

# Strengthening collective action: Role of social capital in motivating third-sector workers

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**Abstract:** This study highlights the importance of social capital within third sector organizations, as in other sectors of the economy, and confirms the influence of social capital on human capital. In this case, it contributes to the analysis of the structure and quality of relationships among members of a social organization, which enables motivation and commitment to collective action. Based on exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, from a 45-item survey applied to 190 workers in social organizations; the constructs were reconfigured for the construction of the model of organizational social capital, was carried out using the structural equation methodology. It is argued that the cognitive and structural dimensions of social capital affect its relational dimension in terms of identification, trust and cooperation, which in turn influences worker motivation and other key aspects of human capital. The relational dimension, measured by workers' identification, trust, and cooperation, has significant effects on their motivation and work engagement, which leads to important practical considerations for human resource policies in these organizations. The article contributes to the existing literature on human capital management by exploring the perception of workers in nonprofit organizations that are part of Ecuador's third sector.

**Keywords:** organizational social capital; motivation; third sector; collective action; work environment

## 1. Introduction

The third sector, comprising nonprofit and civil society organizations (CSOs), plays a critical role in addressing social needs that governments and profit-driven markets cannot fully meet (Brandsen and Johnston, 2018). These organizations operate with public-purpose missions, emphasizing values such as trust, cooperation, and reciprocity—cornerstones of social capital. Social capital, as an intangible but impactful resource, emerges from the interrelationships among members and underpins collective action, enabling organizations to navigate resource-scarce and uncertain environments (Álvarez, 2015; Cueva, 2019).

In Ecuador, third-sector organizations face significant challenges, including limited professionalization, a state over-regulation and weak connections with private sector actors. These obstacles hamper their ability to leverage social and human capital for long-term sustainability (Gortaire-Morejón et al., 2022). However, as Luthans and Youssef (2004) suggest, social capital can generate competitive advantages when effectively harnessed, especially in crisis contexts. Case studies confirm that organizations with robust social capital achieve greater stability through trust-based labor relations, improved organizational commitment, and stronger networks (Bakiev and Kupucu, 2012; Von Schnurbein, 2010; Zenck et al., 2019).

Social capital benefits organizations at a macro level and impacts members at a micro level through mechanisms explaining collective action and performance. Although it is a quality of the organization (Lesser, 2000), individuals benefit from personal social capital. Interaction and involvement between members of dissimilar groups as a determinant of social capital, competitiveness and value creation in family's business structures (Pearson et al., 2008). Recent empirical research reaffirms that social capital is important in determining employee attitudes, such as commitment and motivation in the work environment (Kroll et al., 2019).

This research adopts a neo-institutionalist framework, emphasizing how norms, trust, and shared goals influence collaboration and organizational effectiveness (De León, 2018; DiMaggio and Powell, 1999). Specifically, it explores the structural, cognitive, and relational dimensions of social capital and their role in shaping work environments and performance in Ecuador's third sector (Adler and Kwon, 2002; Hawkins and Maurer, 2012; Leana and Van Buren, 1999; Molina et al., 2016; Pearson et al., 2008). The analysis also highlights the interplay between social capital and human capital, defined as the knowledge, competencies, and shared values of staff that enhance organizational performance (Gallego and Naranjo, 2020; Membiela-Pollán et al., 2019).

From the statistical analysis, we explore the factors of organizational social capital that affect the work environment perceived by workers in the third sector. The research questions ask from the workers' perceptions, what roles do structural, cognitive and relational capital play in the work environment? How does this organizational social capital affect organizational performance in third sector social organizations? What are the factors that are related to the best performance of third sector workers? Specifically, the research focuses on the constructs of staff commitment and motivation as elements of human capital and their relationship with the internal dimensions of social capital, generating empirical notions of how interpersonal relationships between work teams can improve the collective action and performance of nonprofit organizations.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Social capital, human capital and collective action**

Efforts to define and explore social capital have expanded significantly, emphasizing its role as a set of resources derived from social relations that facilitate collective action (Bourdieu, 2001; Coleman, 2000; Fukuyama, 2001). It is broadly understood as the informal norms and values shared within a group, promoting trust and cooperation (Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 2002). In organizational contexts, social capital is considered a public good embedded in social structures, benefiting both individuals and the collective (Millán and Gordon, 2004).

Central to the concept is trust, which fosters collaboration and effective management through personal interaction and communication (Lockward, 2011). Scholars of collective action highlight that trust alone is insufficient; its effectiveness depends on the quality of relationships, norms, and situational factors (Ostrom and Ahn, 2003), such as those observed during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic (Navas et al., 2021). Social capital complements human capital by emphasizing "who you

know” alongside “what you know” (Woolcock, 2001). It enhances collective action through better communication, resource access, and intellectual capital management (Adler and Kwon, 2002; Leana and Van Buren, 1999). Moreover, it reduces transaction costs and supports knowledge sharing, ultimately contributing to improved organizational performance (Burt, 2000; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). This interplay underscores its value in both theoretical and practical applications, particularly within the third sector, where solidarity and group identity are crucial (De León, 2018).

## **2.2. Organizational performance and dimensions of social capital**

Organizational performance is defined as the effective utilization of human, physical, and financial resources to achieve shared goals (Richard et al., 2009). Social capital plays a pivotal role in enhancing this performance by fostering trust, cooperation, and reciprocity, which align organizational efforts toward common objectives (Bebbington, 2005; Leana and Pil, 2006). It operates through three dimensions—cognitive, structural, and relational—that collectively shape the quality and utility of social relationships within organizations (Adler and Kwon, 2002; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998;).

