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## EFFECT OF LIFE LONG LEARNING ON MENTAL HEALTH OF ADULTS

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### ABSTRACT

*Lifelong Learning* refers to the voluntary decision to enrol in educational courses or to study a topic on one's volition. While the term may seem to apply especially to those who have already earned a college degree or entered the workforce, lifelong learning is vital for everybody, no matter the age or level of education. The courses and activities taken on by the lifelong learner may culminate in some kind of certificate, license or even a degree, but this is not necessarily the ultimate objective. With lifelong learning, the goals may not be so clear-cut. Lifelong learners tend to keep themselves motivated with the desire for more knowledge and self-improvement, or there may be career aspirations in mind.

**Keywords:** life-long learning, mindset, mental health

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### INTRODUCTION

Lifelong learning is a form of self-initiated education that is focused on personal development. While there is no standardized definition of lifelong learning, it has generally been taken to refer to the learning that occurs outside of a formal educational institute, such as a school, university or corporate training. Lifelong learning does not necessarily have to restrict itself to informal learning, however. It is best described as being voluntary with the purpose of achieving personal fulfilment. The means to achieve this could result in informal or formal education. Whether pursuing personal interests and passions or chasing professional ambitions, lifelong learning can help us to achieve personal fulfilment and satisfaction. It recognizes that humans have a natural drive to explore, learn and grow and encourages us to improve our own quality of life and sense of self-worth by paying attention to the ideas and goals that inspire us.

### NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF STUDY

*Lifelong Learning* refers to the voluntary decision to enroll in educational courses or to study a topic on one's volition. While the term may seem to apply especially to those who have already earned a college degree or entered the workforce, lifelong learning is vital for **everybody**, no matter the age or level of education. The courses and activities taken on by the lifelong learner may culminate in some kind of certificate, license or even a degree, but this is not necessarily the ultimate objective. With lifelong learning, the goals may not be so clear-cut. Lifelong learners tend to keep themselves motivated with the desire for more knowledge and self-improvement, or there may be career aspirations in mind.

## PILLARS OF LIFELONG LEARNING

According to the Lifelong Learning Council Queensland (LLCQ), a board that promotes the concept around the world, the concept has four major pillars:

1. **Learning to Know:** Developing your curiosity and eagerness to learn, having critical and inquisitive thinking.
2. **Learning to Do:** Putting knowledge into practice, learning through real experience, learning by doing.
3. **Learning to Live Together:** Developing social skills, a good sense for giving and receiving feedback, and teamwork skills.
4. **Learning to Be:** Self-Knowledge. Knowing what your interests are your strengths and weaknesses, your purpose, and the kind of knowledge you should seek.

## ASPECTS OF LIFELONG LEARNING

The aspects of lifelong learning have been stated as follows:

1. **Informal Learning:** The informal learning encompasses both non-formal and informal types of education and training. Formal learning includes the hierarchically structured school system that functions from primary school through the university and organized school programs created in business for technical and professional learning. Formal education is referred to as school education. Whereas, informal learning describes the lifelong process, whereby individuals acquire values, skills, attitudes and knowledge from daily experience and the educational experiences and resources in his or her environment. The main aspects that render a significant contribution in making provision of informal learning to the individuals are, family and community, work and play, marketplace, library and mass media. The individuals generate information from these aspects throughout their lives. Hence, it can be stated that informal learning is a lifelong concept and takes place throughout the lives of the individuals.
2. **Self-Motivated Learning:** In particularly higher educational institutions, the individuals are required to take responsibility for their own learning. Apart from higher education, too they are required to take responsibility for their own learning. Lifelong learners are not defined by the type of education or training in which they are involved, but by the personal characteristics that lead to their involvement. Self-motivated learning is influenced to a major extent by the personal characteristics of the learners. They need to stimulate their mind-sets to develop motivation towards learning. It is essential for the learners to possess interest and enthusiasm and develop motivation towards their learning. Motivation towards learning is developed either formally or informally throughout the lives of the individuals. The individuals develop the confidence to learn, including a sense of participation in the education and training systems.
3. **Willingness and Motivation to Learn:** It is recognized that economic activities alone are not necessarily sufficient to motivate individuals to participate in the acquisition of education. A range of motivational barriers need to be identified and addressed to encourage individuals to participate in the acquisition of education. Some of these barriers are economic and can be overcome with financial assistance and most of the individuals are deterred from participating

