

RESEARCH ARTICLE	The Potential for “Scientifying” Human Development: Towards the Establishment of an Independent Science for Human Advancement	
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Abstract An attentive reader may notice that most “bestselling” books are strongly tied to the motivational force they offer. In today's world, individuals search for happiness in every corner of the universe. This search comes at a time when people are worn down by life's burdens, in an age of rapid change and infinite needs shaped by modern information and communication technologies. Since the late twentieth century, the concept of human development has evolved rapidly, becoming one of the most prominent themes in academic and developmental discourse. Its significance lies in its departure from purely economic and quantitative measures, placing the individual—along with their capacities and dignity—at the center of development policies. As interest in mental health and quality of life continues to grow, there is a pressing need to explore the scientific framework of human development. This includes examining its relationship with psychological disciplines, particularly positive and religious psychology, and distinguishing between academic and rhetorical approaches in the field. Against this backdrop, this paper investigates the possibility of establishing a distinct discipline under the title: The Science of Human Development.		
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Introduction

Who among us has not read the global literary masterpiece *The Alchemist* by the Brazilian novelist Paulo Coelho? The book has been translated into 83 languages and, according to several online sources, has sold over 210 million copies worldwide. On Amazon, it is reported that Coelho has published 30 books, including *The Alchemist*, with total sales exceeding 310 million copies.¹

In a survey conducted by Time magazine in 2011 on the most influential books in the world, « How to Stop Worrying and Start Living » ranked 19th. This came despite the fact that 63 years had passed since its first edition was published, in the United States, in 1948. The book has been translated into 57 languages, with multiple editions in each. Total sales across all languages and editions are estimated at around 30 million copies.²

¹www.amazon.fr, le: 01/12/2025, at: 13:19

²azhabooks.com, date: 01/12/2025, at: 09:37

In the Arab world, several books have been frequently compared in content to the aforementioned work. Among them are *Renew Your Life* by Sheikh Mohammed Al-Ghazali, *Enjoy Your Life* by Sheikh Mohammed Al-Arifi, and *Don't Be Sad* by the Saudi preacher Aaidh Al-Qarni. The latter gained notable popularity in Algeria, where for years thousands of readers stood in long lines to purchase it at the International Book Fair in Algiers. Published in 2002, *Don't Be Sad* was translated into five languages and sold over 10 million copies, despite media controversy surrounding its resemblance to Dale Carnegie's *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*.

As of 2013, available statistics ceased to be updated, partly due to plagiarism accusations directed at Aaidh Al-Qarni by Dr. Salwa Al-Odidan, a Saudi specialist in family counseling. She alleged that he had copied 85 out of 97 topics from her book *This Is How They Defeated Despair*, published in 2007, and reproduced them nearly word-for-word in his book *Don't Despair*, released in 2011. These claims were later upheld by the Saudi judiciary¹.

An attentive reader can observe that most bestselling books are closely linked to the motivational power they provide. Today, individuals seek happiness in every corner of the world, while facing the exhaustion caused by life's challenges. Time seems to move faster, and personal needs continue to grow without limit. Modern information and communication technologies have played a role in this shift, increasing feelings of anxiety about the future and a tendency toward isolation—even as people remain constantly connected through social media platforms.

This growing sense of unrest leads many to search for ways to cope with anxiety. In response, the field of human development offers solutions grounded in what is known as “positive thinking.” A number of global figures have emerged as pioneers in this field, promoting what they describe as revolutionary ideas, including the well-known work *The Power of Positive Thinking*². Among the most influential authors in this field is Norman Vincent Peale, known for *The Power of Positive Thinking*. His work addressed topics such as: believing in oneself, having a peaceful mind, gaining lasting strength, trying the power of prayer, creating personal happiness, breaking the habit of worry, and rejecting the idea of defeat.

Another notable work is *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen R. Covey. It presents principles such as: being proactive, beginning with the end in mind, integrity and execution, mutual benefit, mutual understanding, creative cooperation, and balanced self-renewal.

Also relevant is *Awaken the Giant Within* by Anthony Robbins, which encourages individuals to discover their inner potential. One cannot overlook Ibrahim El-Feki, one of the most prominent Arab figures in the field of human development and neuro-linguistic programming. These and similar works focus strongly on the inner dimensions of success and happiness.

