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HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT: A HOLISTIC FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY GROWTH

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ABSTRACT

Human resource development (HRD) and social empowerment have increasingly been recognized as critical drivers of sustainable community growth in the context of global development challenges. The relationship between HRD, social empowerment, and sustainable community development using secondary data derived from international development indicators. The research adopts a quantitative approach and analyzes key variables related to education, gender equality, labour participation, and human development outcomes. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis were employed to explore the relationships among these variables. The findings reveal that education-based HRD indicators, particularly mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling, have a strong positive influence on human development outcomes. The study identifies a significant negative relationship between gender inequality and human development, indicating that higher levels of gender equality contribute to improved socio-economic development. Although indicators of political and economic participation demonstrate moderate effects, they remain important components of inclusive development strategies. The results highlight the importance of integrating HRD and empowerment initiatives to achieve sustainable development objectives. The findings provide important policy implications for governments and development organizations seeking to strengthen human capabilities and promote inclusive and sustainable community growth.

KEYWORDS: Human Resource Development, Social Empowerment, Human Capital, Sustainable Development, Community Growth, Gender Equality, Education Development, Human Development Index.

1. Introduction

Human capital has always been viewed as the major socio-economic factor of the development and sustainable growth in contemporary communities. Investments in education, skills and capacity of workforce are generally viewed as necessary towards enhancing productivity, innovation and economic resiliency. Human resource development (HRD) is important in reinforcing these capacities through the development of knowledge, skills and professional abilities of individuals. Research has demonstrated that human capital development is a key factor that promotes the economic growth and sustainable development through its ability to help societies enhance the productivity and innovativeness of labor (Bykova *et al.*, 2024; Omelchuk *et al.*, 2020). With the ever-changing economies in line with globalization and technological advancement, the enhancement of human resources through education and inculcation of skills has become one of the most significant strategies in promoting long-term growth and enhancing the lives of the communities.

The global development agenda has in the recent years placed more implications on the need to develop communities in a sustainable manner. Sustainable development does not exist only in economic advancement but it is also concerned with social inclusion, environmental responsibility, and community empowerment. According to scholars, the implementation of sustainable community development is based on the need to empower local capacities and stimulate local involvement in social and economic life processes (Franco and Tracey, 2019). Societies with high human capital and institutional capacity building support systems have a better chance to confront social problems and achieve long term sustainability. Furthermore, it was stated that community empowerment efforts that include local knowledge, social collaboration, and participatory governance are effective tools to achieve the results of sustainable development (Dushkova and Ivlieva, 2024). These strategies underscore the significance of self-enhancement and community empowerment in community decision-making processes, which have impact on their social and economic well-being.

The capacity-building programs and education, as well as skills development, are at the heart of this empowerment process. The availability of education and jobs improves the capability to engage in economic activities and develop the community. Its educational attainment has been generally attributed to better social participation, economic independence, and empowerment especially among

marginalized populations like women and youth (Habib *et al.*, 2019; Jaysawal and Saha, 2023). Moreover, education with community involvement and leadership training can empower the human resources to a considerable extent and foster inclusive development. It has also been reported that skill building and vocational training courses are significant stepping stones to attaining sustainable growth because they help individuals adjust to evolving labour market needs (Jafarov, 2025). These processes can be part of such workforce development undertaken by HRD, but additionally lead to overall social empowerment and community resilience.

Although more people have become aware of the need to focus on HRD and social empowerment as part of sustainable development, the current research tends to discuss the two concepts separately without considering them as two related processes. There are numerous studies dedicated to HRD in an organizational setting, where the emphasis is placed on the training of the workforce and its performance enhancement, whereas the majority of studies devoted to empowerment are dedicated to social participation, gender equality, and community engagement (Obazuaye, 2024; Schaupp, 2021). This disjointed outlook restricts the knowledge that can be formed about how HRD initiatives can create impacts in social empowerment as well as sustainable community development. Incorporation of HRD and empowerment models into the overall picture can give a more detailed idea on how human capital investments can lead to overall developmental results. As such, the interrelationship between HRD and social empowerment is critical to the development of an integrated framework that will inform sustainable development of the community and provide effective policy and development approaches (Figure 1).

