

# Exploring EFL Teachers' Perspectives on the Role of Social Media for Building Trust in the Workplace

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## Abstract

The role of social media in the educational landscape has evolved significantly during the past two decades, particularly amid the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a significant gap exists in understanding the impact of social media on developing trust among English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in their professional environments. Therefore, this qualitative study investigated the perceptions of experienced EFL teachers regarding using various social media platforms to cultivate trust in the workplace. The study employed a qualitative research approach, utilizing semi structured interviews as the primary data collection method. Interviewees include fourteen experienced EFL teachers from the Saudi universities. Thematic content analysis was conducted using Nvivo software to analyze the transcribed data. The findings revealed seven main themes with corresponding subthemes: enhancing collaboration, building trust through emotional connections, concerns about privacy and trust, professional growth and development, nurturing trust through positive online interactions, motivating peers, and fostering goal achievement. The findings demonstrated that social media platforms are critical in enhancing collaboration and trust among EFL teachers in the workplace. The implications of social media usage on trust development among experienced EFL teachers have been illustrated.

**Keywords:** virtual simulation, web-based application, multimedia, teaching, learning

## 1. Introduction

Social media has evolved from a platform for personal connections to a powerful tool significantly influencing society. The emergence of various social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn has revolutionized communication, opinion, and information sharing (Rodríguez et al., 2015; Sujon et al., 2018). Social media has enabled people across the globe to interact instantly, thus breaking down geographical barriers. People from diverse backgrounds now disseminate their thoughts, experiences, and ideas to a broad audience using these social media platforms (Boulianne, 2019). Moreover, social media has impacted ordinary people and transformed business strategy as it has become a prominent channel for businesses, organizations, and institutions to connect with their audiences. Brands don't need to hire professionals for door-to-door marketing campaigns; they utilize social media platforms to promote their products, provide customer support, and engage in real-time conversations (Ibrahim & Ganeshbabu, 2018).

In today's complex and fast-paced work environments, trust plays a fundamental role in maintaining cohesiveness and a productive working environment among colleagues by influencing effective communication and collaboration. It helps maintain transparency and responsibility in the workplace. Trust is a significant pillar in educational settings that helps EFL teachers achieve their academic goals (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). EFL teachers collaborate with their peers to develop curricula, exchange teaching strategies, and collectively address student needs. Therefore, the trust is a binding force for the EFL teachers, enabling them to benefit from other's expertise, share constructive feedback, and jointly innovate for their students. Trust helps to minimize misunderstanding, conflict, and competition among colleagues (Khany & Tazik, 2016). Moreover, trust enhances psychological safety within EFL teachers, so they may feel comfortable expressing their opinions and can take calculated risks without fear of repercussions (Zhang et al., 2023).

The perception and attitude of EFL teachers are critical factors in effectively integrating new tools into their professional activities. EFL teachers' knowledge and experiences significantly impact adopting innovative technologies and their effectiveness (Inderawati, 2017). EFL

teachers should be involved in policy-making matters related to adopting new technology in educational settings. This approach will enhance the collaboration between academic institutions, and EFL teachers in shaping education's digital landscape. The extensive influence of social media platforms on various societal aspects has been extensively researched. However, a research gap exists in assessing the EFL teachers' perceptions of the impact of social media on their professional lives and trust dynamics in workplace environments. The current study is designed to evaluate the impact of social media usage on EFL teachers' professional relationships. The study aims to examine the effect of social media on the workplace and its interaction with workplace trust.

## 2. Literature Review

### *Trust in the workplace*

Workplace trust is defined as 'developing confidence among colleagues and honestly maintaining a productive work environment'. It is essential for people working in the same organization, especially supervisors and team members, to adhere to ethical principles and work honestly and wholeheartedly for the organization's development (Helliwell & Huang, 2011). It creates a positive environment where workers are willing to co confidently and independently. So, trust helps improve professional relationships and work as a team (Karlsen et al., 2008). Because of the multifaceted nature of workplace trust, it has several components, among which cognitive trust is notable, which refers to the belief in the competence and expertise of other colleagues. Affective trust, on the other hand, is a component that relates to interpersonal relationships and emotional bonds and revolves around feelings of goodwill and empathy among workers. Building confidence among colleagues to be ethically considerate of each other's feelings and emotions helps build institutional trust (Serrat & Serrat, 2017).