Since the late twentieth century, the concept of human development has seen rapid evolution. It has become one of the most widely used concepts in academic and development literature. Its importance lies in its move beyond economic and quantitative dimensions, placing the human being—along with their abilities and dignity—at the center of development policies.

With growing attention to mental health and quality of life, there is an urgent need to explore the scientific foundations of human development. This includes its relationship with branches of psychology, especially positive and religious psychology, and the need to distinguish between scholarly and rhetorical approaches within this field.

Research Problem

Although the term “human development” is widely used, its scientific status remains clear. This raises the following question: Can human development be considered an independent science, or is it an applied interdisciplinary field? And how does it intersect with other scientific domains, particularly positive and religious psychology?

First: The Concept of Human Development

¹ aljazeera.net, date: 01/12/2025, at: 13:51

² Imad Abu Alfotouh: "The 10 Best Personal Development Books of All Time" <https://ar.m.wikipedia.org>, le: 04/17/2017 at: 11:00

1. Linguistic Definition of Human Development

The word “development” in Arabic comes from the root verb nama, which is relatively modern and not widely used in earlier texts. According to Arabic language dictionaries, the verb nama carries several meanings.

In Al-Mu'jam Al-Waseet, the word nama means: to grow or increase. For example: the crop grew, the child developed, or the wealth increased. It is also said: “He grows into nobility.” Nama may also describe the deepening of color in the hands or hair when dyed, referring to increased redness or darkness. In another context, nama can refer to news spreading, water rising, or animals becoming fat. For livestock, it can indicate their movement in search of pasture¹.

(Al-Nami): That which grows or is alive, as opposed to what is static or inanimate. This includes things like plants and animals.

(Al-Namwah): Refers to increase or growth.

Linguistic Definition of “Human”: According to Al-Ma'ani Al-Jami' Dictionary² Arabic- Arabic Dictionary Definitions

- **Al-Bashariyya (Humanity):** Refers to human beings, both male and female.
- **Bashariyya (as an adjective):** A feminine noun derived from the word bashar (human).
- **Human Capital:** Refers to people or citizens³.

Bashar (Human): Definition Basharis a noun that refers to a human being. It applies to both singular and plural, male and female, and can also be used in dual and plural forms such as abshar. For example, a "human doctor" is a physician who treats people, in contrast to a veterinarian who treats animals.

Definition of Human Development Human development can be defined as the positive progression and growth of individuals. From birth, a person begins learning from various sources. Their mental development is shaped by interaction with others. Along the way, they accumulate both negative and positive experiences. The role of human development is to eliminate the negative influences and reinforce the positive ones. At the same time, individuals are encouraged to learn from negative past experiences, which are referred to as “challenges.” “These challenges represent personal experiences that turn into valuable life lessons”⁴.

2. Definition of Human Development

Terminology: The concept of human development has evolved from classical economic theory to the Human Development Report 2025.

Historical Concept of Development: Researcher Muammar Hamdi Salman notes that the concept of development emerged primarily after World War II. Before that, from the time of the prominent British economist Adam Smith in the late eighteenth century until World War II, the term was rarely used. Instead, the terms used to describe societal progress were material progress or economic progress.

When the issue of developing certain Eastern European economies rose in the nineteenth century, the terms in use shifted to modernization or industrialization⁵.

¹ Muammar Hamdi Salman: “Malaysia’s Development Experience... A Guiding Vision,” Scientific Conference on Human Development and its Role in Addressing the Population Problem, Algeria, 03/05 April 2006, p. 173.

² “Definition and meaning of humanity in the comprehensive dictionary of meanings an ArabicArabic dictionary,” on www.almaany.com

³ “Definition and meaning of humanity in the comprehensive dictionary of meanings an ArabicArabic dictionary,” on www.almaany.com

⁴ <https://vb.elmstba.com>, le: 06/14/2015, at: 20:00

⁵ Muammar Hamdi Salman: “The Malaysian Development Experience... A Guiding Vision,” Scientific Conference on Human

The concept of development emerged alongside classical economic theory, which relied on the views of well-known scholars such as Adam Smith, Thomas Malthus, and David Ricardo. The classical theory regarded population and capital as the two main components that contribute to economic development. During the 1950s and 1960s, the economic dimension clearly influenced the concept of development. By the late 1960s, the focus of development had expanded beyond merely increasing income. It also came to involve the implementation of policies aimed at reducing poverty and supporting a fairer distribution of income among individuals¹.

