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Research Article

Managerial Competence and Lecturer Engagement as Drivers of Student Life Skills: The Role of Learning Motivation

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The widening gap between graduate preparedness and labor market expectations has prompted higher education institutions to transform their educational practices. Strengthening students' life skills has become a strategic response to address employability challenges. In this context, institutional leadership and lecturer engagement are considered pivotal in shaping students' learning experiences. This study investigates how managerial competence and lecturer roles contribute to students' life skills through the lens of learning motivation.

Objectives: This study aims to examine the effect of the managerial competence of the study program head and the role of lecturers on students' life skills, with learning motivation as a mediating variable. It seeks to identify direct and indirect pathways through which leadership and pedagogical engagement influence the development of transferable skills among undergraduate students.

Methods: A quantitative survey method was applied, involving 284 undergraduate students enrolled in a teacher education program in Indonesia. Participants were selected through random sampling. Data collection employed structured questionnaires, and the analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The model tested relationships among managerial competence, lecturer role, learning motivation, and students' life skills.

Results: The findings indicated that the managerial competence of the study program head significantly influenced the effectiveness of lecturers' roles. These roles, in turn, had a substantial effect on students' learning motivation and life skills. Learning motivation was found to partially mediate the relationship between lecturer role and life skills, but not between managerial competence and life skills. The lecturer's role emerged as a critical mediator in facilitating student skill development through motivational mechanisms.

Conclusions: This study underscores the importance of educational leadership and teaching roles in promoting students' life skills. Enhancing institutional competence and lecturer engagement fosters motivation-driven environments conducive to skill formation. The results suggest that universities should adopt integrated leadership and pedagogical strategies to bridge the gap between academic preparation and labor market demands. Future research should explore the impact of institutional policies, peer collaboration, and digital ecosystems in sustaining life skill enhancement.

Keywords: learning motivation, lecturer role, life skills, managerial competence, higher education

INTRODUCTION

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Higher education is increasingly challenged to produce graduates who are not only academically competent but also equipped with life skills essential for thriving in dynamic and unpredictable work environments. The transition from academic environments to the workforce has revealed a growing gap in graduate readiness, where institutions often fall short in cultivating attributes like adaptability, communication, leadership, and problem-solving (Ashford-Rowe et al., 2014; Oliver & Jorre de St Jorre, 2018). Despite numerous reforms aimed at aligning curricula with industry needs, studies continue to report deficiencies in graduate employability, indicating issues such as misalignment between academic content and workplace expectations, insufficient industry involvement, and inadequate tracking of graduate outcomes (Ajayan & Balasubramanian, 2020; Osmani et al., 2019).

The primary research problem addressed in this study is the lack of alignment between higher education outputs and industry expectations, particularly regarding life skills. While curriculum revisions and institutional policies have attempted to address this, they often overlook the importance of leadership at the program level and the role of motivation in student development. A general solution involves integrating holistic, experience-based, and student-centered learning approaches into academic structures to foster essential life skills. However, the success of such efforts depends heavily on the institutional actors directly responsible for learning implementation: study program heads and lecturers.

Recent studies suggest that managerial leadership from study program heads and the facilitative role of lecturers are central to improving students' life skill development (Giudici & Filimonau, 2019; Imron et al., 2019). Furthermore, motivational constructs—especially those emphasizing autonomy, purpose, and support—are shown to significantly mediate student engagement and the internalization of soft skills (Bureau et al., 2022; Davis, 2018). Work-integrated learning, internships, and teaching practices grounded in self-determination theory have emerged as evidence-based strategies for increasing student motivation and transferable skill acquisition (Cheng et al., 2023; Jackson & Dean, 2023).

While literature supports the value of both program-level leadership and motivational learning, few studies have explored their interaction—specifically, how the managerial competence of program heads and the pedagogical roles of lecturers jointly influence life skill outcomes through the mediating mechanism of learning motivation. Existing research tends to examine these components in isolation, limiting our understanding of how institutional actors shape motivational environments that foster holistic student development (Pedler et al., 2022; Martínez-Moreno & Petko, 2024). This lack of integrative analysis presents a significant research gap in understanding the complex, indirect relationships influencing student readiness.

This study aims to analyze the direct and indirect effects of the managerial competence of study program heads and the roles of lecturers on students' life skills, mediated by learning motivation. The novelty of this research lies in its integrative model, which combines institutional leadership, teaching roles, and psychological motivation to explain life skill development—an area that remains underexplored in current educational literature. The scope of the study is limited to higher education settings, with data gathered from university students enrolled in teacher education programs, offering a focused lens on how leadership and teaching can be optimized to improve graduate outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Life skills

Life skills are essential competencies that enable individuals to navigate personal, social, academic, and professional challenges effectively. These skills include self-awareness, communication, decision-making, problem-solving, interpersonal collaboration, and adaptability. According to UNICEF (2018), life skills should be developed between the ages of 10 and 24 to prepare students for lifelong success. Chaiyama and Kaewpila (2022) emphasized that life skills contribute to sociocultural adaptability, entrepreneurship, and employability. In higher education, life skills education is typically delivered through experiential learning such as internships, service learning, and extracurricular activities. Zehr and Korte (2020) found that internships help students align their personal competencies with the demands of the labor market. Moreover, life skills development has been shown to enhance self-esteem and reduce anxiety among university students (Winarsunu et al., 2023; Subarkah et al., 2022). However, research indicates that in developing countries, implementation remains inconsistent, and evaluation mechanisms

are often lacking (Nasheeda et al., 2019). To ensure effectiveness, life skills programs should integrate literacy, numeracy, and behavioral competencies (Bansal & Kapur, 2023).

