

Civil Society Organizations and the Promotion of Human Resource Development: A Contemporary Psychological Approach

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Abstract

This study examines the role of civil society organizations as catalysts for human resource development from a contemporary psychological perspective by highlighting their contributions to human capacity building and the development of psychological resources that support performance and active participation in development. Using a descriptive-analytic approach, the study draws on relevant scholarly literature and prior research. It examines the psychological approach to human resource development and its foundations, emphasizing the development of self-efficacy, motivation, psychological resilience, and psychological capital as essential components of human resource development. It also reviews the principal contributions of civil society organizations through training, capacity building, empowerment, volunteerism, and the development of social capital. In addition, the study discusses the principal challenges these organizations face and considers future directions for strengthening their roles amid digital transformation and the demands of sustainable development. The study concludes that enhancing the effectiveness of civil society organizations requires an integrated developmental approach that combines the development of professional competencies with the strengthening of psychological resources and institutional partnerships. Such an approach can contribute to developing a more competent workforce capable of responding to the demands of contemporary development.

Keywords: civil society organizations, human resource development, psychological approach, sustainable development

Introduction:

There is growing global interest in enhancing the performance of civil society organizations as essential partners in achieving sustainable development. Achieving this goal requires investment in human resources and the development of individuals' cognitive, psychological, and behavioral capacities, thereby enabling them to contribute effectively across areas of development. In this context, training, professional development, and psychological empowerment programs are particularly important because they build competencies, strengthen motivation, and improve individual and collective performance.

As the role of civil society organizations has expanded and the scope of their interventions has broadened, it has become increasingly important to examine their contributions to human resource development from a perspective that extends beyond administrative and technical considerations to encompass psychological dimensions. These dimensions include the development of psychological capital and self-efficacy and the reinforcement of participation and social responsibility.

Research Problem

Over recent decades, human resource development has become a fundamental pillar of sustainable development, as attention has shifted from investment in material resources to investment in people as the principal drivers of economic and social development. The United Nations Development Programme has emphasized that genuine development is measured not only by economic indicators but also by the expansion of people's choices, the development of their capabilities, and their active participation in public life. Achieving this objective requires coordinated efforts among governmental and nongovernmental actors (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2003a).

In this context, civil society organizations have emerged as key development actors. Their role has expanded beyond the traditional provision of assistance and social services to encompass human capacity building, skills development, community participation, and the empowerment of individuals to contribute actively to local and national development. These contributions are advanced through training and education programs, the promotion of volunteerism, the development of social capital, and the reinforcement of citizenship and social responsibility (UNDP, 2003b).

However, rapid global transformations associated with the digital revolution, the knowledge economy, and changes in the labor market have generated new requirements for human resource development. These requirements are no longer limited to knowledge and technical skills; they also include positive psychological resources that enable individuals to adapt to their work and social environments, such as self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism. Together, these dimensions constitute psychological capital, a prominent contemporary concept in organizational psychology and human resource development (Al-Qahtani et al., 2024).

Research has shown that psychological capital is developable through training and professional development and that its development is positively associated with performance, commitment, creativity, organizational citizenship behavior, and quality of work life (Luthans, 2012). Avey et al. (2011) further found that psychological capital was positively associated with desirable employee attitudes, behaviors, and performance and negatively associated with undesirable attitudes and behaviors, including cynicism, turnover intentions, stress, anxiety, and deviance.

Despite the growing literature on the role of civil society organizations in development, most studies have emphasized economic, social, and administrative dimensions. The psychological dimension has received less attention, particularly regarding how these organizations build positive psychological resources, strengthen motivation and psychological empowerment, and develop psychological capital in ways that improve human resource effectiveness and support sustainable development.

Accordingly, the role of civil society organizations should be reconsidered from a contemporary psychological perspective that views them not merely as institutions that provide services or assistance

but also as environments for developing individuals' psychological, cognitive, and social potential. From this perspective, the research problem is expressed in the following central question:

How do civil society organizations, using a contemporary psychological approach, contribute to human resource development and to enhancing individuals' positive psychological resources in ways that support sustainable development?