Trust is essential to foster collaboration in educational institutions and is the backbone when working in the same institution to build mutual assets, which makes them practically think after innovations and ideas and believe in enhancing cooperation. Trust helps reduce fear of decision-making, creating an environment where everyone feels free to share their thoughts. This encourages innovation in teaching strategies, provides healthy feedback on each other's teaching methods, and emphasizes collaborative problem-solving (Suter et al., 2009). Collaboration among EFL teachers represents a fundamental element in educational achievement. The importance of trust within this framework cannot be overstated, as it diminishes obstacles to collaboration. Educators who trust one another demonstrate a higher propensity to combine their expertise and assets to tackle the barriers and establish rewarding educational encounters for students. Confidence in each other's motives nurtures a feeling of solidarity, enabling educators to collaborate effectively toward attaining common objectives (Nix, 2021).

Moreover, trust amplifies the readiness to engage in calculated risks. In an environment characterized by trust, EFL teachers are more inclined to experiment with innovative teaching approaches, investigate innovative technologies, and revolutionize pedagogical practices. The absence of apprehension regarding adverse outcomes encourages EFL teachers to venture beyond their comfort zones and contribute to a culture of ongoing advancement (Alzaanin, 2021).

### *Social media in EFL teaching*

Considering the changing trend of the education system, there has been a significant change in social media platforms, which were once only a means of establishing individual connections but have been successfully integrated into educational settings. Social media, once used primarily to connect with friends and family members, has now become a tool for educators to enhance their teaching skills in modern times. Any such platforms have emerged, such as Edmodo and Schoology, which cater to the needs of teachers and students (Abdelraheem & Ahmed, 2018; Kong et al., 2017). The emergence of video-sharing platforms like YouTube and virtual meeting tools such as Zoom and Google Meet has brought forth a new era in creating and spreading educational content by EFL teachers. EFL teachers now possess the ability to design instructional materials in vivid and captivating ways, surpassing the constraints of conventional text-based resources. This shift in approach has opened many opportunities for EFL teachers to connect, involve, and cooperate in unprecedented ways. Social media's dynamic essence enables teachers to partake in live interactions that transcend physical borders (Ramadani & Xhaferi, 2020).

Nevertheless, despite the myriad benefits these platforms offer, their incorporation into education also poses challenges that educators must address. Notably, issues related to privacy necessitate cautiousness when sharing student details or personal anecdotes. Maintaining a delicate equilibrium between imparting valuable knowledge and safeguarding confidential information demands educators exercise vigilance in their online engagements (Ibrahim et al., 2020).

### *Potential benefits and challenges of using social media in EFL teaching*

The use of social media platforms in EFL teaching has a bunch of benefits as well as some challenges. The positive aspect is that by using social media, EFL teachers are not bound by any geographical boundaries. They can share their thoughts and collaborate with peers worldwide for healthy discussion. The immediate essence of these platforms nurtures the swift spreading of information, ensuring EFL teachers stay updated with the most contemporary trends and advancements in the field. The interactive quality of social media also enables EFL teachers to receive instant feedback on their teaching techniques and methods, contributing to their professional development (Lambton-Howard et al., 2012).

Nevertheless, the utilization of social media in education encounters various challenges. Privacy concerns emerge, especially when addressing student-related issues or sharing personal anecdotes. Balancing imparting valuable insights and safeguarding sensitive details requires thoughtful deliberation (Latif et al., 2019). Furthermore, the risk of misinformation and misinterpretation looms, potentially

affecting the trustworthiness of educational content circulated on these platforms. Furthermore, the rapid pace of social media could result in an overload of information, underscoring teachers' need to meticulously assess and curate content for its relevance and precision (A ĩneur et al., 2023).

#### *Relationship between social media and trust-building*

An important synergy between social media and trust building fulfills the basic human needs of communication and collaboration. The theoretical underpinnings of this convergence are related to online activities and interpersonal relationships. That is why social media platforms are accessible from geographical boundaries, and (Bingham & Conner, 2010). From a conceptual perspective, social exchange theory acts as a lens that illuminates the merging point of social media and trust cultivation. This concept suggests that human engagements, whether in person or via digital means, are steered by an innate craving for give-and-take and mutual advantages. Within social media, individuals share in an ongoing interchange of data, resources, and assistance, laying the groundwork for trust formation. The steady and dependable access to information on these platforms adds to the cognitive aspect of trust as people start depending on the reliability of shared perspectives and encounters (Cropanzano et al., 2017).

Moreover, social identity theory provides perspectives on how social media contributes to the sentimental aspects of trust establishment. Individuals who participate in virtual communities and clusters focused on educational subjects cultivate a joint sense of identity and inclusion. This digital companionship nurtures emotional trust, where educators connect through mutual experiences and objectives. The emotional bonds crafted through online engagements can stretch to real-life connections, reinforcing the overarching framework of peer trust (Hogg, 2016).

