PERFORMANCES OF TRUST AMONG LEARNERS IN THE CONTEXT OF ONLINE SOCIAL LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

This study contributes to the conversation on how to potentially make online learning more satisfying and successful by focusing on trusting relations. The conceptual framework is informed by a broad literature base on trust. Qualitative, open-ended interviewing with snowball sampling is used to explore 30 learners’ emergent, interactive, social construction of trust. Data from these interviews were subjected to several levels of analysis. The findings suggest that learners socially construct moral theories of trust, consisting of rational and affective components. Rational trust shaped their assessments of others’ trustworthiness. Affective trust shaped a moral lens through which they viewed rational trust. The effect of affective trust is positive affect created bonds of friendship among learners that facilitated the social appropriation of technology and transactive conflicts which contributed to deeper, critical thinking. The lack of positive affect or presence of negative affect resulted in trust-compromised learning, characterized by ongoing breaches of trust.