

HUMAN CAPITAL AND ETHNOCULTURAL FACTORS IN ITS DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract:

This article analyzes the role and significance of ethnocultural factors in the development of human capital from the perspective of recent scientific research. The main purpose of the study is to identify the processes of human capital formation through national culture, traditions, and value systems, and to examine their impact on socio-economic development. The article considers human capital not only as an economic resource but also within a social, cultural, and institutional context.

Ethnocultural factors—such as national identity, traditional values, cultural behavior, and the sociocultural environment of society—are examined in terms of their influence on the development of human capital’s skills, knowledge, and creative potential. Additionally, the study compares local and international research findings and highlights effective strategies for human capital development that take ethnocultural factors into account.

The results indicate that, alongside economic and educational measures, an integrated approach that incorporates national culture and ethnocultural values is essential for effective human capital development. The findings of this study provide a scientific and practical basis for designing human capital development policies, promoting social development, and ensuring societal sustainability.

Keywords: Human capital, national identity, ethnocultural characteristics, development, globalization, cultural heritage, language, traditions, social norms, values, potential, society, education, unity, balance.

Introduction

The late twentieth century was a period marked by unexpected events in human history and rapid development of information technologies. On one hand, this era propelled human society to a new stage of development, while on the other, it intensified the “dialogue among civilizations.” As a result, populations across the globe—diverse in terms of nationality, language, religion, and ethnicity—have become increasingly interconnected, fostering the awareness of being part of a shared human civilization.

In the twenty-first century, social, political, and economic changes occurring at a global scale are significantly influencing the trajectories of different countries. Today, the foundation of a

nation's development depends not only on its active participation in international relations but also on domestic factors, including a democratic governance system, social management structures, economic stability, rule of law, protection of human rights, the development of civil society institutions, citizens' political-legal culture, and their well-formed civic positions. Most importantly, these elements are closely intertwined with the role of social capital within society. Recent studies also indicate that a fractal approach is increasingly applied in scientific research to optimize social governance processes.

In contemporary Uzbek society, the formation of human capital cannot be fully realized without considering national identity and ethnocultural factors. The foundation of every social capital system is rooted in national specificity, which plays a crucial role in shaping the social, cultural, political, and economic relations within society and the state. National traditions, customs, rituals, values, norms, and principles serve as cultural resources that foster national identification and form elements of cultural capital within society. Properly managing the flow of cultural products contributes to creating a modern cultural environment. Emphasizing the development of literacy, printed and mass publications, electronic audio-visual products, entertainment shows, cinema and television, visual and applied arts, theater, and literature, as well as enhancing large-scale cultural trade platforms such as the Uzbekistan International Cultural Industry Exhibitions and Fairs, strengthens the foundations of social capital.

National identity is distinguished by its emphasis on social action and interactions with other members of society, while simultaneously ensuring social consolidation. Identity, in this context, refers to an individual's recognition and sense of belonging to a particular social unit, shaped by the incorporation of various historical and cultural characteristics present in the society. However, today, "due to globalization, the emerging new universal human values and the social life experiences acquired by humanity are partially disrupted, and the changing state of national identity under various threats necessitates specialized research" [8, p. 51].

From a sociological perspective, this implies that mechanisms for producing human capital can be understood as relationships formed through mutual perception and acceptance of individual uniqueness. In other words, distinctiveness can serve as a factor that strengthens social connections and regulates both individual behavior and adherence to established social norms. For example, professional distinctiveness is linked to an individual's participation in a structured system of professional activities and integration into the social networks of the professional community. Accordingly, the professional resource of society is determined not only by the presence of highly skilled specialists but also by their integration into social networks, which enables timely access to information necessary for further development.

The economic well-being of various regions and nations worldwide is a result of social capital. In this context, individuals utilize the unique resources of society to pursue or achieve their personal interests. For instance, M. Brewer, in studying social dilemmas, demonstrated that in complex conditions, the process of social choice shows that group identification serves as a basis for resolving social dilemmas depending on the alignment of individual personality with collective interdependence. The author considers group members to be those who understand that access to shared resources or services affects the opportunities available to all other

members. “The contribution of social distinctiveness to cooperation in social dilemmas may depend on whether the effect of generalized categorical membership is consistent across groups of different sizes and characteristics” [1, pp. 150–164].