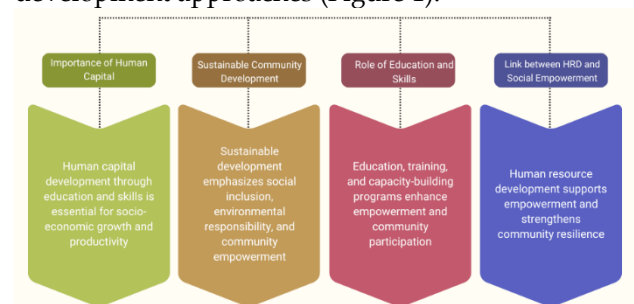


Figure 1: Human Resource Development and Social Empowerment as Drivers of Sustainable Community Growth

The study explores how human capital development, education, and skill-building initiatives contribute to social empowerment and sustainable community

development. It highlights the interconnected role of HRD in strengthening community resilience, promoting inclusion, and supporting long-term socio-economic growth.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between human resource development and social empowerment in the context of sustainable community growth
2. To analyze the influence of key human resource development indicators, such as education and skill development, on social empowerment and community development outcomes
3. To develop a holistic framework that integrates human resource development and social empowerment for promoting sustainable community growth

2. Literature Review

2.1 Human Resource Development

HRD is now regarded as a strategic mode of enhancing competencies of individuals, performance of organizations and overall socio-economic performance. HRD is concerned with improving the human capacities by education, training and professional development so as to enable the individuals to adjust to the dynamic economic and technological factors. Obazuaye (2024) defines HRD as organized learning that is used to build knowledge, skills, and abilities that facilitate personal development and organizational performance. With time, HRD has come to refer to a broader focus on employee training than an inclusive model involving the personal growth of an individual, their leadership capability, and social progression (Schaupp, 2021).

The significance of HRD is directly connected to the human capital theory, which emphasizes the power of investments in education and development of skills in the stimulation of economic productivity and long-term growth. Human capital is a term used to refer to the aggregate knowledge, skills, and competencies provided by individuals to the development of the economy and the society (Fix, 2021). According to empirical research, those countries that have developed systems of human capital development are more likely to have a high extent of economic performance and innovation (Bykova et al., 2024). Moreover, education and vocational training programs can be considered as the necessary tools to workforce development and the competitiveness of the labor market. The skill development initiatives are also important in developing long-term growth as they enable people

to gain the skills that can help in enhancing technological growth and economic change (Jafarov, 2025).

2.2 Social Empowerment

Social empowerment is the process whereby individuals and communities can control resources, engage in decision-making and be able to enhance their social and economic status. Empowerment is believed to be a multidimensional concept and the concept includes the economic, educational, and political aspects. According to Joseph (2020), empowerment is a process in which people get more ability to make decisions and convert those decisions into what they want to see. With the empowerment processes, the people gain the confidence and resources that they have, which enable them to actively engage in social and economic activities.

Some of the most important factors that affect social empowerment include education and employment opportunities. Education increases the knowledge and decision-making ability of the people and employment offers them financial freedom and esteem in the society. The studies have indicated that education and employment are important factors helping women become empowered as they enhance economic and social status (Habib et al., 2019; Jaysawal and Saha, 2023). Furthermore, the empowerment has been observed to be reinforced by financial inclusion programs like the microfinance programs that give individuals access to financial resources and entrepreneurial opportunities (Rehman et al., 2020). Social cohesion is further boosted by community empowerment initiatives promoting participation and collaboration which help to increase the capacity of communities to respond to socio-economic problems (Dushkova and Ivlieva, 2024).