Learning Motivation

Motivation is a central factor influencing student engagement, academic persistence, and achievement. It reflects the internal and external drivers that compel individuals to pursue learning goals (Gage & Berliner, 1984). Learning motivation can be either intrinsic—driven by personal interest and autonomy—or extrinsic, influenced by rewards or external pressures (Locke & Schattke, 2019). Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory posits that the fulfillment of basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—promotes intrinsic motivation (Bureau et al., 2022). In the university context, learning motivation is enhanced through emotional support, teacher-student rapport, and relevance of learning content (Baier et al., 2016; Rahal & Singh, 2024). The presence of supportive peers and faculty plays a vital role in fostering motivation and well-being (Venketsamy & Lew, 2024). When students experience autonomy-supportive environments, they demonstrate higher persistence, self-regulation, and academic success (Davis, 2018; Zaccone & Pedrini, 2019). Additionally, motivation is linked to factors such as student interest in the subject matter, perceived competence, and the satisfaction of academic needs (Chukwuedo et al., 2021; Bardach et al., 2020).

Lecturer's Role

Lecturers hold a multifaceted role in shaping the academic and personal development of students. Beyond delivering content, they function as facilitators, mentors, motivators, and reflective practitioners (Kolb et al., 2014; Carnwell et al., 2007). Effective lecturers provide clear learning objectives, create collaborative environments, and offer timely, constructive feedback (Khutsafalo & Makambe, 2020; Berestova et al., 2022). Research has shown that lecturer responsiveness and relational engagement directly impact students' learning motivation and performance (Zavyalova, 2020; Adam, 2023). The application of experiential learning models such as flipped classrooms, project-based learning, and blended learning further enhances motivation and cognitive engagement (Cho et al., 2021; Sierens et al., 2009). Furthermore, student perceptions of lecturer commitment and accessibility influence their sense of belonging and academic identity (Hudson et al., 2022; Guay, 2022). In contrast, poor lecturer support has been linked to student attrition and reduced engagement in higher education settings (Heublein, 2014; Bardach et al., 2020).

Managerial Competence of the Study Program Head

The managerial behavior of program leaders plays a pivotal role in influencing the educational environment. Effective academic leadership involves strategic planning, transparent decision-making, team coordination, and continuous quality improvement (Yukl, 1989; Peterson & Van Fleet, 2008). Leaders who exhibit transformational behaviors such as empowerment, open communication, and participative management contribute positively to faculty motivation and student success (Ajayan & Balasubramanian, 2020; Mayseless, 2010). In higher education institutions, study program heads are responsible for academic planning, stakeholder collaboration, and curriculum alignment. Their ability to manage internal structures, support faculty development, and facilitate student feedback loops has a direct impact on institutional performance (Kamales & Knorr, 2018; Lekchiri et al., 2018). Moreover, leadership that encourages autonomy and innovation among lecturers improves teaching quality and research output (Sukirno & Siengthai, 2011; Joensuu-Salo et al., 2023). Despite its importance, research shows that managerial engagement with alumni, industry partners, and student needs remains insufficient in some contexts, especially in under-resourced or private institutions (Ajayan & Balasubramanian, 2020; Ikemba-Efughi & Raj, 2020). Thus, a more student-centered and adaptive leadership model is essential to fostering life skills development through motivation and lecturer engagement.

METHODS

Research Design and Approach

This study adopted a quantitative research design employing a survey method, aimed at investigating the direct and indirect effects of institutional factors—namely, the managerial competence of the study program head and the lecturer's role—on students' life skills development, with learning motivation serving as a mediating variable. The

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use of a survey within a structural model framework allows for a comprehensive analysis of causal pathways among latent constructs, making it suitable for evaluating the hypothesized mediation effect (Bureau et al., 2022; Vergara-Torres et al., 2022).

Population and Sample

The target population comprised 979 active undergraduate students enrolled in STKIP PGRI Nganjuk, an institution offering teacher education programs. Using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, a sample size of 284 respondents was determined and selected through simple random sampling, ensuring each student had an equal probability of inclusion. Participation in the study was voluntary, and all responses were gathered with informed consent, without any external influence or coercion in the selection of responses.

Variables and Indicators

The independent variables in this study were the managerial competence of the study program head and the lecturers' role, while the intervening variable was students' learning motivation, and the dependent variable was students' life skills. The managerial competence of the study program head was operationalized using four key indicators: planning, monitoring, networking, and problem-solving, which reflect essential functions of effective educational leadership (Yukl, 1989; Imron, 2013; Lekchiri et al., 2018). The lecturers' role was measured through four dimensions, capturing their function as facilitators, motivators, learning engineers, and sources of inspiration, all of which contribute significantly to student engagement and academic development (Carnwell et al., 2007; Kolb et al., 2014). Students' learning motivation, serving as the mediating variable, was assessed based on four sub-constructs: interests, needs, attitudes, and incentives, representing both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors as emphasized in motivational theories (Bureau et al., 2022; Gage & Berliner, 1984; Mcclelland, 1965). Lastly, students' life skills were evaluated using a comprehensive framework that includes academic, vocational, personal, and interpersonal skills, in line with global standards on youth development and life skills education (Unicef, 2018; Chaiyama & Kaewpila, 2022; Vergara-Torres et al., 2022).