Prior studies explored the relationship between social media and trust in the workplace environment in various scenarios. Within the domain of commerce and advertising, research has scrutinized how brands and businesses utilize social media to build and nurture trust with their clients. Studies reported that a captivating and genuine online presence leads to increased consumer trust, with open communication, prompt responses, and uniform branding promoting favorable perceptions (Dwivedi et al., 2021). However, in education settings, especially among EFL teachers, there is a lack of research to assess the impact of social media usage on building trust in the workplace. Hence, this research aims to investigate how EFL teachers evaluate the role of social media in cultivating trust in their professional settings.

#### *Positive and negative aspects of social media in professional environments*

Social media is the most popular sector for advertising right now, and it includes businesses, organizations, and brands that make news, influence partners, build relationships, and form groups (Appel et al., 2020). In English teaching settings, social media platforms provide English language professionals with a global reach, enabling them to connect and collaborate with colleagues, experts, and students worldwide. They can join professional groups, participate in discussions, and share ideas, resources, and best practices. This networking fosters cross-cultural exchange, promotes collaboration, and enriches professional development (Capriotti & Zeler, 2023). education workplace use web-based social networking to enhance their operations, including expanding their annual offerings and meeting objectives. Businesses use social media to improve their performance, including increasing annual sales and meeting business targets. Social media acts as a communication medium, allowing a company to engage in two-way contact with its shareholders (Manuti, 2016). Through Diverse social networking platforms, English language professionals can expose their students to authentic language use in real-world contexts. They can share videos, articles, and multimedia content that showcase native speakers' communication styles, idiomatic expressions, and cultural nuances. This exposure enhances language learning and provides students with a broader understanding of the language (Appel et al., 2020).

Social media offer a plethora of professional development resources for English language professionals. They can follow educational blogs, join online communities, and participate in webinars and virtual conferences. These platforms provide access to the latest teaching methodologies, research, and industry trends, allowing professionals to stay updated and enhance their teaching practices (Oksa et al., 2023).

Social media can have negative aspects in the educational sector, specifically in the context of English language settings. For example, social media platforms allow users, including students and parents, to openly express their opinions and provide ratings about educational institutions and English language programs. Negative feedback or ratings can harm the reputation of an institution, potentially leading to enrolment declines and financial challenges (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

### **3. Method**

#### *Instrument*

Semistructured interviews were conducted to explore the EFL teachers' perspectives on social media usage to build workplace trust. In contrast to quantitative analysis, the qualitative approach investigates the intricate layers of human behavior, motivations, and social dynamics (Alasuutari, 2010). Semistructured interviews strike a harmonious balance between the rigidity of predetermined queries and the adaptability to probe into emerging themes. This approach enables participants to express their perspectives, experiences, and insights freely and without constraints (Horton et al., 2004). Enechukwu (2023) crafted an extensive interview guide comprising 23 inquiries concerning the utilization of social media in professional settings and its impact on trust among colleagues.

### *Selection of the Participants*

A stringent set of criteria was established to carefully choose the participants, ensuring a varied and inclusive representation of the target population. Participants needed to possess a minimum of five years of teaching background, guaranteeing a significant level of expertise in the education field. Proficiency in using social media platforms was also a prerequisite, ensuring familiarity with the tools pertinent to the research. The selection was based on the participants' readiness to openly converse and exchange their opinions regarding the role of social media in establishing trust within the professional environment. The study employed a purposive sampling technique to select 14 EFL teachers from the **Saudi Universities**, offering various experiences and perspectives on social media utilization in their respective work settings.

### *Procedure*

The study was carried out following the university's approved ethical standards to ensure the wellbeing and confidentiality of the participants. Participants were given detailed consent forms explaining the study's objectives, methods, and possible hazards. To safeguard their identities, pseudonyms or codes were allocated to all participants. During data analysis, any identifiable details were eliminated from the transcriptions to protect their privacy. The research team possessed the original data, and any study-related reports or publications maintained a veil of anonymity.

EFL teachers from the Saudi Universities were engaged in semistructured interviews to evaluate their perceptions of utilizing social media to cultivate trust in professional settings. The choice of a semistructured interview format was deliberate as it permits participants to express their views. Individual interviews commenced with a short introduction of the participants at a scheduled date and time, followed by open-ended queries to investigate deeply into the participants' perceptions of the study's objectives. Subsequent questions probed further into EFL teachers' perceptions of trust within the workplace. The interviews were conducted in Arabic, audio-recorded with participants' consent, and later transcribed into English for clarity and the formulation of thematic codes.