The cognitive dimension emphasizes shared systems of meaning, such as common language, culture, and values, which enhance understanding and alignment within organizations (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). This shared vision reduces individualistic behaviors, fostering collective action and stronger organizational identification (Leana and Van Buren, 1999; Pearson et al., 2008). In nonprofit organizations, the emphasis on a social mission strengthens members’ sense of belonging and motivates collaboration (Wasko and Faraj, 2005). Furthermore, the horizontal nature of relationships in such settings encourages trust and reciprocity, creating a shared identity and enhancing organizational stability (López-Santos et al., 2017).

The structural dimension relates to the density and connectivity of social ties, determining how members access and share information (Coleman, 1990; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). Repeated interactions over time build trust and facilitate efficient resource exchange within networks (Mujika et al., 2010; Ostrom, 2009;). These structured relationships enable organizations to function cohesively, promoting flexibility, emotional support, and the resolution of collective action problems through norms of reciprocity (Adler and Kwon, 2002).

The relational dimension focuses on the quality of interactions among organizational members, characterized by trust, reciprocity, and commitment (Bolino et al., 2002; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). Strong relational ties enhance job satisfaction, foster collaboration, and create a sense of belonging, thereby improving workplace attitudes and performance (Collins et al., 2019; Gallego and Naranjo, 2020). Over time, these relationships build organizational social capital, strengthening loyalty and reducing the need for costly monitoring mechanisms (Adler and Kwon, 2002; Akingbola, 2012).

Social capital facilitates knowledge sharing, reduces transaction costs, and supports collective action, making it a key resource for improving organizational outcomes (Adler and Kwon, 2002; Andrews, 2010). In nonprofit organizations, where

civic engagement and shared goals dominate, social capital is crucial for sustaining performance by integrating values, enhancing team cooperation, and fostering a positive organizational climate (Brown et al., 2016; Chacón-Henao et al., 2022). Ultimately, leveraging social capital strengthens organizational resilience and aligns efforts toward achieving shared missions (Leana and Pil, 2006).

### **2.3. Social capital and effects on the organizational environment**

Social capital is crucial for understanding the role of social interactions in explaining outcomes (Brunie, 2009). In Latin America, the third sector faces institutional weaknesses and nascent regulations. Processes in social relations (Adler and Kwon, 2002) are grouped into three sources: capabilities, attitudes, and motivations, which improve the effectiveness and sustainability of nonprofit organizations (Brown et al., 2016). Social capital, motivation, and commitment share multidimensionality and definitional challenges (Meyer et al., 2004; Pinder, 1998). The work climate, as an organizational construct of human capital, is connected to social capital. Structural and cognitive aspects are common between social and human capital (Dawson, 2012). Researchers incorporate a behavioral dimension in human capital, encompassing personal resources linked to work engagement and performance (Felício et al., 2012; Islam et al., 2023). When these aspects interact synergistically, motivating employees to invest attitudinal, individual, or social resources can enhance productivity (Ali and Anwar, 2021; Bakiev and Kupucu, 2012). Employees' perception of their environment forms a cognitive map influencing their behavior towards goals (Nencini et al., 2016). In third-sector organizations, motivation is influenced by satisfaction with the environment (Brown et al., 2016).

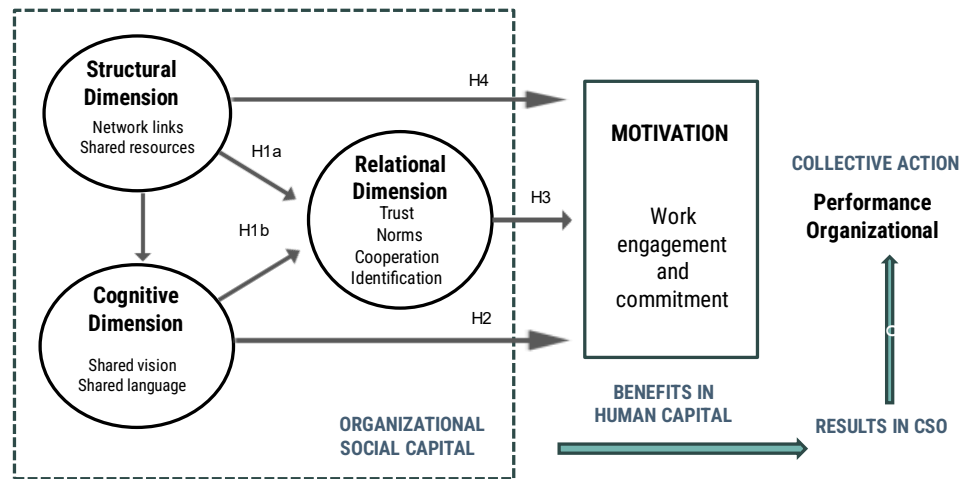
In social organizations, the relationship between commitment and motivation is crucial for achieving goals. Talent and experience alone are insufficient; a determined attitude is necessary. This commitment stems from appreciation and pride in the organization (Mowday, 1998), bringing benefits such as belonging, job satisfaction, lower turnover, reduced supervision costs, and improved performance (Watson and Papamarcos, 2002). Motivation, described as energizing forces (Pinder, 1998), arises from recognition, development, satisfaction, and the opportunity to contribute to society. Motivation and commitment are positively correlated; higher motivation increases the likelihood of commitment. This process involves setting goals reciprocally with the organization, regulating behavior direction, persistence, effort, and strategy development (Locke and Latham's goal-based motivation theory, Molina, 1999). Aligning goals with the mission, vision, and values creates a sense of direction and purpose. Feedback and recognition reinforce commitment and enhance intrinsic motivation. Nonprofit workers who view their work as meaningful and aligned with personal values have higher intrinsic motivation and commitment (Grant et al., 2008).