Instrumentation and Data Collection

The data collection instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire consisting of 86 Likert-type items, designed to measure the research variables based on validated instruments and comprehensive literature reviews. For the managerial competence of the study program head, a total of 32 items were included, distributed across four dimensions: 17 items for planning, 4 items for monitoring, 7 items for networking, and 4 items for problem-solving. The lecturers' role was assessed through 22 items, comprising 6 items for the facilitator role, 6 items for the motivator role, 6 items for the learning engineer role, and 4 items for the inspiration giver role. To measure the students' learning motivation, 17 items were utilized, divided into 5 items for interest, 5 items for need, 3 items for attitude, and 4 items for incentive, capturing both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational aspects. Lastly, 15 items were dedicated to evaluating students' life skills, with 3 items for academic skills, 2 items for vocational skills, 8 items for personal skills, and 2 items for interpersonal skills. Each item was carefully formulated to align with established theoretical constructs and ensure content validity.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis in this study was conducted using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), a robust statistical technique appropriate for analyzing complex models that involve latent constructs, multiple indicators, and mediating variables. The PLS-SEM approach enabled simultaneous evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model), ensuring a comprehensive analysis of the relationships between variables.

In the measurement model analysis, several steps were undertaken to assess the validity and reliability of the constructs. Convergent validity was examined by evaluating the outer loading values and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct, with AVE values of 0.50 or above indicating satisfactory convergence. Discriminant validity was assessed using both the Fornell–Larcker criterion, which compares the square root of AVE to inter-construct correlations, and cross-loading analysis, which ensures that items load more strongly on their

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respective constructs than on others. To confirm the reliability of the constructs, both Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha were calculated, with acceptable thresholds set at ≥ 0.70, indicating internal consistency.

For the structural model analysis, the direct and indirect effects among variables were tested using bootstrapping procedures with a large number of subsamples to obtain t-values and p-values for each hypothesized path coefficient. This was essential to assess the significance and strength of both direct relationships and mediation effects. The Upsilon (Y) test was specifically employed to further validate the mediating role of students' learning motivation, offering deeper insight into indirect causal pathways. Additionally, the model's predictive relevance was evaluated using the Q^2 statistic, with values greater than zero indicating that the model had sufficient predictive accuracy for the endogenous (dependent) constructs. This rigorous, multi-step analysis ensured the precision of the measurement instruments and the validity of the theoretical model, thus enhancing the reliability and interpretability of the research findings.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

To gain an initial understanding of students' perceptions toward the research indicators, a descriptive analysis was conducted for each questionnaire item. This analysis includes the mean, median, standard deviation, as well as distribution characteristics such as skewness and excess kurtosis. The purpose of this step is to observe the general tendency of responses, the spread of answers, and the shape of data distribution, which serve as a foundation for further analysis using PLS-SEM.

Table 1. The Result of Descriptive Test of Indicators

Indicators	Mean	Median	Standard deviation	Excess kurtosis	Skewness
MH1	3,335	3,000	0.579	-0.658	-0.204
MH2	3,377	3,000	0.652	-0.656	-0.570
MH3	3,384	3,000	0.631	-0.636	-0.526
MH4	3,377	3,000	0.641	-0.201	-0.619
LR1	3,658	4,000	0.543	0.782	-1,318
LR2	3,511	4,000	0.602	-0.311	-0.819
LR3	3,451	4,000	0.634	-0.472	-0.729
LR4	3,440	4,000	0.655	-0.055	-0.834
LM1	3,387	3,000	0.626	-0.632	-0.518
LM2	3,602	4,000	0.544	-0.169	-0.941
LM3	3,398	4,000	0.692	-0.326	-0.782
LM4	3,525	4,000	0.619	-0.138	-0.945
LS1	3,254	3,000	0.568	-0.426	-0.046
LS2	3,398	3,000	0.611	-0.081	-0.581
LS3	3,299	3,000	0.610	-0.127	-0.365
LS4	3,092	3,000	0.740	-0.827	-0.253

The results of the descriptive analysis in Table 1 indicate that most indicators have mean values ranging between 3.0 and 3.6, suggesting generally positive student perceptions toward the research variables. The negative skewness values indicate that the data distribution tends to lean to the right, meaning the majority of respondents gave relatively high ratings. Furthermore, the excess kurtosis values fall within an acceptable range, implying no extreme deviations in the data distribution. The relatively low standard deviation values also suggest consistency in students' responses. These findings demonstrate that the data meet reasonable distribution assumptions and are appropriate for further inferential analysis.

