



Mobile-Empowered Ministry in Indonesia: A Phenomenological Study

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ABSTRACT

The impact of new media has continued to transform people. Thus, the impact of mobile phones which are deemed to have a positive effect on education, business, science, health, safety, communication, entertainment, society, environment, globalization, and people's lives is reflected in various studies. Though the abovementioned impacts are widely studied, the impact of mobile phones in ministry—in sharing the gospel of God to humankind is hardly discussed. This study employs phenomenological study with ministers of the gospel from the West Java Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists situated in Indonesia as its participants. Findings revealed that mobile phones can bring the gospel to both the reached and the unreached through its different features and services. Thus, this study emphasizes understanding of the importance for ministers of the gospel to take the edge of mobile-empowered ministry, a new opportunity, as everyone is upswept by the mobile revolution.

Keywords: Mobile Phones, Ministry, Phenomenological Study, West Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Mobile phones (MPs) are in one's possession—may he be male or female (Hilao & Wichadee, 2017); young people (Vicente, 2013), university students (Darmi & Albion, 2014, Dos, 2014; Krishna & Parajuli, 2016), or even preschool-age students (Morgan, n.d.). They have been everyone's necessity. They have become human's buddies—indispensable companions wherever one's journey would be.

MPs have transformed people from all walks of life. An example are the illiterate women in Pakistan who learned to read and write with the use of MPs (Mark, 2012, cited in Gabor & Peter, 2015). Another example is the MP-based farmers' advisory information system which furnishes innovative mobile agricultural extension service to more than 380 smallholder farmers via web (Sanga, Mlozi, Haug, & Tumbo, 2016). In addition, MPs have have parents-children's essentials. They are deemed so “for remote parenting in physically separated families, and both parents and children use the phone to foster emotional harmonization in

the family. In general, the left-behind teenagers project their longing and expectations of a warm and harmonious home into the use of the mobile phone” (Hong, 2016, p. 72).

Furthermore, MPs assist pre-service social studies teachers to have better ability to produce intended result after exposure to training (Gloria & Oluwadara, 2016). MPs are seen as feasible tools in the promotion of teacher ethics; also accessibility, popularity and convenience of use, internet coverage and connectivity (Mfaume, Mgaya, & Bilinga, (n.d.). In other words, MPs are has increasingly become powerful support for humans’ necessities (Chinnery 2006; Kukulska-Hulme & Traxler 2005, cited in Reinders, (n.d.).

Inspite of the varied studies on how MPs have influenced the different aspects of his buddy, little has been conducted on how they can be empowered in sharing God’s gospel to both the reached and the unreached. Thus, this phenomenological study considers this gap—the roles MPs have towards the ministry of the ministers of the gospel based on their lived experiences. This study explores to answer the following research questions:

1. Do you use mobile phones in your ministry?
2. What mobile applications do you use in ministering the reached and how do these mobile phone applications help you?
3. What mobile applications do you use in ministering the unreached and how do these mobile phone applications help you?
4. How important are mobile phones to your ministry?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This phenomenological study traverse the lived experiences of the ministers of the gospel. The review of the literature which avers the influence of MPs to a gospel workers’ life considers on mobile revolution, demographics of MPs, features and applications of MP, and ministering to the reached and the unreached through MPs—mobile-empowered ministry. The review discusses on how MPs can effectively and efficiently be empowered for God’s ministry.

Mobile Revolution. Without doubt, the mobile revolution has arrived. Keegan (2002) narrates that the population of the world reached six billion in the late 1999 and that year, Ericsson and Nokia made public that the world had 500,000,000 MPs and estimated that by 2004 there would be one billion. The mobile revolution has transformed people’s way of living (Fleischmann, 2013) in many varied aspects including education, business, social working, one’s behaviour, ethics and so on.

MPs influence includes education. A study (see Mospan, n.d.) attested that preschool-age students employ MPs and apps in learning their classroom activities. MPs are used for announcements like in

WhatsApp (Zayed, 2016), camera and calculator (Vicente, 2013), or even internet (Vicente, 2013). These all show how MPs effect the society for the benefits these gadgets can extend.

MPs are deemed to positively influence teaching and learning processes. In other words, MPs serve for educational purposes (Cakir, 2015; Mospan, n.d.) and have their place in education all over the world (Mark, 2012, cited in Gabor & Peter, 2015) for they enhance learning (Fernandez, 2018; Gal, 2019; Wong & Wong, 2016) both within and without the classroom and outside classes (Krishna & Parajuli, 2016; Yilmaz, 2016). In other words, their functions are not limited to the four walls of the classroom.

