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Lifelong Learning as a Research Topic in European Journals: Prevalence, Subjects, and Types of Research²

Summary: *The paper discusses lifelong learning as a research topic in European journals through three research questions concerning its prevalence, the subjects of lifelong learning and lifelong education-related papers, and the type of research. To address these questions, we conducted a systematic literature review. We established a precise procedure for data collection and employed a coding strategy for categorizing research subjects. The analysis encompassed articles published in European journals from 2019 to 2024 — a total of 326 publications released across 125 European journals. For data collection, we used content analysis techniques and applied a structured protocol for content analysis as an instrument. We present the results in terms of frequencies and percentages. We found that authors from Europe and America most commonly discuss the subject of lifelong learning in European journals, that the majority of the research is focused on questions related to LLL policies, and that most of the papers are theoretical.*

Keywords: *lifelong learning, systematic literature review, research subject, types of research*

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Introduction

The process of lifelong learning is considered necessary for personal and societal growth and includes three interrelated dimensions: learning capacity, social skills, and personal skills. It does not only focus on developing the technical skills required for employment. *Individual growth and development* are referred to as personal dimensions. Lifelong learning supports the exploration of interests, the enhancement of creativity, and the development of critical thinking skills. This not only helps in confronting everyday challenges but also enhances general well-being and life satisfaction. *Social dimensions* emphasize the significance of interaction and collaboration with others. In the contemporary environment, characterized by rapid changes in information and technology, the capacity to communicate and interact with various individuals is becoming increasingly important. Lifelong learning fosters the development of social networks and groups that facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences, thus promoting social cohesion. The third component, *capacity for learning*, includes the abilities that promote lifelong learning, which involves the capacity to use technology for learning purposes, to assess information critically, and to adapt to changing circumstances. Capacity for learning is a necessary component for success in today's environment, characterized by rapid development of knowledge.

Lifelong learning/lifelong education is frequently linked to conventional formal models, even though it has considerable potential to transform established forms of education and to include informal education. This focus marginalizes lifelong learning and lifelong education, deeming them less significant than formal education (Hasan, 2011; Regmi, 2023). The significance of informal learning is inadequately acknowledged, thus constraining the developmental potential of the concept. Lifelong learning is promoted as a strategy for preparing individuals for the emerging realities of a knowledge-driven society. The aim is to develop autonomous, proactive,

and self-aware individuals, which is particularly important in dynamic work environments where success depends on the capacity to adapt and to attain new competencies and skills.

However, when policy prioritizes market efficiency, it may overlook other important educational objectives. For instance, policy may overlook elements like community development and social cohesiveness. They are essential for a stable and harmonious society, where education enhances not just economic interests but also relationships and the overall quality of life.

Over the past fifty years, there has been discourse over the concept of lifelong learning/lifelong education. However, the concept is still “elusive”, diffuse, context-specific, culturally driven, and value-laden. Some authors (Hasan, 2011; Regmi, 2023; Schoon & Evans, 2023) state that, while it is an original and constructive process in which all persons take responsibility for the collaborative development of ideas, strategies, initiatives, and practices, its reinterpretation is necessary. Collaboration among different actors – corporations, educational institutions, and individuals – is essential for the development of new approaches to learning that address contemporary requirements and for effectively reinterpreting this concept.

The concept of lifelong learning, while not fully established, substantially and complexly influences educational realities. Consequently, we considered that an in-depth examination of the content and approach employed by authors in European journals regarding lifelong learning, along with the prevalence of lifelong learning as a research topic in these publications, would be important to a more comprehensive redefinition and contextualization of the concept.

Methodology

For this article, we established three research questions to investigate and obtain a deeper under-

standing of the texts concerning lifelong learning and European³ journals:

- What is the prevalence of lifelong learning as a research subject in European journals?
- What is written about lifelong learning in European journals?
- What types of research do they employ?

More precisely, we searched for answers to these questions by:

1. examining the prevalence of lifelong learning as a research subject in European journals by the country where the first author was employed when the text was published,
2. analyzing the subjects of lifelong learning and lifelong education-related papers, and
3. exploring the types of research most frequently used in lifelong learning-related articles.

The analysis involved articles published in European journals between 2019 and 2024. For the purposes of our research, we surveyed all European journals that publish peer-reviewed articles presenting findings from pedagogical and educational research. The terms “lifelong learning” and/or “lifelong education” were identified in articles from 556 journals. Specifically, these terms appeared in 107 journals before 2019, whereas from 2019 to 2024, 449 scientific journals included these expressions.