Validity and Reliability

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To assess the quality and consistency of the measurement model, an outer model evaluation was conducted using key metrics such as outer loading, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE). These tests are essential to determine whether the measurement items adequately represent their respective latent constructs and whether the indicators meet the reliability and validity criteria for further structural modeling. The analysis aims to ensure that each construct demonstrates strong internal consistency and convergent validity before proceeding to test the structural relationships.

Table 2. The Results of Outer Loading, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and AVE

Variable	Measurement Items	Indicator	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
The Managerial of the Head Study Program	MH1	Planning	0.816	0.867	0.909	0.715
	MH2	Monitoring	0.812			
	MH3	Networking	0.885			
	MH4	Problem-Solving	0.868			
Lecturer Role	LR1	Facilitator	0.811	0.876	0.915	0.728
	LR2	Motivator	0.868			
	LR3	Engineer Learning	0.866			
	LR4	Giver Inspiration	0.868			
Student Learning Motivation	LM1	Interest	0.853	0.785	0.860	0.606
	LM2	Need	0.825			
	LM3	Attitude	0.831			
	LM4	Incentive	0.816			
Student Life Skills	LS1	Academic skills	0.853	0.851	0.899	0.691
	LS2	Vocational skills	0.825			
	LS3	Personal skills	0.831			
	LS4	Interpersonal Skills	0.816			

As shown in Table 2, all measurement items demonstrated outer loading values above 0.80, indicating a strong correlation between the indicators and their corresponding latent variables. The Cronbach's alpha values for each construct ranged from 0.785 to 0.876, exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.70, which confirms acceptable internal consistency. Similarly, the composite reliability (CR) values ranged from 0.860 to 0.915, further supporting the reliability of the constructs. The AVE values, ranging from 0.606 to 0.728, met the minimum criterion of 0.50, confirming sufficient convergent validity. These results affirm that all constructs in the model are both reliable and valid for further analysis in the structural model.

To assess discriminant validity, the cross-loading method was employed as part of the outer model evaluation in PLS-SEM. Discriminant validity ensures that each construct is truly distinct from the others and that items load more highly on their own construct than on any other. This is a critical step in validating that the model measures conceptually different constructs, which supports the accuracy of the structural model results. Items should show the highest loading on their corresponding latent variable compared to others in the matrix.

Table 3. The Result of Discriminant Validity with Cross Loading

	L.M	L.R	L.S	MH
LM1	0.827	0.356	0.406	0.355
LM2	0.773	0.494	0.405	0.331
LM3	0.801	0.314	0.335	0.349
LM4	0.707	0.278	0.287	0.186
LR1	0.316	0.811	0.450	0.554
LR2	0.361	0.868	0.439	0.565

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	L.M	L.R	L.S	MH
LR3	0.449	0.866	0.496	0.629
LR4	0.488	0.868	0.505	0.574
LS1	0.429	0.476	0.853	0.480
LS2	0.372	0.508	0.825	0.459
LS3	0.345	0.419	0.831	0.399
LS4	0.408	0.436	0.816	0.434
MH2	0.301	0.542	0.463	0.816
MH3	0.276	0.504	0.418	0.812
MH4	0.396	0.669	0.438	0.885
MH1	0.368	0.570	0.496	0.868

As presented in Table 3, all measurement items exhibited higher loading values on their respective constructs than on other constructs, confirming that discriminant validity has been achieved. For example, item LM1 loads 0.827 on the Student Learning Motivation construct, which is significantly higher than its loadings on other constructs such as Lecturer Role (0.356), Life Skills (0.406), and Managerial Competence (0.355). Similar patterns are observed across all items in the table. These results indicate that each construct is empirically unique and well-defined by its respective indicators, supporting the validity of the measurement model and its use in further structural path analysis.

To further ensure the discriminant validity of the constructs, two additional statistical tests were conducted: the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) and the Fornell–Larcker Criterion. The HTMT is a modern and more stringent approach that assesses discriminant validity based on the ratio of between-construct correlations to within-construct correlations, where values below 0.85 (or 0.90 in more lenient contexts) are considered acceptable. Meanwhile, the Fornell–Larcker Criterion compares the square root of the AVE for each construct to its correlations with other constructs; discriminant validity is confirmed when each construct's square root of AVE exceeds the highest correlation it has with any other construct.

Table 4. The Results of Discriminant Validity with HTMT

	L.M	L.R	L.S	MH
L.M				
L.R	0.552			
L.S	0.560	0.639		
MH	0.468	0.774	0.622	

Table 5. The Results of Discriminant Validity with Fornell Lacker

	L.M	L.R	L.S	MH
L.M	0.778			
L.R	0.478	0.853		
L.S	0.469	0.555	0.831	
MH	0.401	0.681	0.535	0.846

As shown in Table 4, all HTMT values were below the threshold of 0.85, with the highest value being 0.774 between the Lecturer Role and Managerial Competence constructs, confirming satisfactory discriminant validity across constructs. Additionally, the Fornell–Larcker results in Table 5 reinforce this finding, where the diagonal values (square roots of AVE) are consistently higher than the off-diagonal correlations for each construct (e.g., the square root of AVE for Managerial Competence is 0.846, which is higher than its correlations with other constructs such as 0.681 with Lecturer Role). Together, these two methods confirm that all latent variables in the model are empirically distinct, justifying their continued use in the structural model analysis.

