Scripta Humanika:
Jurnal Sosial Humaniora dan Pendidikan
Vol. 2, No. 2 November 2026, Hal 85-94
ISSN: 3110-892X (Print) ISSN: 3110-8911 (Electronic)
Open Access: https://scriptaintelektual.com/scripta-humanika/index

Social Media in Higher Education: Integrated Practices, Boundary Negotiations, and Scholarly Communication among selected Educators

Gianne Rensen Verano Antonio[1]
[1] Philippine Christian University, Philippines
Email: giannervantonio@gmail.com[1]

Article Info :
Received:
18-09-2026
Revised:
04-10-2026
Accepted:
02-11-2026

Abstract

The expansion of social media has altered communication across higher education, yet little research examines how educators navigate digital platforms across interconnected professional domains. This qualitative descriptive study explored the self-reported practices and public digital artifacts of 12 purposively selected, digitally active educators from five world regions. Data comprised semi-structured interviews (60–90 minutes) and a corpus of 156 public artifacts (48 microblogging threads, 36 professional-networking posts, 24 webinar recordings, 28 Discord and open-resource channels, and 20 blog entries), gathered through combined participant submission and independent researcher collection. A single researcher analyzed the data using reflexive thematic analysis, and identifiers were removed from all artifacts. Four themes were developed: perceived instructional scaffolding and student participation; decentralized professional learning networks; scholarly communication and perceived research visibility; and boundary maintenance, epistemic noise, and digital risk management. Participants described structured, moderated platform use as supporting low-latency instruction, peer collaboration, and research dissemination, alongside deliberate boundary management in response to context collapse and institutional oversight. Findings reflect educator perceptions only. Student learning outcomes and citation impacts were not measured, and the purposive sample of digitally active educators limits transferability. The study suggests that institutions should treat informal networked practice as legitimate professional development and provide clear, non-punitive guidance on public engagement.

Keywords: *social media in education, digital scholarship, qualitative descriptive research, professional learning networks, higher education.*

©2026 Authors.. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial 4.0 International License.
(https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

INTRODUCTION

The integration of social media platforms into contemporary higher education has reconfigured how academics construct professional identities, establish networks, and exchange information (Boyd, 2014). Early educational technology scholarship focused primarily on learning management systems and core digital literacy (Anderson & Dron, 2011; Moeller, 2004). Modern social networks present a participatory environment where boundary-spanning communication occurs in real time. However, a gap persists in understanding how educators navigate digital platforms across interconnected professional domains simultaneously.

While the integration of digital networks offers promising avenues for higher education, pedagogical efficacy depends heavily on structured execution. Bhasa (2026) highlights the potential of social media as a pedagogical tool in university environments, arguing that intentional integration fosters interactive knowledge construction. This aligns with Anderson and Dron's (2011) foundational typology of distance education, which traces the evolution of learning paradigms toward social-constructivist and connectivist frameworks. Furthermore, a recent review by Saputra (2025) demonstrates that structured, teacher-moderated social media interactions positively influence learning outcomes, whereas unstructured engagement yields inconsistent results.

Critically, unguided or informal technology adoption poses significant risks to academic performance. Rather than inherently facilitating engagement, off-task digital media usage can impede learning; empirical research by Junco and Cotten (2012) demonstrates that Facebook activity and multitasking or texting while studying negatively predict student GPA. Recognizing this tension

between digital connectivity and cognitive distraction underscores the necessity of establishing clear, theory-driven pedagogical strategies rather than assuming spontaneous collaborative benefits.

Conversely, scholars highlight vulnerabilities, including digital distraction, privacy erosion, algorithmic bias, and the collapse of personal-professional boundaries (Boyd, 2014; Pepper et al., 2023). Educators occupy a complex intersection—balancing institutional policies with public-facing digital engagement across teaching, professional development, and research dissemination (Livingstone et al., 2015).

To address these dynamic interactions, this qualitative descriptive and thematic study investigates how 12 purposively selected, digitally active educators across five world regions (North America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australasia) describe and navigate their integrated digital practices. Rather than treating digital platforms as isolated tools or evaluating student learning outcomes directly, this study focuses on educator accounts and curated digital artifacts to examine the intersection of instructional scaffolding, informal professional learning networks (PLNs), scholarly communication, and boundary management.

