



An Assessment of Lifelong Learning Needs and Policy Effectiveness in Mongolia

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Abstract: This study examines the need for lifelong learning and evaluates the effectiveness of related policies in Mongolia within the context of rapid socio-economic transformation, technological advancement, and changing labor market demands. Drawing on the theoretical perspectives of Gary Becker, Amartya Sen, and Albert Bandura, the study conceptualizes policy effectiveness through four key dimensions: policy clarity, accessibility of learning opportunities, institutional support, and labor market relevance, and examines their influence on lifelong learning outcomes. A mixed-method research design was adopted, combining quantitative survey data collected from 128 university professors in both public and private institutions with qualitative insights derived from policy documents and stakeholder perspectives. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the proposed hypotheses and assess the relationships between policy factors and learning outcomes. The measurement model results confirm satisfactory levels of reliability and validity, indicating the robustness of the constructs used in the analysis. The findings reveal that policy clarity is the only factor with a statistically significant positive effect on lifelong learning outcomes, underscoring its critical role in promoting participation, skill development, employability, and social inclusion. In contrast, accessibility, institutional support, and labor market relevance do not demonstrate significant effects, pointing to gaps between policy design and practical implementation. These results suggest that although a formal policy framework for lifelong learning exists in Mongolia, its effectiveness depends largely on the clarity of its communication and the extent to which it is effectively implemented and experienced by stakeholders. This study contributes to both theoretical and practical discourse by offering an integrated framework for evaluating lifelong learning policy effectiveness. It highlights the need to strengthen policy clarity, improve implementation mechanisms, enhance institutional coordination, and ensure closer alignment with labor market demands in order to support inclusive and sustainable lifelong learning development.

Keywords: Lifelong Learning, Policy Effectiveness, Policy Clarity, Labor Market Relevance

INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly changing world, lifelong learning has become a critical component of national development strategies. Economic globalization, digital transformation, and evolving labor market demands require individuals to continuously update their knowledge and skills. For Mongolia, these changes are particularly significant due to its transition toward a knowledge-based economy and its unique socio-geographic context.

Despite increasing recognition of lifelong learning, questions remain regarding how effectively national policies address actual societal needs. While policy frameworks exist,

their implementation and impact are not always consistent across regions and population groups. This raises important concerns about equity, accessibility, and relevance.

This study seeks to bridge this gap by assessing both the demand side (societal learning needs) and the supply side (policy effectiveness). It aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how lifelong learning policies function in practice and to what extent they contribute to human development and social inclusion.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is built upon several well-established theoretical perspectives that together provide a comprehensive understanding of lifelong learning and its role in individual and societal development. These theories help explain why lifelong learning is essential, how it functions across different contexts, and what outcomes it produces.

According to Gary Becker's Human Capital Theory (1964) serves as a fundamental economic foundation for this study. According to Becker, education and skill development should be viewed as investments rather than costs. Individuals who continuously develop their knowledge and competencies become more productive, adaptable, and capable in the labor market. At a broader level, such investments contribute directly to economic growth and national competitiveness. In the context of lifelong learning, this theory highlights the importance of continuous education in maintaining a skilled workforce, especially in rapidly changing economies like Mongolia.

According to Paul Bélanger (2015) draws on the Lifelong Learning perspective advanced by approach expands the traditional understanding of education by emphasizing that learning does not end with formal schooling. Instead, it is a continuous, life-wide process that occurs across formal, non-formal, and informal environments. Bélanger's framework is particularly important for this research because it acknowledges diverse learning pathways, including workplace learning, community engagement, and self-directed learning. This perspective is highly relevant in assessing Mongolia's lifelong learning policies, as it encourages a broader evaluation beyond formal education systems.

According to Amartya Sen's Capability Approach (1999) provides a human-centered perspective on development. Rather than focusing solely on economic outcomes, Sen emphasizes the expansion of individuals' real freedoms and opportunities—referred to as "capabilities." Education and lifelong learning are seen as key mechanisms for enhancing these capabilities, enabling individuals to lead meaningful and productive lives. Within this study, the capability approach is important for evaluating whether lifelong learning policies in Mongolia truly empower individuals, reduce inequality, and improve overall well-being, rather than merely increasing economic output.