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Direct Effect

To evaluate the structural model and test the hypotheses regarding direct and indirect effects, a PLS-SEM analysis was conducted. This included calculating the path coefficients, t-statistics, p-values, confidence intervals, and effect size indicators such as R-square, f-square, and Q-square. The goal was to assess the strength and significance of the relationships between the managerial competence of the study program head (MH), the role of lecturers (LR), students' learning motivation (LM), and students' life skills (LS). The analysis also incorporated visual inspection of the PLS-SEM path diagram to better illustrate the relational structure among constructs.

Table 6. The Result of Hypothesis Test of Direct Effect

Correlation	Original Sample (O)	t-stat	p-value	95% confidence		R-square	f-square	Q-square
				Lower limit	Upper limit			
LM →LS	0.264	3,762	0,000	0.136	0.409	0.362	0.084	0.242
LR →LM	0.382	5,892	0,000	0.254	0.509	0.239	0.102	0.133
LR →LS	0.429	5,720	0,000	0.265	0.563	0.362	0.223	0.242
MH →LM	0.141	2,056	0.040	0.004	0.275	0.239	0.014	0.133
MH →LR	0.681	16,275	0,000	0.594	0.758	0.464	0.867	0.332

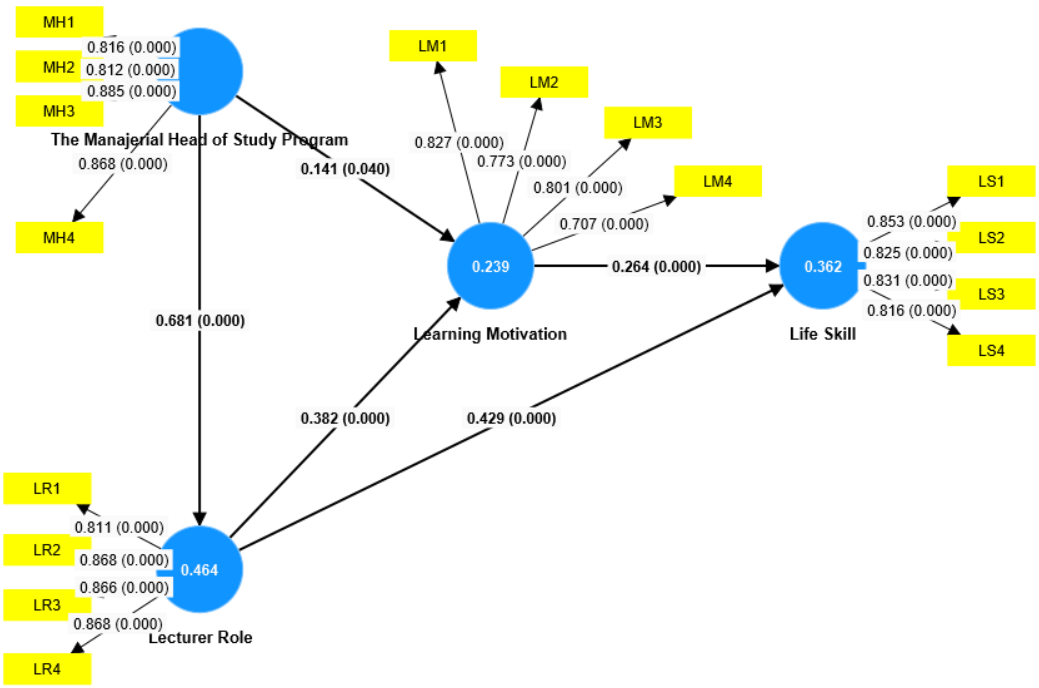

Figure 1. The Result of Hypothesis Test of Direct and Indirect Effect

As shown in Table 6 and Figure 1, all tested direct path relationships were statistically significant, with p-values below 0.05. The managerial competence of the study program head had a strong direct effect on the lecturers' role (β = 0.681, t = 16.275, p < 0.001), indicating that effective managerial leadership significantly enhances lecturer engagement. The lecturers' role directly influenced both students' learning motivation (β = 0.382) and their life skills (β = 0.429), showing that lecturers play a pivotal role in both motivating students and fostering essential competencies. Additionally, students' learning motivation had a significant positive effect on life skills (β = 0.264, t = 3.762, p < 0.001), confirming its mediating role. The indirect effect of the managerial competence of the study program head on life skills—through the lecturers' role and learning motivation—is visually supported in the figure, highlighting the interconnected pathways. The R-square values indicate that the model explains a moderate to

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substantial proportion of variance in the endogenous constructs, particularly life skills (R^2 = 0.362) and lecturer role (R^2 = 0.464), validating the model's predictive power and theoretical relevance.

Indirect Effect

To explore the mediating mechanisms underlying the structural relationships among variables, an analysis of indirect effects was performed using the bootstrapping method within the PLS-SEM framework. This analysis helps identify whether the influence of an independent variable on a dependent variable occurs through one or more intervening variables. In addition to reporting the original sample estimates, t-statistics, p-values, and confidence intervals, the Upsilon (v) statistic was used to quantify the size of the mediating effects, offering a more detailed view of the mediated pathways within the model.