We searched for journals by accessing their website. If there was an option for “search” or “advanced search,” we searched for all articles containing the terms “lifelong learning” and/or “lifelong education”. Furthermore, we obtained all texts for journals without a “search” feature on their website and manually searched for all articles containing the terms “lifelong learning” and/or “lifelong education”.

A total of 3,853 texts containing the phrases “lifelong learning” and/or “lifelong education” were identified in the conducted search. Subsequently, we examined each of the chosen papers separately. Through KOBSON (Consortium for Coordinated Acquisition of Serbian Research Libraries), we gained comprehensive access to almost all of the content in journals.

The following criteria were used to categorize the articles during the screening process.

- Texts that only include the term “lifelong learning” as a part of the UN Agenda 2030 recommendation to “promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” are not contained in the database.
- Articles that only include the terms “lifelong learning” and/or “lifelong education” in titles, keywords, references, project titles cited within the text, or author affiliations are not included in the database.
- The database excluded articles that only contained specified terms in the context of other research subjects.
- After screening, texts that offer clear and comprehensive discourses on lifelong learning or lifelong education have been compiled into a database.

Of the registered 3,853 articles, a total of 3,527 texts were excluded from the analysis. In 29 texts, only the phrase “to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” is mentioned. Also, a total of 57 texts have been recorded in which the requested phrases are mentioned exclusively as keywords, while, in 10 texts, these terms appear only in the title. 3431 texts referenced “lifelong learning” and/or “lifelong education” within the context of another research subject. Only 326 texts, i.e., less than 10% of the chosen articles, provide explicit and in-depth discussions on lifelong learning and/or lifelong education.

As stated above, there are 326 texts in the sample of articles that were part of the analysis.

³ We refer to countries that are strictly part of Europe. Since Russia and Turkey belong mainly to Asia, we did not consider journals published in those countries.

They have been published in 125 European journals. All journals included in our analysis have been listed in the ERIH PLUS (European Reference Index for the Humanities and Social Sciences) and CEEOL (Central and Eastern European Online Library for the Humanities and Social Sciences) databases. Most of the journals that were searched in the mentioned databases are indexed in SCOPUS (scientific abstract and citation database) and WoS (Web of Science), too.

We used content analysis techniques for data collection and, in response, applied a structured protocol for content analysis. More precisely, this systematic literature review was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA-P protocol requirements (Moher et al., 2009, 2015) from September 2024 to January 2025. We developed a systematic review procedure that includes data related to:

- article information (title, author(s), journal name, year of publication)
- the most relevant journal index database where the paper is published (WoS, SCOPUS, ERIH PLUS, or CEEOL).
- the country where the first author was employed when the text was published,
- the subject of the paper,
- the type of performed research.

We used a coding strategy concerning research subjects. After the initial open coding of all the articles included in database (Gough et al., 2017), 68 codes were determined. Considering the extent of the database of texts that were analyzed, we proceeded and compiled previously acquired detailed codes. At this stage we opted to use inter-rater validation of coding and of components of the analysis (Purssell & McCrae, 2020). Following the second round of reading and analyzing the selected texts in our database, we condensed the previously created list into 23 distinctively defined codes. The final, third phase of coding resulted in the production of 12 codes that were clearly specified.

To record data relevant to the research type we used a variety of data sources and methods. In particular, the following elements were considered: the classification of papers by certain journals, such as review articles and original scientific papers (both theoretical and empirical); the statements made by the authors (qualitative, quantitative, mixed-method research (MMR), comparative, historical, and multimethod research); and the assessments of the authors of this text.

The collected results are represented by frequencies and percentages. The registration unit indicates the number of papers that contain the identified information because the context unit is a paper.

The acquired results were documented in a spreadsheet editor, Microsoft Excel.

Results

Between 2019 and 2024, the highest number of articles referencing the terms “lifelong learning” and/or “lifelong education” were published in journals from the Netherlands and United Kingdom (Table 1). Less frequently, texts on the aforementioned subjects were published in Switzerland and Romania. At the very least, journals from Bulgaria, Finland, France, and Norway published one article each. Serbia, with five published texts, is placed among the countries where fewer than ten articles on lifelong learning/lifelong education were published from 2019 to 2024.