### *Reliability and Validity*

Some measures were taken in order to minimise possible variations in the sample that can occur in data collecting practice: Graphic Data Interview Process. The interview procedure was cautiously designed in advance to cover a wide spectrum of issues concerned with the trust building done through social media among EFL teachers. Thus, the questions were clear, relevant, and able to provide rich data from the participants' responses. Criteria for participants were carefully set in a way that included only experienced teachers of EFL from the Saudi Electronic University to ensure the tutors' profound view on the topic. Interviewers were trained well to ensure that they applied the necessary techniques that would reduce any possibility of an interviewer effect. Several training sessions were conducted on how to interview parties without bias, and on the kind of questions to ask and how to avoid asking questions that may make the respondent's response predictable or influence their responses. In addition, interviews were carried out in conditions that are safe and allowed for free expression of ideas without revealing the participant's identity. This allowed for the development of trust between researcher and participant with honest reflections being made by participants. The chosen method of data analysis was thematic content analysis through NVivo software even though the study is qualitative in nature; the use of NVivo software enabled the systematic organization of the findings thereby supporting reliability. In fact, inter-coder reliability checks were conducted to assert the coding process employed with the research data.

### *Statistical Analysis*

The thematic content analysis approach guided the examination of gathered information due to its adaptability and capacity to unveil patterns, meanings, and revelations within qualitative data. This method is a structured technique involving detecting, examining, and communicating patterns or themes within the information (Clarke et al., 2015).

Initially, themes or codes were developed from the available transcribed data, wherein researchers systematically assigned labels to meaningful segments of text that captured vital concepts and ideas. These codes were then organized into subsequent groupings based on their relevance. Following this, initial groupings were clustered and enhanced to pinpoint overarching themes. These themes were distinguished by their significance, recurrence, and importance about the study's objectives. The interconnections between these themes were explored to craft a cohesive storyline embodying the intricate nature of educators' perceptions of social media and trust-building (Alhojailan, 2012).

To conduct the thematic analysis, the Nvivo software was employed, providing a structured platform for arranging and handling qualitative data, thereby streamlining the coding and theme identification process (Sivakumar, 2020). Moreover, the data underwent frequency distribution using IBM SPSS v. 25 to quantitatively examine the prevalence of particular themes or patterns within the qualitative data, enriching the qualitative insights with data-driven quantitative perspectives (IBM Corp, 2017).

## **4. Findings**

Table 1 presents the results of the thematic analyses, which indicate that seven central themes and their associated sub-themes emerged, the first of which is "enhancing collaboration through social media", which reflects how EFL teachers use social media platforms to promote collaboration and resource-sharing. Notably, the interviewees strongly stressed the creation of lesson plans and the sharing of valuable resources with their peers, illustrating the role of social media in educational institutions. Social media is not only a means of increasing cooperation between teachers but also a means of developing emotional support and personal connections, which in the thematic analysis is

referred to as “building trust through emotional connection”. The potential of social media platforms to foster friendships and share personal experiences has been highlighted as a critical element in promoting trust within the teaching process. Another central theme of the thematic analysis is “privacy and trust concerns”, which highlights the importance of maintaining a climate of trust in the workplace, including privacy settings, verifying information, navigating digital literacy, and handling misinformation.

Another prominent theme is “professional growth and development through social media”, which highlights that by using social media, teachers undergo a continuous learning and teaching process and facilitate an atmosphere of professional collaboration. Skills enhancement, peer mentorship, and professional networking are some of the sub-themes of this theme. The next central theme is “nurturing trust through positive online interaction,” which highlights the importance of various trust-building techniques and establishing effective feedback among EFL teachers in educational institutions. In academic institutions, it is essential to encourage the performance of fellow teachers and to create a positive environment, which is themed “inspiring and motivating others through social media”, which aims to support fellow teachers and motivate them in every difficult. Nowadays, using social media platforms is an essential tool for educators to organize and achieve their educational goals, through which they not only maintain a creative work environment but also enhance personal development. Therefore, the last theme is termed “fostering goal achievement through social media” (Table 1).

Table 1. Main themes and subthemes extracted as a result of thematic analysis

Main Themes	Subthemes
Enhancing Collaboration through Social Media	Resource Sharing
	Collaborative Problem-Solving
	Lesson Plans
	Peer Review
	Online Professional Communities
Building Trust through Emotional Connections	Emotional Support
	Personal Narratives
	Vulnerability
	Shared Challenges
	Supportive Online Networks
Privacy and Trust Concerns in Social Media Usage	Privacy Settings
	Verifying Information
	Digital Literacy
	Handling Misinformation
	Protecting Professional Information
Professional Growth and Development	Skills Enhancement
	Applying Expertise
	Peer Mentorship
	Continuous Learning
	Professional Networking
Nurturing Trust through Positive Online Interactions	Trust-building Techniques
	Effective Feedback
	Reciprocal Support
Motivating Others through Social Media	Promoting Positive Advocacy
	Inspirational Strategies
	Defining Inspiration
	Sharing Success Stories
	Encouraging Growth and Exploration
Goal Achievement	Cultivating a Positive Atmosphere
	Goal-focused Interactions
	Creative Work Environments
	Goal Setting
	Continuous Improvement
	Personal Development

