



Mobile Learning in Mathematics Education: A Review of Research Trends and Keyword Analysis

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Mobile learning (M-learning) has emerged as a transformative and innovative tool in mathematics education, providing flexible access to educational resources and garnering increasing attention. Despite extensive research, a systematic exploration of M-learning in mathematics education remains limited. To address this gap, this study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) method to analyze 58 publications from the Scopus and Web of Science databases, covering the period from 2015 to 2024. Articles were assessed and selected using rigorous inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure a comprehensive analysis. The findings reveal a consistent growth in M-learning research, with a 50% increase in annual publications post-2020. Geographically, Europe contributed 27.87% of studies, followed by Asia (24.59%) and North America (13.11%). Research methods evolved over the decade, with qualitative studies dominating earlier years (2015–2018) and a shift towards quantitative (38%) and mixed methods (28%) post-2020. Frequently used keywords such as "mobile learning," "mathematics education," and "game-based learning" reflect the field's primary focus areas. These insights offer valuable guidance for researchers, educators, and policymakers, fostering the effective integration of M-learning in mathematics education and shaping future research directions in digital education.

Keywords: m-learning, mathematics education, systematic literature review, mobile learning, mathematics, learning

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INTRODUCTION

Mobile learning emerged from the concept of learning with small, portable computers introduced by Alan Kay in 1972 (Crompton, 2014). The rapid development of mobile technology has enabled its pivotal role in designing seamless learning environments. The accessibility of mobile learning allows students to access educational materials regardless of time and location (Poçan et al., 2023). Advancements in technology, particularly the widespread adoption of smartphones and tablets, have significantly expanded and enriched the functions and applications of mobile learning in education (Tang & Yu, 2018). This evolution has transformed how educational content is delivered, making it more engaging and interactive through multimedia resources and adaptive learning platforms (Burke et al., 2022).

In mathematics education, mobile learning leverages flexibility and interactivity to provide students with learning opportunities that transcend geographical boundaries, greatly enhancing educational accessibility and engagement (Tirado-Morueta et al., 2020). The ability to access learning materials anytime and anywhere allows students to tailor their learning experiences to their individual needs and pace, which can improve their understanding and retention of mathematical concepts (Wang et al., 2021). Additionally, mobile learning tools, such as educational apps and interactive platforms, promote active participation and collaborative problem-solving, enabling students to engage with complex mathematical tasks in innovative ways (Poçan et al., 2023). These tools have also been shown to foster critical thinking and adaptive reasoning, essential skills for success in mathematics (Borba et al., 2016).

Given the growing global significance of mathematics education, mobile learning has gained considerable attention as a means of enhancing teaching and learning within the field. Researchers have actively investigated effective practices for integrating mobile technology into mathematics education, emphasizing its potential to improve student engagement (Poçan et al., 2023), motivation (Poçan et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2021), performance (Wang et al., 2021), and overall learning experiences (Burke et al., 2022). These studies highlight the versatility of mobile learning in accommodating diverse learning styles and fostering collaborative problem-solving. Despite this growing body of work, there is a notable gap in summarizing the key insights from existing systematic reviews and empirical studies to consolidate a comprehensive understanding of mobile learning in mathematics education.

Existing literature reviews predominantly focus on scoping reviews (Bringula & Atienza, 2023), empirical studies (Bano et al., 2018a; Tang et al., 2023), technological implementations of mobile learning (Drigas & Pappas, 2015), interdisciplinary applications (Bano et al., 2018a), and trend analysis (Crompton & Burke, 2014). While these reviews provide an overview of mobile learning from diverse perspectives, systematic reviews specifically targeting mathematics education are relatively scarce. Furthermore, they lack a systematic literature review (SLR) analysis that covers critical aspects such as annual publication trends, geographical distribution, research methods, and significant keywords. These dimensions are crucial for identifying patterns,

research gaps, and emerging themes that influence how mobile learning is conceptualized and implemented within mathematics education globally

The objective of this SLR is to provide a structured and in-depth analysis of research on mobile learning in mathematics education. Specifically, it aims to examine trends in annual publications, explore geographical distributions and their influence on research focus, identify research methods employed, and analyze significant keywords to uncover prevailing themes. This review seeks to consolidate fragmented findings in the existing literature and offer actionable insights to inform both academic research and practical applications. To achieve this objective, the following research questions are proposed.