Table 1. The prevalence of lifelong learning as a research subject in European journals by the country of publication

The country where the journals were published	f	%
Netherlands	73	22.4
United Kingdom	68	20.9
Switzerland	34	10.4
Romania	22	6.7
Poland	15	4.6

Greece	13	4.0
Italy	12	3.7
Croatia	11	3.4
Czech Republic	11	3.4
Spain	10	3.1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	8	2.5
Slovenia	7	2.1
Hungary	5	1.5
Latvia	5	1.5
Serbia	5	1.5
Sweden	5	1.5
Germany	4	1.2
Northern Cyprus	4	1.2
Slovakia	4	1.2
Lithuania	3	0.9
Portugal	3	0.9
Bulgaria	1	0.3
Finland	1	0.3
French	1	0.3
Norway	1	0.3
Total	326	100.0

A slightly different pattern emerges when examining the statistics on the prevalence of lifelong learning as the subject of research in European journals by the country where the first author was employed when the text was published (Table 2). There is a predominance of publications with first authors from Germany, the United Kingdom, and Canada. The first authors of texts on lifelong learning as a research subject came from the USA, Türkiye, Sweden, Italy, and Spain, to a slightly lower extent. The first authors from a total of 17 countries are represented with a single text each. Four publications on lifelong learning/lifelong education, authored by researchers from Serbia, were released between 2019 and 2024.

Table 2. The prevalence of lifelong learning as a research subject in European journals by the country where the first author was employed when the text was published

The country where the first author was employed when the text was published	f	%
Germany	23	7.1
UK	22	6.7
Canada	20	6.1
USA	17	5.2
Türkiye	16	4.9
Sweden	14	4.3
Italy	13	4.0
Spain	13	4.0
Greece	12	3.7
Poland	12	3.7
Croatia	11	3.4
Ukraine	11	3.4
Hungary	9	2.8
Australia	8	2.5
Finland	8	2.5
Czech Republic	7	2.1
Moldova	7	2.1
Netherlands	6	1.8
China	6	1.8
Bosnia and Herzegovina	5	1.5
Portugal	5	1.5
Romania	5	1.5
South Africa	5	1.5
France	4	1.2
Latvia	4	1.2
Norway	4	1.2
Republic of Korea	4	1.2
Serbia	4	1.2
Slovenia	4	1.2
Chile	3	0.9
India	3	0.9
Lithuania	3	0.9
Mexico	3	0.9
Slovakia	3	0.9
Taiwan	3	0.9
Austria	2	0.6
Belgium	2	0.6

Brunei	2	0.6
Israel	2	0.6
Japan	2	0.6
Singapore	2	0.6
Bangladesh	1	0.3
Republic of Benin	1	0.3
Brazil	1	0.3
Bulgaria	1	0.3
Ethiopia	1	0.3
Ireland	1	0.3
Kazakhstan	1	0.3
Malaysia	1	0.3
Mozambique	1	0.3
New Zealand	1	0.3
Nigeria	1	0.3
North Cyprus	1	0.3
Pakistan	1	0.3
Saudi Arabia	1	0.3
Switzerland	1	0.3
Thailand	1	0.3
Vietnam	1	0.3
Total	326	100.0

Examining the popularity of lifelong learning as a study topic in European journals, based on the region where the first author was employed when the text was published, clarified the situation further (Table 3). The analyzed texts predominantly involve authors from Europe and America; however, a significant number originate from Asian authors. Between 2019 and 2024, a limited number of authors from Africa and Oceania have contributed European journals included in our database.

Table 3. The prevalence of lifelong learning as a research subject in European journals by the region where the first author was employed when the text was published

Region where the first author was employed when the text was published	f	%
Europe	233	71.4
America	44	13.5
Asia	31	9.5
Africa	9	2.8

Oceania	9	2.8
Total	326	100.0

The primary research subjects related to life-long learning and lifelong education identified in European journal publications from 2019–2024 encompass lifelong learning (LLL) policies and the role of LLL as a framework for professional development (Table 4). Furthermore, there are numerous studies that address subjects including information and communication technology (ICT) related to LLL, LLL of human resources, social dimensions of LLL, LLL skills and competencies, and participation in LLL. The research subjects with the lowest frequency of occurrence are among the domains of LLL and citizenship education, as well as LLL and sustainable development, which are succeeded by LLL – values and quality of life and LLL, art education, and leisure.