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to examine the role of civil society organizations as catalysts for human resource development from a contemporary psychological perspective by highlighting their contributions to the development of individuals' capacities and psychological resources, thereby enhancing their competence and active participation in development.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its examination of the role of civil society organizations in human resource development from a contemporary psychological perspective, amid growing interest in human capital as a foundation of sustainable development. The study also highlights the contributions of civil society organizations to developing individuals' capacities and psychological resources, thereby enhancing their competence and active participation in serving society.

Key Concepts

Clearly defining the key concepts of a study is essential to precision and objectivity. Researchers must therefore identify and delimit the concepts used in their studies to facilitate readers' understanding of the subject.

Civil Society Organizations

Ehrenberg characterizes civil society as an inevitably vague and elastic concept that does not readily lend itself to precise definition. Shaykhani similarly describes the term as ambiguous and open to competing interpretations depending on the author's perspective and cultural or scholarly background (as cited in Mufti, 2014, p. 13).

Civil society has also been defined as a sphere characterized by a multiplicity of voluntary organizations, including political parties, trade unions, federations, associations, clubs, interest groups, pressure groups, and other nongovernmental entities that represent public presence and reflect the vitality of society. Such plurality contributes to the establishment of civic institutions that operate alongside institutions of authority and prevent them from monopolizing the various spheres of public activity (Shaoush Ikhwan, 2015, p. 26).

Human Resource Development

Human resource development is a process aimed at developing individuals' knowledge, skills, and abilities, thereby enabling them to perform their work effectively across various fields through appropriate selection, preparation, and capacity development aligned with job requirements and organizational needs (Ben Zahi & Al-Shayeb, 2004, p. 198).

Human resource development is not limited to training; it encompasses a range of activities intended to develop human capacities and competencies across cognitive, skill-based, and behavioral dimensions, thereby improving performance and human resource effectiveness (Bark, 2009, p. 275).

For the purposes of this study, human resource development refers to a planned process that equips individuals with knowledge, skills, and abilities while developing their positive psychological resources. This process enables them to perform their tasks efficiently and effectively and enhances their contribution to the objectives of civil society organizations and sustainable development efforts.

The Psychological Approach to Human Resource Development

The concept of human resource development has changed significantly in recent decades. It is no longer limited to developing knowledge and technical skills through training and education; it also emphasizes the psychological and behavioral dimensions that enable individuals to use their abilities effectively and adapt to a changing work environment. Developments in organizational psychology and positive psychology have reshaped the philosophy of human resource development by emphasizing positive psychological resources as essential to performance, creativity, commitment, and sustainable development (Al-Qahtani et al., 2024; Al-Murshid, 2022).

The psychological approach places people at the center of the development process. Genuine investment therefore entails not only developing technical skills but also strengthening psychological characteristics and cognitive, emotional, and social capacities. From this perspective, human resource development promotes continuous learning, decision-making, problem-solving, adaptation to change, and positive attitudes toward work, thereby supporting both individual and organizational objectives (Ar'our, 2011; Boukmish, 2014; Hamr Al-Ain, 2022).

The emergence of positive psychology produced a qualitative shift in human resource management and development practices by redirecting attention from weaknesses and psychological pressures toward strengths and positive capacities. Psychological capital is one of the most prominent concepts associated with this perspective. It refers to a positive psychological state of development comprising four principal dimensions: self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience. Research has linked these dimensions to improved performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and positive organizational behavior (Mahrez et al., 2020).

Contemporary literature emphasizes that these psychological resources are not fixed traits; they can be developed through training and planned interventions incorporated into human resource development programs. Luthans et al. (2010) found that a brief psychological capital intervention improved employee performance, indicating that investment in psychological resources is an effective means of enhancing human resource performance.

The meta-analysis by Avey et al. (2011), which included 51 independent samples and 12,567 employees, further demonstrated the importance of psychological capital in human resource development. Psychological capital showed significant positive associations with desirable employee attitudes, organizational citizenship behavior, and multiple measures of performance, as well as significant negative associations with undesirable employee attitudes and behaviors. These findings indicate that human resource development should include programs designed to cultivate positive psychological resources alongside technical and administrative skills.