Table 7. The Model Structure Results of Indirect Effect

Correlation	Original Sample (O)	t-stat	p-value	95% confidence Lower limit	Upper limit	Upsilon (v)
MH →LR →LM	0.260	5,749	0,000	0.174	0.354	0.068
LR →LM →LS	0.101	2,940	0.003	0.047	0.180	0.010
MH →LR →LS	0.292	4,989	0,000	0.172	0.406	0.085
MH →LM →LS	0.037	1,529	0.126	0.001	0.095	0.001
MH →LR →LM →LS	0.069	3,032	0.002	0.033	0.121	0.005

Table 7 presents the results of the indirect effect analysis and reveals several statistically significant mediation pathways. The path from the managerial competence of the study program head to students' learning motivation via the lecturers' role (MH → LR → LM) showed a strong and significant indirect effect (β = 0.260, t = 5.749, p < 0.001, Upsilon = 0.068), indicating that effective managerial leadership influences student motivation primarily through its impact on lecturer performance. Likewise, the lecturers' role indirectly affected life skills through students' learning motivation (LR → LM → LS) with a modest but significant effect (β = 0.101, p = 0.003, Upsilon = 0.010). The pathway from the managerial role to life skills via lecturers (MH → LR → LS) was also significant (β = 0.292, p < 0.001, Upsilon = 0.085), showing the importance of lecturers as key transmitters of institutional leadership. However, the direct two-step path from the managerial role through motivation to life skills (MH → LM → LS) was not significant (β = 0.037, p = 0.126), suggesting that the effect of managerial leadership on life skills is largely indirect through the role of lecturers. Interestingly, the full mediating chain (MH → LR → LM → LS) yielded a significant but small indirect effect (β = 0.069, p = 0.002, Upsilon = 0.005), highlighting a complex yet meaningful mediation process that underlines the importance of integrated institutional leadership and instructional motivation in enhancing students' life skills

DISCUSSION

The Direct Influence of MH to LR

Based on the direct effect result of MH to LR was significant and the result of f-square value so MH had a maximum high effect up to 75.8% on LR. However, MH structural model of LR was a medium category. This result was supported by the leaders' managerial skills on their subordinates in the organization like planning, monitoring, networking, and problem solving (Yukl, 1989). The study program head evaluated organization structure by communicating, collaborating, and accepting feedback from the lecturers (Kamales & Knorr, 2018). Besides, the study program head gives motivation and feedback to increase lecturers' skills through teaching planning (Locke & Schattke, 2019). Universities provide academic freedom and flexibility that go hand in hand with monitoring and evaluation so that teaching and research autonomy can be freely chosen according to the lecturer's interests (Teelken, 2012; Austin et al., 2014; Ajayan & Balasubramanian, 2020). Moreover, universities that provide opportunities for lecturers to participate in decision-making will see their performance increase (Sukirno & Siengthai, 2011). So, MH can improve LR through the collaboration such as formulating learning achievement, monitors the guidance activity of the lecturer with the students, coordinates the lecturer and students at every beginning of the semester, communicate the results of the students' learning process, open consultation about lecturers' role.

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The Direct Influence of MH on LM

The direct effect of MH's relation to LM was significant although having a low effect with a maximum increase up to 27.5%. The structural model was low category. Although having low effect, educational institution needed to the management of the student about the lecturers' mentoring process in practice/internship (Hauge et al., 2019). The student's internship teaching needed to identify their learning motivation as the teaching preparation (Fong et al., 2019). Internship programs in cultural learning at the partners' place could increase students' language learning motivation (Veselova et al., 2021). High educational institutions that given good quality service would impact the loyalty of the students (Supriyanto et al., 2024) so it will motivate the students to be loyal to their university. The study program head motivate the students to be loyal to their university such monitors the students' presence, monitoring service and outcome.

The Direct Influence of LR to LM

The direct effect of LR on LM was significant although it had low effect and could be improved its effect maximum up to 50.9%. The structural model was a low category. The effect of LR on LM could be maximized its effect like the results of a previous study that the lecturers' role is responsive to the characteristics, recognize their students and give feedback to the students' tasks (Khutsafalo & Makambe, 2020). Motivation from the lecturers to the students was not always about positive support but constructive criticism during assistance learning (Olson & Nayar-Bhalerao, 2021). The students need more psychological motivation from their educator than support from their parents (Bureau et al., 2022). Primarily, the satisfaction of students' basic psychological needs due to the presence of teaching lecturers which has a significant influence on students' autonomous motivation (Adam, 2023). Another finding is that lecturers can use a delegation leadership style when teaching students who are sufficiently motivated, while students who are less motivated need the presence of a lecturer and a lecturer-student relationship in learning (Zavyalova, 2020).

The learning process which is based on the lecturing contract can increase persuasive communication between lecturer and students (Gabel & Dreyfus, 2022). The role of the lecturers to know the curriculum their learning could increase the students' critical thinking and responsive socially to field their knowledge (Hudson et al., 2022). On the other hand, the research from (Hauge et al., 2019), 54% of students state that there was not support from the lecturer during the mentoring process even so in the e-learning process the lecturers' role must be capable to give feedback and report the students' learning results so the students had high learning motivation (Berestova et al., 2022). Improving its effect so the lecturer's role gives information on the learning plan, gives an appreciation for students' presence and the students' outcome, provides suggestions and practical solutions on students' difficulties, and support the students' learning experiences.