Work commitment, defined as a "state of positive and persistent affective-emotional fulfillment" (Maslach et al., 2001), fosters loyalty, satisfaction, and permanence, leading to motivated actions that positively impact efficiency (Cruz et al., 2009). The multidimensionality of social capital enhances processes and performance. Motivation, aligned with goals, boosts efficiency, collaboration, and commitment (Portes, 1998). Integrating motivation and commitment theories broadens the

understanding of motivated behavior (Meyer et al., 2004). Self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985) identifies autonomy, competence, satisfaction, and relatedness as key drivers of intrinsic motivation. These factors promote well-being and performance (Ryan and Deci, 2017). Trust within the organization fosters loyalty, motivation, and commitment (Bakiev and Kupucu, 2012).

### 3. Model and research hypothesis

After reviewing some theories of social capital related to the organizational field, this correlational study focuses on identifying the social capital factors that influence the motivation and commitment of workers in the third sector, using an adaptation of the organizational social capital model analyzed by Adler and Kwon (2002), Leana and Van Buren (1999) and Pearson et al. (2008). The proposed model incorporates the benefits that the theorists reviewed in the literature obtain for collective action and organizational performance (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Organizational social capital model. benefits and results.

Source: Adapted from Adler and Kwon (2002), Leana and Van Buren (1999) and Pearson et al. (2008).

In the case of nonprofit organizations, these ideas revolve around a social cause that engages them and confers deep meaning to organizational membership. Collaboration within the structure increases contact between the subject and the work teams, reaping a series of benefits for the organization, such as organizational identification, shared language to disseminate knowledge in the group, organizational stability and motivation for collective action. Volunteers add solidarity to the work of technicians, and the administrative burden is lightened in interactions with users. They are key connections that strengthen ties and keep the organization’s internal network stable. In summary, we propose that the frequency of connections among CSO members can lead to increased identification, cooperation, and emotional support in network structures (H1a). Additionally, we suggest that collective understanding of the mission and other strategic values will have effects on trust, reciprocity, and identification among subjects based on their personal relationships (H1b).

H1a: Structural dimension of organizational social capital is positively associated with the relational dimension.

H1b: Cognitive dimension of organizational social capital is positively associated with the relational dimension.

Few empirical studies in Latin America focus on the third sector, despite the crucial relationship between team commitment and motivation for achieving goals. When workers invest their energy in the mission due to alignment with nonprofit values, they are more engaged and identify with the organization (Akingbola and Van den Berg, 2019). This engagement is fostered by a cohesive internal network facilitating communication and diverse interactions, enhancing commitment (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). Blau's (1964) social exchange theory suggests that social interactions generate favorable exchanges, leading to greater commitment and motivation (Morales, 2024). As relationships strengthen, a sense of community and belonging develops, resulting in better commitment, trust, ownership, and performance (Dávila De León and García, 2014). Informal ties in nonprofit organizations foster affective commitment, making members feel supported and valued (Grant et al., 2008; Watson and Papamarcos, 2002).

H2: Cognitive dimension of organizational social capital is positively associated with motivation and work engagement.

H3: Relational dimension of organizational social capital is positively associated with work motivation and work engagement.

H4: Structural dimension of organizational social capital is positively associated with work motivation and work engagement.

Analyzing the constructs of organizational social capital at the dimension level not only contributes to the investigation of collective action within organizations but is also useful as a guide for decision makers to identify human resource management strategies that positively impact organizational results.

## **4. Methods**

This section details the process followed for the design of a definitive adjusted model on the effect of organizational social capital on the motivation of third-sector workers, starting from an initial model established by the analysis of the literature, with the objective of guaranteeing sufficient reliability to test the initial hypotheses. This process consisted of the following stages: 1) Description of the sample collection process and the variables used for the statistical analysis of the empirical information, 2) Verification of the validity of the constructs, consisting of convergent validation, discriminant validation and factor analysis; and 3) The structural equation model, which includes the adjustment of the indices and the validation of the relationships proposed as hypotheses, is implemented.

The research methodology was nonexperimental cross-sectional, with primary data sources obtained from the 45-item questionnaire with a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), which were subsequently processed and analyzed with SPSS. The items were formulated in such a way as to address the respondents' perception of their organization as a whole and not at the individual level. The instrument used includes aspects of the questionnaire proposed in the Organizational Social Capital Self-Assessment Manual developed at the University of Deusto in Spain (Mujika et al., 2010) and common aspects identified in the literature

reviewed (Andrews, 2010; Gallego and Naranjo, 2020; Meyer et al., 2004) on labor performance and human capital. The item measurements can be seen in Appendix A.

Within the first stage, data from workers who agreed to participate were collected virtually, given the pandemic context at the time of the study. An online version of the questionnaires was sent to each participant through the administrative area of the organizations with the prior approval of the managers to be applied anonymously to all teams, receiving a total of 190 valid surveys. The questionnaires were applied to members of seven Ecuadorian CSOs, conveniently selected for proximity and access, according to parameters that ensured that the unit of analysis was sufficiently complex in terms of trajectory and formal structure.