1. What are the annual publication trends of mobile learning within mathematics education?
2. What is the geographical distribution of research on mobile learning, and how does this influence research focus?
3. What research methods have scholars recently employed in articles on mobile learning?
4. What are the most frequently used and significant keywords in the articles on mobile learning within mathematics education?

Literature Review

Mobile learning (M-Learning) is an educational paradigm that leverages mobile devices to achieve teaching and learning objectives. It breaks free from traditional constraints of time and place, allowing learners to access educational content at their convenience and from any location (Milheim et al., 2021). The widespread adoption of mobile devices, particularly smartphones and tablets, has propelled M-Learning into a central role in modern education (Jurayev, 2023). Unlike conventional online learning, M-Learning emphasizes interactive components, including mobile applications and social media platforms, to enrich the educational experience (Criollo-C et al., 2022).

The adoption of M-Learning in mathematics education has attracted considerable attention for its potential to improve students' academic outcomes and engagement. Technological advancements have enabled the creation of mobile learning tools and applications that significantly boost students' motivation and performance (Poçan et al., 2023). For example, Wang et al. (2021) identified the positive impact of mobile tools on student motivation, while Borba et al. (2016) highlighted their flexibility in providing continuous access to learning materials. Similarly, Drigas and Pappas (2015) emphasized the effectiveness of mobile tools across various educational levels in mathematics instruction.

A comprehensive examination of M-Learning in mathematics education reveals a trajectory of significant progress alongside enduring challenges. The focus has shifted from merely digitizing educational content to creating interactive and student-centered learning environments. Studies such as Crompton and Burke (2014) conducted meta-analyses to identify trends in elementary mathematics education, while Bringula and Atienza (2023) demonstrated the efficacy of mobile computer-supported collaborative learning in improving mathematical achievement. However, challenges persist,

including disparities in access, variability in teacher preparedness, and a scarcity of empirical studies on the long-term impact of M-Learning. Addressing these issues requires a nuanced understanding of the relationships between technology, pedagogy, and student outcomes.

Theoretical frameworks are essential for contextualizing the integration of M-Learning into mathematics education. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) and the Substitution Augmentation Modification Redefinition (SAMR) model (Puentedura, 2006) provide valuable insights. The TAM framework explores the factors influencing the acceptance of mobile tools by teachers and students, while the SAMR model demonstrates how technology can transform learning experiences. These frameworks offer researchers a structured approach to evaluating the pedagogical and technological dimensions of M-Learning, enabling a deeper understanding of its potential and limitations.

Existing studies exhibit a range of strengths and weaknesses. For instance, Crompton and Burke's (2014) trend analysis lacked methodological rigor, while Drigas and Pappas (2015) focused on technical implementations without addressing broader methodological considerations. Bano et al. (2018) contributed methodological insights but excluded keyword analysis. Similarly, Bringula and Atienza's (2023) scoping review provided valuable findings but did not comprehensively analyze research trends or geographical contexts. This variability underscores the importance of critically evaluating methodological robustness, contextual relevance, and alignment with educational goals.

Synthesizing insights from diverse studies highlights both consistencies and contradictions. While there is consensus on M-Learning's ability to enhance student engagement and academic performance, its scalability across varied educational contexts remains underexplored. Discrepancies also emerge in the reported effectiveness of specific tools, emphasizing the need to consider contextual elements such as curriculum integration and teacher training. A synthesized understanding can inform the design of more effective M-Learning strategies tailored to diverse educational needs.

Identifying and addressing research gaps is critical for advancing the field. Notable gaps include a lack of analyses on publication trends, geographical distributions, and keyword usage in M-Learning research. Additionally, the absence of longitudinal studies on the sustained impacts of M-Learning interventions limits comprehensive evaluations of its effectiveness. This study aims to bridge these gaps by conducting a systematic literature review of M-Learning applications in mathematics education from 2015 to 2024. By doing so, it seeks to provide educators and researchers with actionable insights to optimize the implementation and impact of M-Learning in education.

METHOD

The methodology section provided a detailed account of the search strategy employed in conducting the study. It encompassed the process of sample identification and selection, as well as the evaluation criteria utilized. This section included a description

of how relevant samples were identified, the techniques employed to select them, and the systematic evaluation process applied to ensure the reliability and validity of the study.