The Direct Influence of LR to LS

The direct effect of LR on LS was significant and LR had a medium effect on LS that could be improved its effect maximum of up to 56.3%. The structural model of them both was a medium category. The educators and students made a learning contract about the learning objective and determining the teamwork which given an improvement of students' achievement (Bardach et al., 2020). Lecturer given motivation to the students so they are capable of working in a team and collaborating with a mentor so they were solving problems during the internship (Carnwell et al., 2007). Structured guidance model by lecturers to student in internship helped the students to finish their project (Schultz et al., 2021). An effective learning strategy through experience learning can give career development (Hayden & Osborn, 2020) and increase student's motivation (Farooqi, 2024). The lessons provided to the students (teacher candidate) by sharing ideas and materials could increase the students' courage to make decisions regarding the learning model used and giving innovation (Liou et al., 2020). However, there were a few research about the students' motivation in teacher practical that did not only influence their learning process but also their practical school (Kotera et al., 2023). The lecturers can improve student life skills: guidance to the student, opportunities to think creatively and innovative, give challenge in the learning process, improve students' life skills like asking for suggestions and criticism, give inspiration for hard and soft skills.

The Direct Effect of LM to LS

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The direct effect of LM on LS was significant and LM had a low effect on LS that can improve its influence maximum up to 40.9%. The structural model was the medium category. The students who have intrinsic learning motivation will have higher learning effectiveness than who have external motivation (Zaccone & Pedrini, 2019). Students capable of controlling criticism to themselves, and could divert extrinsic to intrinsic motivation so they could increase their achievements (Kotera et al., 2023). Students who had a trend to study for a lifetime and were supported by motivation, self-control, perseverance, and curiosity would have independent learning (Chukwuedo et al., 2021). The teacher training students' learning motivation which caused the interest to the teacher profession will increase their achievements (Sugianto et al., 2017). Support of individual autonomy from the students (Davis, 2018) or the peers could increase the learning results and prosperity. The students' activities which can learning motivation to increase life skills in inside and outside class such as giving ideas, seminar, training, workshops, business, internship, social service.

The Indirect Effect of MH to LS through LR

The indirect effect of MH on LS through LR was significant and LR as a high category mediator between MH and LS, so that LS can improve its effect maximum up to 40.6%. The university must give chance to students to develop life skills (Griffiths et al., 2018) through the interaction of the lecturers and students (Kamales & Knorr, 2018) and life skills education to improve knowledge, self-quality, self-esteem and reduce student anxiety (Scheuring & Thompson, 2024; Subarkah et al., 2022; Winarsunu et al., 2023). Moreover, skills education in developing countries tends to produce short-term outcomes and is poorly implemented, poorly evaluated and monitored (Nasheeda et al., 2019). However, life skills education can be of higher quality with a curriculum that uses literacy and numeracy skills (Bansal & Kapur, 2023). The students' life skills in a computer mentoring were time management, teamwork, and effective communication (Olson & Nayar-Bhalerao, 2021). The relationship between lecturers and students through deep learning strategies became the attention of the university so the students increase their skill (Mattanah et al., 2024). So, the study program head and lecturers have to information about the learning program and appreciation the students' learning result.

The Indirect Effect of MH to LS through LM

The indirect effect of MH to LS via LM was not significant and LM as a low category mediator between MH and LS, so LS can improve its effect maximum up to 9.2 %. The insignificance of the effect of MH on LS through LM because the policy of the private college in this research had a less selective system for new students so it caused the students' a low learning motivation. This was supported by the study which shows that a college with an unselective system of entrance paths for new students, being unresponsive and giving unclear information can cause students to want to quit their studies (Bardach et al., 2020). Students would have high motivation if they have confidence in being accepted into the university and being appreciated by the leaders and included in the university program (Pedler et al., 2022). The study program head have to communication and cooperation such as technical skills, humanity connection conceptual so influence the student's learning motivation (Kamales & Knorr, 2018). Moreover, the managerial private institution behavior was social responsibility to develop the human resources and providing facilities for the students (Ikemba-Efughi & Raj, 2020). The university as a big contributor motivation to increase students' learning result because they have to adapt the academic policy (Raza et al., 2018; Zaccone & Pedrini, 2019). The increasing of students' innovative ideas can be pushed from independence motivation and self-efficacy through the autonomous supporters from the university and family (Venketsamy & Lew, 2024). Therefore, the management role at university is crucial which is push the education of entrepreneurship, provide mentors, and support the students' competence to critically thinking about opportunities and entrepreneurship behavior (Joensuu-Salo et al., 2023). So, the study program head can give the facility of digital learning and digital literacy and provides consultation service.