2.3 HRD and Community Development

The linkage between HRD and community development has been given an incremental concern in the development research. HRD programs help in the development of the community by improving the capacity and skills of people together with their knowledge in economic and societal activities. A community that has been well endowed with human capital is in a better position to overcome the economic challenges and raise the living standards. Human capital development empowers the communities because it enhances innovation, productivity, and social resilience (Bykova et al., 2024).

Social capital which implies networks of trust, cooperation and common values within communities is also interrelated with the concept of community resilience. Social capital is very important in facilitating community projects and social action towards development. Liu et al. (2022) used to state that communities characterized by a high level of social capital and human resource capability are more resilient to handle environmental and socio-economic issues. HRD programs that concentrate on education, vocational training, and capacity building have helped to enhance the level of community involvement and achievement of sustainable development outcomes in various developing economies (Franco and Tracey, 2019).

2.4 Sustainable Community Growth

Sustainable community development is the development principles that meet the economic development, social integration, and environmental sustainability. This notion is strongly interconnected with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that focus on inclusive development, poverty eradication, and a better quality of life. The concept of sustainable development demands unitary solutions that take into account social, economic, and environmental issues at the same time (Mishra et al., 2024).

Human capital development is very vital in ensuring sustainable community development through better workforce skills, innovation and economic opportunities. Long term community resilience and sustainability are the results of inclusive growth plans, which put education, employment, and social participation first (Oladapo and Oyaromade, 2025). Moreover, environmentally responsible programs and social empowerment might be regarded as the most prevalent aspects of balanced development in sustainable community programs. In El-Haggag and Samaha (2019), sustainable communities are considered to be a combination of economic growth and environmental conservation alongside social justice to develop advantages in the long term to society.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

There are a number of theoretical viewpoints that facilitate the connection that exists between HRD, social empowerment, and sustainable community growth (Setyowati and Octafian, 2025). The human capital theory is based on the fact that investments in education and training increase the productivity of individuals and lead to economic growth (Fix, 2021). The capability approach also emphasizes on an increase in people opportunity and freedom to attain

better well-being and social engagement. Besides, the empowerment theory describes how communities and individuals become able to control their resources and decision-making, which enhances their ability to control social and economic outcomes (Joseph, 2020). Combined, these theoretical approaches offer a holistic background of comprehending the role of HRD and empowerment strategies in promoting sustainable development of the community.

Although there is a lot of research on HRD, empowerment, and sustainable development, much of the existing research tends to analyze them in individual contexts, and not in a coordinated manner. Majority of HRD research is centered on workforce development and performance of the organization, and empowerment research on social participation and community involvement. As a result, the literature on HRD indicators, dimensions of empowerment, and the sustainability outcomes are poorly combined into one analytical model. The gap in this case should be addressed to be able to devise holistic development strategies of developing human resources with social empowerment in the way of ensuring sustainable community development.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research design that will be adopted in this study is quantitative research design to analyse the relationship between HRD, social empowerment and sustainable community growth. The quantitative methods are typically applied in the development studies in order to measure the socio-economic variables and assess the correlation between human capital and developmental outcomes. The study uses descriptive and analytical research method that enables the study to seek patterns and relationships between variables of key development.

3.2 Data Source

The research is based on the secondary data, which are the publicly available international datasets, which present indicators regarding the human development and socio-economic progress. Specifically, the Human Development Index (HDI) data is used as the primary source of data since the data set consists of the most important indicators, including education, life expectancy, and income levels. These indexes have been broadly applied in development studies to determine development of human capital and social well-being among nations. Reliability of the data is guaranteed by the use of

secondary datasets and it is possible to analyze the trends of development at the global level.

3.3 Variables and Measurement

The study focuses on three primary variables, namely, HRD indicators, social empowerment indicators, and sustainable community growth indicators. The variables which are based on HRD are education and skill development, the education index and literacy levels are the measures of HRD. The social empowerment is measured by using indices like employment rate and gender and related development indices which portray the accessibility of people in economic and social opportunities. The broader development indicators on which sustainable community growth is measured are the Human Development Index, which is a measure on the improvements in living standards, health, and education.