Table 4. The subject of the analyzed articles published in European journals from 2019 to 2024

The subject of the articles	f	%
LLL policies	54	16.6
Role of LLL as a framework for professional development	49	15.0
ICT related to LLL	37	11.3
LLL of human resources	33	10.1
Social dimensions of LLL	30	9.2
LLL skills and competencies	28	8.6
Participation in LLL	26	8.0
LLL and citizenship education	13	4.0
LLL and sustainable development	13	4.0
LLL – values and quality of life	9	2.8
LLL, art education and leisure	9	2.8
Additional subjects	25	7.7
Total	326	100.0

The final set of texts fell under the category of additional subjects. This set is compiled by multiple articles on the subject matter, including LLL and career guidance and support (6)⁴, LLL in diverse contexts such as prisons, disaster education, COV-

⁴ The number in parentheses represents the quantity of articles.

ID-19, and parenting (6), motivation or incentives related to LLL (6), dimensions of LLL (6), and research and methodology related to LLL (2).

Table 5. Types of Research in Articles on Lifelong Learning

Types of research	f	%
Theoretical	115	35.2
Qualitative	98	30.1
Quantitative	72	22.1
Mixed-method	15	4.6
Comparative	15	4.6
Historical	10	3.1
Multimethod	1	0.3
Total	326	100.00

The dominant group of papers consists of theoretical research, followed by qualitative and quantitative studies (Table 5). A smaller, yet comparable, number of mixed-method, comparative, and historical research articles are also represented.

Discussion

Articles on LLL published in European journals from 2019 to 2024 were predominantly authored by researchers from Europe and America, with fewer contributions from Asia, while the smallest number of them are from Africa and Oceania. Among the authors from Europe, researchers from Germany and the United Kingdom dominate, while in the American region, the highest number of authors are from Canada and the USA. The majority of papers were published in journals based in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. There may be several explanations for such findings. The fact that English is the predominant language of many scientific publications can be a challenge for authors whose native language is not English. Authors from developed countries frequently collaborate and network more effectively with other academics in those areas, which can help to increase research quality and make resources more accessible. Devel-

oped countries offer enhanced institutional support for research, encompassing training in writing and publishing. Inequalities in the international scientific discourse and the visibility of researchers from less developed regions may result from these discrepancies.

The transnational character of scholarly publishing in European journals is expanding regarding the general subjects of LLL. Therefore, it appears that an increased internationalization and subject differentiation in knowledge production characterized the LLL knowledge base in recent years (published in European journals between 2019 and 2024). We agree with the observations made by He and Spink (2002) regarding foreign co-authorship, that “with the drastic increase in foreign co-authorship in international journals in past 15 years [...] it will be interesting to study foreign co-authorship as an indicator of international collaboration in scholarly communication involving authors from developed countries” (p. 959).

The distribution of research subjects in the examined articles is uneven. With the exception of those articles that discuss the connection between LLL and leisure, all texts contain explicit references to the information provided in LLL policy documents. The reasons for the dominant position of LLL policy as a research subject are numerous: funding and support (as policies play an important role in setting up resources for LLL programs); regulations and standards (national and international policies shape the implementation and evaluation of LLL); social and economic context (policies address issues such as employment, economic development, and social inclusion, which are interconnected with LLL); educational reforms; the impact of globalization; and frequent modifications in the documents of important international organizations that shape the LLL concept, among others.

A possible reason for the writers’ profound interest in LLL policies as a topic for articles published in European journals from 2019 to 2024 is that be-

cause of the various customs and cultural settings of each nation, trends regarding the laws and practices that influence LLL and education may seem comparable across countries, but their effects are not the same.

On one hand, several authors (Mejía-Manzano et al., 2022; Milana & Mikulec, 2023; Nuissl & Sava, 2024; Vanderkooy et al., 2019) consider that LLL is the answer to the future. According to them, a country cannot prosper in an increasingly complex world, especially when confronted with unexpected obstacles, unless it has a strong culture of LLL. Although the specific skills required for the future are unknowable, a strong culture of LLL equips individuals to enhance their current skills or acquire new ones to respond to emerging issues and possibilities.

On the other hand, some authors (Biesta, 2022; Deuel, 2022; Kinnari & Silvennoinen, 2023; Romö, 2024) critically analyze policy documents released by four significant international organizations: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Council of Europe, World Bank, and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Kinnari and Silvennoinen (2023) wrote about the main reasons why LLL is important, focusing on how policy documents supported the governmentality of LLL (power). At its most basic level, UNESCO and the Council of Europe see LLL as a way to promote freedom and democracy and reduce alienation. According to OECD and World Bank documents, LLL is essential for individuals to succeed in labor markets and societies, emphasizing the skills and competencies that encourage economic growth. The authors of the above-mentioned papers underline that there is an increasing support for a LLL framework that emphasizes continuous training over higher education as a more effective solution, particularly for less developed nations.