Learning through the use of MPs has been a growing field as evidenced by the increasing variety of research topics, methods, and researchers (Krull & Duarte, 2017). Studies reflect that MPs increase student and lecturer's collaboration, provide distant communication, increase student participation and engagement, facilitate authentic learning and reflective practice, and foster learning communities (Kaliisa & Picard, 2017); assist learners' metacognitive awareness (Dos, 2014) and social awareness (Sangeetha & Vanitha, 2019), and "organize lessons that would nourish emancipatory functions of learning, help in self-determined and self-organizing learning, and would facilitate an autonomous and a motivating environment" (Gabor & Peter, 2015, p. 11). Thus, studies support the potential of integrating MPs as a learning tool to enhance language learning (Darmi & Albion, 2014). Therefore, MPs are employed by teachers (Nawi, Hamzah, & Abdul Rahim, 2015) to assist them.

MPs are also considered instrumental in teaching (Ibrahim, & Kadiri, 2018) and learning English (Ahmad & Fizza Farrukh, 2015; Ibrahim, & Kadiri, 2018; Mospan, n.d.) not only in English as a second language (Ashiyan, & Salehi, 2016; Ibrahim & Kadiri, 2018; Small, 2014) but also in English as a foreign language—its curriculum and activities (Cakir, 2015), technical and semi-technical terminologies outside the classroom, and grammatical rules and writing (Alkhezzi, 2016).

In language learning, MPs aid in vocabulary enhancement (Alkhezzi, 2016; Darmi & Albion, 2014; Stockwell & Liu 2015; Suwantarathip & Orawiwanakul, 2015), and in advancing cooperative and collaborative learning through the enhancement of learner's use of authentic English language that enables learners to construct their own knowledge (Ibrahim, & Kadiri, 2018).

MPs when combined with a task-based language teaching approach does not only create learning environments which promote self-confidence and interaction with the teacher and peers but also helped the teacher in providing individual feedback to the students, improving students' engagement in learning tasks as well as self-expression in English(Rashid, Cunningham, & Wastson, 2017). Furthermore, in language learning, MP assists in advanced communication, reading, and listening, and beginners' and elementary grammar (Mospan, n.d.). Communication function of MPs is gradually gaining space in institutional education around the world (Gabor, & Peter, 2015).

Given the above discussion, MPs continue to be the most widely used devices in mobile learning studies (Krull & Duarte, 2017). MPs have become the "harbinger of the future of learning" (Keegan,

2002, p. 9) and has created learners' behaviour (Ali, 2018) and positive attitude towards mobile learning (Krishna & Parajuli, 2016) in the EFL classroom (Khrisat, & Mahmoud, 2013) for instance. All these eventually help improve learners' academic achievement (Ali, 2018; Dos, 2014).

Furthermore, MPs have become trusted personal devices with Internet access and smart card usage because assist the distance students to be in touch with their respective institution— distance education learning—the possibility of teaching and learning at a distance—where learning can be done electronically (Keegan, 2002). Thus MPs have become the most popular information access devices (Miah, Hossain, & Rahman, 2017).

Studies (Dania & Iwe-ewenode, 2016; Ismail, Azizan, & Azman, 2013; Molara, & Joseph, 2014) the negative sides of MPs. MPs are considered objects of distraction which buoy up learners laziness by spending more time in browsing than going to the library and that they also enhance examination malpractice (Dania & Iwe-ewenode, 2016) thus some students do not well perceive MPs skeptical about their use (Ismail, Azizan, & Azman, 2013). Also, students make use of phones everywhere including restricted spaces like banking halls, cars and lecture rooms and may cause accidents on campus because they were engaging phones while driving (Molara, & Joseph, 2014).

Though MPs have negative aspects, still they have penetrated so quickly (Keegan, 2002). It is because they are not only relatively cheap (Chinnery 2006; Kukulska-Hulme & Traxler 2005, cited in Reinders (n.d.) but because of the advantages they provide (see Gloria & Oluwadara, 2016; Hong, 2016).

Mobile and Ministry. Mobile Applications. Two of the most prominent applications in the MPs are Whatsapp (WA) and Facebook (FB). WA in as application employed towards learning and practicing new collocations which eventually guarantee retentions of collocations; thus the implication of employing WhatsApp is for learning (Ashiyan, & Salehi, 2016) aside from the gospel ministry purposes. FB enhances not only mobile learning but also social networking to support learners' learning for it has the possibility to enhance participation more as a reminder role, direct training, and facilitating discussion (Tran, 2016). In other words, MPs through FB assist humans in terms of education. It also assists gospel ministry.

