

Public Abstract

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Title:An Exploration of a Rural Arkansas K-12 Educational Leader's and Community's Social Media Use

This exploratory qualitative case study was designed to examine a rural Arkansas K-12 educational leader's and community's communication using social media. Hoffman and Novak's (1996) model of marketing communications in a hypermedia computer-mediated environment served as the conceptual framework for analyzing the leader's social media use from the perspectives of students, parents, and faculty/staff members. The rural K-12 school was located in the northwest region of Arkansas. The study's participants included an educational leader nationally recognized for her use of technology and her students, parents, and faculty/staff members. Through information-gathering questionnaires, interviews, focus group sessions, observations, and document gathering, data were collected and triangulated. Three themes emerged through data analysis. The themes included: recognition of and appreciation for Mrs. Johnson's authentic proficient professional social media use on sites such as Twitter; the power of connectedness both in her relationships with students and with others around the nation through social media; and the positive impact of Mrs. Johnson's professional social media use on the school and its stakeholders, including the faculty/staff, students, and its reputation. These themes furnish an understanding of the phenomenon of a rural K-12 educational leader's professional social media use as perceived by faculty/staff, students, and parents.

This study's findings indicated that a rural K-12 educational leader's students, parents, and faculty/staff positively perceive the leader's professional social media use as a sign of leadership in technology use, a model of responsible social media use, a fount of resources and ideas to be shared, and as a source of school pride and culture. Professional social media use may also function as an instantaneously-accessible personal learning network for educational leaders, supplying them with peer-connections, concepts, and information free from geographical limitations. While students, parents, and faculty/staff members may be novice users of technology or social media, they believe that the educational leader's professional social media use benefits the students and the school.