in education and training by social and personal factors. This is apparent that to acquire learning, it is vital for the individuals to develop willingness and motivation to learn. When they will develop willingness and motivation, they will be able to acquire an efficient understanding of the aspects and how to make effective use of them to enrich their lives.

4. **Self-Funded Learning:** The concept of self-funded learning is linked to the characteristic of self-motivated learning. In recognition of the costs involved in subsidizing lifelong involvement in education. The lifelong learning policy puts emphasis on the responsibility of the individuals to finance their continuing education and training with minimal support from the government. The lifelong learner is the person, who takes the responsibility of their own learning. When the individuals assume responsibility of their own learning, they are required to invest in time, money and effort in the acquisition of education. Research has indicated that individuals, belonging to rural communities also migrate to urban communities to acquire education. When their parents are unable to provide them financial resources, they need to self-finance their education. For this purpose, they either obtain scholarships from the universities or other organizations or get engaged in part-time jobs and so forth.
5. **Universal Participation:** Lifelong learning is referred to commitment to universal participation in education. Universal participation is necessary for meeting the economic demands of the 21st century. The concept of universal participation includes both formal and informal learning for all purposes, i.e. social, economic, cultural, political, religious and personal. All these areas are regarded as an integral part of the lives of the individuals. Therefore, it is essential for them to participate in all activities. Within their lives, individuals experience changes from time to time. These changes are usually experienced in their personality, work, career, relationships and daily life routine. The universal participation in lifelong learning is necessary to promote social cohesion, particularly in the time of rapid social and economic changes.
6. **Action Learning:** In lifelong learning, action learning is given recognition. The individuals learn by doing. The educators are guides to sources of knowledge. In action learning, the individuals generate information in terms of practical performance of tasks and activities. When they are unaware and need to understand, they may either get enrolled in a training centre or seek assistance from family members, friends, or community members. After obtaining information and training, they are encouraged to get engaged in the implementation of tasks. When they are performing the tasks, they are able to augment their learning. Therefore, it can be stated that action learning is one of the effectual ways that provides practical understanding of the concepts to the individuals.
7. **Improvement in Knowledge and Skills:** Within the course of lifelong learning, the individuals are required to bring about improvements in knowledge and skills. The developments and changes that are taking place within the lives of the individuals are major aspects that inspires them to bring about improvements in their knowledge and skills. Experiences and opportunities are regarded as crucial aspects that individuals seek in order to bring about improvements in knowledge and skills. The other important aspects that they need to get engaged in to augment knowledge and skills are, reading various books, articles and other reading materials, surfing the internet, participating in various tasks and activities, interacting with others and so forth.

8. **Assessment Methods:** The major objective of assessment methods is to identify the limitations and implement measures to bring about improvements in the performance of the individuals. In formal education, the main assessment methods that have been put into practice by the educators are, class assignments, homework assignments, tests, exams, competitions, presentations and so forth. Whereas, when the individuals are learning other competencies, then their practical implementation would make provision of efficient information and generate awareness among them, regarding where they are lacking. For instance, when the individuals are learning how to prepare an artwork or a handicraft, they need to practically perform the task to augment their knowledge. Therefore, in case of informal education, practical implementations of tasks are regarded as important assessment methods.
9. **Accessibility to Learning Opportunities:** Learning is an integral part of the lives of the individuals. There are numerous aspects that individuals learn, these include, academic concepts, management of household responsibilities, communication skills, decision making skills, critical thinking skills, conflict resolution skills, morality and ethics, creative activities, such as, artworks, handicrafts, dance, music, sports, physical activities and so forth. Hence, in order to enhance their skills and abilities, it is essential for the individuals to have access to learning opportunities. For instance, if they aspire to enhance their computer literacy skills, they would seek enrolment in computer training centres, which are located nearby their place of residence. In the present existence, there are large number of individuals, belonging to rural and tribal communities, who are migrating to urban areas to get enrolled in educational institutions to augment their skills and seek employment opportunities to upgrade their living conditions.