In the second stage, the validity of the constructs was tested to determine the extent to which the items selected to explain each construct are truly representative. Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) indicators were examined for convergent validation (Schumacker and Lomax, 2004). We then proceeded to verify that the latent constructs of the model are distinct from each other, that is, that each latent variable is more related to its own observed variables than to the observed variables of other constructs, by means of discriminant validation, where the correlation matrix of the latent variables was examined. The item loadings of each construct were subsequently evaluated to define whether the item contribution was significant to the construct. Values above 0.5 were considered (Hair et al., 2010).

Finally, with the constructs correctly defined, we proceeded to apply the structural equation model to validate the hypotheses formulated in the form of relationships between the constructs. For this purpose, the goodness of fit of the structural model was evaluated through the absolute fit indices: chi-square,  $\chi^2/df$ , SRMR, RMSEA and the incremental fit index CFI. All these indices were calculated via AMOS software.

## **5. Results**

### **5.1. Descriptives**

Most of the sample was made up of women (74.7%), which is very common in social work in the region. A total of 69.5% of the participants were between 31 and over 60 years of age; that is, only 30.5% were under 30 years of age. The educational level of the participants was mostly high, since 62.6% had postgraduate studies, and only 19 of the 190 had a high school education. It was also evident that 42.1% of the participants had been with their organizations for less than 3 years, but 36.3%, that is, 69, had been with their organizations for between 10 years and more than 20 years. Project contracting was the most common employment relationship among the participants (50.5%), with 27.4% in a dependent relationship and 22.1% as volunteer staff. Similarly, 50% of the respondents were from administrative areas, and 21.6% belonged to the board of directors. Sample composition in detail in Appendix B.

## 5.2. Reliability and convergent validity

As a result of the second stage, to corroborate the validity of the constructs, exploratory factor analysis was previously developed with the 45 questions of the questionnaire related to the dimensions of organizational social capital, where a Kaiser–Meier–Olkin (KMO) statistic of 0.857 was obtained. Bartlett’s test statistic was  $\chi^2 = 5187.77$ , and its p value was 0.000. These results confirmed the linear dependence between variables and supported the robustness of dimensionality reduction to examine new factors of organizational social capital affecting work motivation. Confirmatory factor analysis was then performed with the four constructs used to test a model and its validity (values > 1). **Table 1** presents the results of the reliability analysis of the four constructs previously identified in the Exploratory, which allowed the internal consistency of the items of each of the constructs to be validated.

**Table 1.** Evaluation of the measurement model.

Art.	Construct	Factorial loading	M	SD	Cronbach’s alpha	CR	AVE
F1. Relational Dimension (Trust, Identification and Cooperation)					0.941	0.942	0.571
P14.3	The ideas of the employees are taken into consideration	0.81	2.62	1503			
P14.4	The organization develops processes to improve communication among employees	0.88	2.58	1530			
P14.5	The organization offers training to its employees on an ongoing basis	0.69	2.49	1552			
P14.6	Activities that motivate teamwork are carried out	0.80	2.54	1528			
P14.7	The organization develops strategies for my personal growth	0.69	2.39	1531			
P16.1	Within the organization there is an exchange of knowledge among employees	0.61	2.41	1573			
P16.2	There is a good relationship within the work teams	0.71	2.61	1531			
P16.3	I apply the knowledge I have acquired over time within the organization.	0.70	2.64	1483			
P16.6	The organization fosters unity and camaraderie among employees	0.78	2.78	1466			
P17.1	I feel that my work is valued	0.77	2.60	1629			
P17.5	I receive the recognition I deserve for my work.	0.77	2.48	1583			
P17.6	There is good communication with the organization’s senior management.	0.83	2.82	1445			
F2. Cognitive Dimension (Shared Resources)					0.870	0.871	0.551
P11.2	Feels identified with the Mission and Vision of the organization.	0.65	2.17	1438			
P11.3	Knows and is motivated by the strategic objectives of the CSO	0.64	2.16	1413			
P11.4	You put the collective objectives of your team before your personal objectives.	0.59	2.06	1411			
P11.5	Considers their work valuable to the organization	0.77	2.46	1320			
P11.6	Complies with the standards established by the organization	0.91	2.47	1363			
P11.7	Their work contributes to the image of the organization	0.83	2.42	1302			



**Table 1.** (Continued).

Art.	Construct	Factorial loading	M	SD	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
F3.	Structural Dimension (Network links)				0.950	0.970	0.536
P12.2	Frequency of relations [Technicians/Teachers/Therapists]	0.61	2.56	1485			
P12.5	Frequency of relationships: [Direct beneficiaries].	0.72	2.39	1552			
P12.6	Frequency of relationships: [Indirect beneficiaries (parents, institutions, public)].	0.86	2.35	1579			
F4.	Work motivation (Satisfaction with performance)				0.892	0.893	0.807
P17.3	I am satisfied with my work and functions	0.90	2.99	1407			
P17.4	I feel encouraged and energized to perform my work properly	0.89	3.08	1315			

For the first factor (Relational dimension), Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was 0.941, so its internal consistency can be considered optimal. In addition, the composite consistency (CR) was 0.942, which also reflects that the correlations of the items that make up the relational dimension are close and optimal. Additionally, an average variance extracted (AVE) of 0.571 was obtained, an acceptable value that suggests good convergent validity of the latent variable. Similarly, the second factor (cognitive dimension) presented a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of 0.870, a composite consistency of 0.871 and an AVE of 0.551.

The internal consistency of the third factor (Structural dimension) was 0.950, and the composite consistency was 0.970; this construct presented the highest consistency. The variance explained by the items of this construct, represented in the AVE measure, was 0.536, which, despite being an acceptable value, was the lowest with respect to the measures of the other constructs. Finally, for the fourth factor (Work motivation), Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was 0.892, so its internal consistency can be considered very acceptable. Additionally, the composite consistency (CR) was 0.893, and the AVE was 0.807, which is considered an optimal value of variance explained by the items of this construct.