3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The analyzed data are discussed with the help of various statistical tools to study the connection between the research variables. The data is summarised with the help of descriptive statistics to define the general trends in the indicators of human

development. Moreover, correlation analysis is used to establish the quality of relationships and their direction between the variables of HRD and social empowerment. Regression analysis is also used to evaluate the impact of the HRD indicators on sustainable community growth to give empirical evidence of the connection between the development of human capital and the overall development.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics were initially computed to analyse the distribution and nature of the main variables as far as HRD, social empowerment, and sustainable community growth is concerned. The analysis was done using the last one year of the dataset (2022). These variables were Human Development Index (HDI), mean years of schooling, expected years of schooling, gender inequality, women representation in parliament and feminine labour force participation.

These descriptive results, as depicted in Table 1, demonstrate that indicators of education and those of gender equality continue to be the focal points of human development and empowering communities (Figure 2).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables (2022)

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Human Development Index (HDI)	0.728	0.156	0.380	0.967
Mean Years of Schooling	9.01	3.30	1.34	14.26
Expected Years of Schooling	13.63	2.99	7.04	21.08
Gender Inequality Index	0.335	0.195	0.009	0.820
Women in Parliament (%)	25.96	12.19	0.29	54.72
Female Labour Participation (%)	50.56	14.48	5.84	79.78

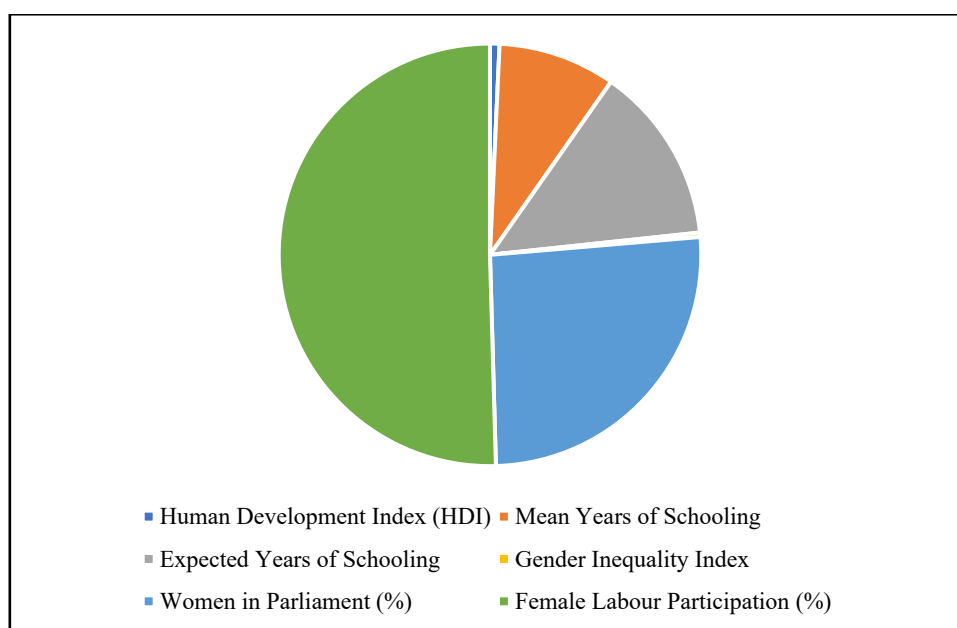


Figure 2: Distribution of Human Development and Social Empowerment Indicators

The figure illustrates the distribution of key indicators related to human resource development and social empowerment, including HDI, education levels, gender inequality, women's political representation, and female labour participation, highlighting their relative contributions to sustainable community development.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

The correlation test was used to test the associations between the indicators of HRD, social empowerment variables, and sustainable community development. Table 2 describes the results.

The results reveal that there is a positive relationship with strong indication between education indicators and HDI.