The psychological approach therefore views individuals as both human and psychological capital and seeks to create organizational and social environments that strengthen self-efficacy, motivation, resilience in the face of challenges, and active participation in development. Civil society organizations

can play a central role by implementing training, guidance, and volunteer programs designed to develop these psychological resources. Such programs can foster creativity, initiative, and social integration and reinforce the position of civil society organizations as essential partners in human resource development and sustainable development.

Contributions of Civil Society Organizations to Human Resource Development

Civil society organizations have become key actors in human development because their roles extend beyond the provision of social services to human capacity building, community participation, and individual empowerment. International literature identifies these organizations as strategic partners of governments and international institutions in implementing development programs because they can reach diverse social groups, understand their needs, and design programs suited to local contexts (UNDP, 2003b).

One of the principal contributions of civil society organizations to human resource development is the development of knowledge and skills through training and vocational development programs, workshops, and awareness-raising seminars. These activities seek to enhance individuals' competencies and capacities in accordance with labor market requirements. Their effects extend beyond technical skills to critical thinking, communication, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving, all of which are increasingly important amid rapid economic and social change.

Civil society organizations also play a central role in individual empowerment by providing opportunities to participate in volunteer initiatives and community activities. Such participation can strengthen self-efficacy, responsibility, citizenship, and belonging. From a psychological perspective, these practical experiences can enhance motivation and adaptability, which are essential to developing human resources capable of initiative and creativity.

Another important contribution is the development of social capital. Civil society organizations expand social networks and strengthen cooperation, trust, and solidarity among community members, thereby creating an environment that supports learning, knowledge exchange, and capacity development. Civil society participation in development processes can also strengthen good governance, support public participation, and improve the effectiveness and sustainability of development programs (UNDP, 2003b).

From a psychological perspective, these organizations develop individuals' positive psychological resources by providing supportive environments for learning and participation, encouraging initiative and teamwork, and strengthening achievement and belonging. These practices are consistent with positive psychology, which maintains that investment in self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism can improve performance, productivity, and quality of life and constitutes a contemporary approach to human resource development (Mahrez et al., 2020; Issa & Mihoubi, 2022; Al-Qahtani et al., 2024).

Civil society organizations also promote social inclusion by directing programs toward vulnerable groups, such as young people, women, persons with disabilities, and unemployed individuals. These programs can develop their capacities and facilitate their integration into economic and social life, thereby expanding opportunities for community participation, reducing exclusion, and promoting social justice—essential components of sustainable human development.

The contributions of civil society organizations to human resource development therefore extend beyond training and knowledge transfer to individuals' psychological, social, and professional development. Through capacity development, the strengthening of psychological resources, volunteerism, participation, and social capital, these organizations can prepare human resources to address contemporary development challenges. Their success depends on their ability to adopt integrated programs that combine professional competencies with psychological and social development.

Challenges and Future Directions

Despite their growing role in human resource development, civil society organizations continue to face challenges that affect program effectiveness and the achievement of development objectives. Limited financial resources are among the most prominent challenges because many organizations depend on external funding or donations, leaving programs vulnerable when funding declines. Some organizations also lack qualified personnel and expertise in strategic planning, project management, and program evaluation, which can adversely affect the quality of their services and activities (UNDP, 2015b).

Other challenges include limited coordination and integration among civil society organizations, government institutions, universities, and the private sector. The absence of effective partnerships can duplicate efforts, limit the effective use of available resources, and impede the integration required to implement human resource development programs. Some organizations also continue to rely on traditional training methods, reducing their ability to respond to rapid labor market transformations associated with the digital revolution and the knowledge economy.

From a psychological perspective, many civil society programs emphasize technical and professional skills while giving insufficient attention to psychological dimensions, even though these dimensions are essential to successful human resource development. Self-efficacy, motivation, resilience, optimism, hope, and adaptability directly influence readiness to learn, the ability to manage pressure, and effective performance. Research on psychological capital indicates that investment in these resources can improve performance, commitment, creativity, and quality of work life, making them integral to contemporary human resource development programs (Mahrez et al., 2020; Issa & Mihoubi, 2022; Al-Qahtani et al., 2024).