From the 1970s to the 1990s: During this period, the economic influence on human development declined. Instead, the social aspect became the primary focus. Western societies experienced significant improvements in living standards, yet these advances did not necessarily lead to greater happiness among people². Professor Schultz explains that the key factor in ensuring human well-being lies in investing in people and knowledge. He emphasizes that the skills individuals acquire—through education, experience, abilities, and health—are essential for achieving economic progress³. Abdu Ibrahim Al-Dasouqi points out that during this period, some scholars focused on defining the concept from a linguistic perspective. Others concentrated on specific dimensions of development, such as the economic or social aspects, or a combination of various dimensions at the expense of others. Meanwhile, some referred to it within the framework of what is called comprehensive development⁴. Mahdi Al-Hafiz states that the term “development” serves as a common focal point for most human sciences and their applications. There is economic development, social development (sociology), political development (political science), as well as cultural development⁵.

According to Nabil Al-Samallouti, it is notable that Western scholars often use several terms interchangeably, including modernization, development, Westernization, progress, and Americanization. They argue that these concepts refer to the replacement of existing social, economic, political, and intellectual systems in traditional societies with those of the West. Consequently, this implies the establishment of the liberal capitalist system, market economies, political parties, Western-style democracy, and other related systems and practices⁶.

Some view development as the emergence and growth of all potential and latent capacities within a given entity, in a complete, comprehensive, and balanced manner—whether that entity is an individual, a group, or a society.⁷ Professor Schultz explains that the key factor in securing human life lies in investment in people and knowledge. He adds that the capabilities people acquire—such as their education, experience, skills, and health—are essential for achieving economic progress⁸. This is close to the first definition adopted by the United Nations Development Program in 1990, with the introduction of the Human Development Index. The index measures the rate of development in about 180 countries around the world. It is calculated on an annual basis, and each country is ranked according to its individual score. The ranking is based on three main types of data⁹:

- Gross National Income Per Capita: This refers to the total value of goods and services produced domestically, combined with the net income generated from financial returns such as dividends, pensions, wages, and other forms of income received over one year. This total is then divided by the overall population.

- Life Expectancy: Life expectancy is the average number of years a person is expected to live, based on current mortality trends. These data help assess the extent to which populations have access to adequate healthcare services. They also reflect the general health conditions of a given society.

Development and its Role in Addressing the Population Problem, Algeria, 03/05 April 2006, p. 174.

¹<https://mawdoo3.com>, on: 08/03/2018, at 18:00.

²<https://mawdoo3.com>, on: 08/03/2018, at 18:00.

³Theodore Schultz: How to Develop Humanity, translated by: Samira Bahr, Arab Awareness Library, Arab Republic of Egypt, 1982, p. 5.

⁴Abdo Ibrahim AlDasouqi: Television and Development, 1st ed., Dar AlWafa for Printing and Publishing, Alexandria, 2004, p. 24.

⁵Mahdi AlHafez “Human Development: The Evolution of the Concept and Its Significance,” in AlArabi Magazine, Ministry of Information, Kuwait, Issue 515, October 2001, p. 28.

⁶Nabil AlSamaluti: Sociology of Development, A Study in Third World Sociology, Egyptian General Book Authority, Alexandria, 1987, p. 107.

⁷Abdel Rahim Tamam Abu Kreisha: Studies in the Sociology of Development, Modern University Office, Alexandria, 2003, p. 44.

⁸Theodore Schultz: How to Develop Humanity, translated by: Samira Bahr, Arab Awareness Library, Arab Republic of Egypt, 1982, p. 5.

⁹<https://mawdoo3.com>, on: 08/03/2018, at 18:00.

- **Education Index:** This index measures the average number of years of schooling among individuals aged twenty-five and older. It also includes the estimated years of education a child is expected to receive, based on the age before formal schooling begins. This index highlights the level and scope of knowledge available within the population, which in turn supports better life choices.