Of Faith Community (Reaching The Reached and the Unreached Through Mobile Phones) MPs enhance ministry for both the reached and the unreached. da Silva (2015) cited examples on this. They are discussed below. For Saulo, his other mobile phone, with more than twenty praise songs in the memory, was very valuable when the church equipment quit working just one week before he was installed as pastor. Saulo had no doubts - he adapted a microphone and an amplifier and used his mobile phone to officiate the service and help the choir with their performance. And the phone helped celebrate the worship service for several weeks in the small church with only 30 square meters, until enough offerings were collected from the members to fix the sound system (p. 118)

Da Silva (2015) further emphasized that in the task of disciplining the mobile phone for it to be “evangelical,” the word of the pastor is essential. Beyond taking care of the contents, the calls also must be made according to Christian principles. “The cell phone can be a weapon of Satan in someone’s hand,” (Edinéia, cited in da Silva, 2015). MPs are perceived by the Pentecostals of S. Jorge as a negative mediator chiefly in terms of indebtedness, gossip, and slander thus the pastor elaborated (da Silva, 2015), “You have to know how to use your mobile phone. If you have a bill to pay, you are responsible for paying it. Don’t use the mobile phone to call and do wrong things, gossip, fight, don’t yell on the phone. Use the phone to send a message of faith, love, and hope, not wrong things” (p. 119)

MPs are employed by religious folks (Davidovitch & Yavich, 2018). MPs assist for the furtherance of sharing God’s gospel. When properly employed, MPs are powerfully empowered. As Mobile Ministry Forum (2014) stresses, A quiet revolution has been taking place. It rarely gets mentioned in the news, but it is impacting every corner of the globe. Young and old, rich and poor - no one has escaped its reach. This revolution is the rapid increase in the use of mobile phones, even in some of the most remote places. The number of mobile phone subscriptions actually outnumbers the world’s population. And mobile phones aren’t only good for staying connected with work or catching up with friends: they can be a tool for engaging people with media that effectively communicates the Good News of Jesus Christ (p. 1)

METHODS

This section explains the research design and the research setting, participants, and sampling. It explains the procedures in data collections and ethical considerations in the study. The section closes with the data analysis.

Research Design. Although studies (Dos, 2014; Sanga, Mlozi, Haug, & Tumbo, 2016; Vicente, 2013; Zayed, 2016) have attested the different influences on MPs on humans, the significance on how these gadget may influence the lived experiences of gospel workers prompted the investigation of 21 gospel workers through phenomenological study. A qualitative methodological approach, phenomenological study does not only understand the phenomenon of the participants but also discuss in detail their lived experiences that have transpired the lifeblood of the participants (Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015).

Phenomenological study is apt for this research because it “describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept of a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). In other words, phenomenological study in this study investigates on how MPs are

empowered for the ministry based on the lived experiences of the gospel workers as the participants.

This phenomenological study was conducted in an office in West Java, Indonesia. It was participated by 15 gospel workers who vountarily consented to this study on their lived experiences on how they minister for both the reached and the unreached by employing MPs. This study which employed purposive sampling—a sampling wherein “samples are likely to be chosen in a deliberate manner [having its purpose to] select the specific study units ... that will yield the most relevant and plentiful data (Yin, 2011). In other words, it intends to find the best type of informants who both see and report the event in their lives.

Data Collections. Data gathering is significant in the study. It provides significant contribution to a more comprehended understanding of theories involved in the research (Bernard 2002). Thus, source of data needs to be given careful thought with thorough discernment.

This study was conducted through open-ended questions. Participants (P1 to 21) expressed their lived experiences by sharing their own stories by answering the research questions on a sheet of paper. The stories assisted in the exploration of the phenomenon in interest (Creswell, 2007) due to the richness of the participants’ own experiences (Yin, 2011).

Ethical considerations are significant elements of research. Ethical considerations were given importance in this particular study. The participants voluntarily participated by signing an informed consent. None of the was forced to do the study (Miles, 2014). In other words, they had the choice to join and even stop the study during the course of answering the open-ended questionnaire.