**Table 2.** Discriminant validity.

	Relational Dimension	Cognitive Dimension	Structural Dimension	Work Motivation
Relational Dimension	0.755	0.308***	0.311**	0.690***
Cognitive Dimension	0.308***	0.743	0.115	0.217**
Structural Dimension	0.311**	0.115	0.732	0.423***
Work Motivation	0.690***	0.217**	0.423***	0.899

Significance of correlations: \*  $p < 0.050$ , \*\*  $p < 0.010$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

**Table 2** presents the results of the discriminant validity analysis used to evaluate whether the dimensions of organizational social capital (relational, cognitive, structural and work motivation) are distinct and differentiable concepts. The correlation coefficient between the relational and cognitive dimensions is 0.308 (significant at  $p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that there is a moderate positive correlation between the two dimensions, suggesting that they share some elements in common but are not identical concepts. For the relational and structural dimensions, the correlation

is positive at 0.311 (significant at the  $p < 0.010$  level). Like the previous relationship, this indicates a moderate correlation between the two dimensions, suggesting that they share some elements in common but are not identical concepts.

The correlation coefficient between the cognitive and structural dimensions is 0.115 (not significant). This low value indicates that there is no significant correlation between the two dimensions, suggesting that the two dimensions are independent. The correlation between the relational dimension and work motivation was 0.690 (significant at the  $p < 0.001$  level). This high value indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between the two dimensions, suggesting that greater strength in the relational dimension is associated with greater work engagement and motivation, supporting H3.

### 5.3. Structural equation model

**Table 3.** Unstandardized and standardized estimates of the confirmatory factor analysis.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis						
		Coefficients regression coefficient ( $\beta$ )	S.E.	C.R.	P	Coefficients standardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ )
P14.4	← D. Relational	1.000				0.878
P14.6	← D. Relational	0.904	0.066	13.659	***	0.796
P14.3	← D. Relational	0.902	0.062	14.575	***	0.807
P14.5	← D. Relational	0.783	0.072	10.810	***	0.682
P14.7	← D. Relational	0.780	0.072	10.901	***	0.684
P16.1	← D. Relational	0.721	0.084	8.565	***	0.684
P16.2	← D. Relational	0.810	0.071	11.428	***	0.711
P16.3	← D. Relational	0.761	0.069	11.061	***	0.691
P16.6	← D. Relational	0.854	0.064	13.405	***	0.684
P17.1	← D. Relational	0.936	0.081	11.495	***	0.773
P17.5	← D. Relational	0.912	0.079	11.573	***	0.775
P17.6	← D. Relational	0.894	0.072	12.382	***	0.831
P11.6	← D. Cognitive	1.000				0.911
P11.7	← D. Cognitive	0.872	0.061	14.359	***	0.832
P11.5	← D. Cognitive	0.824	0.062	13.275	***	0.775
P11.2	← D. Cognitive	0.753	0.079	9.483	***	0.650
P11.3	← D. Cognitive	0.730	0.082	8.939	***	0.642
P11.4	← D. Cognitive	0.673	0.077	8.762	***	0.593
P12.5	← D. Structural	1.000				0.679
P12.6	← D. Structural	1.357	0.267	5.072	***	0.905
P12.2	← D. Structural	0.806	0.099	8.170	***	0.572
P17.4	← Work Motivation	1.000				0.896
P17.3	← Work Motivation	1.076	0.076	14.091	***	0.901

**Table 3.** (Continued).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis			Covariance	S.E.	C.R.	P	Correlations
D. Relational	↔	D. Cognitive	0.510	0.135	3.777	***	0.308
D. Relational	↔	D. Structural	0.438	0.138	3.165	0.002	0.311
D. Relational	↔	Work Motivation	1.086	0.158	6.880	***	0.690
D. Cognitive	↔	D. Structural	0.150	0.110	1.364	0.173	0.115
D. Cognitive	↔	Work Motivation	0.315	0.119	2.646	0.008	0.217
D. Structural	↔	Work Motivation	0.523	0.140	3.737	***	0.423

In **Table 3**, the unstandardized regression coefficients represent the change in the items of the latent variables per unit change in the dimensions of social capital, whereas the standardized regression coefficients indicate the size of the effect of the dimensions of social capital on the items, even controlling for other variables in the model.

Thus, for example, in the confirmatory factor analysis, the unstandardized regression coefficient for work motivation is 1.000, which implies a parallel increase between motivation and the score of the question (P17.4) on whether the participant feels encouragement and energy to adequately perform his job. Considering the standardized regression coefficient, for work motivation, a  $\beta$  value of 0.896 was obtained, indicating a positive and significant effect on P17.4, even after controlling for the other dimensions of social capital. A diagram of the confirmatory factor analysis is presented in Appendix C. Finally, the unstandardized and standardized estimates of the structural equation model that resulted from the four factors of the confirmatory analysis are presented in **Table 4**. **Figure 2** presents a schematic of the structural model with the standardized  $\beta$  parameters