When we carefully examine the papers cited in texts about LLL policies (16.6%), it becomes clear that the other topics covered in the articles tak-

en from our database and analyzed are also important parts of LLL policy. In the case of the role of LLL as a framework for professional development (15.0%), this requires acknowledging professional development as a system for promoting and managing professionals' learning throughout their working life (and, for some, beyond retirement). Professional development encompasses LLL and lifelong education, representing both personal and institutional reality. In the preliminary coding, LLL as a framework for professional development was classified within multiple professions; from the total of 49 articles the majority of them are focused on educators across different educational levels (31)⁵, followed by andragogues (5), physicians and nurses (4), with nine articles addressing various occupations. Most of the analyzed articles (Allen et al., 2024; Friedman, 2023; Ovesni et al., 2021; Tsvetanska, 2023) emphasized that LLL as a framework for professional development transcends mere courses or training as professional organizations evaluate a broader spectrum of activities, including independent reading, social interactions, and reflections on work experiences. LLL as a framework for professional development promotes professionalism by encouraging and, for many, mandating that people engage in lifelong learning and/or lifelong education on a regular and methodical basis.

The relationship to LLL policy can also be observed in the 11.3% chosen articles that link information and communication technology to lifelong learning and/or lifelong education (Alamprese, 2024; Eynon & Malmberg, 2021; Salajan, 2019). In this context, Salajan (2019) emphasizes the EU's "commitment to promote employability and foster skills development in all sectors impacted by the advent of digital technologies, engendering a culture of LLL in the service of a cohesive and inclusive society" (p. 7). ICT, blockchain technology, online learning, m-learning, AI learning, hybrid learning, digitalization, and digital skills are only a few topics cov-

5 The number in parentheses represents the quantity of articles.

ered by the publications in the chosen articles from our database.

Although some authors of the analyzed texts (Alamprese, 2024) refer to Principles 18 and 20 outlined in the CONFINTEA VII Marrakech Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2022), which emphasizes the importance of LLL in a digital environment, other scholars (Regmi, 2024) suggest that inequalities in access to educational technologies have contributed to inequality within countries, societies, and among people. As learning technologies advance, individuals are anticipated to become self-directed lifelong learners, equipped not only for emerging job opportunities but also for the potential of unemployment resulting from their failure to acquire the technological skills necessary for success in a rapidly evolving job market. This highlights the critical need for equitable access to educational resources to ensure individuals may succeed in an increasingly digital world.

Lifelong learning of human resources subjects (10.1%) included workplace learning, which relates to all lifelong learning and lifelong education activities conducted within organizations. Therefore, while Ekşi and associates (2021) note that the core dynamics of transformation encompass the integration of human resources and innovation, which allow people to acquire and apply 21st-century skills, Karatas and colleagues (2024) maintain that lifelong learning and lifelong education activities within organizations are essential for the preservation and retention of human resources.

The dichotomy in viewpoints on LLL policy seems to be reflected in the inconsistency in explaining the relationship between LLL and human resource development. One group of analyzed texts (Tan et al., 2024) argues that LLL policy discusses human resource development from a broader perspective, including both andragogical interventions within organizations and those occurring externally. However, a different set of articles emphasizes that learning occurs at the individual, rather than

the organizational level. It suggests that individuals, through their engagement in human resource development activities, operate as a “sustaining and dynamic force behind lifelong learning” (Duvekot & Onstenk, 2021, p. 437). It should be noted that such viewpoints disagree with the contemporary understanding of human resource development, especially with the idea of a learning organization, which holds that each employee’s knowledge is an essential component of organizational knowledge that is retained in some way even after they leave the organization for any reason (Ovesni, 2014).

Interestingly, among the examined texts, some (Gmaj & Fijałkowska, 2021) discuss human resource development from different standpoints and argue that these two explanations are not opposed sides of a dualistic perspective but rather pragmatic options that represent a shift in LLL approaches that take a more comprehensive view and display a combination of humanistic and economic model characteristics.