This inquiry is operationalized through a Networked Digital Practice Framework, drawing on constructivist learning theory and networked privacy theory (Boyd, 2014; Vygotsky, 1978). This framework posits that an educator's public digital practice is shaped by the interaction between pedagogical intentionality, informal peer networks, scholarly dissemination goals, and risk-mitigation protocols.

The study addresses three central research questions: First, how do digitally active educators across diverse world regions describe the role of social media across student instruction and self-directed professional growth? Second, what digital practices do these educators report using for scholarly dissemination and academic networking? Third, how do these educators navigate operational, ethical, and reputational risks when engaging on public-facing digital platforms?

RESEARCH METHODS

This study implemented a qualitative descriptive and thematic study design (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2014). A qualitative descriptive design was selected to capture, analyze, and report multi-domain practices and digital artifacts across diverse higher education contexts without imposing formal case-study boundaries or bounded-system comparative structures.

The target population comprised higher education educators who maintain an active, public-facing professional social media presence. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling. Eligibility required meeting at least two of the following operationalized parameters: Documented maintenance of an active academic social media profile (e.g., Facebook, X/Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, research blogs) used for academic communication for >2 years; self-reported incorporation of digital tools or platforms into post-secondary instruction; and engagement in public scholarship or peer-reviewed publication.

The final participant cohort comprised 12 educators (N = 12). To provide contextual background without asserting formal comparative claims, geographical representation spanned five world regions: North America (n = 2), Europe (n = 3), Africa (n = 2), Asia (n = 3), and Australasia (n = 2). Data collection was conducted between March 2024 and August 2024. All interviews were conducted in English via secure video conferencing software. Information-power principles (Malterud et al., 2016) guided the sample size, evaluating the narrow study aim, sample specificity, and rich qualitative dialogue across the 12 participants.

Ethical approval was granted by the university ethics board. Written informed consent was obtained digitally prior to interviews. Participant confidentiality was strictly maintained through alphanumeric pseudonyms (Participant E-01 through Participant E-12).

Data collection integrated semi-structured individual interviews and a collaboratively curated digital artifact corpus: Semi-Structured Interviews: Audio-recorded individual interviews (60–90 minutes) were conducted and transcribed verbatim. The protocol explored four core domains: pedagogical scaffolding, informal learning networks, scholarly dissemination, and risk management. Artifact Corpus Disclosures & Sampling: A corpus of N = 156 public digital artifacts created or shared during the 12 months prior to data collection was assembled. To mitigate selection bias, artifacts were gathered through a joint sampling procedure: each participant submitted 5–8 representative artifacts, and the author independently collected 5–8 additional public artifacts per participant.

For all N = 156 public artifacts, strict data minimization procedures were enforced. All direct identifiers, student names, institutional references, and third-party user comments within collected threads, blogs, and repositories were redacted. Excerpts from digital artifacts were systematically rephrased or paraphrased where necessary to prevent reverse-search re-identification.

Data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. The analytical process was conducted independently by the single author, eliminating dual-investigator discrepancies while treating researcher subjectivity as a central analytical resource. To ensure auditability and analytical transparency, a clear coding path was maintained throughout data analysis: 1. Raw Data Corpus: 12 Transcripts From Semi-Structured Interviews (60–90 Mins); 156 Paraphrased/De-Identified Public Digital Artifacts; 2. Initial Codes (142 Discrete Codes): Segment-By-Segment Initial Coding Capturing Actions, Challenges, Perceptions (E.G., "Lms Latency," "Informal Peer Feedback," "Privacy Gap", 3. Candidate Subthemes: Code Clusters Representing Domain Intersections (Low-Latency Mobile Instruction, Informal Over Crowdsourcing, Alternative Research Visibility, Profile Compartmentalization); and 4. Final Overarching Themes (4 Themes across full cohort): 1. Perceived Instructional Scaffolding & Student Participation; 2. Decentralized Professional Learning Networks (PLNs); 3. Scholarly Communication & Perceived Research Visibility; 4. Boundary Maintenance, Epistemic Noise, & Digital Risk

The analytical scope of this study is bounded by specific qualitative parameters: Self-Reported Accounts & Perceptions: Analytical claims are restricted strictly to educator narratives and public digital artifacts. Student learning outcomes, actual citation counts, and long-term career impacts were not independently measured; Transferability Constraints: Findings reflect the experiences of digitally active higher education faculty (N = 12) across five regions and do not generalize to educators with low digital proficiency or differing institutional requirements.