Second: United Nations Human Development Reports – The Shift in the Concept of Human Development from the 1990 Report to the 2025 Report: From the Human as a Goal to the Human as an Agent in a Transforming Digital Environment

The United Nations website (www.un.org) hosts the Human Development Reports issued by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). These are thematic reports published annually. They rely on analytical studies of global experiences and address key developmental issues, trends, and policies. The content of the 2025 Human Development Report, as well as earlier global, regional, and national reports, is available on the website¹ **The following:** <https://hdr.undp.org> This website provides access to the full texts of the reports, as well as a series of summaries available in more than twenty languages. It also includes research papers on human development, a collection of animated maps, and databases of human development indicators for various countries. Additionally, it offers explanations of the sources and methodologies used in calculating human development indices, country profiles, and other reference materials upon which the reports are based.

The first thing a visitor reads on this site is the definition of human development: “Human development is, first and foremost, about allowing people to lead the kind of life they choose – and providing them with the tools and opportunities to make those choices².”

The Human Development Reports Issued by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Since 1990: Redefining the Concept of Human Development in Light of Changing Global Contexts

The Human Development Reports, issued by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) since 1990, have played a critical role in reshaping and continuously refining the concept of human development as global contexts evolve.

1. The Emergence of the Human Development Concept and the First Report (1990)

The first Human Development Report was published in 1990 under the leadership of the Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq, in collaboration with the development thinker and economist Amartya Sen (who later received the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1998 and influenced the 1999 report). This 1990 report defined human development as: “The process of expanding people's choices by enabling them to live long and healthy lives, gain knowledge, and enjoy a decent standard of living.”

This marked a shift in focus—from Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to human well-being. A new tool was introduced: the Human Development Index (HDI), which combined three key dimensions: health, education, and income.

2. Expanding Human Dimensions (1995–2000)

During this period, the concept of human development expanded to include additional aspects such as:

- Gender and women's empowerment (Human Development Report 1995)
- Political participation
- Social justice
- Empowerment

¹ <https://hdr.undp.org>

² www.un.org

The idea of “sustainable human development” also emerged, allowing environmental concerns, poverty, and equality to be integrated into the development discourse. The guiding principle became: “There can be no development without gender equality.” (UNDP, 1995)

3. Human Freedoms as a Core Component (2000–2010)

The 2000 Human Development Report, titled “Human Rights and Human Development,” presented development as a means to realize rights and emphasized that human rights are a fundamental part of the development process.

Many of the reports from this decade were influenced by the vision of Amartya Sen, who had recently received the Nobel Prize in Economics (1998). Sen is known for his contributions to welfare economics, his work on poverty and famines, and his approaches to measuring individual well-being. He came to be seen not only as an economist but also as a humanist thinker whose insights deeply shaped the concepts of justice, freedom, and human dignity—core themes of the Human Development Reports.

The 1999 report, titled “Globalization with a Human Face,” addressed the challenges globalization posed for developing countries. It called for putting the human being at the center of globalization, rather than treating people as tools of economic growth.

It stated: “Development is the expansion of the substantive freedoms that people enjoy.” (1999)

Within this framework, several key issues were highlighted:

- Freedom of access to resources
- Freedom of expression and association
- Freedom of human security

4. Addressing Inequality and Environmental Threats (2010–2020)

As global inequalities deepened, new tools and indicators were introduced to better reflect disparities and vulnerabilities. These included:

- The Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI)
- The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)
- Environmental sustainability as a condition for development

The 2011 report emphasized: “Growth is not enough. It must be inclusive and environmentally fair.” (UNDP, 2011)

5. The Age of Crises and Uncertainty (2020–2023)

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced new challenges to the concept of development. It revealed the fragility of health and social systems in many countries. The Human Development Reports during this period focused on several key themes:

- Human security
- Mental and social well-being
- The digital divide
- The relationship between humans and the planet

An example is the 2021 report titled: “Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping Our Future in a Transforming World” (UNDP, 2021).

6. The 2024 Human Development Report: “Global Imbalance: Trust, Safety, and Cooperation in a Fragmented World”

The 2024 report addresses deep transformations in relationships—between individuals, states, and global systems—in the face of contemporary growing crises, such as:

- Declining trust in institutions, including government, media, education, and even science. The report links this erosion of trust to the spread of misinformation, political polarization, and rising inequality.
- Fear of the future. According to regular UNDP surveys, 61% of people globally reported feelings of fear and a sense of “constant threat.” These concerns include climate disasters, wars, and economic instability.
- Mental health is now recognized as a central pillar of human development.
- A decline in international cooperation has widened global disparities in safety and security. Poorer countries face greater exposure to environmental disasters, while women and vulnerable groups are more at risk of violence and exclusion.