According to Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) provides insight into how learning actually occurs in everyday life. Bandura argues that individuals learn not only through formal instruction but also through observation, interaction, and experience. This theory emphasizes the social and behavioral dimensions of learning, including imitation, modeling, and reinforcement. In the context of lifelong learning, it explains how individuals acquire skills and knowledge in real-life situations such as workplaces, communities, and social networks. This is particularly relevant for understanding informal and non-formal learning processes, which are central to this study.

We concluded that integration of Gary Becker’s Human Capital Theory, Paul Bélanger’s Lifelong Learning perspective, Amartya Sen’s Capability approach, and Albert Bandura’s Social Learning Theory provides a comprehensive and balanced foundation for understanding lifelong learning. Together, these theories demonstrate that lifelong learning is not only an economic investment but also a continuous, socially embedded, and human-centered process that enhances individual capabilities and societal development.

Based on the integrated insights of Albert Bandura, Gary Becker, and Amartya Sen, effective lifelong learning policies are expected to create supportive environments that enhance participation, foster continuous skill development, and improve employability outcomes. At the same time, by expanding learning opportunities and strengthening social interaction, these policies contribute to broader social inclusion and the overall development of individuals within society.

Other words, based on the integration of human capital, lifelong learning, capability, and social learning theories, this study proposes that key policy factors—policy clarity, accessibility of learning opportunities, institutional support, and labor market relevance—serve as critical determinants of lifelong learning outcomes.

This study develops a structural model in which four exogenous (independent) constructs—Policy Clarity (Po.Cla), Accessibility (Acce), Institutional Support (In.Spr), and Labor Market Relevance (La.Mrk)—are hypothesized to influence the endogenous (dependent) construct, Lifelong Learning Outcomes (LLO).

The dependent construct (LLO) is conceptualized as a higher-order construct, integrating participation, skill development, employability, and social inclusion. This approach allows for a comprehensive assessment of the overall effectiveness of lifelong learning policies.

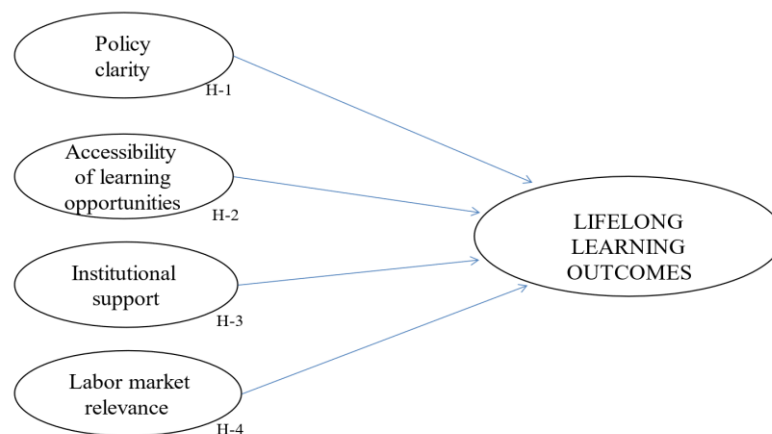


Figure 1: The conceptual framework on lifelong learning outcomes

- H1: Policy clarity positively influences lifelong learning outcomes.
- H2: Accessibility of learning opportunities positively influences lifelong learning outcomes.
- H3: Institutional support positively influences lifelong learning outcomes.
- H4: Labor market relevance positively influences lifelong learning outcomes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a mixed-method research design to provide a comprehensive and balanced analysis of lifelong learning needs and policy effectiveness in Mongolia. The integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches allows the study to capture both measurable patterns and deeper contextual insights. The quantitative component is used to examine the relationships between policy-related factors and learning outcomes, while the qualitative component provides an in-depth understanding of policy implementation, challenges, and practical experiences. This design enhances the validity and reliability of the findings through methodological triangulation.

Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources using complementary methods.

Quantitative data: A structured survey questionnaire was administered to key stakeholders, including learners, educators, and policymakers. The questionnaire was designed using Likert-scale items to measure perceptions of policy clarity, accessibility, institutional support, labor market relevance, and their impact on participation, skill development, employability, and social inclusion.

Qualitative data: Qualitative data were gathered through policy document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Relevant national policies, strategic plans, and legal documents related to lifelong learning were systematically reviewed to assess policy content and alignment. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants to explore their experiences, perceptions, and challenges regarding policy implementation. This approach allows for flexibility while maintaining consistency across interviews.