This qualitative descriptive study is bounded by the self-reported accounts and public digital artifacts (N = 156) of 12 purposively selected, digitally active higher education educators across five world regions (North America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australasia) collected between March and August 2024. The inquiry focuses exclusively on how educators describe, integrate, and navigate digital practices across four interconnected professional domains—instructional scaffolding, informal professional learning networks (PLNs), scholarly communication, and digital boundary risk management. Geographically and institutionally broad, the sample specifically isolates digitally active faculty with a documented public presence of more than two years; consequently, the findings do not extend or generalize to educators with low digital proficiency or differing institutional expectations. Furthermore, the scope of this study excludes direct quantitative or empirical evaluations of student learning outcomes, citation impacts, or long-term career progression, deliberately restricting all analytical conclusions to the participants' self-reported perceptions, strategies, and paraphrased public digital artifacts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The reflexive thematic analysis produced four central themes capturing how the 12 participating educators navigate integrated social media practices across five world regions. The presentation synthesizes interview accounts with curated digital artifacts (N = 156). All four themes represent perspectives across the full cohort.

Theme 1: Perceived Instructional Scaffolding and Student Participation

Participants described integrating digital platforms to supplement institutional Learning Management Systems (LMS). Educators reported using platforms such as Discord, X/Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and YouTube to support interaction and content delivery.

In contexts with limited institutional IT infrastructure, participants reported using commercial social platforms to maintain instructional continuity. Participant E-01 (Asia) stated:

> *"Our institutional LMS frequently experienced server outages during enrollment and peak assessment weeks. Moving class announcements and peer Q&A to a lightweight Discord server provided reliable access for students relying on mobile data."*

An audit of curated Discord artifacts (n = 28) confirmed structured channel hierarchies (e.g., syllabus, quality assurance, resource-sharing), demonstrating intentional instructional setup rather than informal chat usage.

Participants across regions noted that public-facing platforms supported student engagement:

Participant E-04 (Europe) observed: "Asking students to analyze active industry discussions on LinkedIn changed classroom dynamics. They described feeling like contributors to a broader professional community rather than just completing a homework assignment."
Participant E-05 (Asia) noted that text-based asynchronous threads allowed non-native English speakers additional processing time to construct responses.
Participant E-07 (North America) described using short video summaries on YouTube to scaffold complex theoretical readings.
Participant E-12 (Asia) noted using open blog assignments to encourage peer review.

While participants perceived higher levels of student agency, these observations represent qualitative evaluations of student dynamics rather than independently measured learning outcomes. These deliberate practices reflect Bhasa's (2026) emphasis on social media as a pedagogical scaffold, as well as Saputra's (2025) finding that moderated digital environments support learning interaction.

Theme 2: Decentralized Professional Learning Networks (PLNs)

Participants reported relying on informal, self-directed Personal Learning Networks (PLNs) on social media for continuous professional development, contrasting these with mandatory institutional workshops.

Participant E-11 (Australasia) noted:

"Formal university training often feels disconnected from immediate classroom needs. On social networks, I can ask a specific question about an instructional strategy at 8:00 AM and receive responses and shared materials from peers across time zones by mid-morning."

PLNs were also described as a key strategy to mitigate resource constraints. Participant E-03 (Africa) explained:

"Accessing paywalled subscription journals for teaching materials is challenging at our institution. Through my online network, scholars share open-access preprints, open educational resources, and syllabi directly."

This narrative was corroborated by collected microblogging artifacts (n = 48), which contained direct links to open-access repositories and collaborative teaching guides.

Participant E-06 (Australasia) reported using public peer networks to refine coding exercises.
Participant E-09 (Europe) noted that international PLNs provided exposure to alternate pedagogical approaches outside their immediate faculty.

