# ENTERTAIN OR ENLIGHTEN? – SIGNIFICANCE OF MOBILE SOCIAL NETWORKING APPS IN INFORMAL LIFELONG EDUCATION

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Mobile learning emerged with the revolutionary development of Android, iOS and Windows based smartphones. For a decade and a half, its effectiveness has been largely researched in the context of schools and universities. However, according to the available literature, its significance on the working adult population has not been properly researched. This study was an extension of an existing m-learning research to find the significance of mobile learning on the Sri Lankan semi-governmental context with respect to lifelong education.

Research conducted during the last decade with students in universities and technical colleges have concluded that mobile learning was more effective in comparison to face-to-face learning in the classroom and the objective was to see whether there was a similarity between those findings and the results of this study. The WhatsApp mobile app was used for this study as it is platform independent and leads in the highest rank of Google Play Store apps. A sample of 60 semi-government workers in the age range of 25 to 45 was used with the application of mixed methods for data collection using a printed and mobile questionnaire, mobile and face-to-face interviews and discussions together with observations of the pattern of communication. The Mobile Learning Environment (MLE), which was created for the main project, with access to web-based Google forms, was used as the communication interface.

The results revealed that there was a higher demand for mobile-based learning opportunities in contrast to traditional teacher-centered learning. These workers have the issue of unavailability of time for conventional classes. Lack of motivation, low self-confidence, and fear of making mistakes prevents them in lively engagement in class discussions. Therefore, it was clear that the mobile-based approach such as m-learning would be ideal to cater to their needs and help them to learn at ease guaranteeing uninterrupted participation by adapting study time to suit their free time. Hence, it is obvious that there is an ongoing demand for m-learning in this context. However, there is a necessity to study further about the factors such as mobile literacy and technological affordance.

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