Contemporary research increasingly focuses on assessing the quality of life in modern Uzbek society. Specifically, the characteristics of life quality can be evaluated through indicators of social capital, such as trust, civic patriotism, living standards, social cohesion, national specificity, and the promotion of tolerance, which enable multi-ethnic citizens to live together harmoniously. In the context of ethnic tolerance, human capital plays a crucial role in uniting society through the ethnocultural characteristics of a given nation, ensuring interethnic harmony, strengthening political stability, reducing various negative trends, and preserving subcultures, thereby fostering social continuity. “When individuals face social dilemmas, social distinctiveness manifests its influence. Competition within a group generally considers intra-group cooperation rather than outcomes achieved in interpersonal dilemmas” [2, pp. 169–185].

Social distinctiveness, as an element of self-awareness, reflects an individual’s position within the social, economic, and political life of society. It can be argued that contemporary dynamic conditions—economic, political, cultural, and other challenges—ultimately become issues of distinctiveness. Social distinctiveness not only forms the basis of intergroup relations but also serves as a measure for how an individual perceives and internalizes societal activities, history, and culture as their own. The empirical study of social distinctiveness is grounded in the tradition of understanding how individuals associate themselves with particular social groups, as well as the nature of intergroup stratification, as examined in the works of A. Tajfel [6, pp. 183–190]. Tajfel defines it as “the part of self-concept derived from an individual’s knowledge of their membership in a social group or groups, including the value and emotional significance of that membership” [6, pp. 183–190].

Social distinctiveness is based on processes of integration and differentiation [14, pp. 613–623]. It reflects both an individual’s affiliation with a specific community and the ideas of being distinct from others. Therefore, it is important to understand which integrative or differentiating characteristics are inherent to a particular form of distinctiveness.

It is well established that national identity is primarily formed on the basis of a sense of “self-awareness,” closely tied to the interests of the state and its people. Through self-awareness, not only national and ethnic interests can be realized, but also mental characteristics that foster national cohesion can be purposefully directed. Another feature of national identity is that it serves as the basis for understanding the socio-spiritual aspects of a nation’s character and mentality. Each nation’s self-awareness constitutes a part of its national identity. However, in many studies, the factor of self-awareness has historically been conflated with the broader concept of identity. In reality, national identity embodies both the concepts of mentality and self-awareness within a nation, and these cannot be separated when defining the characteristic features of a people [8, p. 51].

Analysis and Results

Human capital reflects the constructive outcomes of social goals, interests, relationships, and interpersonal interactions. These constructive outcomes can be material or immaterial and may simultaneously include benefits, information, innovative ideas, and future opportunities. Social capital manifests not only at the individual level but also in institutional forms.

The presence of concepts such as the “American Dream,” the “British Dream,” the “Russian Dream,” the “Japanese Dream,” and the “Chinese Dream” in global political discourse illustrates this point. These concepts are neither accidental nor arbitrarily formed; each embodies the collective aspirations of the people, their contemporary experiences, and their future-oriented objectives [15, p. 14].

From our perspective, social trends within human capital comprise networks of trust, relationships, and cooperation, which are crucial for societal stability and development. National identity, on the other hand, is associated with a people’s distinctiveness, values, traditions, and culture. It influences the social development of human capital in several important ways.

First, national identity ensures social cohesion and strengthens trust. It enhances mutual trust among peoples. Shared values and traditions within a nation establish reliable social relationships. Furthermore, national identity promotes social integration.

Second, national identity helps preserve and develop cultural traditions, which, in turn, plays a vital role in reinforcing social capital.

Third, national identity supports the development of collective activities. Individuals strengthen social ties by participating in events related to their nation. They contribute to social initiatives and collaborate in addressing societal issues.