THE RESULTS OF OUR STUDY

We collected 128 participants who are working in public and private universities professors. The study sample consisted of 128 participants, all of whom are professors working in public and private universities in Mongolia. In terms of gender distribution, 32% of the respondents were male ($n = 41$), while 68% were female ($n = 87$). This indicates that the sample is female dominated, reflecting a higher representation of women among university faculty in the surveyed institutions. Such a distribution suggests that female academics may have a stronger presence or higher participation rate in the study, which should be considered when interpreting the findings. Overall, gender composition provides a reasonably diverse perspective; however, the imbalance may influence perceptions related to lifelong learning needs and policy effectiveness and therefore should be acknowledged as a contextual factor in the analysis in table 1.

Table 1: Gender distribution of respondents (N = 128)

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Male	41	32%	32%	32%
Female	87	68%	68%	100.00%
Total	128	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Noted by: The results of study.

In measurement model analysis, the reliability and validity of the constructs were assessed using factor loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

Lifelong Learning Outcomes (LLO) construct demonstrates acceptable reliability and convergent validity, with Cronbach's Alpha = 0.874, CR = 0.901, and AVE = 0.535, all exceeding the recommended thresholds (0.70 for reliability and 0.50 for AVE). Most item loadings are above 0.70, indicating good indicator reliability. However, LLO1 (0.626) and LLO6 (0.606) fall slightly below the ideal threshold. Despite this, they remain acceptable for exploratory research, and the overall construct validity is still supported due to strong CR and AVE values.

Institutional Support (IS) shows excellent reliability and validity, with Cronbach's Alpha = 0.933, CR = 0.953, and AVE = 0.791. All factor loadings are high (0.803-0.933), indicating strong internal consistency and that the items effectively represent the construct.

Labor Market Relevance (LMR) construct demonstrates very strong measurement properties, with Cronbach's Alpha = 0.941, CR = 0.955, and AVE = 0.809. All loadings exceed 0.87, suggesting that the indicators are highly reliable and strongly correlated with the latent construct.

Policy Clarity (PC) shows good reliability and validity, with Cronbach's Alpha = 0.882, CR = 0.914, and AVE = 0.682. Factor loadings range from 0.711 to 0.896, indicating acceptable to strong indicator reliability. All values meet recommended thresholds.

Accessibility of Learning Opportunities (AC) demonstrates high reliability and convergent validity, with Cronbach's Alpha = 0.921, CR = 0.939, and AVE = 0.757. All loadings are above 0.81, confirming strong measurement quality and consistency across items.

Overall, the measurement model satisfies the recommended criteria for internal consistency reliability and convergent validity. All constructs exhibit Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above 0.70 and AVE values above 0.50, confirming that the indicators reliably measure their respective constructs. Although a few indicators (LLO1 and LLO6) show slightly lower loadings, they do not substantially affect the overall validity of the construct. Therefore, all constructs are considered suitable for further structural model analysis using PLS-SEM in table 2.

Table 2: Construct reliability and validity

Construct	Item	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Lifelong Learning Outcomes.	LLO1	0.626	0.874	0.901	0.535
	LLO2	0.783			
	LLO3	0.792			
	LLO4	0.798			
	LLO5	0.761			
	LLO6	0.606			
	LLO7	0.732			
	LLO8	0.735			
Institutional support	In.Spr1	0.803	0.933	0.953	0.791
	In.Spr2	0.918			
	In.Spr3	0.918			

	In.Spr4	0.933			
	In.Spr5	0.867			
Labor market relevance	La.Mrk1	0.872	0.941	0.955	0.809
	La.Mrk2	0.897			
	La.Mrk3	0.917			
	La.Mrk4	0.912			
	La.Mrk5	0.898			
Policy clarity	Po.Cla1	0.711	0.882	0.914	0.682
	Po.Cla2	0.832			
	Po.Cla3	0.853			
	Po.Cla4	0.896			
	Po.Cla5	0.827			
Accessibility of learning	acce1	0.846	0.921	0.939	0.757
	acce2	0.882			
	acce3	0.817			
	acce4	0.932			
	acce5	0.871			

Noted by: The results of study.