Table 2. Correlation Matrix

Variable	HDI	Mean Years Schooling	Expected Years Schooling	Gender Inequality	Women in Parliament	Female Labour Participation
HDI	1.000	0.916	0.894	-0.920	0.257	0.147
Mean Years Schooling	0.916	1.000	0.789	-0.846	0.226	0.203
Expected Years Schooling	0.894	0.789	1.000	-0.821	0.349	0.200
Gender Inequality	-0.920	-0.846	-0.821	1.000	-0.411	-0.230
Women in Parliament	0.257	0.226	0.349	-0.411	1.000	0.303
Female Labour Participation	0.147	0.203	0.200	-0.230	0.303	1.000

4.3 Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis using HDI as the dependent variable was undertaken on the effect of HRD as well as social empowerment on sustainable community growth. These independent variables were mean years of schooling, expected years of schooling, gender inequality, women representation in parliament, and women labour participation.

Table 3 displays the findings of the regression analysis. The overall model is statistically significant and explanatory of HDI variance, having a value of R^2 of 0.954 which implies that about 95.4% variation in the human development outcomes can be explained by the variables chosen.

Table 3. Regression Results: Determinants of Human Development

Variable	Coefficient (β)
Constant	0.515
Mean Years of Schooling	0.016
Expected Years of Schooling	0.017
Gender Inequality	-0.326
Women in Parliament (%)	-0.001
Female Labour Participation (%)	-0.001

Model Fit: $R^2 = 0.954$

4.4 Empirical Findings

The empirical results prove that HRD indicators especially education is key in enhancing sustainable development in communities. The findings indicate that increased educational levels and reduced gender inequality have a great impact on the enhanced human development results. Even though social empowerment indicators, including women political representation and labour are also positively related to development, their impact seems to be lower than that of education and gender equality indicators. Such results confirm the discussed framework, which incorporates the HRD and social empowerment as the means of sustainable community development.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study provide empirical support for the central role of HRD in promoting social empowerment and sustainable community growth. The findings prove that education based HRD measures, especially mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling are strongly connected to human development outcomes. These results are consistent with the human capital theory that focuses on the idea that investments in education and skill development increase the productivity, innovation, and economic growth in the long term (Fix, 2021). HRD helps to enhance the socio-economic situation and empower individuals with knowledge and skills,

which can help communities to attain sustainable development.

Education appears to be one of the most significant elements of HRD in the development and empowerment. The close correlation between education indicators and human development outcomes implies that education level is important in improving the capacity and opportunities of the individuals. Other past researches have also emphasized the empowering and socio-economic developmental effects of education. As an example, it is shown that education can contribute greatly to increasing the empowerment of women, making them more open to working in the field, more empowered, and more active in society (Jaysawal and Saha, 2023; Rani, 2024). Education does not only enhance the skills of individuals but also builds confidence and awareness, which empowers individuals to take an active part in the community development, and in the process of making social decisions (Mahbub, 2025). Thus, empowering the education systems and increasing access to high-quality learning opportunities are the critical approaches to attaining sustainable development levels.

The other important conclusion of the research is associated with the connection between the issue of gender inequality and the outcomes of development. The analysis shows that there is a high negative correlation between gender inequality and human development whereby the less a society is characterized by gender disparity, the better the development outcome. It is a finding that can be explained by the rest of the literature that underlines the necessity of gender equality in sustainable development. Gender empowerment programs that enhance the accessibility of women to education, employment, and finances have demonstrated a great contribution to socio-economic development and the well-being of the community (Rehman et al., 2020). When they are empowered to engage in economic and social activities, communities enjoy better productivity, decision gathering and social stability.

The findings also expose the significance of the social-empowerment indicators like female political representation and work force participation. These variables, even though they are showing positive relationships with human development, seem to be weaker in their effects, compared to the education and gender equality indicators. This observation indicates that although involvement in the political and economic lives leads to empowerment, structural issues including education and equality

are some of the underlying development agents. This dynamic can be explained by the empowerment theory, which states that empowerment is a multidimensional process, and it includes resource accessibility, knowledge, and institutional support systems (Joseph, 2020). Participation can on its own not produce outcomes of significant development unless there are enough investments in human capital and institutional capacity.