The Indirect Effect of MH to LM through LR

The indirect effect of MH on LM through LR was significant and LR as a medium category mediator between MH and LM, so LM can improve its effect maximum up to 35.4 %. The LR mediator was categorized as partial mediation in the form of the structural model so this model could direct and indirect effects. The lecturer's role interpersonally to the students at the university is influenced by less communication between the lecturers and the university authority, using the technology and the latest innovation, and the quality of student input (Yin et al., 2020). The

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contextual factors in learning such as unpunctuality of lecturing, less chance to discussion, and lack of lecturer's support can increase the number of students dropping out (Bardach et al., 2020) so that the faculties and lecturers support could prevent the student from quitting the university (Heublein, 2014; Bardach et al., 2020). The students' inability in finance, learning strategy, social competency, and weak student commitment can cause resignation from their study program (Heublein, 2014; Bardach et al., 2020) so the students' decision it which is the result of their motivation (Baier et al., 2016). Therefore, to reduce the students' resignation it needs through the university and lecturers' role (Bardach et al., 2020). The lecturer's role in serving students so it increased the quality of education and teaching process in university (Imron et al., 2019). It can be applied by the study program head activities: holds a curriculum meeting engaging the lecturers and the student, do regular meetings with students and lecturer.

The Indirect Effect of LR on LS through LM

The indirect effect of LR on LS through LM was significant and LM as a medium category mediator between LR and LS, so LS can improve its influence maximum up to 18 %. The LM mediator was categorized as partial mediation in the form of the structural model so this model could be done with direct or indirect effects. The role of the lecturer which had leadership (Zavyalova, 2020), dedication, and responsiveness to the students' characteristics would make the students more confident, and motivated so increasing learning results (Khutsafalo & Makambe, 2020). The lecturers at the educational institution must be able to recognize their students to build their interpersonal relationship (Khutsafalo & Makambe, 2020) such as the students' ability to convey their motivation for joining an internship program to the supervisor lecturer (Urquía-Grande & Pérez Estébanez, 2020). Likewise, the lecturer's experience that is seen during learning can motivate students in forming their character (Permana et al., 2024). Criticism and suggestions were given by the lecturer in a mentoring will increase the students' motivation (Olson & Nayar-Bhalerao, 2021). However, about 46 % of students in electrical technique engineering at several universities in Spain want to quit the study program because of lack of attention from lecturer and low achievement so those influence learning motivation (Tayebi et al., 2021). There was no difference in the students' communication ability between those who used a problem-solving model and a teacher-centered model (Aslan, 2021). The role of autonomy educator in learning process (Guay, 2022) was like increasing the students' involvement (Hong Jiang et al., 2011), learning independent (Sierens et al., 2009) or using flipped classroom so the students can prepare the lecture material (Cho et al., 2021). The lecturers as facilitator who guide the students to think innovatively and creatively, as learning model designer who adapt to the conditions of their students, as motivators and as inspirator for the students inside and outside class for developing life skills in social service, independent study, internship, and the others.

The Indirect Effect of MH to the LS through LR and LM

The indirect effect of MH on LS via LM and LR is significant and LM plays a low role as a mediator between LR and LS, so LS can improve its influence maximum up to 12.1%. The faculty apply a policy about the relationship between the lecturers and the students through a deep learning so the students master the skill of work readiness (Mattanah et al., 2024). Policy of the head of the university about communication approach between the lecturers and the students would give motivation to the student so they were increasing the students' achievement (Wiyono et al., 2023) so the students' work readiness and achievement were increasing (Mattanah et al., 2024; Wiyono et al., 2023). A model of school-based Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia prioritized the students' ability to face the society's global challenged through life so it could attract the students (Mufarokah, 2022). The university provides experience-based learning management through an internship program which can attract the students to develop their skills outside the class with the help of their internship supervisor (Dhia et al., 2022). The study program which involves the students in curriculum discussion and learning activities at the beginning of the semester and the programs which support the students' learning process and their life skills.

CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this study was to examine the direct and indirect effects of the managerial competence of the study program head and the lecturers' role on students' life skills, with learning motivation as a mediating variable. Utilizing a quantitative approach and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the study evaluated both measurement and structural models to determine how institutional leadership and teaching roles influence student development outcomes. The key findings of the study highlight several significant relationships. First, the managerial competence of the study program head significantly influenced the lecturers' role, which in turn

directly impacted both students' learning motivation and life skills. Learning motivation also had a significant direct effect on life skills, confirming its role as a partial mediator. Furthermore, the indirect pathways—particularly MH → LR → LS, LR → LM → LS, and the full chain MH → LR → LM → LS—were statistically significant, emphasizing the interconnected role of program heads and lecturers in fostering student life skills. However, the pathway MH → LM → LS was found to be non-significant, suggesting that managerial competence alone does not directly stimulate life skill development through motivation, unless facilitated by lecturer engagement. This research makes a valuable contribution to the literature by providing an integrated model that explains how institutional leadership and instructional roles contribute to life skills development in higher education through motivation as a mediating mechanism. The findings reinforce the need for coherent strategies involving both leadership and pedagogy to strengthen student preparedness. The study also offers practical implications for universities to enhance managerial support, lecturer-student interaction, and motivational strategies—all of which are vital for nurturing graduates who are not only competent but also adaptive, collaborative, and ready to thrive in the professional world.

Ethics Statements

The studies involving human participants (students) in STKIP PGRI Nganjuk. All participants gave written informed consent to participate in this study. Participant privacy and confidentiality were respected, and appropriate measures were taken to maintain anonymity.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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