Civil society organizations also face a limited culture of evaluation and impact measurement. Some organizations focus on implementing activities without adequately measuring outcomes or assessing their effects on human resource development. This limitation makes it difficult to improve future programs using rigorous evidence, reduces the efficiency of resource allocation, and constrains the sustainability of program outcomes.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive future vision that shifts from traditional programming toward evidence-based development programs combining professional, psychological, and social capacity development. Partnerships among civil society organizations, higher education institutions, and research centers should be strengthened to support training programs informed by current research and responsive to community needs. This vision also requires investment in digital transformation through online platforms, remote training, and artificial intelligence technologies to expand access to capacity-building programs and improve the quality of training services. At the same

time, positive psychology should inform program design through an emphasis on psychological capital, psychological empowerment, and self-efficacy, which support continuous learning, innovation, and active community participation.

The future contribution of civil society organizations to human resource development therefore depends on their ability to adapt to contemporary change and adopt evidence-based approaches that integrate human and psychological capital, strengthen institutional partnerships, and use modern technology in support of development. These directions can enhance organizational effectiveness and consolidate the position of civil society organizations as strategic partners in human and sustainable development.

Psychological Mechanisms for Enhancing the Effectiveness of Civil Society Organizations in Human Resource Development

In the context of contemporary economic, social, and technological transformations, human resource development has become a multidimensional process. It is no longer limited to equipping individuals with professional knowledge and skills; rather, it now encompasses the development of psychological, cognitive, and social capacities that enable them to adapt to the demands of a changing environment and to engage in continuous learning, creativity, and active participation in development. From this perspective, the psychological approach has emerged as a contemporary framework that regards the individual as both the center and the ultimate purpose of development. It emphasizes that the success of human resource development programs depends on their capacity to produce positive changes in individuals' personalities, attitudes, and motivations, rather than merely increasing their knowledge or skills.

Within this context, civil society organizations play an important role in providing educational, training, and social environments that enable individuals to acquire experience and develop their capacities through volunteer programs, awareness campaigns, training courses, and social and economic empowerment projects. However, the effectiveness of these programs is determined not by the number of beneficiaries or the volume of activities implemented, but by their ability to generate sustainable psychological and behavioral changes in individuals. Such changes strengthen self-confidence, increase motivation, and develop the capacity to take initiative and participate in community service. Mufti (2014) maintains that civil society is one of the fundamental pillars for building a society capable of mobilizing its members' capacities and consolidating the values of participation and responsibility, thereby making it a principal partner in achieving human development.

From a psychological perspective, the success of civil society organizations in human resource development depends on adopting mechanisms that prioritize individuals' psychological development over professional dimensions. Individuals who possess confidence in their abilities, motivation to achieve, and the capacity to confront challenges are better prepared to benefit from education and training programs and to apply the knowledge they acquire in practical settings. This explains the growing interest in integrating concepts from positive psychology into development programs by emphasizing the cultivation of psychological resources that help individuals achieve personal and professional success.

5.1 Enhancing Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is among the most important psychological variables affecting human resource development because it reflects individuals' perceptions of their ability to perform required tasks and achieve established goals. Individuals with high levels of self-efficacy are more inclined to take initiative, more capable of confronting problems, and more persistent in their efforts despite difficulties than those with limited confidence in their abilities.

Within the work of civil society organizations, self-efficacy can be enhanced by involving beneficiaries in diverse activities rather than limiting programs to the theoretical presentation of information. Young people's participation in volunteer campaigns, the assignment of organizational responsibilities, and opportunities to lead work teams provide authentic experiences of success and help them discover their capabilities, thereby increasing self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment. Positive feedback, continuous encouragement, and recognition of effort also function as psychological factors that strengthen individuals' belief in their ability to succeed and encourage them to undertake new experiences. In addition, training programs implemented by civil society organizations play an important role in developing self-efficacy by emphasizing practical application, experiential learning, and teamwork rather than relying exclusively on conventional lectures. The more opportunities individuals have to apply what they have learned in real-life situations, the more confident they become in their abilities and the more prepared they are to assume future responsibilities. Ben Zahi and Al-Chaib (2004) emphasize that training is not limited to developing technical skills; rather, it is a psychological process that fosters cognitive and behavioral capacities and helps individuals improve their performance and adapt to workplace demands.