The social dimensions of LLL and lifelong education are present in a wider range of the examined texts (9.2%). The final two stages of coding involved the integration of codes related to social dimensions of LLL, lifelong education, senior learners, and social inclusion within the context of LLL. The framework underscores the interrelationships between these themes, emphasizing the importance of developing inclusive educational environments that address the varied needs of learners. A gradual discursive transition from social exclusion to social inclusion has been observed, resulting in a dual trend: firstly, the adoption of affirmative language that emphasizes the strengths and talents of diverse groups rather than their vulnerabilities; secondly, an emphasis on addressing structural issues instead of only preventing exclusion. Effectively translating this change from discourse to practice requires a coordinated response across various policy sectors, alongside empowering the vulnerable to articulate their own needs. The multidimensional character

of social inclusion (Kauppila et al., 2020; Öz, 2022; Schoultz et al., 2020; Teles et al., 2024) is related to the migrants, individuals with disabilities, and minorities (10), as indicated by the subjects of the analyzed articles, and to diverse population categories, including the elderly and active aging (17), in addition to factors such as gender differences and inter-generational learning (3).

The majority of the texts in the group LLL skills and competencies (8.6%) are based on the political suggestions made by UNESCO, the Council of Europe, World Bank, and OECD documents that were previously mentioned. Although the groups of texts related to LLL skills and LLL competencies were divided in the first coding stage, they were combined in the second coding stage. According to Romö (2024), the aforementioned political recommendations address LLL in terms of investments in “competence-oriented education” and “skills essential for the knowledge economy,” which reflects a neoliberal emphasis on building human capital to increase competitiveness in the job market.

Several texts discuss “lifelong learning skills,” encompassing teamwork, problem-solving, and creative thinking (Eyal et al., 2023). Other texts expand this list to include learning-to-learn skills, non-academic and non-cognitive skills, non-technical skills, soft skills, transferable skills, character skills, higher-order skills, meta-skills, occupational skills, and digital skills, among others (Alamprese, 2024; Friedman, 2023; Testers et al., 2024). The primary goal of lifelong learning and lifelong education, according to Eyal and colleagues (2023), is “to cultivate LLL skills and 21st century skills, which [...] will develop much-needed higher-order thinking skills” (p. 4). Interestingly, as in the case of LLL skills, there isn’t a clear consensus among the authors of the texts under analysis about what LLL competencies are. After identifying 254 LLL competencies in systematic literature review, Van den Broeck et al. (2024) divided them into six categories – “(1) Information Literacy, (2) Self-Regulation & Self-Direc-

tion, (3) Autonomous Motivation, (4) Learning Beliefs & Strategies, (5) Initiative & Perseverance, and (6) Adaptability & Resilience” (p. 1). Kan and Murat (2020) used a different approach and determined the following key LLL competencies: competence of communicating in native language, competence of communication in a foreign language(s), mathematical basic competence in science and technology, digital competency, competency of learning to learn, social, intercultural and citizenship awareness competencies, initiative and social entrepreneurship competencies, cultural awareness and expression competencies.

A substantial group of the examined articles (8.0%) relates to the subject “participation in LLL”. The research encompasses texts that present different perspectives on participation. Billett (2024) states that employee learning occurs through participation in activities explicitly intended for this purpose and through involvement in work-related activities and interactions with coworkers. According to the research findings in the texts, engagement in adult education activities is related to socioeconomic status, education level, occupation category, gender differences, age, and public perceptions of adult learning (Heuer et al., 2025).

According to the texts discussed in this paper, one of the key indicators of the efficacy and efficiency of LLL is participation. Skills, typically associated with employability and economic production, directly influence participation in LLL activities. However, there is a trend that suggests social and cultural practices are evolving, necessitating advanced skills to fully participate in cultural life, democratic processes, and complex daily life (Rubenson, 2019).

Lifelong learning and citizenship education were the subject of interest in a notably smaller number of texts (4.0%). Prior to advancing to the second stage of coding, this group also encompassed texts related to LLL cities, LLL communities, and LLL environments. Citizenship education is closely associated with LLL policy. Several reports from UNE-

SCO, Council of Europe, World Bank, and OECD explicitly link “citizenship education to the task of empowering adults for change [...] and present active citizenship education as a necessary condition for human sustainability and global transformation” (Avoseh, 2024, p. 82).

According to a group of authors, “citizenship and its learning” is one of the main topics in the field of LLL, which could be divided into the subtopics of citizenship learning, learning for citizenship, learning through citizenship and emancipation, and the social purpose of adult education. Holford and associates (Holford et al., 2022) emphasize various forms of citizenship – inclusive, pluralistic, reflexive, and active – as essential to adult education. Citizenship is considered fundamental to LLL and collective well-being. While intersubjective transformational and citizenship learning are essential components of a comprehensive LLL paradigm, public engagement fosters democratic citizenship. Concerns about women, immigrants, and transnational migrants emphasize the importance of inclusive citizenship through transnational learning, a “pedagogy of publicness”, active citizenship in education and society, community education, LLL cities, LLL communities, and LLL environments (Grotlüschen et al., 2024; Holford et al., 2022; Nuissl & Sava, 2024).