Search Strategy

The study benefited from a more systematic and scientific approach by conducting a systematic literature review (SLR). SLR was a method that systematically identified and analyzed relevant primary literature within a specific field to gain comprehensive insights (Pradana et al., 2023). To ensure the validity of the findings, the study included well-defined study strategies, research objectives, and clear explanations of the inclusion and exclusion criteria. After establishing the relevant criteria, the researcher conducted a data search and collection in predefined databases. Articles were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives and were assessed according to the set standards. Finally, the selected articles were comprehensively analyzed using the research objectives. The researcher used the standard protocol of SLR to ensure a rigorous and scientific approach to assessing the research (Amjad et al., 2023). Like most researchers, the authors chose Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) as the primary databases due to their extensive coverage, high quality, and relevance to the research topic. The retrieved literature from these databases was accurate and comprehensive, allowing for high standards of academic excellence in the research.

Sample Identification

In this study, primarily drawing from a keyword-driven approach (Ajallouda et al., 2022), the researcher generated strings related to mobile learning in mathematics education. The keywords were selected based on a comprehensive review of existing literature, expert consultations with researchers specializing in mobile learning, and preliminary analyses of frequently occurring terms in related publications. To ensure inclusivity and minimize selection bias, the search process was carefully designed by diversifying keyword combinations and exploring a wide range of sources. As shown in Table 1, all relevant keywords were combined using the Boolean operator “OR.” Additionally, an asterisk was employed to account for term variations, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the term “mobile learning in mathematics education.” To further mitigate biases in database-specific indexing, the search was conducted using the “title-abstract-keywords” method in Scopus and the “all fields” method in Web of Science (WoS), preventing any potential reduction in scope and quality. The inclusion of multiple databases and varied search methodologies aimed to address potential bias in data retrieval and ensure a balanced representation of the available literature. The final search string, presented in Table 1, encompassed all retrieved data up to May 5, 2024.

Table 1

Keywords and searching query string

	mobile learning terms	Mathematics terms
	mobile learning*	math* education
	mobile app*	math*
Key words	M-learning	math* teach*
	mobile tool*	
	mobile technolog*	
	mobile device*	
Search query string	(mobile learning* math* education) OR (mobile learning* math*) OR (mobile learning* math* teach*) OR (mobile app* math* education) OR (mobile app* math*) OR (mobile app* math*teach*) (M-learning math* education) OR (M-learning math*) OR (M-learning math*teach*) OR (mobile tool* math* education) OR (mobile tool* math*) OR (mobile tool* math*teach*) OR (mobile technolog* math* education) OR (mobile technolog* math*) OR (mobile technolog* math*teach*) OR (mobile device* math* education) OR (mobile device* math*) OR (mobile device* math*teach*)	

Selection and Evaluation Process

After conducting a preliminary search using the specified keywords, the Scopus and Web of Science databases yielded 16,742 and 18,434 publications, respectively. The chosen timeframe of 2015–2024 was selected to capture contemporary research and align with the rapid technological advancements and their integration into mathematics education. This period reflected the growing prevalence of mobile learning tools and the shift towards digital pedagogy, providing a relevant and focused dataset for analysis. Restricting the search to this timeframe refined the count to 7,503 and 13,303 publications.

The search was further limited to “English” language articles, which reduced the number of publications to 7,218 and 12,889. This restriction was justified to ensure accessibility and comprehensibility for the researchers involved, as well as to align with the prevalence of English as the primary language for disseminating scientific research. Restricting the search to “articles” further reduced the count to 3,655 and 8,324 publications. Subsequent categorization by research field as shown in Figure 1 narrowed the results to 505 and 1,383 publications, respectively. Combining these records yielded a total of 1,888 publications, and after removing 91 duplicates, 1,797 articles were retained.

The consensus-building process between researchers was a critical component of the methodology. Two researchers independently applied the same filtering criteria, ensuring reliability and consistency in the selection process. Disagreements on the inclusion of five articles were resolved through discussion, which involved evaluating the articles against predefined criteria, such as their focus on mobile learning in mathematics education, theoretical contributions, and methodological rigor. Additional measures were implemented to ensure the robustness of the selected articles.