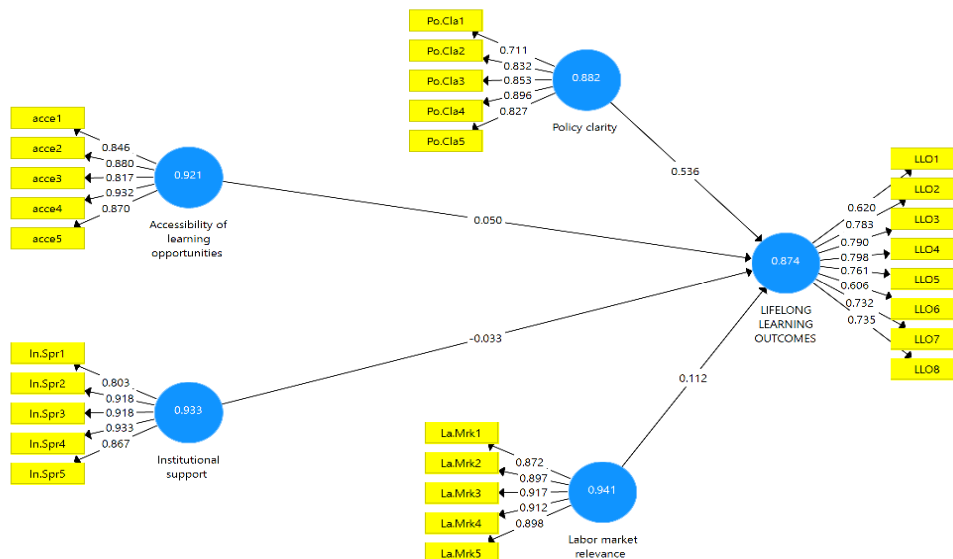


Figure 2: The results of study /Smart PLS-3.00, algorithm/

Table 3: The result of discriminant validity

Factors	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Accessibility of learning opportunities [1]	0.870				
Institutional support [2]	0.691	0.889			
Lifelong learning outcomes [3]	0.376	0.427	0.732		
Labor market relevance [4]	0.692	0.735	0.489	0.899	
Policy clarity [5]	0.692	0.769	0.567	0.813	0.826

Noted by: The results of study.

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which requires that the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct exceeds its correlations with other constructs. This approach ensures that each construct shares greater variance with its own indicators than with those of other constructs.

The results indicate that the square root of AVE values for all constructs—Accessibility of Learning Opportunities (0.870), Institutional Support (0.889), Lifelong Learning Outcomes (0.732), Labor Market Relevance (0.899), and Policy Clarity (0.826)—are higher than their respective inter-construct correlations. This confirms that the Fornell-Larcker criterion is generally satisfied across the model.

More specifically, Accessibility, Institutional Support, Lifelong Learning Outcomes, and Labor Market Relevance all demonstrate clear discriminant validity, as their AVE square roots substantially exceed correlations with other constructs. Although Policy Clarity also meets the required threshold, its correlation with Labor Market Relevance (0.813) is relatively high and approaches its square root of AVE (0.826). This suggests a degree of conceptual proximity between these two constructs, indicating that respondents may perceive policy clarity and labor market alignment as closely interconnected dimensions.

Overall, the findings provide sufficient evidence of discriminant validity, confirming that the constructs are empirically distinct and capture different aspects of lifelong learning policy effectiveness. Despite the observed proximity between certain variables, the measurement model is considered acceptable and appropriate for subsequent structural model analysis in table 3.

Table 4: The path analysis results

Hypothesis	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
H1: Policy clarity positively influences lifelong learning outcomes.	0.536	0.560	0.200	2.687	0.007
H2: Accessibility of learning opportunities positively influences lifelong learning outcomes.	-0.050	-0.049	0.178	0.279	0.780
H3: Institutional support positively influences lifelong learning outcomes.	-0.033	-0.039	0.1310	0.2510	0.802
H4: Labor market relevance positively influences lifelong learning outcomes.	0.112	0.104	0.1860	0.6010	0.548

Noted by: The results of study.

The structural model was evaluated using path coefficients (β), t-statistics, and p-values obtained through bootstrapping. The results for the four hypothesized relationships are presented below.

H1: Policy Clarity \rightarrow Lifelong Learning Outcomes results show that policy clarity has a positive and statistically significant effect on lifelong learning outcomes ($\beta = 0.536$, $t = 2.687$, $p = 0.007$). Since the t-value exceeds the critical value of 1.96 and the p-value is below 0.05, H1 is supported. This finding suggests that clearer and more transparent policies play a crucial role in enhancing participation, skill development, employability, and social inclusion.

H2: Accessibility \rightarrow Lifelong Learning Outcomes: Accessibility of learning opportunities shows a negative and statistically insignificant effect on lifelong learning outcomes ($\beta = -0.050$, $t = 0.279$, $p = 0.780$). The very low t-value and high p-value indicate that H2 is not supported. This implies that, despite theoretical expectations, accessibility alone does not significantly influence learning outcomes in the current context.