The texts under analysis showed interest in LLL and sustainable development (4.0%) to the same degree as LLL and citizenship education. The documents of UNESCO, Council of Europe, World Bank, and OECD explicitly connect sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles with human rights, gender equality, the promotion of the culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and the appreciation of cultural diversity and the contribution of culture to sustainable development (Grotlüschen et al., 2024).

According to Hanemann (2019), there are three significant aspects of sustainable development: social equality, economic empowerment, and environmental sustainability. The documents that pro-

mote sustainable development that originate from UNESCO, Council of Europe, World Bank, and OECD are met with skepticism from several authors. According to Elfert (2019), although these agendas promise to lower global poverty, they will not significantly change the current power dynamics and oppressive systems that lead to unequal development opportunities.

A notably reduced quantity of the examined texts (2.8%) addresses the interconnections and/or issues related to LLL – values, and quality of life. Since life satisfaction, quality, and meaning are significant to individuals, Karatas and associates (2024) suggest that adult education can give meaning to the quality of life by using the LLL philosophy to renovate knowledge and experience systems individually. Lifelong learning is a continuous process of enhancing and strengthening information, beliefs, and skills acquired by individuals during their lifetime, enabling them to implement them in their lives. Additionally, the knowledge, skills, and cognitive abilities acquired through LLL could change behavior or behavior patterns so that lifelong learners can use the acquired knowledge, skills, and cognitive abilities to improve their quality of life (Kuo et al., 2021).

Also, in a total of nine texts (2.8%), the authors examine the relationship between LLL, art education, and leisure. The final two phases of coding encompassed a combination of codes related to the interconnection of LLL, art education, museums (6), leisure, outdoor activities, and play (3). Some authors emphasize the synergy between learning and leisure and suggest that “lifelong learning can also be considered a kind of leisure activity” (Kuo et al., 2021, p. 2). It is interesting that within this specific group of the analyzed papers, there are no obvious indicators of a connection to LLL policy. One of the proposed explanations is that art, leisure, play and learning “can help shift lifelong learning beyond its economic orientations, especially by expanding what ‘counts’ for learning” (Gaydos, & Kumar, 2024, p. 2).

Considering the research subjects in the examined texts, it is not surprising that the majority of them are theoretical in form (35.2%). In addition to this, there is an increased amount of both qualitative and quantitative research. The prevalence of qualitative (30.1%) over quantitative research (22.1%) is evident, which has been an increasing trend in the social sciences in the last twenty years (Thelwall, & Nevill, 2021).

In contrast to other corresponding areas, it is particularly noticeable that there are very few mixed-method studies (4.6%) that address any aspect of lifelong learning (Matović & Ovesni, 2023). Additionally, multi-method research (0.3%) is noticeably lacking. One reason may be the complexity of these two research types.

Conclusion

By performing a systematic literature review of the lifelong learning-related articles published in European journals between 2019 and 2024, we found that authors from North America and Europe most commonly discuss the subject of lifelong learning. LLL policies and the role of LLL as a framework for professional development-related questions are prevalent, alongside theoretical research.

Finally, in light of the types of research that our study identified, it is important to emphasize the

necessity of integrating the results and conducting more comprehensive LLL empirical research. This indicates that conducting only qualitative research, with a limited potential for generalization, is insufficient. Methodologically rigorous quantitative research is crucial in this domain, as is mixed-methods research, which provides a holistic knowledge of the research problem and aims to integrate data to gain insights from both qualitative and quantitative components.

Similar future studies might cover issues we have not covered, like details of the research published in the journals that form part of the systematic literature review. It may encompass an increased number of journals or, for example, concentrate exclusively on the journals indexed in the WoS or SCOPUS databases. A possible future research direction is to examine the intersection of the first author's country of employment at the time of publication, the subject of the paper, and the type of research conducted, along with specific methodological details such as data collection, sample, and instruments used. Each of these research projects would substantially enhance the pool of knowledge related to lifelong learning.