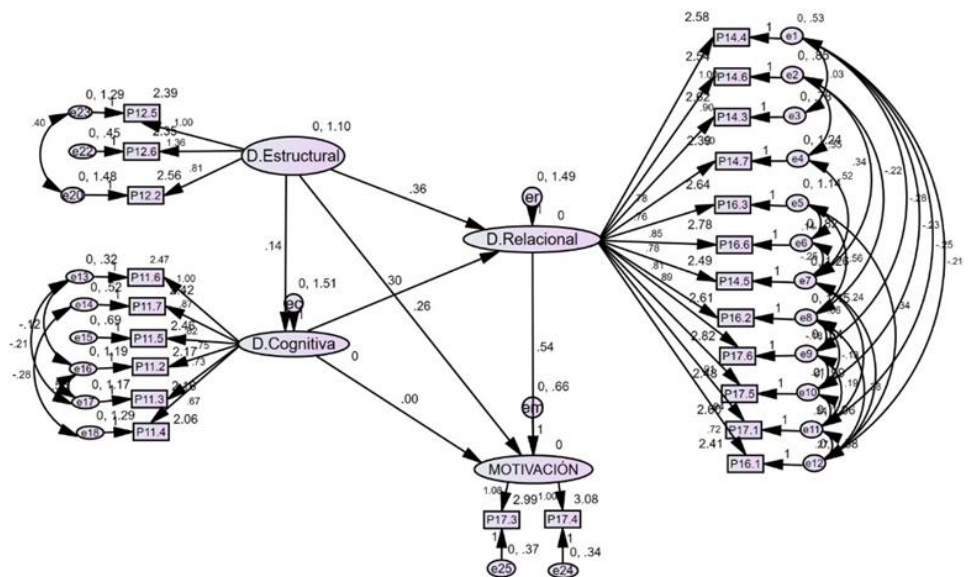
**Table 4.** Unstandardized and standardized estimates of the structural equation model (SEM) tested.

Structural Equations Model			Coefficients regression coefficient ( $\beta$ )	S.E.	C.R.	P	Coefficients standardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ )
D.Cognitive	←	D.Structural	0.136	0.097	1.402	0.161	0.115
D.Relational	←	D.Structural	0.356	0.101	3.515	***	0.279
D.Relational	←	D.Cognitive	0.298	0.079	3.765	***	0.275
Work Motivation	←	D.Structural	0.258	0.078	3.33	***	0.231
Work Motivation	←	D.Cognitive	0.000	0.06	0.001	0.999	0.000
Work Motivation	←	D.Relational	0.542	0.065	8.279	***	0.618
P11.5	←	D.Cognitive	0.824	0.062	13.275	***	0.775
P11.2	←	D.Cognitive	0.753	0.079	9.483	***	0.650
P11.3	←	D.Cognitive	0.73	0.082	8.939	***	0.642
P12.2	←	D.Structural	0.806	0.099	8.17	***	0.572
P12.6	←	D.Structural	1.357	0.267	5.072	***	0.905
P17.3	←	Work Motivation	1.076	0.076	14.091	***	0.901
P11.7	←	D.Cognitive	0.872	0.061	14.359	***	0.832

**Table 4. (Continued).**

Structural Equations Model			Coefficients regression coefficient ( $\beta$ )	S.E.	C.R.	P	Coefficients standardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ )
P11.4	←	D.Cognitive	0.673	0.077	8.762	***	0.593
P17.6	←	D.Relational	0.894	0.072	12.382	***	0.831
P17.5	←	D.Relational	0.912	0.079	11.573	***	0.775
P17.1	←	D.Relational	0.936	0.081	11.495	***	0.773
P16.2	←	D.Relational	0.81	0.071	11.428	***	0.711
P14.7	←	D.Relational	0.78	0.072	10.901	***	0.684
P12.5	←	D.Structural	1				0.679
P14.5	←	D.Relational	0.783	0.072	10.81	***	0.682
P16.6	←	D.Relational	0.854	0.064	13.405	***	0.784
P14.4	←	D.Relational	1				0.878
P14.3	←	D.Relational	0.902	0.062	14.575	***	0.807
P14.6	←	D.Relational	0.904	0.066	13.659	***	0.796
P16.3	←	D.Relational	0.761	0.069	11.061	***	0.691
P11.6	←	D.Cognitive	1				0.911
P17.4	←	Work Motivation	1				0.896
P16.1	←	D.Relational	0.721	0.084	8.565	***	0.610

The resulting structural equation model revealed that the structural dimension does not maintain a linear relationship with the cognitive dimension. Similarly, the cognitive dimension does not reflect a linear association with work motivation since, in both cases, the p level is greater than 0.05.



**Figure 2. Structural model (SEM).**

The fit indices obtained in the estimation of the measurement model showed optimal values, both for values of the chi-square statistic  $\chi^2 = 279.591$  with 197 degrees of freedom (df) and a p value of 0.000, and for the indices  $\chi^2/df$ , CFI, SRMR

and RMSEA. **Table 5** shows the index values and thresholds confirming the overall goodness of fit of the model.

**Table 5.** Measures of the fitted model.

Measure	Estimate	Threshold	Interpretation
X <sup>2</sup>	279.591	--	--
DF	197.000	--	--
<sup>2</sup>	1.419	Between 1 and 3	Excellent
IFC	0.971	> 0.95	Excellent
SRMR	0.057	< 0.08	Excellent
RMSEA	0.047	< 0.06	Excellent

## 6. Conclusion and discussion

It is concluded that the fit indices achieved can be used to explain the hypotheses. In the initial hypothesis (H1a, H1b), the cognitive, structural and relational dimensions of organizational social capital, which are independent of each other, present greater interdependence with the relational dimension, which is where ties acquire greater meaning for workers in the third sector. H3 and H4 are supported and show that a greater level of social network and trust contribute to greater motivation and work commitment because organizational social capital is nourished especially by workers' interactions, communication with all levels, recognition of the value of their work and organizational improvement processes.