Participants conceptualized PLNs as horizontal networks that enabled self-directed professional growth independent of internal university budgets.

Theme 3: Scholarly Communication and Perceived Research Visibility

Participants reported using social platforms to communicate research findings to broader audiences, citing publishing delays and paywalls as drivers for digital dissemination.

Participant E-02 (North America) shared:

"Publishing in a peer-reviewed journal is an initial step. To reach practitioners and policymakers, I translate paper findings into accessible summary threads and short posts on platforms where those communities are active."

Excerpts from collected LinkedIn and microblogging artifacts (n = 84) illustrated this practice, featuring visual summaries, graphical abstracts, and direct links to institutional repositories.

Participants across the cohort associated public digital dissemination with expanded research reach:

Participant E-08 (Africa) noted that sharing plain-language summaries resulted in inquiries from regional non-governmental organizations.
Participant E-10 (Europe) stated that posting preprints on Twitter led to higher repository download numbers.
Participant E-06 (Australasia) described receiving international conference invitations following online discussions of published papers.

While participants associated public digital engagement with increased research reach, these reports reflect perceived visibility and self-reported metrics rather than verified bibliometric impact.

Theme 4: Boundary Maintenance, Epistemic Noise, and Digital Risk Management

All 12 participants identified challenges associated with public digital engagement, particularly context collapse where professional, personal, and student contexts overlap online.

Participants expressed concerns regarding institutional surveillance, public misinterpretation, and online hostility. Participant E-08 (Africa) remarked:

"Without clear boundaries, public engagement creates vulnerability. A post intended for an academic debate can be taken out of context by the public or flagged by university leadership."

To manage these operational and reputational risks, participants reported specific boundary-management strategies:

Participant E-07 (North America) maintained separate public professional accounts and private personal profiles.
Participant E-09 (Europe) established personal guidelines avoiding public commentary on internal university governance.
Participant E-05 (Asia) and Participant E-12 (Asia) described teaching students how to evaluate unverified information ("epistemic noise") on public platforms.

Curated blog artifacts (n = 20) reflected these concerns, with several posts offering explicit guidance on digital ethics and boundary management for academic staff.

The research demonstrates that the 12 participating educators use social platforms across teaching, professional learning, scholarly communication, and risk management. Through the lens of the Networked Digital Practice Framework, these four domains do not operate in isolation. An educator's approach to research dissemination informs instructional design, while risk-management strategies constrain how educators participate in personal learning networks. This integrated pattern extends a literature that has mostly examined single purposes or single platforms. Earlier studies reported that academics use social media more readily for professional sharing than for formal teaching (Manca & Ranieri, 2016), and more recent work has shifted toward how platform choice, pedagogical design, and professional boundaries jointly shape adoption (Machado et al., 2024). Regional evidence points the same way. In a survey of 246 faculty at a single university in the United Arab Emirates, most respondents reported instructional use of social media and also reported benefits for networking and research sharing, alongside concerns about distraction (Alsumaiti et al., 2026). Because these data come from one institution and rest on self-report, they are best read as comparison points rather than regional norms. The present study adds an interpretive account of how these purposes intersect in participants' own practice.

This study confirms prior work (Anderson & Dron, 2011) on the shift toward connectivist and social-constructivist paradigms in digital environments. It also qualifies earlier optimistic assumptions about technology adoption, because digital engagement was accompanied by deliberate risk-mitigation behaviors and self-censorship (Boyd, 2014; Pepper et al., 2023). What is distinctive here is the

identification of boundary management as a continuous condition that cuts across multiple academic roles. Participants did not treat context collapse as an occasional hazard to be solved once. Earlier work showed that Twitter users manage imagined audiences when diverse social contexts merge into one (Marwick & Boyd, 2011), and that audience composition shapes what people disclose on social network sites (Vitak, 2012). The present findings suggest that for academics these dynamics extend across teaching, networking, and dissemination at once.