For instance, the *mahalla* system—through participation in weddings, communal work (*hashar*), traditional practices, ceremonies, and rituals—serves as a factor in fostering social continuity. *Hashar*, a form of voluntary social cooperation and mutual aid among Uzbeks and certain other Turkic peoples, was primarily applied in tasks requiring rapid completion, such as harvesting, or in large-scale labor projects, including canal digging, and construction of roads and bridges. Historically, *hashar* could last several days for projects such as canal construction or building structures and was often organized under the direction of khans and rulers to maintain and clean the environment in the country [20, p. 61].

Hashar represents one of the most historical forms of collectivism, reflecting social cooperation and unique values among Eastern peoples. References to performing tasks collectively through *hashar* can even be found in the sacred Zoroastrian text, the *Avesta*. Among the Uzbek people, it has become a tradition for neighborhoods (*mahalla*) and extended families to carry out major tasks collectively during weddings, ceremonies, or festivals. For example, according to the decree No. 896 of the USSR Council of People’s Commissars on June 3–6, 1939, concerning the construction of the Great Fergana Canal, the population collectively excavated a 300-kilometer canal within 45 days to convert unproductive land into fertile fields. Approximately 160,000 people participated in this effort, resulting in improved

water supply for 500,000 hectares of irrigated land across Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, facilitating the development of new arable land [21].

National identity plays a crucial role in the social development of human capital. It is significant for ensuring social stability and strengthening social relations within society. The interaction between national identity and social capital is a key factor in facilitating societal development. The population's level of self-awareness depends on socio-political conditions and the effective functioning of social networks, including community organizations and volunteer associations. Society is shaped "by its own communications, governed by principles distinct from those of the country's economic and political sectors, and built on its own laws, equality, cohesion, transparency, mutual respect, and trust" [18, pp. 148–150].

Widespread promotion of tolerance in society is also a vital component of human capital. Tolerance involves an impartial, fair, and equitable attitude toward other cultures, supporting their consolidation and development within society, while integrating behaviors and beliefs through moral norms. Promoting tolerance in Uzbekistan's multi-ethnic society strengthens ethnocultural life and serves as a foundation for developing social capital. Today, however, racial, national, religious, and ideological differences still pose obstacles to tolerance. In addressing these challenges, social capital plays a critical role, serving as a mechanism to counter divisive ideas. The goal of promoting tolerance is to enable individuals to unite, collectively develop their abilities, and live peacefully together.

The encyclopedic scholar Abu Nasr al-Farabi emphasized in his work *City of Virtuous People* that "the path to true happiness and well-being lies in a city where people help one another and perform good and beautiful deeds; such a city is a virtuous city, the city of virtuous people" [12, p. 239].

From ancient times to the present, analyzing human capital in the social life of humanity through the lens of national distinctiveness provides significant insights. Concepts such as unity, solidarity, and cooperative relations have manifested differently across historical periods. In primitive societies, these concepts were understood in connection with the surrounding environment. In the Middle Ages, the roots of social capital were tied to religious values (theological worldview), whereas in modern times, ideas of humanism have enabled society to reach new heights through mutual support.

The great Sufi scholar Abdulkhaliq Gijduvani described humans as "microcosms." He argued that knowledge and skills are valuable only insofar as they benefit humanity, lighten the burdens of society, or serve practical purposes. In this sense, humans have historically created systems of knowledge and science essential for their needs [5, p. 170]. Every society establishes conditions to ensure sustainable development and facilitate collective progress toward common goals for all national and ethnic groups, which is crucial for the improvement of interethnic relations [16, p. 50].

Engaging in tasks of socio-economic and cultural significance based on developed human capital requires, first and foremost, the full implementation of the principles of social justice in social life. This demands a conscious and creative approach to labor, evaluating its results and quality, and adhering to the principles of self-management during the work process. If all of

these principles are applied in social life, an individual fully fulfills their civic duties within society.

At the same time, youth, who are experiencing a profound crisis of values, require a new social philosophy and ideology that can explain the ongoing changes in society. These young people are increasingly distancing themselves from society and attempting to adapt materially rather than morally to the current situation. In today's context, the growing importance of national and spiritual values in the life of individuals and society, and their role in the development of youth, are of paramount significance. As discussed above, we attempted to address various types of values—national-spiritual, cultural, educational, moral—their essence, their influence on human thinking and worldview, and their role in the upbringing of a perfect individual [19, p. 43]. Accordingly, studying youth value orientations and understanding the system of values is urgent, as it defines the content dimension of an individual's orientation and forms the foundation of their worldview. In modern Uzbek society, transforming values serves as a crucial mechanism for the development of human capital.

