3.4 Social Presence and Community of Inquiry

Findings

✓ This mixed method study explored the students’ perception of a **social presence**, focusing on observing three dimensions that are influenced by the degree of social presence in a task. For instance, the finding for this study is evidence that a positive social presence can influence the interaction (Tu, & McIsaac, 2002).

✓ **Learner-learner interaction in virtual environments**: This study provided a model that makes emphasis on video communication using high-speed networking to help the learner-to-learner interaction. This virtual environment can enrich face-to-face communication as well as help to build trust in a learning community. Moreover, this learner-to-learner interaction requires planning that looks for students to be engaged and accommodate students’ learning styles (Smyth, 2011).

✓ **Crucial components for computer-mediated communication (CMC)** in higher education: These elements are based on components from community of inquiry (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000):

  - Cognitive presence: It refers to the extent where students can construct meaning sustained in the communication. This is closely related to critical thinking as well. This element in a computer conference can be understood as a model of critical thinking. This model is a multi-phased where it can be domain-specific and context-dependent where “the synergy between reflecting and communicate actions” (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000, p. 98) take place.
  - Social presence: It refers to students’ ability “to project themselves socially and emotionally” (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000, p. 86).
  - Teaching presence: Teaching presence can be a crucial element for the successful interaction between cognitive presence and social presence. The role that educator plays in the community inquiry consists of two general functions:
    - The design of the educational experience
    - Facilitation

✓ This study developed strategies for engaging students in online kinesiology courses. Considering that some studies have shown the difficulty for students to move forward to the second phase of the Community of Inquiry Framework, the cognitive presence component. This study’s findings suggest that it is important for online courses to have and tie all the three community of inquiry components (cognitive, social, and instructor presence) for facilitating the coursework to students. Additionally, this study indicates that the instructor should regularly interact with learners in an online environment and give meaningful feedback. The online courses should have a clear organization, considering that students will have different backgrounds and experiences with the learning environment. A clear organization of the instructional content and of the design helps students to understand the dynamics of the class and the content (Hersman, & Schroeder, 2017).
Instructional Recommendations

- **Community of Inquiry (Col) theoretical framework** (Garrison, 2011): The notion of community is important when students are taking online classes. The base for this theoretical framework is to help students to feel part of a community, even though it is an online environment. Some of the previous components of community inquiry are also used in this framework. This framework determines and adds the idea that the cognitive presence is similar related to critical thinking. Four phases add to this part of the inquiry:

  **Cognitive presence**
  - **Phase I**: An instruction should begin by facilitating events where students are triggered by the topic.
  - **Phase II**: The students should explore and take what they know to learn more about the topic.
  - **Phase III**: The students after the exploration should integrate and create meaning from what they have explored providing a rationale for this meaning and justification.
  - **Phase IV**: This face guide students to apply what they know in a situation and defend their decisions made in this specific situation.