty-five students who were contacted. Of those twenty-five, ten students agreed to participate. The researcher proceeded with these ten participants by sending them the daily social media log, instructions for the log and survey, and the link to an electronic survey. The survey questions were a combination of selected response and open-ended questions. This allowed for respondents to provide information in various formats.

Discussion of Major Points of the Study

One of the major points that came from this study is that each of the participants think that student engagement is important. The definitions and understanding that the students had regarding the definition of engagement and disengagement varied but also provided additional information on why each specific student believes student engagement is important.

Some of the students were surprised by the amount time that they spend on social media. These self-reported values are estimates but this study may persuade students to be more conscience of the time they spend on social media when they should be studying or preparing for classes. Students may also consider the time they spend on social media and whether it is for academic or personal/social use. A couple of the students indicated that social media has a negative impact on their student engagement; hopefully this study will provide them with the reflective prompt to make needed adjustment in their social media usage.

Action Plan: Implications of the Findings

This study will create the opportunity to have discussions with students and colleagues about the impact of social media on the student engagement of college students. With the advancements of technology, there are options for incorporating technology on social media within courses but it should be done with the sole purpose of enhancing student success. Student engagement is important to the success of a student and supplemental should add to their learning environment and not be distractive.

As noted with some of the participant responses, some students are aware that social media has a negative impact on their student engagement. Others noted that they spend more time on social media than studying or preparing for their courses. Due to the findings, the researcher will use the

findings as talking points and will also provide assistance to students with finding a social media/technology and school life balance. Based on the findings of this study and observations of college students, the researcher notes the various levels of engagement. A student may attend class or an event, they may participate in a classroom discussion or campus activity, they may become involved in a course project or campus organization, or they may become fully engaged where they are processing and making connections within their courses or campus activities. The various levels that lead to student engagement offer the opportunity for individual students to be successful while meeting their own needs. The researcher plans to use this study and its findings to continue and expand upon the research.

Suggestions for Future Research

One avenue for future research is to expand upon the current study to include additional participants and to include questions that will lead to a relevant comparison for age, classification, gender, and race or ethnicity.

Future research could also look at the social media dependency and its impact on student engagement. Students who are distracted during courses as they wonder if they have missed a post, comment, or notification on social media would be an interesting topic. Many students have become so accustomed to having immediate access to social media information and communications; this could be studied to determine its impact on student success. Another avenue

would be to examine the social media impact on the student engagement of students enrolled in distance education programs. Some participants reported that they overuse social media or were making a conscious effort to not use social media. Future research could examine digital dependency and the feelings of use and overuse students express. Social media provides the opportunity for students to create their own persona and branding, whether this is positive or negative. Students can have a true identity, a pseudo identity through social media, and possibly even an anonymous identity as they post and comment. Research that studies the affect that social media has towards forming traditional relationships and identity development would also provide useful information.

Research could also be conducted with a pre- and post survey of perceptions to examine student understandings and reporting before the research and then collect responses after participants have considered the ideas presented within the research topic.

There are several other factors that can have an impact on student engagement; those could be studied and then compared to determine a hierarchical order for factor affects and impacts. The positive, neutral, and negative impacts would need to be studied as they pertain to student engagement. As we acknowledge the advances in technology and changes in the current generation of students, a study of the change in the meaning and practice of student engagement is another viable study.

Conclusion

This study provided the researcher with information regarding the impact of social media on student engagement. There are limitations to the study such as the estimates of the daily social media usage and the truth in the self-reported responses. Social media interactions can be positive and can be utilized to supplement courses and possibly increase academic performance and student engagement. With the advances in technology and abundance of personal mobile devices, it is important to understand and address the impact social media has on student engagement.

This study has provided valuable and pertinent information for the researcher. The researcher will use this study to improve the knowledge and understanding of student engagement and its importance. If utilized properly, social media can enhance student success while expanding their knowledge base and improving the well-being of students through communications and relationships.

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Appendix A: Survey Questions

- Are you a first-generation college student? The first person in your immediate family to attend college.
 - Yes, I am the first in my immediate family to attend college.
 - No, other family members have attended college.
- Which of the following social media platforms do you currently use?
 - Facebook
 - Instagram
 - Twitter
 - Snapchat
- How many hours per day do you spend on each of the following social media platforms? You will need your social media log report to answer this question.
 - Facebook
 - Instagram
 - Twitter
 - Snapchat
- After considering the hours you spend on each social media platform, are you surprised by the number of hours you spend on social media?
 - Yes
 - No
- Do you use social media more for academic or for personal/social use?
 - Academic
 - Personal/Social Use
 - Both
- Do you interact with classmates through social media?
 - Yes

- Sometimes
 - No
 - I use other way to contact classmates (email, etc)
- Have any of your professors used social media to supplement their courses?
 - No – none have used social media so far
 - Yes – they used Facebook
 - Yes – they used Instagram
 - Yes – they used Twitter
 - Yes – they used Snapchat
 - Yes – they used a social media platform not listed
- Do you think social media impacts/effects your student engagement?
 - Yes – there is a positive impact/effect on my student engagement
 - Yes – there is a negative impact/effect on my student engagement
 - No – there is no impact/effect on my student engagement
- Do you think you are engaged during your classes?
 - I am engaged during my classes
 - I am disengaged during my classes
- Please rate each statement on the scale indicating whether you agree or disagree. (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)
 - I spend more time on social media than studying.
 - I spend more time on social media than preparing for classes.
 - I am on social media during classes.
 - I am on social media during campus activities/events.
- In your own words, define what you think student engagement means.
- In your own words, define what you think student disengagement means.
- Do you think student engagement is important or not important?
 - Yes – it is important
 - No – it is not important
- Briefly (in a few words) explain why you think student engagement is important or is not important.

- In a few words, explain how you know if a student is engaged or disengaged.
- What would increase your student engagement?
- Do you think your social media usage impacts your student engagement? Please explain.

Appendix B: Social Media Usage Log

Daily usage time: Recorded by student participant

	Daily hours spent
Facebook	
Instagram	
Snapchat	
Twitter	