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ЦЕЛОЖИВОТНО УЧЕЊЕ КАО ИСТРАЖИВАЧКА ТЕМА У ЕВРОПСКИМ ЧАСОПИСИМА: ПРЕВАЛЕНЦА, ПРЕДМЕТ И ВРСТЕ ИСТРАЖИВАЊА

У раду се истражује целоживотно учење као значајна истраживачка тема у европским часописима, при чему се постављају три кључна питања: преваленца истраживања, предмет истраживаних текстова и врсте сprovedених истраживања. Sprovedен је систематски преглед литературе који укључује дејалан процес прикупљања података истраживању кодирања за категоризацију истраживачких предмета. Анализа се фокусира на чланке објављене између 2019. и 2024. године, односно укупно на 326 текстова из 125 европских часописа. Користена је техника анализе садржаја, а налази су представљени у фреквенцијама и проценима. За прикупљање података користили смо технике анализе садржаја и применили структурирани протокол за анализу садржаја као инструмент.

Пошли смо од схватања да се процес целоживотног учења сматра неопходним за лични и друштвени напредак и укључује три међусобно повезане димензије: капацитет за учење, социјалне и личне вештине, те да не обухвата само развој техничких вештина потребних за запошљавање. Целоживотно учење промовише се као стратегија за припрему појединаца за нове реалности друштва заснованој на знању, која има за циљ развој аутономних, проактивних и самосвесних појединаца, што је посебно важно у динамичним радним окружењима, где успех зависи од способности да се прилагоде и стекну нове компетенције и вештине. Концепт целоживотног учења, иако није снажно научно утемељен, значајно и сложено утиче на образовну реалност. Стога смо сматрали да су анализа садржаја и преглед који аутори користе у европским часописима у вези с целоживотним учењем, као и преваленца целоживотног учења као истраживачке теме важне за контекстуализацију концепта.

На основу прелиминарно формулисаних критеријума из базе која је обухватала 3853 текста, од којих је сваки прегледан, издвојили смо 326 текстова (мање од 10% одабраних чланака) који су садржали експлицитне и дејалне дискусије о целоживотном учењу и/или целоживотном образовању. Између 2019. и 2024. године највећи број чланака који се односе на термине „целоживотно учење” и/или „целоживотно образовање” објављен је у часописима из Холандије и Велике Британије. Нешто грубачији образац јавља се при испитивању преваленце целоживотног учења као теме истраживања у европским часописима према земљи у којој је први аутор био запошлен у тренутку објављивања текста, где се уочава превладавање публикација са првим ауторима из Немачке, Уједињеног Краљевства и Канаде. Испитивање преваленце целоживотног учења као теме истраживања у европским часописима, на основу региона у којем је први аутор био запошлен у тренутку објављивања

текста, догађајно је разјаснило ситуацију – анализирани текстови углавном укључују ауторе из Европе и Америке, међутим, значајан број појача и од азијских аутора.

Основне истраживачке теме везане за целоживотно учење и целоживотно образовање идентификоване у публикацијама европских часописа од 2019. до 2024. године обухватају пољитике целоживотног учења и улогу целоживотног учења као оквира за професионални развој. Осим тога, постоји велики број студија које се баве темама које укључују информационе и комуникационе технологије у вези са целоживотним учењем, целоживотно учење људских ресурса, социјалне димензије целоживотног учења, вештине и компетенције целоживотног учења, као и партиципација у целоживотном учењу.

Узимајући у обзир истраживачке теме у испитиваним текстовима, није изненађујуће што је већина њих теоријске природе (35,2%). Осим тога, примећан је и већи број квалитативних и квантитативних истраживања, при чему је уочљиво превагавање квалитативних (30,1%) у односу на квантитативна истраживања (22,1%). У поређењу с другим сличним областима, посебно је приметно да је веома мало микс-методских истраживања (4,6%), док су мултиметодска истраживања изузетно ретка (0,3%).

Сличне будуће студије могле би обухватити питања која ми нисмо обрадили, као што су дејави истраживања објављених у часописима који чине део систематског прегледа литературе. Оне могу укључивати већи број часописа или се, на пример, могу концентрисати искључиво на часописе индексиране у WoS или SCOPUS базама података. Могућа будућа истраживања могла би испитати међусобну повезаност земље зајослења првог аутора у тренутку објављивања, тему рада и тип истраживања које је сprovedено, као и специфичне методолошке дејавије као што су прикупљање података, узорак и коришћени инструменти. Сваки од њих истраживачких пројеката значајно би обогатио базу знања везану за целоживотно учење.

Кључне речи: целоживотно учење, систематски преглед литературе, предмет истраживања, типови истраживања