Self-efficacy is particularly important in civil society programs directed toward young people, women, and vulnerable groups, as these populations often face social and economic challenges that diminish their confidence in their abilities. Consequently, designing development programs that account for psychological dimensions and provide opportunities for gradual success contributes to higher levels of self-efficacy and increases individuals' capacity to integrate into economic and social life. Developing this psychological dimension also positively affects community participation, as individuals become more prepared to take initiative, engage in volunteer work, and assume responsibility, thereby strengthening the developmental role of civil society organizations.

The literature indicates that the success of human resource development programs is associated with their capacity to develop individuals' personalities alongside their skills. Possessing knowledge alone does not guarantee improved performance unless it is accompanied by a sense of being able to apply that knowledge in practice. Self-efficacy therefore serves as a link between training and actual behavior, making it one of the most important psychological mechanisms that civil society organizations should incorporate when planning and implementing development programs (Park, 2009; Chaouch, 2014).

5.2 Fostering Motivation for Learning and Community Participation

Motivation is one of the fundamental pillars of human resource development because it constitutes the internal force that drives individuals to learn, acquire skills, sustain performance, and achieve goals. From a psychological perspective, the success of any training or development program is

associated with individuals' readiness to participate and the extent to which they perceive the program as important and relevant to their personal and professional lives. Civil society organizations must therefore adopt practices that foster beneficiaries' motivation and transform them from recipients of services into active participants in the development process.

The organizational environment provided by civil society organizations can increase motivation by allowing individuals to participate in decision-making, encouraging personal initiative, and reinforcing the importance of their roles within the organization. When individuals feel that their efforts are valued and respected and that their participation has a positive effect on society, their desire to continue learning, working, and contributing increases, which is reflected in higher levels of performance and productivity.

The use of interactive training methods grounded in dialogue, teamwork, and field applications also increases individuals' interest in training programs. It makes the learning process more engaging and more closely connected to their actual needs. The effects of these methods are not limited to knowledge acquisition; they also extend to fostering initiative and responsibility, qualities that civil society organizations seek to cultivate among community members. In this regard, Ben Zahi and Al-Chaib (2004) emphasize that training is an integrated process designed to produce cognitive and behavioral change, enabling individuals to improve their performance and respond effectively to the demands of life and work.

Volunteer activities play a central role in strengthening motivation by providing individuals with opportunities to express their abilities, serve their communities, and recognize the value of their contributions to others. These activities also help satisfy several psychological needs, including the need for belonging, self-actualization, and a sense of achievement. This increases individuals' attachment to the organization and their willingness to participate in various community initiatives. Chaouch (2014) argues that volunteer work within civil society organizations contributes to the development of a more positive social personality and strengthens cooperation and responsibility among individuals, thereby supporting local development efforts.

5.3 Psychological Empowerment and the Promotion of Initiative

Psychological empowerment is a contemporary concept that has received increasing attention in organizational psychology and human resource development because of its role in strengthening autonomy, competence, and the ability to influence the decisions and activities in which individuals participate. Empowerment does not merely involve granting authority; rather, it seeks to develop individuals capable of making decisions, assuming responsibility, and taking the initiative to solve problems. This orientation is consistent with the philosophy of civil society organizations, which is grounded in community participation and collective action.

Civil society organizations can strengthen psychological empowerment by involving beneficiaries in planning programs and activities, listening to their views, and providing opportunities to participate in managing community initiatives. They can also encourage beneficiaries to propose creative ideas and participate in decisions concerning the programs directed toward them. Such practices enable individuals to perceive themselves as influential members of the organization rather than merely as

recipients of its services, thereby increasing commitment, strengthening self-confidence, and improving psychological satisfaction.