The main objective of this research was to analyze the factors of organizational social capital that affect the work environment perceived by workers in nonprofit or third sector (social action) organizations. The results of this study provide empirical support for the mediating role of the quality and quantity of interpersonal relationships in an organization (structural dimension), which, together with trust (relational dimension) and shared team values (cognitive dimension), contribute significantly to the satisfaction, motivation and work effectiveness of workers in CSOs. This creates an institutional framework of rules and norms, many of which are tacit or not entirely shared, which, as suggested by De León (2018), directly influences the motivated behavior and committed attitudes of collaborators toward the achievement of organizational goals.

Notably, there is no significant association between the structural dimension and the cognitive dimension, suggesting that both independently mediate the relational dimension. The general pattern of connections among the subjects consulted, 50% of whom have administrative positions, is structured (how and with whom they connect) mainly by frequent relationships with technical staff, direct beneficiaries, and indirect beneficiaries (parents, institutions, community), which could influence access to information and resources that, as Morán (2005) indicates, are necessary to minimize individualistic behaviors in favor of a shared identity and therefore not to lose one of the main benefits of organizational social capital, which is the generation of knowledge (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). Given the interaction of the dimensions, some aspects of the constructs analyzed indicate that although relationships with the organization's top management are not frequent, it is perceived that there are

exchanges of knowledge among collaborators and good communication with the organization's top management, which, for Membiela-Pollán et al. (2019), reveals that associativity and knowledge are sources of organizational social capital and produce benefits in human capital as well as in organizational performance.

In support of the hypotheses raised, both the network ties of the structural dimension and the shared resources of the cognitive dimension are positively correlated with the relational dimension through the constructs of communication, trust, identification, obligations and identification so that, as suggested by Collins et al. (2019), subjects identify with the organization, and there is a sense of significance and perception of personal growth, thus improving attitudes, which has an impact on a better work environment with positive experiences that result in job satisfaction.

For those who manage human resources, these results imply some considerations about the importance of encouraging the exchange of knowledge and the internalization of the CSO's strategic objectives so that the sharing of organizational culture, collective objectives, and other vital organizational resources is promoted among the different members in all areas of the organization, regardless of the type of employment relationship, whether by projects or as unpaid volunteers.

It is certainly surprising that the aspects of "associativity" referred to by Leana and Pil (2006) as a cognitive dimension do not contribute positively to the benefits—individual and collective—proposed by the theoretical model of this study, assuming that the understanding of strategic objectives (mission, vision and values) strengthens workers' attachment to their work, their organizational identification, and their shared language, stability and motivation for collective action (Leana and Van Buren, 1999).

In fact, the lowest construct in the dimension refers to whether you put the collective objectives of your team before personal ones, which broadly represents the culture and narrative that supports Locke and Latham's goal-based motivation theory, that specific and challenging goals can be a powerful tool to motivate workers and, in the context of social organizations, achieve a significant impact on the emotional connection that a priori one has with the social cause that gave rise to it.

According to Grant et al. (2008), in the context of social organizations, it is vital to establish goals aligned with personal values so that intrinsic motivation, i.e., that which arises from the internal desire of the worker, is sufficient to predispose him/her to strive to achieve institutional objectives without expecting external rewards and recognition. In this case, what the members of the organization perceive is that both the recognition and the valuation of work positively influence their commitment and work motivation, thus contributing to satisfactory behavior in the relational dimension, which, according to the conceptual model and the analysis carried out, is positively associated with motivation and work performance. In the context of the Latin American third sector, it is important to investigate and position theories related to the management of human capital and the promotion of social capital, which implies benefits in collective action and organizational performance, since it is an incipient area of research that has great potential.

It is evident that, in the context of a health crisis, with individual special situations, the members of the organizations have had difficulties exchanging knowledge and achieve commitment through the strategic objectives of the institution. Instead, social relations could provide that powerful force referred to by Andrews (2010) in an ideal

structure (technical areas, direct and indirect beneficiaries), resulting in an improved flow of information, trust and cooperation and facilitating the fulfillment of collective action through solidarity and commitment in the working environment of third-sector organizations.

### **Limitations and future research**

This study has inherent limitations that could affect the results of the hypotheses proposed, such as the virtual context of interaction due to the pandemic crisis; however, it contributes to the knowledge of internal social capital variables in third-sector organizations, which, according to theorists, is a natural producer of social capital and an actor that contributes to the social development of the people. Other aspects, such as age and gender composition, could be of interest for in-depth sociological studies, as could the internalization of organizational membership, whether it is related to the labor relationships of CSO members. On that basis, this study may also be useful for different types of nonprofit organizations (civil societies, charities, NGOs, humanitarian organizations) to determine the elements of human capital that are associated with organizational social capital, considering factors such as organizational culture, distinct situational environments, diverse institutional contexts, and other aspects that may be important to study. Resource management departments can further understand behaviors and attitudes through employee perceptions so that they can influence human capital management policies that result in improved organizational performance and sustained collective action. Thus, knowing how to leverage social capital and human capital in situations where intangible assets are insufficient, defined strategies could ultimately benefit the community and the target beneficiaries served by these organizations.

This study focuses on Ecuadorian organizations, which limits generalization to other contexts. Although the results show that the organizational social capital approach is promising for the study of motivational factors that drive better performance in collective action, we are aware that it is a theoretical approach that could be corroborated in the future by replicating the tool in a larger sample of CSO workers.