Main theme 1: Enhancing Collaboration through Social Media

The first central theme has five more sub-themes, as shown in Table 2. Among these five sub-themes, one of the most prominent is “resource sharing”, which accounts for 85.71% of the respondents’ responses. This sub-theme highlights the importance of sharing educational content through social media platforms. EFL teachers have emphasized this approach to help them enhance the collaborative and pedagogical process. Interviewee # 3 said, “During the live sessions of Google Meet, we can easily share videos, valuable articles, and websites with each other. It is elementary. It feels like we are sitting in a virtual library where we instantly access anything, any resource that is necessary for our learning.” Similarly, another interviewee says “We rely on Google Classroom to share educational content, it is very impressive, I can share all educational content even video tutorials on this platform. It feels like everyone is on the same page.” The next prominent sub-theme is “creative problem-solving” which is highlighted by 71.43 % of respondents. Highlighting the importance of this theme, interviewee # 7 remarks that “There is no match of Zoom for fostering collaboration. We recently held a collaborative workshop. The

most prominent feature of this workshop was that special permission was granted for discussion through breakout rooms.”

Table 2. Frequency distribution of Subthemes of main theme-1: Enhancing collaboration through social media

Subthemes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Resource Sharing	12	85.71
Collaborative Problem-Solving	10	71.43
Lesson Plans	8	57.14
Peer Review	7	50.00
Online Professional Communities	9	64.29

Main theme 2: Building Trust through Emotional Connections

Table 3 shows the frequency distribution of the sub-themes of the second main theme. There are five more sub-themes, the most prominent of which is “emotional support,” highlighted by 100 percent of the interviewees. According to this sub-theme, social media platforms are a means of fostering emotional support among EFL teachers. One interviewee commented, “Through online platforms such as Google Classroom and Google Meet, we always provide emotional support to each other. Whether it's solving a student's problem or having a tough day, there's nothing more valuable than providing a helping hand to your colleagues.” Another notable sub-theme is “personal narrative”, which 71.43 percent of the interviewees identified as significant. EFL teachers mentioned that they use social media platforms to share their life experiences and observations with one another. One teacher described his views: “Through platforms like Zoom and Remind, we share our observations in an intimate way; sharing our teaching stories creates a sense of camaraderie.” The next prominent theme is “supportive online networks,” which received a frequency of 35.71 %. This theme seems less frequent but highlights the importance of social media platforms in facilitating online networks. “We've created a supportive online network in our Google Stream community where we share teaching tips, encouragement, and empathy”.

Table 3. Frequency distribution of Subthemes of main theme-2: Building trust through emotional connections

Subthemes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Emotional Support	14	100.00
Personal Narratives	10	71.43
Vulnerability	6	42.86
Shared Challenges	7	50.00
Supportive Online Networks	5	35.71

Main theme 3: Privacy and Trust Concerns in SM Usage

Table 4 thoroughly summarizes the distribution frequency of subthemes under "privacy and trust concerns in social media usage," as conveyed by the interviewees. Notably, "privacy settings" emerged as the most prominent subtheme, with 92.86% of participants acknowledging its importance. Teacher #12 highlighted its significance by stating, "Within platforms such as Google Classroom and Zoom, the settings regarding privacy are of utmost importance. Ensuring the protection and security of student data is a responsibility we must uphold." Another significant subtheme was "verifying information," with 64.29% of participants emphasizing its relevance. An educator stressed this importance by mentioning, "In a time where information is abundant, verifying the content before sharing it on educational platforms like Google Meet or Remind is crucial. Teaching students to discern the truth is essential to combat misinformation." Lastly, the concern of "handling misinformation" was recognized by 50.00% of participants. A teacher commented, "Addressing misinformation is vital within the digital learning environment. Guiding students on platforms such as Google Stream and Google Voice to evaluate information sources critically is key. It's all about nurturing digital literacy and credibility."