Tools such as the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework and quality assessment checklists guided the review process. The

PRISMA flow diagram, as illustrated in Figure 1, documented the research process transparently, including database searches, filtering criteria, merging, deduplication, manual screening, and final selection. Furthermore, a standardized quality assessment framework was used to evaluate the methodological rigor of the studies. Criteria such as clear research objectives, appropriate study design, sample representativeness, and validity of findings were applied. Articles meeting these quality benchmarks were prioritized to ensure the dataset's credibility and relevance.

The title filtering process excluded 709 articles, and abstract filtering refined the selection to 552 publications. Following a detailed review of their abstracts and contents, 58 articles were identified as highly relevant due to their explicit focus on the connection between mobile learning and mathematics education. These steps ensured that the selected studies aligned with the research objectives and met high-quality standards for inclusion.

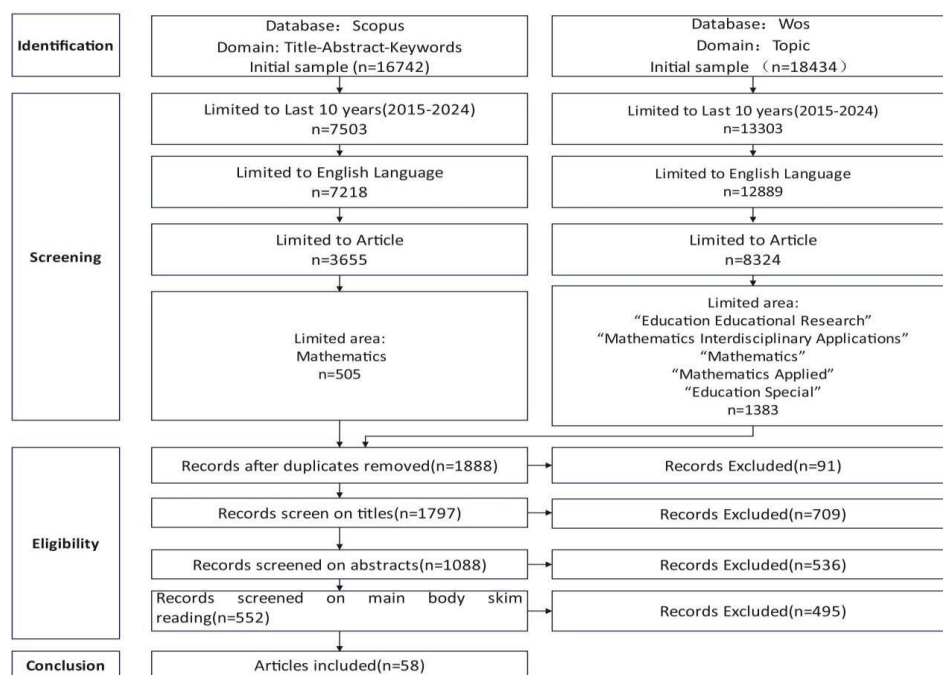


Figure 1

The process of searching the literature

FINDINGS

Through meticulous review and analysis of the selected articles, our objective is to provide a comprehensive evaluation and analysis of the research findings, uncovering the prevailing trends in mobile learning within mathematics education. Aim to systematically examine the annual, geographical, and keyword distributions related to this field.

Publication Trends

This study primarily focuses on articles published in mathematics education journals that cover M-Learning from 2015 to May 2024. As illustrated in Figure 2, interest in this field has been steadily increasing over the past nine years, with a notable surge in the number of studies published. Excluding the two articles from 2024, the research includes a total of 58 articles. The number of articles published each year follows a consistent pattern, with an initial increase from three in 2015 to four in 2016 and 2017. This trend continues, with a jump to six articles in 2018, followed by seven articles in 2019 and 2020. The number of articles published each year then increases to eight in 2021 and 2022, culminating in nine articles in 2023.

This growth reflects the evolving demand for M-Learning in mathematics education, driven by multiple factors. Key among these are advancements in mobile technology, including improved hardware capabilities, affordable access to devices, and enhanced connectivity through widespread internet availability. These technological innovations have made M-Learning tools more accessible and practical for educators and learners alike. Additionally, the integration of interactive features, gamification, and data analytics into M-Learning platforms has increased their appeal and effectiveness, encouraging more research in this area.