#### STAGES OF LIFELONG LEARNING

Lifelong learning is the learning that takes place from integration of formal, non-formal and informal education. The individuals are required to augment their abilities that are needed to achieve personal and professional goals. Learning is a continuous lifelong process, which initiates from birth and carries on throughout the lives of the individuals. Throughout the lives of the individuals, they acquire knowledge and enrich their competencies from family members, community members, educational institutions, workplaces and so forth. The stages of lifelong learning have been stated as follows:

1. **Age Group 0-5 Years:** In this age group, great amount of learning takes place, making provision of the foundation for future learning, habits and resourcefulness. Within this age group, informal learning takes place to a major extent. Children learn from their environment, parents, relatives and community members. From the stage of early childhood, they are taught the differences between appropriate and inappropriate and are inculcated the traits of morality and ethics. Apart from academic concepts and other creative activities, such as, artworks, handicrafts, dance, music, physical activities and sports, they are taught good manners and etiquettes, so they are able to maintain good terms and relationships with others. The learning that takes place at this stage has an influence upon all other aspects of learning that takes place within the lives of the individuals.
2. **Age Group 6 to 24:** Learning that takes place among individuals, belonging to the age group of 6 to 24 years, primarily takes place in educational institutions. This learning is referred to

as primary, secondary and tertiary learning. Family life, social organizations, religious institutions and mass media renders a significant contribution in making provision of formal and informal learning during this time. The primary objective of learning during this period is to ensure that individuals acquire knowledge, skills and competencies that would bring about improvements in their overall quality of lives. At the age of 24, individuals normally complete their education and are seeking or engaged in employment opportunities. Within the course of employment, they are required to generate awareness in terms of various skills, such as, communication, time management, decision making, conflict resolution and so forth. Enhancement of these skills renders an effectual contribution in facilitating the achievement of personal and professional goals.

- 3. Age Group 25 to 60:** Individuals, belonging to the age group of 25 to 60 can learn informally during their working lives. The major aspects that render a significant contribution in augmenting their learning include, use of technologies, reading books, articles, newspapers, reports and so forth, communicating with others, carrying out various tasks and activities and getting engaged in problem solving activities. The individuals have the primary objective of acquiring employment opportunities, related to their field. They have the main objective of making use of their educational qualifications in sustaining their living conditions appropriately and promoting well-being of their families and communities. These individuals are aware that apart from making use of educational qualifications and competencies to augment one's livelihoods opportunities, they need to inculcate the traits of morality and ethics and depict honesty and truthfulness. They focus on the continuous development of intellect, capability and integrity.
- 4. Age Group 60 and Above:** The individuals, belonging to the age group of 60 years and above are senior citizens. In some cases, they are retired from work, whereas in other cases, they are engaged in jobs or social work or other activities. The individuals, belonging to this age group aspires to gain knowledge that may help them in enriching their lives as well as promoting well-being of their families and communities. Research has indicated that individuals, belonging to this age group develop interest in particular areas and read books and reading materials related to that particular area. Normally, elderly women may participate in social work activities, and make use of their knowledge and skills. If they have been from medical professions, they may provide medical assistance free of cost to individuals, belonging to deprived, marginalized and economically weaker sections of the society. On the other hand, they may provide free tuitions to the children, belonging to economically weaker sections of the society. Therefore, they focus upon enhancing their learning primarily related to tasks and activities in which they participate.

#### **EFFECT OF LIFELONG LEARNING ON MENTAL HEALTH OF ADULTS**

A lifetime of learning can keep both the body and mind in shape. Research has suggested that continued cognitive activity has a positive effect on brain cells and helps promote mental sharpness, especially for senior citizens.