“Ethnic stability in social life is of paramount importance for the optimal development of national relations, as it ensures the development of a nation's culture, customs, and traditions. Such stability highlights the cultural and moral aspects of society, elevating them to a leading position and thereby securing the essence of society as a social entity” [17, p. 50].

Today, developing human capital through national identity and ethnocultural characteristics while promoting interethnic harmony is an effective mechanism that ensures social cohesion within society. In recent years, Uzbekistan has expanded its relations with Central Asian countries. The policy of harmonious neighborhood promoted by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has yielded socio-economic benefits as social capital. Central Asian states and peoples now serve as a model of unity and harmony in international integration. Moreover, Uzbekistan's development into a modern state and the creation of wide-ranging opportunities for all national and ethnic groups in the country form the foundation of state policy and demonstrate tangible positive outcomes. The promotion of these ideas has led not only to spiritual achievements but also to significant material gains in the lives of citizens. Since 2016, closer ties among Central Asian countries through harmonious neighborhood policies have strengthened mutual economic, political, spiritual, and cultural relations, reinforcing trust. In this context, social, political, economic, and cultural reforms allow Uzbekistan to present itself as an independent state to the world, revive the invaluable spiritual and cultural heritage created by ancestors, restore national customs and traditions, and preserve identity among global nations. Today, promoting interethnic relations requires strengthening ties with fraternal countries that share similar ethnicity, religion, values, and lifestyles.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines the welfare state as “a government in which a well-organized network of state or social institutions plays the primary role in protecting and promoting the economic and social well-being of its citizens” [10]. This concept is based on principles of equal opportunity, fair distribution of wealth, and state responsibility toward those unable to secure a good standard of living through minimal means. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the welfare state is a system in which the government cares for the sick, elderly, or

unemployed and provides them with financial support [9]. In scholarly literature, the terms social state and legal state are often used synonymously, in which the legal norms of a state can be interpreted as creating the framework for the social state under analysis through the following principles:

- Rule of law
- Separation of powers
- Guarantee of individual rights and freedoms
- Coercive authority of the state

Additionally, according to the German *Duden* dictionary, “a welfare state is a democratic state that seeks to ensure the economic security of its citizens and to balance social inequalities within society” [11].

Conclusion and Recommendations

In the era of globalization, we are increasingly moving beyond the boundaries of a single country or a single ethnic group, often interacting and collaborating with people from multiple countries, ethnicities, or languages. At this time, the most important task is to recognize and understand the differences between countries, ethnic groups, and historical periods, as well as to correctly perceive the essence of humanity worldwide and make effective use of it. Taking this situation into account, it is appropriate to emphasize the following principles: the functioning of social capital should be based on legality, social responsibility, solidarity, humanity, and equality. If these core principles are observed, the positive value of social capital can be fully realized [13, p. 33–36].

Social cohesion, as a form of activity that develops human capital, is one of the key factors of a social state. In definitions of social cohesion, it is considered a derivative of the concept of social capital. For example, Dahrendorf and others define social cohesion as an aspect that prevents social alienation among people in society: “Social cohesion or solidarity describes activities that provide opportunities to all members within the framework of common values and institutions” [3]. Social cohesion helps reduce inequality and social alienation. Relationships based on social cohesion depend on collective approaches to external influences and interactions. This measure typically encompasses all aspects of a society’s social capital—trust, loyalty, love, and more. Addressing this issue is critical both for preventing the consequences of social alienation and for the continuous formation of social capital, thereby strengthening social cohesion.

Creating a worldview that meets the demands of the present, enhancing and refining public opinion work, and fostering an environment that aligns with social capital norms remain our primary criteria. We must adhere to new ideas and the foundations of civil society, clearly understand the right direction, ensure unity and stability, promote positive transparency, strengthen public opinion, and enhance the relevance, credibility, and influence of public opinion. These actions will determine the nature of our future and the kind of society we leave for the next generations.

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