Psychological empowerment also contributes to the development of leadership, teamwork, and communication skills, all of which are essential for human resources across different fields. When individuals feel free to express their views and can influence their environment, they become more willing to assume responsibility and better able to adapt to change and confront challenges. Psychological empowerment therefore provides an important means of transforming individuals' latent capacities into positive practices and behaviors that serve society.

Psychological empowerment further strengthens mutual trust between an organization and the beneficiaries of its programs, encouraging the development of relationships grounded in cooperation and respect. This enhances teamwork effectiveness and reinforces a sense of belonging within the organization. It also helps cultivate social responsibility and motivates individuals to continue participating in volunteer activities, thereby supporting the sustainability of development initiatives and achieving their long-term objectives.

Park (2009) indicates that human resource development requires an organizational environment that helps individuals develop their abilities and realize their latent potential. This can be achieved by adopting contemporary management approaches based on participation, encouragement, and continuous development. Similarly, Mufti (2014) argues that civil society organizations play an important role in developing community awareness and consolidating a culture of participation. Psychological empowerment is therefore one of the fundamental mechanisms for strengthening individuals' contributions to sustainable human development.

The preceding discussion demonstrates that the effectiveness of civil society organizations in human resource development does not depend solely on the implementation of training and qualification programs. It is also associated with their capacity to employ psychological mechanisms that develop individuals' psychological resources alongside their knowledge and skills. Enhancing self-efficacy, fostering motivation, and promoting psychological empowerment are essential approaches that help individuals gain confidence in their abilities, assume responsibility, and participate positively in diverse development activities. These mechanisms contribute to improved performance and an increased capacity to adapt to changing conditions (Ben Zahi & Al-Chaib, 2004).

Development programs implemented by civil society organizations also produce more sustainable outcomes when they integrate professional and psychological dimensions. Developing technical skills alone is insufficient to prepare human resources capable of creativity and responsiveness to development requirements. Attention to psychological dimensions—including building self-confidence, promoting initiative, and cultivating a sense of belonging and responsibility—is therefore a fundamental requirement for the success of these programs (Park, 2009).

In addition, volunteer work and community activities organized by civil society organizations provide genuine opportunities to develop personal and social skills, reinforce the values of cooperation and participation, and cultivate leadership capacities. These outcomes contribute to the development of balanced individuals who are capable of supporting community development. An organizational environment based on participation, respect, and encouragement also increases psychological satisfaction

and motivation and strengthens individuals' commitment to the organization's objectives and developmental mission (Chaouch, 2014).

Strengthening the role of civil society organizations in human resource development, therefore, requires the adoption of an integrated psychological approach that places the individual at the center of the development process. This entails designing programs that cultivate positive psychological resources alongside professional competencies and strengthening partnerships with educational and research institutions to leverage recent research findings and improve development practices. Such an approach can contribute to the development of more competent and resilient human resources that are capable of adapting to rapid transformations and participating actively in the achievement of sustainable development. It can thereby reinforce the position of civil society organizations as strategic partners in building society and developing its human capital.

Conclusion

This study concludes that civil society organizations have become essential actors in human resource development. Their role is no longer limited to social services and volunteer activities; it also encompasses human capacity building and community participation, thereby contributing to sustainable development. The psychological approach demonstrates that investment in human resources requires not only professional knowledge and skills but also positive psychological resources, including self-efficacy, motivation, resilience, optimism, and psychological capital. These resources directly influence performance, creativity, and adaptability.

The study also shows that civil society organizations have considerable potential to contribute to human resource development through training, professional development, empowerment, volunteerism, and social capital. However, the effectiveness of these roles depends on overcoming challenges such as limited resources, weak institutional partnerships, and insufficient attention to psychological dimensions in the design and implementation of development programs.

The study therefore recommends an integrated approach to human resource development that combines professional competencies with psychological resources, strengthens cooperation among civil society organizations, universities, research centers, and government institutions, and leverages digital technologies and artificial intelligence in capacity-building programs. It also emphasizes the need for further field research on the effects of civil society programs on human resource development, particularly research addressing psychological capital, psychological empowerment, self-efficacy, and quality of work life. Such research can support the development of more comprehensive and effective models of sustainable human development.

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