Incorporating lifelong learning in your life can offer many long-term benefits, including:

- 1. Development of Self-Efficacy:** The development of self-efficacy is defined as the beliefs of the individuals regarding their capabilities, which would determine, how the individuals feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. When the individuals are generating information and

augmenting their understanding in terms of various aspects, they are required to make use of that knowledge and competencies to enrich their lives. Furthermore, they need to ensure they develop positive thinking and implement appropriate behavioural traits. Positive thinking enables the individuals to develop interest and motivation, so they are able to carry out their tasks and activities satisfactorily. In addition, they are able to efficiently deal with unexpected events.

2. **Tolerance:** One of the major benefits of lifelong learning is, it helps in the enhancement of tolerance capacity of the individuals. In ones lives, individuals encounter number of situations which are not pleasant and amiable. When they experience these situations, they feel disappointed and stressed. But it is vital for them to form a calm and pleasant attitude. In other words, tolerance is the major strategy, which individuals need to put into operation in case of unpleasant circumstances. Tolerance capacity would enable the individuals to form good terms and relationships with others and achieve personal and professional goals in a well-organized manner.
3. **Job Security:** As industries continue to evolve, many employees feel the pressure to stay ahead. Competition for jobs can be tough, and there are always new faces entering the workforce with fresh skills. If you aren't keeping up with the changing times, you can bet someone else is. According to a survey from the Pew Research Center, 87% of workers think it's important to seek training and develop new skills throughout their careers. Lifelong learning allows you to hone your skill set so you can be an asset to your industry for years to come. Plus, by developing your professional abilities, you can demonstrate your commitment to your industry and career. That will go a long way to earning the trust and respect of any employer.
4. **Formation of Good Terms and Relationships with Others:**It is essential for the individuals to form good terms and relationships with others within as well as outside the home. In order to enrich one's life and achieve personal and professional goals, the individuals need to socialize and communicate with others. One cannot carry out tasks and activities in seclusion. Hence, to generate the desired outcomes, it is indispensable to form good terms and relationships with others. In order to maintain good terms and relationships, it is essential for the individuals to communicate in an effective manner with others, possess a pleasant and an approachable attitude and perform tasks that would be beneficial to others.
5. **Career Options:** Lifelong learning isn't just about keeping your old job. It can also open the door to new roles — or even a new career. For example, if your current job isn't suiting you, you might consider taking an online course that offers a valuable certification in your preferred field. In some cases, this could make a career transition possible without requiring to go back to school.
6. **Creating a Social Network:**Social network is the social structure, based on individuals and groups. It is a network of friends, colleagues and other personal contacts, including social interactions with other individuals in learning situations. Creating a social network by interacting with other individuals, creating new friends and creating new networks are the core benefits, which are found in earlier studies. Creating a social network would be beneficial to the individuals to a major extent, particularly when they are engaged in their own business. In some cases, when individuals are unable to find employment opportunities

outside of their home, they may get engaged in various businesses, such as, production of food items, handicrafts, artworks, or services and so forth. Hence, creation of a social network would be beneficial to them.