Crucially, the findings underscore the importance of structured digital engagement over unguided media use. Junco and Cotten (2012) demonstrated the detrimental effects of off-task social media multitasking on student performance, and the present findings illustrate how educators attempt to mitigate such distractions by designing structured, domain-specific activities (as advocated by Bhasa, 2026, and Saputra, 2025). This accords with research in Saudi Arabia, where university students held positive attitudes toward classroom social media activities, yet higher levels of general social media use were negatively associated with academic performance (Alshwiah & Alaulamie, 2023). In a study of students in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, social networking supported communication, collaboration, and independent learning, but was also linked to distraction and privacy and security concerns (Issa et al., 2021). Recent qualitative work with university students in the UAE similarly portrays social media as a dual-purpose environment (Ali & Proff, 2026). Taken together, these studies support the interpretation that the pedagogical value of social media depends less on the platform than on the design of the activity around it.

The platforms participants chose also fit evidence from Asia. YouTube, for example, has been reported as a useful complementary learning tool in Malaysian higher education (Moghavvemi et al., 2018), which is consistent with E-07's use of short video summaries to scaffold difficult readings. Evidence from China shows that pre-service teachers use WeChat, DingTalk, and TikTok in ways that relate to their professional learning, and the authors recommend using social media as a teaching aid (Xu et al., 2024). These are pre-service populations, so they are suggestive rather than directly comparable to the faculty in this study. Participants' structured practices, such as Discord channel hierarchies and LinkedIn analysis tasks, echo this logic of deliberate scaffolding. The same cautions apply to those practices as to the studies cited here. Reported increases in student participation may reflect participant enthusiasm, teaching experience, or existing networks rather than platform attributes alone.

Participants' reliance on commercial tools in low-resource settings was driven by LMS instability rather than purely pedagogical preference. This is consistent with evidence that faculty barriers to technology use often concern training, infrastructure, and time (Mercader & Gairín, 2020; Purvis et al., 2020). A qualitative study of faculty in Hong Kong likewise described adoption driven by "pedagogical pragmatism," in which free commercial tools were favored for interaction, while a rigid institutional LMS made it difficult to integrate open resources (Duan & Wong, 2026). The practical implication parallels this study's recommendation. Where formal infrastructure is unreliable, faculty improvise, and that improvisation can expose them to unmanaged privacy risks. Duan and Wong (2026) also report faculty concerns about intellectual property and the privacy of third-party tools, which resonates with E-01's account of moving class communication to a lightweight server.

Participants conceptualized personal learning networks (PLNs) as horizontal structures that enabled self-directed growth independent of university budgets. This corroborates research on social media as a site of professional learning. A systematic review of social-media-supported professional development in higher education concluded that PLNs and communities of practice show potential for faculty learning, while sustaining participation and navigating the social media space remain challenging, especially for novices (Luo et al., 2020). Evidence from Chinese universities points in the same direction. A narrative study of expatriate faculty found that positive emotions fostered social media engagement that linked personal interests with professional needs and produced self-directed, work-related learning (Zhou et al., 2025). E-11's account of receiving specific, timely help from peers across time zones illustrates the same mechanism of informal, incidental learning. Because participants in this study were purposely selected for digital activity, the benefits they described probably overstate what the average faculty member would experience. The review by Luo et al. (2020) is a reminder that engagement is not automatic.

The role of PLNs in offsetting resource constraints connects to the literature on open educational resources (OER). Participants in Africa and Asia described accessing preprints, open syllabi, and

teaching materials through their networks, in lieu of paywalled journals. Open resources may be especially consequential in the Global South, where the cost of educational materials is a recognized barrier to access (de Oliveira Neto et al., 2024). However, evidence from Hong Kong cautions that faculty often conflate "free" tools with "open" licensed resources and cite time burdens, quality concerns, and a lack of institutional incentives as obstacles to genuine OER practice (Duan & Wong, 2026). These findings suggest that informal network-based sharing is a valuable complement to, but not a substitute for, institutional OER support. They also reinforce the recommendation that universities formally recognize self-directed networking as professional development.

The implications for institutional support are reinforced by recent evidence that sustained, pedagogically grounded professional development in digital pedagogy can strengthen teacher competence and self-efficacy while increasing work engagement and reducing emotional exhaustion (Shi et al., 2025). If institutions ignore the informal learning that faculty already conduct online, they risk leaving a gap between formal training and the immediate classroom needs participants described.