H3: Institutional Support → Lifelong Learning Outcomes: Institutional support also demonstrates a negative and insignificant relationship with lifelong learning outcomes ($\beta = -0.033$, $t = 0.251$, $p = 0.802$). As the relationship is not statistically significant, H3 is not supported. This suggests that existing institutional mechanisms may not be sufficiently effective or visible to directly impact learning outcomes.

H4: Labor Market Relevance → Lifelong Learning Outcomes: Labor market relevance shows a positive but statistically insignificant effect on lifelong learning outcomes ($\beta = 0.112$, $t = 0.601$, $p = 0.548$). Although the direction of the relationship is consistent with expectations, the lack of statistical significance means that H4 is not supported.

The results indicate that policy clarity is the only factor with a significant positive impact on lifelong learning outcomes, highlighting its central role in shaping effective lifelong learning systems in Mongolia. In contrast, accessibility, institutional support, and labor market relevance do not show significant effects, suggesting potential gaps in policy implementation, coordination, or practical alignment.

These findings imply that while a policy framework may exist, its effectiveness largely depends on how clearly it is communicated and understood by stakeholders. The lack of significant effects for other variables may reflect structural or contextual challenges, such as unequal access, weak institutional coordination, or limited integration with labor market demands in table 4.

The structural model results clearly demonstrate that policy clarity plays a decisive and statistically significant role in shaping lifelong learning outcomes, indicating that well-defined, transparent, and effectively communicated policies are essential for enhancing participation, skill development, employability, and social inclusion. In contrast, the lack of significant effects for accessibility, institutional support, and labor market relevance points to underlying weaknesses in policy implementation, coordination, and practical alignment, suggesting that these areas remain insufficiently developed or effectively operationalized within the current system. Therefore, improving the coherence, accessibility, and institutional integration of lifelong learning policies is necessary to ensure that they translate into meaningful and measurable outcomes in practice.

DISCUSSION

This study explored how key policy factors shape lifelong learning outcomes in Mongolia, drawing on responses from 128 university professors in both public and private institutions. The sample provides a useful perspective from the higher education sector, where lifelong learning plays a central role in knowledge development and professional growth.

The measurement model results indicate that the constructs used in this study are reliable and valid. Most indicators demonstrated strong factor loadings, and the values of Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted all met recommended thresholds. Although a small number of items showed slightly lower loadings, they did not weaken the overall quality of the measurement model. In addition, discriminant validity was largely confirmed, suggesting that the constructs capture distinct but related aspects of lifelong learning policy effectiveness. The relatively strong association between policy clarity and labor market relevance, however, points to an important insight: in

practice, respondents may view clear policy direction and labor market alignment as closely connected rather than fully separate dimensions.

The structural model results reveal a clear and meaningful pattern. Among the four policy factors examined, policy clarity emerges as the only significant predictor of lifelong learning outcomes. This finding highlights the importance of having policies that are not only well-designed but also clearly communicated and understood. When policies are transparent and accessible in terms of information, individuals are more likely to engage in learning activities and perceive tangible benefits from them. This supports the idea that clarity is not merely a formal characteristic of policy, but a practical condition that enables participation and engagement.

By contrast, the findings show that accessibility, institutional support, and labor market relevance do not have significant effects on lifelong learning outcomes. While this may appear inconsistent with theoretical expectations, it offers an important reflection of the current context. It is possible that these factors exist more at the policy level than in actual practice.

For example, learning opportunities may be formally available but not equally accessible across regions or social groups. Similarly, institutional support may be present but not sufficiently coordinated or visible to participants. The limited effect of labor market relevance may also suggest that learning programs are not yet strongly aligned with real employment needs, or that this alignment is not clearly perceived by individuals.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the effectiveness of lifelong learning policies depends not only on their content, but also on how they are implemented and experienced. Policy clarity appears to function as a foundational element, while other factors may require stronger integration and operational support. Without clear communication and practical coordination, even well-designed policies may fail to produce meaningful outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study finds that policy clarity plays a central role in shaping lifelong learning outcomes in Mongolia. Clear, transparent, and well-communicated policies significantly enhance individuals' participation in learning, as well as their skill development, employability, and sense of social inclusion.

At the same time, the absence of significant effects for accessibility, institutional support, and labor market relevance highlights important gaps between policy design and real-world implementation. These results suggest that having policies in place is not sufficient; their impact depends on how effectively they are communicated, coordinated, and translated into practice.