7. **Renewed Motivation:** Plenty of workers find themselves losing interest in their careers over time. A job becomes routine, mindlessly completing the same boring tasks day after day. What used to be fresh and exciting becomes old hat. Fortunately, lifelong learning can help reignite your passion. Developing new skills may well be the secret to rediscovering what drew you to your career in the first place.
8. **Work-Related Benefits:** Acquisition of good and well-paid employment opportunities are regarded as one of the major aims of individuals, belonging to all categories and backgrounds. When the individuals get engaged in employment opportunities, it is vital for them to augment their knowledge, competencies and aptitude to acquire work-related benefits. Work-related benefits are referred to the benefits and outcomes, which may help the individuals to attain promotional opportunities, incentives, increase in pay and so forth. To acquire work-related benefits, it is essential for the individuals to ensure that they perform their job duties in an appropriate and suitable manner. These benefits help the individuals to develop enthusiasm and motivation towards the implementation of their job duties.
9. **Inculcation of Morality and Ethics:** Inculcation of morality and ethics are regarded to be of utmost significance in achieving personal and professional goals and bringing about improvements in the overall quality of lives. Through morality and ethics, the individuals generate information in terms of the aspects that they need to implement the traits of honesty, righteousness, decency and truthfulness, when dealing with other individuals as well as in the implementation of various tasks and activities. The information is provided to the individuals in terms of these traits within ones family as well as in educational institutions. At the initial stage, when individuals get engaged in an act that may violate morality and ethics, their parents and teachers may provide them explanations in a polite manner. But when the individuals get engaged in such acts at a later stage, disciplinary action may be taken and penalties can be imposed. Hence, it is essential for the individuals to inculcate the traits of morality and ethics.
10. **Management of Household Responsibilities:** Management of household responsibilities is regarded as an integral part of lives of the individuals. Apart from focusing on their careers, they need to manage the household responsibilities. The main aspects, which need to be taken into account in the management of household responsibilities are, cleaning, washing, preparation of meals, repair work, electric work, painting, plumbing, gardening and so forth. When individuals are unable to carry out these tasks and activities or do not have time, they hire the services of other individuals. Hence, through lifelong learning, the individuals generate information in terms of management of household responsibilities.
11. **Education and Training:** Education and training are acquired by the individuals throughout their lives. From the stage of early childhood, the individuals may acquire education till they are 35 to 40 years of age. In the present existence, there have been establishment of educational institutions and training centres in rural communities, which are making provision of knowledge to the individuals to enrich their overall quality of lives. In rural areas, agriculture is the main occupation of the individuals. The farmers and agricultural labourers

are getting enrolled in training centres to augment their knowledge in terms of modern, scientific and innovative methods that are needed to enhance agricultural productivity. On the other hand, individuals get enrolled in adult education centres to augment the basic literacy skills, computer literacy skills and information in terms of other aspects that are necessary to bring about improvements in their livelihood's opportunities.

**12. Stronger Motivation:** Studies have shown that lifelong learning helps improve the health and function of the brain. The mental benefits of learning can include:

- a. Better cognitive function
- b. Longer attention span
- c. Stronger memory
- d. Improved reasoning skills
- e. Reduced risk of dementia

Again, these benefits are bound to enhance your efforts in every area of life.

**13. Confidence:** Self-improvement is key to building confidence. By mastering new skills, you can unlock your potential and boost your self-esteem. And as you use those skills to advance your career, your sense of purpose will only grow.

**14. Promoting Mental Well Being:** The individuals need to put into operation, tasks and activities that are necessary to promote mental well-being. The tasks and activities that promote mental well-being of the individuals include their participation in social, economic, cultural, political and religious activities. The tasks and activities, which give pleasure to the individuals and stimulate their mind-sets are the ones that render an effective contribution in promoting mental well-being. The participation in tasks and activities of the individuals vary on the basis of number of factors. These include, age, educational qualifications, competencies, health and background. Mental well-being of the individuals can lead to make an effective contribution to the community.

**15. Networking Opportunities:** Many options for adult continuing education involve working closely with instructors and fellow learners. This allows you to connect with like-minded professionals and grow your personal network. In time, this could create valuable opportunities to take your career in unexpected directions. Even if not, it never hurts to make a new friend in your field.

**16. Health Care Requirements:** It is crucial for individuals, belonging to all age groups and backgrounds to maintain their health. When the individuals will maintain good health, they will be able to put in their best efforts in the implementation of various tasks and activities. In order to take care of their health, the individuals need to take into account various factors. These include, diet and nutrition, getting engaged in physical activities, establishing amiable and pleasant terms and relationships with others, establishing positive thinking and consulting physicians in case of any health problems or illnesses. It is vital for elderly individuals, primarily the ones, who are above 60 years of age to obtain medical check-ups on a regular basis.

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