Participants associated public digital dissemination with expanded research reach, citing plain-language summaries, preprint sharing, and invitations arising from online discussion. These accounts accord with research showing that academic networking platforms are used for dissemination and visibility, with patterns that vary across disciplines (Jordan & Weller, 2018; Yan et al., 2021). A comprehensive review of scholarly social media use and altmetrics likewise documents both the promise and the uncertainty of such practices (Sugimoto et al., 2017). The UAE faculty survey cited above also reported that a majority of respondents regularly shared research through academic networking services (Alsumaiti et al., 2026), although that finding is self-reported and limited to one institution.

While participants reported that digital sharing increased research visibility, altmetrics (e.g., post shares, download counts, social mentions) remain contested indicators of scholarly quality. A recent systematic and critical review concluded that altmetrics reflect immediate online attention, that Twitter and media mentions reflect public attention rather than scholarly influence, and that such attention seldom translates into proportionally higher citations (González et al., 2025). Altmetrics are also vulnerable to manipulation and to short-term popularity effects (González et al., 2025). Institutional tenure and promotion committees should therefore approach altmetric data with caution. Digital engagement metrics should supplement, rather than replace, rigorous peer review and established evaluative frameworks. In this study, E-10's report of higher repository downloads and E-06's report of conference invitations should be read as perceived visibility rather than verified scholarly impact.

All 12 participants identified context collapse, public misinterpretation, and institutional surveillance as persistent concerns. Their strategies, namely separating professional and personal accounts, avoiding commentary on university governance, and self-censoring, are consistent with how people manage audiences and disclosure online (Marwick & Boyd, 2011; Vitak, 2012). The online harassment of scholars adds a more serious dimension. In a study of women scholars who had experienced online harassment, participants engaged in reactive, anticipatory, preventive, and proactive coping, including self-protection and resistance, while often responding with acceptance and self-blame; the authors called for personal, institutional, and platform-level responses (Veletsianos et al., 2018). Although the present study did not focus on harassment, E-08's remark that a post can be taken out of context by the public or flagged by university leadership indicates that the perceived threat comes from multiple directions. This supports the recommendation that universities adopt transparent, non-punitive conduct guidelines that distinguish institutional representation from individual academic expression, and that they provide support when staff are harassed. The participants' awareness of "epistemic noise" and their practice of teaching students to evaluate unverified information add a pedagogical dimension to risk management. Risk management here is both a protective measure for educators and a literacy that they pass on to students.

The observed transition from rigid institutional learning management systems to agile social media environments reflects a broader theoretical shift in distance education pedagogy. As Anderson and Dron (2011) articulated, educational models have evolved from cognitive-behaviorist approaches toward social-constructivist and connectivist frameworks in which learners participate in distributed knowledge networks. Participants' accounts of structured Discord channels and LinkedIn analysis tasks illustrate how educators operationalize connectivist principles by positioning the internet as an interactive substrate for collaborative inquiry rather than merely a content delivery mechanism. Rather

than replacing formal course structures, these spaces serve as extended scaffolding that bridges formal curricula with authentic disciplinary discourse.

The study also helps explain an apparent tension in the educational technology literature. Unstructured or off-task use has long been shown to harm academic focus (Junco & Cotten, 2012), yet participants' narratives show educators mitigating this risk through moderation and clear task boundaries. This aligns with Saputra's (2025) synthesis that deliberate, teacher-moderated integration enhances peer learning and social connectivity, whereas unguided engagement yields inconsistent or detrimental outcomes. Bhasa (2026) argues that thoughtful integration of social media can support students' critical digital literacy and professional identities. Participants' public-facing tasks, such as evaluating industry debates on LinkedIn or conducting open blog peer reviews, illustrate this potential, although the shift in student agency remains a perception rather than a measured outcome.

Finally, the use of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) allowed examination of both interview accounts and the digital artifact corpus (N = 156), so that stated intentions could be read alongside what participants actually posted. Reflexive analysis treats researcher subjectivity as an interpretive resource, which suited the study's aim of situating boundary maintenance, context collapse, and digital risk management within each participant's institutional and cultural context.