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## Appendix A

**Table A1. Measures.**

Variable and effects	Operationalization
<b>F1 Select the answer option that best fits your opinion: 0=totally disagree; 4=totally agree (Likert)</b>	
<b>Relational Dimension:</b> Trust, commitment, recognition and identity (Adler and Kwon, 2002). Communication, cooperation, obligations and expectations (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998)	The ideas of the collaborators are taken into consideration The organization develops processes to improve communication between collaborators The organization offers training to its employees constantly. Activities that motivate teamwork are carried out The organization develops strategies for my personal growth Within the organization there is an exchange of knowledge between collaborators
<b>(Cronbach's alpha = 0.941)</b>	There is a good relationship within the work teams I apply the knowledge acquired over time within the organization
High relational capital = greater organizational capacity (Kroll et al., 2019)	The organization encourages unity and camaraderie among collaborators I feel that my work is valued
Greater commitment and performance (Andrew, 2010)	I receive the recognition I deserve for my work There is good communication with the senior management of the organization
<b>F2 Select the answer option that best fits your opinion: 0=totally disagree; 4=totally agree (Likert)</b>	
<b>Cognitive Dimension:</b> Shared resources, collective goals over individual interest <b>(Cronbach's alpha=0.870)</b> Organizational identification and motivation for collective action (Andrew 2010)	He feels identified with the organizational Mission and Vision Knows the strategic objectives of the CSO and feels motivated by them You put your team's collective goals before your personal ones. He considers his work valuable to the organization Complies with the standards established by the organization Your work contributes to the image of the organization
<b>F3 Frequency of relationships you have with different people 0=almost never; 4=always (exploratory 8 items, confirmatory 3)</b>	
<b>Structural dimension</b> Links, connectivity and network hierarchy (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998)	Frequency of relationships: Technicians / Teachers / Therapists Frequency of relationships: Direct beneficiaries Frequency of relationships: Indirect beneficiaries (parents, institutions, public)
<b>F4 Select the answer option that best fits your opinion: 0=totally disagree; 4=totally agree (Likert)</b>	
Commitment and Motivation Labor (Meyer et al., 2004)	I feel satisfied with my work and duties I feel encouraged and energized to do my job properly.

Source: Own elaboration.

## Appendix B

**Table B1.** Sample composition.

<b>Age</b>	<b>N = 190</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Under 30 years old	58	30.5
Between 31 and 50 years old	58	30.6
Between 51 and 60 years old	17	8.9
More than 60 years	57	30.0
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	142	74.7
Male	48	25.3
<b>Educational level achieved</b>		
Baccalaureate	19	10.1
Technical studies	28	14.7
University studies	24	12.6
Postgraduate studies	119	62.6
<b>Seniority in the organization</b>		
Less than 3 years	80	42.1
More than 3 years and less than 10 years	41	21.5
More than 10 years and less than 20 years	37	19.5
More than 20 years	32	16.8
<b>Working conditions in the organization</b>		
Dependency relationship	52	27.4
By projects	96	50.5
Volunteer (unpaid work)	42	22.1
<b>Organizational area of the surveyed collaborator</b>		
Board of Directors	41	21.6
Technicians/Teachers/Therapists	15	7.9
Administrative	95	50.0
Users who benefit from services (without remuneration)	25	13.2
Volunteers and interns (unpaid)	14	7.4

Source: Own elaboration.

Appendix C

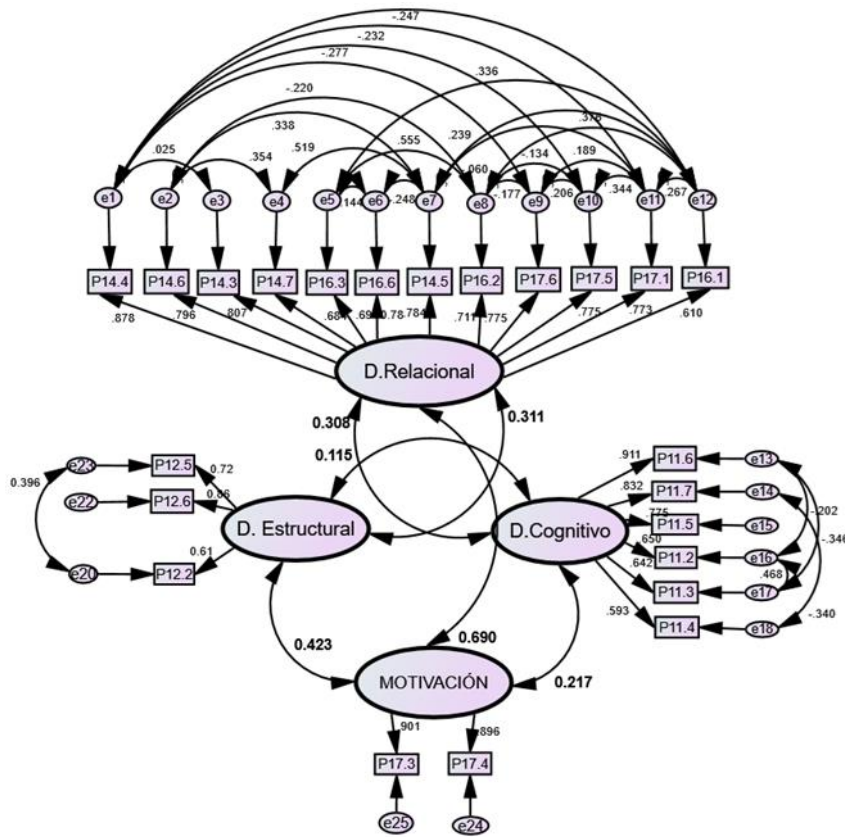


Figure C1. Confirmatory factor analysis diagram.