HRD-community resilience relationship also becomes one of the relevant dimensions of sustainable development. Societies that have a higher human capital and social networks are also more likely to exhibit their ability to overcome social and economic challenges. Social capital, comprising of trust networks, cooperation networks, and value networks is important in enhancing community resilience and collective action. It has been proposed that communities that have a high level of social capital and are well-developed in human resources can better respond to environmental and socio-economic issues (Liu et al., 2022). HRD initiatives resulting in collusion, leadership, and community involvement thus not on economic growth, but resilience and flexibility of communities.

Moreover, the results confirm the suggestion that HRD is an interdisciplinary and strategic process that cannot be reduced to training in an organization (Septiana et al., 2023). Current HRD models focus on the roles of integrating education, leadership growth, and social engagement to yield sustainable development results (Ovesni, 2023). In this respect, HRD activities can be very important in enhancing institutional-community collaboration. To illustrate, university-community partnerships have been demonstrated to increase the capacity of the community through the availability of knowledge resources, training, and joint development programs (Osafo and Yawson, 2019). These alliances have a role to play in sustainable development, as they enhance knowledge transfer, as well as ensuring inclusive participation in the development.

The results of the study also serve the greater discourse of sustainable development which dictates inclusive development and human oriented development practices. The sustainable development systems emphasize the significance of striking a balance between economic development and social and environmental justice. As the recent studies on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) note, the improvement of human capital and its empowerment are fundamental elements of the inclusive and sustainable developmental outcomes (Mishra et al., 2024). Equally, research on inclusive

growth shows that investments in human capital are important in alleviating poverty, enhancing economic stability and enhancing the quality of life (Oladapo and Oyaromade, 2025).

Policy wise, the findings highlight the importance of combined developmental policies which emphasize on education, gender equality and empowerment of communities. The policymakers need to consider enhancing the education system, more skill development programs, and equal opportunities to all members of society. HRD policies such as lifelong learning, vocational training and leadership development can be used to develop capabilities in the workforce and forward growth through innovation. Besides, social cohesion can also be enhanced by empowerment programs that promote the involvement of community and gender inclusion that can enhance the growth of the community in a sustainable way.

The research will be part of the prevailing literature by offering empirical evidence of the interlinked relationship between HRD, social empowerment and sustainable community development. Combining them into a holistic approach, the study emphasizes the significance of human capital development as a platform of inclusive and sustainable development. The results imply that successful HRD practices in collaboration with empowerment efforts may greatly boost the community resilience, minimize the aspects of social inequalities, and foster the long-term developmental outcomes.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between HRD, social empowerment, and sustainable community

growth using secondary development indicators. The results suggest that HRD, especially education and skill development are essential in increasing human development outcomes, and socio-economic development. Some of the education relevant indicators like mean years of schooling, and expected years of schooling were discovered to positively relate with development outcomes with a strong relationship thus the role of human capital investment in enhancing productivity, knowledge, and social participation. What the findings also indicate is that equality and empowerment of the gender is a strong step towards sustainable development since the lower the gender inequality the higher the human development is witnessed in the society. Even though the social empowerment indicators including the political representation of women and labour force were relatively moderate in determining the effects relative to the education variables, they are nevertheless required in ensuring inclusive development and building resilience within the community. The results prove the theoretical view of the human capital theory and empowerment theory that highlight the importance of education, the development of abilities, and equal opportunities in creating sustainable growth. On the whole, the research comes to the conclusion that combined policies that involve education, development of skills, and empowerment are needed to promote sustainable community development. Governments and development institutions can boost the community resilience, mitigate inequalities and facilitate the long-term sustainable development through human capital enhancement and facilitation of inclusive participation.

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