The study underscores the need for a more integrated approach to lifelong learning policy. Strengthening clarity, improving access in practice, enhancing institutional collaboration, and ensuring closer alignment with labor market demands are essential steps toward making lifelong learning systems more effective and meaningful.

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EVIDENCE OF STUDY

Discriminant Validity

	Accessibility of l...	Institutional sup...	LIFELONG LEAR...	Labor market re...	Policy clarity
Accessibility of learning opportunities	0.870				
Institutional support	0.691	0.889			
LIFELONG LEARNING OUTCOMES	0.376	0.427	0.732		
Labor market relevance	0.692	0.735	0.489	0.899	
Policy clarity	0.692	0.769	0.567	0.813	0.826

Uugntsts 2026.txt *Life Learning Outcome.splsm PLS Algorithm (Run No. 1)

Construct Reliability and Validity

Matrix Cronbach's Alpha rho_A Composite Reliability Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Copy to Clipboard

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Relia...	Average Variance Extracted (A...
LIFELONG LEARNING OUTCOMES	0.874	0.883	0.901	0.535
Policy clarity	0.882	0.889	0.914	0.682
Accessibility of learning opportunities	0.921	0.950	0.939	0.757
Institutional support	0.933	0.938	0.950	0.791
Labor market relevance	0.941	0.945	0.955	0.809

Uugntsts 2026.txt *Life Learning Outcome.splsm PLS Algorithm (Run No. 1)

Outer Loadings

Matrix

	Accessibility of l...	Institutional sup...	LIFELONG LEAR...	Labor market re...	Policy clarity
In.Spr1		0.803			
In.Spr2		0.918			
In.Spr3		0.918			
In.Spr4		0.933			
In.Spr5		0.867			
LLO1			0.620		
LLO2			0.783		
LLO3			0.790		
LLO4			0.798		
LLO5			0.761		
LLO6			0.606		
LLO7			0.732		
LLO8			0.735		
La.Mrk1				0.872	
La.Mrk2				0.897	
La.Mrk3				0.917	
La.Mrk4				0.912	
La.Mrk5				0.898	

Uugntsts 2026.txt *Life Learning Outcome.splsm PLS Algorithm (Run No. 1)

Outer Loadings

Matrix

	Accessibility of I...	Institutional sup...	LIFELONG LEAR...	Labor market re...	Policy clarity
Po.Cla1					0.711
Po.Cla2					0.832
Po.Cla3					0.853
Po.Cla4					0.896
Po.Cla5					0.827
acce1	0.846				
acce2	0.880				
acce3	0.817				
acce4	0.932				
acce5	0.870				

Final Results

- [Path Coefficients](#)
- [Indirect Effects](#)
- [Total Effects](#)
- [Outer Loadings](#)
- [Outer Weights](#)
- [Latent Variable](#)
- [Residuals](#)

Quality Criteria

- [R Square](#)
- [f Square](#)
- [Construct Reliability and Validity](#)
- [Discriminant Validity](#)
- [Collinearity Statistics \(VIF\)](#)
- [Model Fit](#)
- [Model Selection Criteria](#)

Interim Results

- [Stop Criterion Changes](#)

Base Data

- [Setting](#)
- [Inner Model](#)
- [Outer Model](#)
- [Indicator Data \(Original\)](#)
- [Indicator Data \(Standardized\)](#)
- [Indicator Data \(Correlations\)](#)

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Export to Excel
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Uugntsts 2026.txt *Life Learning Outcome.splsm PLS Algorithm (Run No. 1) Bootstrapping (Run No. 1)

Path Coefficients

[Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values](#)
[Confidence Intervals](#)
[Confidence Intervals Bias Corrected](#)
[Samples](#)
Copy to Clipboard: [Excel Forma](#)

	Original Sample...	Sample Mean (...)	Standard Deviat...	T Statistics (I0/S...	P Values
Accessibility of learning opportunities -> LIFELONG LEARNING OUTCOMES	-0.050	-0.049	0.178	0.279	0.780
Institutional support -> LIFELONG LEARNING OUTCOMES	-0.033	-0.039	0.131	0.251	0.802
Labor market relevance -> LIFELONG LEARNING OUTCOMES	0.112	0.104	0.186	0.601	0.548
Policy clarity -> LIFELONG LEARNING OUTCOMES	0.536	0.560	0.200	2.687	0.007