Table 4. Frequency distribution of Subthemes of main theme-3: Privacy and Trust Concerns in SM Usage

Subthemes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Privacy Settings	13	92.86
Verifying Information	9	64.29
Digital Literacy	6	42.86
Handling Misinformation	7	50.00

Main theme 4: Professional Growth and Development through SM

A detailed analysis of the frequency distribution of subthemes under the fourth main theme has been demonstrated in Table 5. This theme explores how EFL teachers leverage social media platforms to enrich their professional journey. The primary subtheme, "skill enhancement," emerges as the most prominent, with 78.57% of respondents acknowledging its importance. It showcases how EFL teachers actively employ social media to refine their teaching abilities. One respondent affirmed, "Platforms such as Google Classroom and Google Meet are invaluable for professional development. I have polished my teaching skills through webinars and online courses, becoming a more proficient educator." The second subtheme, "peer mentorship," underscores the significance of social media in nurturing mentorship bonds among educators. Despite being mentioned by 42.86% of respondents, it remains a crucial element of professional advancement. A teacher expressed, "I have been fortunate to find a mentor within our Google Stream community. Their guidance and input have been pivotal in my evolution as an educator." The final subtheme, "building professional networks," is acknowledged by 64.29% of respondents as a vital catalyst for professional growth. EFL teachers recognize that social media platforms offer avenues to engage with colleagues and experts in

their field. An educator highlighted, "Through platforms like GroupMe and Zoom, I have significantly expanded my professional circle. It is not just about expanding one's network; it is about gaining insights from others and embracing fresh perspectives."

Table 5. Frequency distribution of Subthemes of main theme-4: Professional Growth and Development through SM

Subthemes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Skills Enhancement	11	78.57
Peer Mentorship	6	42.86
Continuous Learning	7	50.00
Professional Networking	9	64.29

Main theme 5: Trust Development through SM

These underlying themes illuminate the core factors that promote trust among EFL teachers within the digital domain. The subtheme of "effective feedback" surfaced as the most dominant, with 64.29% of participants highlighting its importance. EFL teachers emphasized the significance of giving and receiving valuable feedback via social media platforms utilized in education, like Google Classroom and Google Meet. A participant expressed, "We utilize Google Classroom for peer feedback on lesson plans. It goes beyond resource sharing to enhancing our teaching quality through insightful feedback." "Reciprocal support" emerged as another pivotal subtheme acknowledged by 42.86% of participants, stressing the value of collaborative aid and encouragement among educators online. A teacher mentioned, "We have a reciprocal support mechanism on Remind, offering guidance and comfort for those facing challenging student scenarios." The final subtheme, "promoting positive advocacy," was identified by 35.71% of participants, highlighting the role of social media in championing and endorsing colleagues' achievements and positive impacts on the education community. Another EFL teacher shared, "We leverage Zoom to acknowledge and celebrate each other's successes, demonstrating solidarity and nurturing trust" (Table 6).

Table 6. Frequency distribution of Subthemes of main theme-5: Trust Development through SM

Subthemes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Effective Feedback	9	64.29
Reciprocal Support	6	42.86
Promoting Positive Advocacy	5	35.71

Main theme 6: Motivating Others through SM

This theme explores the strategies and approaches EFL teachers use to motivate and inspire their colleagues and students through various social media channels commonly utilized in educational settings (Table 7). Within this context, two key subthemes emerge prominently: "inspirational strategies" and "defining inspiration," accompanied by the opposing subtheme of "cultivating a positive atmosphere." The subtheme of "inspiration strategies" stood out as the most significant, highlighted by 85.71% of the participants. EFL teachers shared various techniques for leveraging social media to inspire and uplift others. One EFL teacher ardently expressed, "I firmly believe in the impact of sharing motivational anecdotes and quotes on platforms like Google Classroom. It's astonishing how a timely quote can elevate someone's mood, particularly in challenging moments." On the other hand, "defining inspiration" was referenced by 42.86% of participants, representing a more contemplative facet of motivation. Some EFL teachers discussed their viewpoints on what defines inspiration and how they communicate this idea to their peers and students. A participant remarked, "I believe clarifying our understanding of inspiration as educators holds significance. To me, it involves igniting curiosity and a hunger for knowledge. I share this interpretation with my students on Google Meet, urging them to inquire and explore."

In contrast, "cultivating a positive atmosphere" was acknowledged by 35.71% of participants. Though slightly less emphasized, this subtheme underscores the importance of nurturing a positive and supportive digital space to motivate others. An EFL teacher elaborated, "Establishing a positive ambiance is essential for fostering motivation. On platforms such as Remind, I ensure our interactions remain courteous and encouraging. It significantly contributes to keeping everyone engaged and motivated."