The findings must be interpreted in light of participant selection and platform characteristics. Purposively sampling digitally active educators introduces inherent selection bias. Participants with active online profiles are more likely to report positive experiences and to have higher digital self-efficacy than the broader faculty population. Participant practices were also shaped by local infrastructure and institutional policies. Studies from single institutions, including those from Hong Kong and the UAE cited above, note similar constraints on generalizability (Alsumaiti et al., 2026; Duan & Wong, 2026). As a result, the comparisons drawn here are interpretive rather than statistical. Because student learning outcomes, actual citation metrics, and long-term career impacts were not independently measured, the findings are exploratory and should inform, rather than dictate, institutional policy.

CONCLUSION

This study asked how digitally active higher education educators describe the role of social media in instruction and professional growth, which practices they use for scholarly dissemination and networking, and how they manage risk. Participants described structured, moderated platform use, such as organized Discord channels and LinkedIn analysis tasks, as supporting instruction, though these accounts are perceptions rather than measured outcomes (Adi Saputra, 2025; Junco & Cotten, 2012). They described informal professional learning networks as responsive and as compensating for limited institutional resources, and they associated plain-language summaries and preprint sharing with wider research reach. At the same time, they identified context collapse, public misinterpretation, institutional surveillance, and online hostility as persistent concerns, which they managed through separate profiles and personal guidelines. These patterns suggest that institutions might recognize self-directed networking as professional development, provide reliable platform alternatives where LMS outages occur, and offer clear, non-punitive guidance that distinguishes institutional representation from individual expression. Altmetric indicators measure public attention rather than scholarly quality and should complement, not replace, peer review. These conclusions are exploratory: they rest on the accounts of 12 purposively selected, digitally active educators and 156 public artifacts, were coded by a single researcher, and do not include measures of student learning, citation impact, or career outcomes.

REFERENCES

Ali, S., & Proff, A. (2026). Exploring the role of social media in educational support and mental wellbeing of university students in the UAE. *Frontiers in Education, 11*, Article 1853142. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2026.1853142

Alshwiah, A., & Alaulamie, L. (2023). Social media usage and its association with students' performance and attitude in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education, 15*(2), 355–368. https://doi.org/10.1108/JARHE-11-2021-0417

Alsumaiti, T., Al Hosani, N., Yagoub, M. M., Hussein, K., Al-Sumaiti, A. S., Almurshidi, A., & Al Tenaijy, M. (2026). Faculty acceptance and instructional use of social media in higher education:

A quantitative case study from the United Arab Emirates. *Social Sciences, 15*(9), Article 568. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci15090568

Anderson, T., & Dron, J. (2011). Three generations of distance education pedagogy. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 12*(3), 80–97. https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v12i3.890

Bhasa, M. P. (2026). Reimagining higher education: The role of social media as a pedagogical tool in university learning environments. *London Review of Education, 24*(1), Article 12. https://doi.org/10.14324/LRE.24.1.12

boyd, d. (2014). *It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens*. Yale University Press.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

de Oliveira Neto, J. D., Law, V., & Kang, S. (2024). Adoption of open educational resources in the global south. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education, 36*, 116–140. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12528-023-09351-8

Duan, C., & Wong, B. T. M. (2026). Faculty perspectives on open educational resources: A case study of a Hong Kong higher education institution. *PLOS ONE, 21*(8), Article e0349147. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0349147

González, P., Fors, M., & Torres, A. (2025). Altmetrics in the evaluation of scholarly impact: A systematic and critical literature review. *Frontiers in Research Metrics and Analytics, 10*, Article 1693304. https://doi.org/10.3389/frma.2025.1693304

Issa, T., Alqahtani, S. G. B., Al-Oqily, I., Baltaci Goktalay, S., Köse, U., Issa, T., Abu Salih, B., & Almufaraj, W. K. (2021). Use of social networking in the Middle East: Student perspectives in higher education. *Heliyon, 7*, Article e06676. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e06676

Jordan, K., & Weller, M. (2018). Academics and social networking sites: Benefits, problems, and tensions in professional engagement with online networking. *Journal of Interactive Media in Education, 2018*(1), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.5334/jime.448

Junco, R., & Cotten, S. R. (2012). No A 4 U: The relationship between multitasking and academic performance. *Computers & Education, 59*(2), 505–514. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2011.12.023

Livingstone, S., Sefton-Green, J., & Bober, M. (2015). *The class: Living and learning in the digital age*. NYU Press.