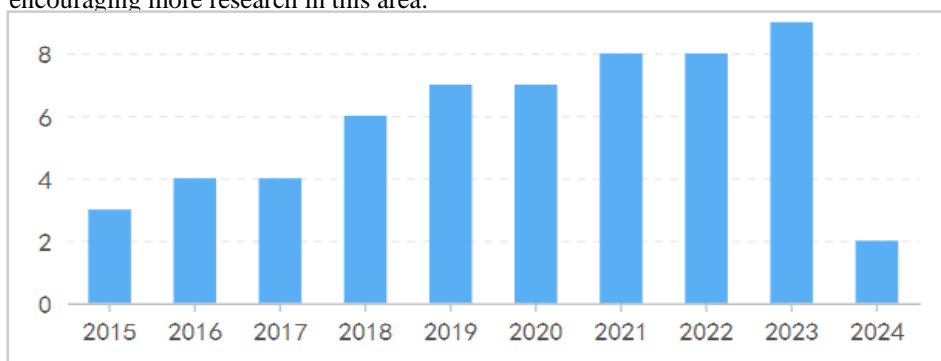


Figure 2
Yearly publication

Geographical Distribution

As evident from Table 2, the geographical distribution of the selected 58 articles reveals a global interest in the subject. Scholars from almost every continent have contributed to research on this topic, showcasing its widespread appeal. When examining the distribution by country, the United States stands out with the highest number of articles, totaling six, underscoring its prominent role in the research landscape. China and Turkey follow closely behind, each with five articles, while South Africa and the United Kingdom contribute four articles. These figures highlight broad international collaboration in this field. Cyprus and Germany each published three articles, while one article did not specify a country, indicating the universal applicability of mobile learning in mathematics. Notably, 13 articles specifically emphasize the global adaptability and scalability of mobile learning in mathematics.

In terms of regional contributions, European countries published the most articles, accounting for 27.87% (17) of the total data. Asia follows with 24.59% (15), and North America with 13.11% (8). However, Africa with 8.20% (5) and Oceania with 3.28% (2) exhibit significantly lower percentages compared to Europe, Asia, and North America. This disparity may be attributed to several underlying factors, including resource constraints, limited access to advanced research infrastructure, and challenges in securing funding for educational technology studies in these regions. Additionally, the digital divide, characterized by unequal access to technology and connectivity, may hinder the capacity for large-scale research initiatives.

Table 2

Geographical distribution

Geographic	Country	Articles	% of Articles	Sum % of Articles
Africa	South Africa	4	6.56%	8.20%
Africa	Kenya	1	1.64%	
Asia	China	5	8.20%	24.59%
Asia	Türkiye	5	8.20%	
Asia	Indonesia	2	3.28%	
Asia	Japan	1	1.64%	
Asia	Saudi Arabia	1	1.64%	
Asia	United Arab Emirates	1	1.64%	
Europe	U.K.	4	6.56%	27.87%
Europe	Cyprus	3	4.92%	
Europe	Germany	3	4.92%	
Europe	Bulgaria	2	3.28%	
Europe	Austria	2	3.28%	
Europe	Spain	2	3.28%	
Europe	Greece	1	1.64%	
Global	International	13	21.31%	21.31%
No specific country	no specific country	1	1.64%	1.64%
North America	USA	6	9.84%	13.11%
North America	Canada	1	1.64%	
North America	Mexico	1	1.64%	
Oceania	Fiji	1	1.64%	3.28%
Oceania	Australia	1	1.64%	

Research Methods Distribution

Researchers have employed various research methods, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods, to study mobile learning in mathematics education. The overall trend shows an upward shift in the use of these methods. However, there were distinct patterns. Qualitative research methods dominated from 2015 to 2018, while quantitative and mixed methods gained prominence from 2020 to 2023. Researchers employ different research methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of mobile learning within mathematics education.