Data Analysis. This phenomenological research is a qualitative research (QLR). This kind of research is a “way of knowing in which a researcher gathers, organizes, and interprets information obtained from humans using his or her eyes and ears and filters” (Lichtman, 2013, p. 4). It focuses on “how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). QLR gives “opportunities to examine issues in depth that may yield a clearer understanding of what is happening in certain circumstances and how changes can be made to meet the needs (Lichtman, 2013, p. xv).

The answers to the open-ended questions distributed to the participants were translated. Analysis was performed from codes to categories. Subsequently, recurring categories were grouped into themes.

Methods section describes the steps followed in the execution of the study and also provides a brief justification for the research methods used (Perry et al., 2003:661). It should contain enough detail to enable the reader to evaluate the appropriateness of your methods and the reliability and validity of your findings. Furthermore, the information should enable experienced researchers to replicate your study (American Psychological Association, 2001:17).

1. The methodology section typically has the following sub-sections:
2. Sampling (description of target population, research context and units of analysis; sampling; and respondent profile)
3. Data collection
4. Measures (Alternatively: Measurement)

RESULT

DISCUSSION

Findings and Discussions. Data collection revealed comprehensive themes—subject matters which summarized the lived experiences of 21 gospel workers in employing MPs in their ministering to both the reached and the unreached. Four identified themes include (a) Bible (b) morning devotions (c) communication—announcements and church activities, and (d) illustrations and motivational stories. The aforementioned themes are discussed below.

Bible. The participants recognized the role MPs have especially in the features of the Bible. “I can share God’s Word (Folder 3, p. 2) and “teach not only our very own church members but also those outside the fold” (Folder 2, p.1) for opening the Bible in the MPs is easy and practical (Folder 4, p. 10). The Bible feature in the MPs has become very accessible that another participant stressed that with such a feature “I am relieved even when asked to participate in an impromptu service like meeting a soul who wants to know the Bible truth” (Folder 9, p. 21). With WA, for instance, “I send lessons to those who are eagerly learning for more Bible lessons” (Folder 7, p. 15) and “become a medium in sending these Bible lessons for more deeper understanding (Folder 2, p. 8).

Morning Devotions. MPs are used in the ministry of the gospel workers. Through its features, “I am able to send morning devotions everyday” (Folder 7, p. 13) “to more or less 300 people” (Folder 9, p. 17). Another participant stressed that with prayers and hope, “the messages would uplift the recipients” (Folder 1, p. 1).

Communication. Another realization of the participants of the study is on how MPs help in the communication for both the reached and the unreached. “I find it easy to access my own church members and the ones I am giving Bible lessons” (Folder 5, p. 7). “I could relay church announcements and schedule reminders, services, and activities anytime anywhere” (Folder 4, p. 9). MPs “help in evangelism” (Folder 6, p. 11). “Communication is efficient” (Folder 5, p. 12) because “distance is not considered” (Folder 3, p. 5). In other words, “communication is quick” (Folder 2, p. 6). Thus an officer participant elaborated that “MPs enhance the communication between churches to pastors and vice versa” (Folder 10, p. 15).

Illustrations and Motivational Stories. Furthermore, participants emphasized that MPs are used for conveying God’s message through illustrations and motivational stories. “With MPs, I can support my church members through illustrations” (Folder 8, p. 19) and “motivational stories” (Folder 7, p. 14). Given these, “I can show them my spiritual support even I am not I am physically far” (Folder 8, p. 20). This show that even when the gospel worker is out from the members sight, this spiritual presence is with them.

Conclusion

MPs are becoming more useful these days. It has been anyone’s inseparable buddy in many aspects of one’s life. MPs serves varied purposes including sharing the gospel of God.

Understanding were garnered from the collected data which was participated by 15 gospel workers from West Java, Indonesia on how MPs are employed for the ministry. Gospel workers affirmed that MPs can be be empowered to share the gospel both to the reached and the unreached. For the reached

For the unreached

It is essential that ministers of the gospel consider the influence MPs have in reaching souls. They need to take the advantage of mobile-empowered ministry. With MPs, ministers of the gospel can share about God in a more effective and efficient way.

Recommendation

MPs help in the sharing of God’s gospel both to the reached and the unreached. Ministers of the gospel need not to only consider the possibilities of employing MPs towards ministering for the Lord through what they currently do out from this gadget but that they need to explore more. Also, institution find more of providing better MPs and other facilities that would assist the gospel workers for a more effective and efficient ways of sharing the gospel. Given this, the coming of the Lord Jesus will be hastened.

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