Table 7. Frequency distribution of Subthemes of main theme-6: Motivating others through SM

Subthemes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Inspirational Strategies	12	85.71
Defining Inspiration	6	42.86
Sharing Success Stories	11	78.57
Encouraging Growth and Exploration	7	50.00
Cultivating a Positive Atmosphere	5	35.71

Main theme 7: Goal Achievement through SM

This theme illustrates how EFL teachers utilize social media platforms commonly used in the field of education to establish and strive toward reaching their career aspirations (Table 8). Within these categories, "goal-focused interactions" were highlighted by 57.14% of the respondents. EFL teachers elaborated on how these platforms facilitate discussions and exchanges focused on goals. One teacher said, "Google Meet plays a crucial role in goal-oriented conversations. We establish objectives, track progress, and even conduct virtual workshops to support each other in attaining our educational targets." "Creative work environments" captured the interest of 50.00% of the participants. They emphasized the role of these platforms in nurturing innovative work environments. A respondent remarked, "Google

Stream serves as our creative nucleus. We exchange inventive teaching methods, explore new resources, and generate ideas. It's akin to a virtual idea generation session, all conveniently consolidated in one location." Lastly, "goal setting" was brought up by 64.29% of the participants, emphasizing the importance of these platforms in defining and monitoring professional goals. An EFL teacher mentioned, "Remind offers a distinct feature for establishing objectives. We utilize it to define individual and group goals. It ensures our responsibility, and witnessing progress serves as motivation."

Table 8. Frequency distribution of Subthemes of main theme-5: Goal Achievement through SM

Subthemes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Goal-focused Interactions	8	57.14
Creative Work Environments	7	50.00
Goal Setting	9	64.29

**5. Discussion**

The thematic analysis of EFL teachers' perceptions regarding social media usage in their workplace revealed seven main themes and corresponding subthemes. These themes encompassed the enhancement of collaboration, trust-building through emotional connections, concerns about privacy and trust, professional growth and development, nurturing trust through positive online interactions, inspiring and motivating peers, and fostering goal achievement, collectively highlighting the diverse and influential roles that social media plays in educators' professional lives. Comparing the findings of the first main theme with previous research, there is consistent evidence that social media, particularly in educational contexts, is a powerful platform for enhancing collaboration among EFL teachers. The prominence of "resource sharing" aligns with previous studies highlighting the value of social media for sharing educational materials and resources (Lim, 2010). Similarly, the emphasis on "collaborative problem-solving" aligns with research indicating that social media platforms facilitate collaborative problem-solving and knowledge sharing among EFL teachers (Palacios Hidalgo et al., 2020). These findings underscore the sustained relevance of social media in education for collaborative purposes. EFL teachers continue leveraging these platforms to exchange resources, ideas, and solutions, reinforcing that social media is integral to modern educational practices. Additionally, the specific mention of platforms such as Google Classroom, Google Meet, and Zoom aligns with the notion that EFL teachers prefer specific platforms for particular collaborative activities based on their features and ease of use (Ramadani & Xhaferi, 2020; Timothy & da Silva, 2022).

There is a strong alignment with studies emphasizing the role of social media in building trust through emotional connections among EFL teachers. The prevalence of "emotional support" as a prominent subtheme echoes previous research showing how social media provides a platform for EFL teachers to offer emotional support, share experiences, and create a supportive community (Ningsih et al., 2021). Similarly, recognizing "personal narratives" as a vital subtheme aligns with previous work that has underscored the importance of personal stories and experiences in establishing trust and rapport among EFL teachers in online spaces (Sahragard & Sadeghi, 2017). Moreover, the theme of "supportive online networks", while less frequent in this study, is consistent with existing research highlighting the value of online communities and networks in providing emotional support and fostering trust within the teaching profession (Maci à & Garc á, 2016). Comparing the findings on "privacy and trust concerns in social media usage" reveals a consistent recognition of the challenges and complexities associated with trust and privacy in online educational settings. This theme resonates with prior studies that have explored EFL teachers' concerns regarding confidentiality and trust when engaging with social media platforms. Research by Inayati (2015) has indicated that EFL teachers often express apprehensions about the privacy of their personal information and the authenticity of shared content in online educational communities. Similarly, the emphasis on managing privacy settings and verifying information aligns with studies highlighting educators' need for digital literacy skills to navigate these concerns effectively (Alexander et al., 2017).

Social media platforms play a pivotal role in fostering EFL teachers' professional growth and development in ways that align with previous research in this domain. As supported by prior studies, social media facilitates "skills enhancement", allowing educators to access various resources, webinars, and discussions that cater to their specific needs and interests (Kavoshian et al., 2022). EFL teachers engage in ongoing learning through online platforms, staying updated with the latest teaching methodologies and technological advancements. Moreover, social media supports the "application of expertise", echoing research highlighting how educators leverage their experience and insights to provide valuable guidance and mentorship to their peers (Allam & Elyas, 2016). Additionally, social media promotes "peer mentorship", a concept well-documented in prior studies, wherein EFL teachers mentor and support each other by sharing best practices, resources, and advice (Carvalho & Santos, 2022). These peer-to-peer interactions enhance professional knowledge and foster a sense of camaraderie among educators. The theme of "continuous learning" underscores how social media encourages EFL teachers to embrace lifelong learning, aligning with research that emphasizes the role of these platforms in promoting ongoing skill development (Namaziandost & Nasri, 2019). Lastly, "professional networking" resonates with extensive literature highlighting the value of social media for expanding EFL teachers' professional horizons, connecting with experts in the field, and staying informed about the latest educational trends (Kiss et al., 2018).