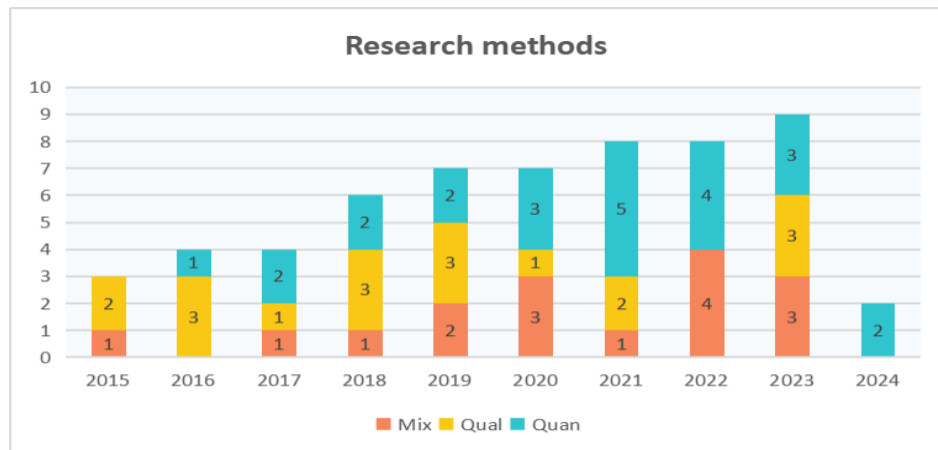


Figure 3
Research methods

Key and Frequent Keywords

As illustrated in Figure 4, the researcher employed VOSviewer to analyze the keywords extracted from 58 articles, providing a visual representation of prominent terms and their respective frequencies. This analysis highlights several significant keywords, such as “M-Learning,” “Math Education,” “App,” and “Mobile Technology,” which stand out due to their frequent mention. These terms underscore key thematic areas and reflect ongoing research priorities within the field of mathematics education. However, their prevalence must be contextualized within broader educational and technological trends to avoid oversimplification. For example, the prominence of “M-Learning” aligns with the global emphasis on leveraging mobile technologies to enhance teaching and learning experiences, while “Math Education” serves as a focal point where these technologies are being applied.

Following these key terms, other keywords like “Educational,” “Primary Education,” “Collaborative,” “Achievement,” and “iPad” further delineate the areas of interest within mobile learning research. These terms suggest a strong inclination toward exploring the pedagogical applications of mobile devices, particularly in early education settings. The mention of “Collaborative” and “Achievement” reflects an emerging focus on understanding how mobile technologies can support group learning and improve learning outcomes in mathematics education. This aligns with studies emphasizing the role of digital tools in fostering collaboration and enhancing student performance, as noted in recent literature.

Moreover, keywords such as “AR,” “Mobile Device,” “Tablets,” “Engagement,” “Teacher Effectiveness,” “Ubiquitous Learning,” “VR,” and “GBL” point to diverse approaches and tools utilized in mobile learning. These terms not only highlight technological advancements but also reveal the multifaceted nature of research in this domain. For instance, the integration of augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR)

[illegible]

Figure 3
Most frequent keywords

DISCUSSION

Over the past decade, research on mobile learning in mathematics education has experienced exponential growth, reflecting the broader educational transformation catalyzed by rapid technological advancements. Mobile learning platforms have been demonstrated to enhance students' understanding, engagement, and achievement in mathematics (Cheung & Slavin, 2013; Wu et al., 2020). Studies indicate that mobile technologies provide rich, personalized, and adaptive learning experiences that captivate students through interactive and flexible content delivery methods (Neuherz & Ebner, 2016; Tang & Yu, 2018). These findings underscore the potential of mobile learning as an effective tool for enhancing mathematical proficiency and engagement in the digital era.

From a geographical perspective, regional infrastructure and educational priorities significantly influence mobile learning research and implementation. Technologically advanced regions, such as North America and Europe, have prioritized integrating advanced tools like augmented reality (AR) and artificial intelligence (AI) into mathematics education (Gocheva et al., 2021; Bower et al., 2014). These approaches are

supported by robust digital infrastructures that foster innovation in educational technology. Conversely, research in less developed regions, particularly in Africa, has highlighted mobile learning as a solution to resource constraints and educational challenges (Roberts & Spencer-Smith, 2019; Munienge et al., 2019). However, disparities in mobile learning adoption are deeply rooted in socio-economic and policy disparities, such as unequal access to funding, government support for digital education, and teacher training programs. Addressing these disparities necessitates tailored strategies, including targeted investments in digital infrastructure, policy reforms to prioritize equitable access to technology, and localized training initiatives for educators.