Luo, T., Freeman, C., & Stefaniak, J. (2020). "Like, comment, and share"—Professional development through social media in higher education: A systematic review. *Educational Technology Research and Development, 68*(4), 1659–1683. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-020-09790-5

Machado, C., Hsiao, P.-Y., Vaccaro, C., & Baker, C. (2024). Entering the social media stratosphere: Higher education faculty use of social media with students across four disciplines. *Journal of Interactive Media in Education, 2024*(1), Article 8. https://doi.org/10.5334/jime.854

Malterud, K., Siersma, V. D., & Guassora, A. D. (2016). Sample size in qualitative interview studies: Guided by information power. *Qualitative Health Research, 26*(13), 1753–1760. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315617444

Manca, S., & Ranieri, M. (2016). Facebook and the others: Potentials and obstacles of social media for teaching in higher education. *Computers & Education, 95*, 216–230. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2016.01.012

Marwick, A. E., & boyd, d. (2011). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media & Society, 13*(1), 114–133. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810365313

Mercader, C., & Gairín, J. (2020). University teachers' perception of barriers to the use of digital technologies: The importance of the academic discipline. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 17*, Article 4. https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-020-0182-x

Moeller, B. (2004). *Technology's role in educational reform: Findings from a national study of innovating schools*. Center for Children and Technology.

Moghavvemi, S., Sulaiman, A., Jaafar, N. I., & Kasem, N. (2018). Social media as a complementary learning tool for teaching and learning: The case of YouTube. *The International Journal of Management Education, 16*(1), 37–42. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2017.12.001

Pepper, C., Perez Vallejos, E., & Carter, C. J. (2023). "I don't feel like there's enough awareness about the damage that social media does": A thematic analysis of the relationships between social media use, mental wellbeing, and care experience. *Youth, 3*(4), 1244–1267. https://doi.org/10.3390/youth3040079

Purvis, A. J., Rodger, H. M., & Beckingham, S. (2020). Experiences and perspectives of social media in learning and teaching in higher education. *International Journal of Educational Research Open, 1*, Article 100018. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2020.100018

Saputra, A. (2025). Educational social media interactions: Its impact on learning and students' social life: A literature review. *Journal of Foundational Learning and Child Development, 1*(1), Article 6. https://doi.org/10.53905/ChildDev.v1i01.6

Shi, Y. R., Sin, K. F. K., & Wang, Y. Q. (2025). Teacher professional development of digital pedagogy for inclusive education in the post-pandemic era: Effects on teacher competence, self-efficacy, and work well-being. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 168*, Article 105230. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2025.105230

Sugimoto, C. R., Work, S., Larivière, V., & Haustein, S. (2017). Scholarly use of social media and altmetrics: A review of the literature. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology, 68*(9), 2037–2062. https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.23833

Veletsianos, G., Houlden, S., Hodson, J., & Gosse, C. (2018). Women scholars' experiences with online harassment and abuse: Self-protection, resistance, acceptance, and self-blame. *New Media & Society, 20*(12), 4689–4708. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818781324

Vitak, J. (2012). The impact of context collapse and privacy on social network site disclosures. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 56*(4), 451–470. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2012.732140

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.

Xu, T., Gao, Q., Ge, X., & Lu, J. (2024). The relationship between social media and professional learning from the perspective of pre-service teachers: A survey. *Education and Information Technologies, 29*(2), 2067–2092. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-11861-y

Yan, W., Zhang, Y., Hu, T., & Kudva, S. (2021). How does scholarly use of academic social networking sites differ by academic discipline? A case study using ResearchGate. *Information Processing & Management, 58*(1), Article 102430. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ipm.2020.102430

Zhou, Y., Gu, H., Wang, Q., Tornquist, M., & Zhang, X. (2025). Professional development of expatriate higher education faculty through informal and incidental learning on social media. *European Journal of Education, 60*(1), Article e12871. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12871