Social media platforms play a vital role in nurturing trust among EFL teachers, a phenomenon well-supported by previous research. They facilitate "emotional support" by providing a space where EFL teachers can share personal experiences and provide empathy and encouragement to their peers (Luan et al., 2023). This emotional connection fosters a sense of belonging and trust within the teaching community. EFL teachers share valuable resources on social media platforms, easing their workload and cultivating a culture of mutual support and trust (Farahian & Parhamnia, 2022). Lastly, the capacity to give and receive "effective feedback" via these platforms is instrumental in cultivating trust, as constructive criticism develops professional development and mutual admiration among EFL teachers



(Gupta, 2014).

## 6. Conclusion

The findings of this research shed light on the outcomes derived from the thematic analysis of EFL teachers' perspectives on social media in their professional environment. Seven principal themes surfaced from the analyzed data due to the thematic content evaluation. The results highlighted the influence of social media in enriching collaboration, fostering trust, promoting professional advancement, and addressing concerns regarding privacy and trust within educational environments. Furthermore, this research highlights that social media has to become an essential instrument for EFL teachers to establish collaborations, cooperate, and advance professionally. Social media platforms act as links, uniting EFL teachers worldwide and developing a feeling of community and trust.

A few practical implications may arise out of the study's findings. Acknowledging social media's role in enhancing collaboration and trust underscores the significance of integrating these platforms into EFL teachers' professional development schemes. Educational institutions should establish protocols for the proficient utilization of social media to cultivate collaboration and trust-building among EFL teachers. Secondly, the focus on privacy and trust issues underscores the necessity for explicit policies and protocols concerning social media usage within educational environments. Education institutions and authorities must establish comprehensive digital citizenship schemes that enlighten EFL teachers and students on responsible and secure online behaviors, thus alleviating privacy concerns. Thirdly, the findings about professional advancement and growth through social media imply that EFL educators should actively participate in online communities and networks to strengthen their continual learning. Educational institutions must stimulate and facilitate these engagements by acknowledging and appreciating EFL teachers who contribute to these communities and providing online professional development materials.

Despite the richness of the findings, the study has a few limitations that need to be addressed in future research. First and foremost is the selection of the participants, as they were all based at one educational institution and may have self-selected based on their comfort or familiarity with social media. Furthermore, social desirability could have impacted participants' responses to align with perceived social norms or expectations, possibly resulting in overemphasizing the favorable aspects of utilizing social media in professional settings.

Addressing these limitations is crucial for ensuring the validity and generalizability of the study's findings. Therefore, Subsequent research should strive to incorporate a diverse range of participant demographics, including educators with varying degrees of familiarity with social media. This approach could offer a more comprehensive insight into the influence of social media across different experience levels and backgrounds within the educational sphere.

It is recommended educational institutions provide information regarding how to correctly set up privacy features of the social media accounts among EFL teachers. This encompasses advice on one's privacy settings, as well as what is allowed or not allowed to be posted in order to avoid crossing certain ethical standards in professional practice. Acceptable use should be clearly outlined and this should include privacy measures as well as consequences for infringements within the institutions' social media policies. These policies should be updated from time to time depending on the changes occurring in the social media and the privacy regulations. It is therefore vital to discuss some privacy issues to do with social media usage among educators. It is therefore important that educational institutions establish firm policies on safety measures concerning the storage and protection of data and privacy levels, orientation for the teachers along with regular interventions on the utilization of social media on one hand and with the protection for privacy on the other hand.

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## Authors' contributions

Dr. Abdulwahed and Dr. Shahla contributed equally to this study and were responsible for the study design and manuscript revisions. Dr. Amara and Dr. Ashwaq played a significant role in data collection. Dr. Haifa drafted the initial manuscript, and Dr. Edyta provided critical revisions. Dr. Shahla and Dr. Abdulwahed contributed to the data analysis and interpretation. Dr. Amara, Dr. Hana and Dr. Ashwaq provided substantial input in the literature review and manuscript revisions. All authors actively participated in discussions, reviewed the manuscript critically, and approved the final version for submission."

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