Methodologically, mobile learning research has undergone a substantial transformation over time. Initially, studies focused on qualitative insights into individual learning experiences (Sharples et al., 2009). However, there has been a notable shift toward employing quantitative and mixed-method approaches, which provide more robust empirical evidence of the effectiveness of mobile learning in mathematics education (Hwang & Wu, 2014; Crompton & Burke, 2018). Quantitative studies offer stronger statistical validation for the positive impact of mobile applications on mathematical skill development. This methodological diversification enhances the reliability and generalizability of research findings, contributing to a deeper understanding of mobile learning outcomes. Integrating these methodological insights with regional and pedagogical factors can assist in developing more comprehensive strategies for mobile learning implementation.

A keyword analysis of recent literature reveals a growing interest in concepts such as “collaborative learning,” “game-based learning,” and “adaptive learning,” which reflect a paradigm shift toward engaging, interactive, and student-centered methods of instruction (Neuherz & Ebner, 2016; Sakibayev, 2022). These approaches have been demonstrated to significantly enhance student engagement and enthusiasm for mathematics, ultimately leading to improved learning outcomes (Lee & Hammer, 2011; Kyriakides et al., 2016). Game-based learning has emerged as a pivotal strategy for making mathematics education more accessible, appealing, and effective (Plass et al., 2015). However, the benefits of these strategies are context-dependent, necessitating critical analysis of factors such as cultural relevance, technological accessibility, and the readiness of educators and students. Understanding these conditions is paramount for maximizing the impact of innovative instructional methods.

Despite these advancements, several challenges persist in effectively implementing mobile learning in mathematics education. The digital divide remains a critical impediment, particularly in underdeveloped regions where access to reliable technology and digital infrastructure is constrained (van Dijk, 2020). Mitigating this divide necessitates a comprehensive approach involving public-private partnerships to enhance internet coverage, provide subsidized access to digital devices, and implement community-driven initiatives to foster digital literacy. Furthermore, the successful integration of mobile learning hinges on the well-trained educators who can effectively incorporate these tools into their teaching methodologies (Admiraal et al., 2017). Customized professional development programs that address pedagogical and technical skills are indispensable in overcoming this barrier.

Additionally, certain mobile learning practices have been found to be ineffective in achieving the intended improvements in mathematical outcomes, and in some instances, have even produced counterproductive effects (Clark et al., 2019). For instance, poorly designed applications or excessive screen time can lead to student disengagement or cognitive overload. A deeper exploration of these negative outcomes can elucidate the underlying factors, such as inadequate instructional design, mismatched content delivery methods, or lack of alignment with curriculum standards. By addressing these issues, future research can refine best practices and minimize unintended consequences.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant impact of mobile learning (M-learning) in mathematics education. By analyzing research trends, regional variations, and keyword usage, it reveals a marked increase in M-learning studies, particularly after 2020. Regional disparities show the prominence of contributions from developed areas like Europe, Asia, and North America, while challenges such as limited resources and inadequate digital infrastructure persist in regions like Africa and Oceania. The keyword analysis points to a growing emphasis on themes like collaborative learning, game-based learning, and adaptive technologies, reflecting M-learning's evolution toward interactive and learner-focused approaches. These developments illustrate M-learning's potential to deepen mathematical understanding and its role in driving educational innovation through tools like augmented and virtual reality. However, this study has limitations that merit attention. It relies on publications from Scopus and Web of Science, possibly excluding relevant studies from other databases or grey literature. Additionally, its focus on English-language articles may have restricted the inclusion of research from non-English-speaking regions, potentially affecting the findings' global applicability. Future research should broaden the scope by including diverse data sources and languages to offer a more comprehensive understanding of worldwide trends. Ultimately, this research consolidates scattered insights into a cohesive perspective on M-learning's influence in mathematics education. It lays the groundwork for addressing regional and methodological gaps, encouraging exploration of long-term impacts, inclusive practices, and teacher training programs. By overcoming these barriers, M-learning can be effectively utilized to create equitable, engaging, and innovative mathematics education on a global scale, enriching both theoretical knowledge and practical applications in the digital learning landscape.

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