In response, the report calls for a shift beyond international competition. It advocates for fair and transparent collective governance. It also emphasizes the need to rebuild “trust among peoples” through participatory mechanisms and responsible media.

The report also highlights the rise of digital individualism. It notes that emerging technologies, especially artificial intelligence, will fundamentally reshape how development is understood.

The 2024 report serves as a conceptual bridge between the post-COVID-19 reports and the forthcoming 2025 edition.

7. The 2025 Human Development Report: A Matter of Choice — People and Potential in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

In this report, the concept of human development has evolved to reflect the new and complex realities brought about by artificial intelligence and technological breakthroughs. The report highlights several key points:

- **Human choice at the center of development:** Artificial intelligence does not determine our future. It is human choices about how AI is used that will shape our progress or regression.
- **Technological potential does not guarantee development:** Technology will not lead to progress unless it is fairly distributed, used responsibly, and contributes to justice and human dignity.
- **Emphasis on ethical governance of technology:** Developing artificial intelligence is not enough. It must also be regulated in ways that serve the public good and respect individual freedoms.

Summary Table: The Evolution of the Human Development Concept in Selected Reports, from the First Report (1990) to the Most Recent (2025)

Concept development	Report focus	year
People are the focus of development, not just the economy.	A basic definition of human development and expanding people's choices: long life, education, and a decent standard of living	1990
Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality	Gender: Gender and Human Development	1995
Focusing on the challenges imposed by globalization on developing countries, and	"Globalization with a humanistic orientation"	1999

demanding that people be made the focus of globalization, not merely a means.		
Freedom as a Condition for Development: Linking Human Dignity and Development	Freedoms: Human Rights and Human Development	2000
Affirmation of Global equity and distribution of opportunities between countries and individuals	International cooperation and human development	2005
Development goes beyond economics to sustainable development the AI Invest in people and	The real wealth of nations: people inequality	2010
Decent work and economic empowerment for development (work as an individual and social means)	Working for human development	2015
Human Security and Environmental Sustainability: Development is the ability to adapt to global risks and changes.	Pandemic, Mental Health, Climate Change: Uncertainty in a Changing Time	2020
Development is not only economic growth, but also building societies capable of cooperation and achieving justice.	Breaking the Impasse: Reimagining Cooperation in a Divided World (blockages in dealing with shared global crises, such as climate change, technological risks, rising poverty and inequality, geopolitical crises, and the loss of trust in institutions.)	2023
Digital transformation as a new factor in development: Human development is no longer measured solely by indicators of health, education, and income, but rather by the choices we humans make in a world dominated by advanced technology.	A Matter of Choice: People and Human Potential (AI and Digitization)	2025

Conclusions from the Overview: It can be stated that the concept of human development has not remained static. Rather, it has interacted with global transformations and adapted to new challenges. It has evolved from merely an indicator measuring quality of life into a philosophical, political, and economic framework that redraws the relationship between humans, society, environment, and technology.

- From the 1990 report to the 2000 report: The focus was on needs and rights.
- From the 2000 report to 2015: The concept of human development progressed toward empowering individuals and communities.
- From 2015 to 2025: The concept intensified to respond to global and technological threats.

A comparison between the 1990 Human Development Report and the 2025 report reveals a profound shift in the conceptual and intellectual vision of human development. The 1990 report was grounded in a fundamental humanist perspective, emphasizing the value of the individual as the core purpose of development. It focused on expanding human choices and capacities in education, health, and income. This report marked a foundational moment in development thought, challenging traditional economic approaches that reduced humans to material indicators.

In contrast, the 2025 report emerges in a more complex global context, characterized by unprecedented challenges such

as digitization, artificial intelligence, climate change, pandemics, and geopolitical conflicts. The report reshapes development priorities through the lens of “uncertainty,” emphasizing the building of adaptive capabilities for individuals in a changing world. At the same time, it redefines humans as strategic actors operating within complex systems, not merely as ends in themselves.

This shift reveals that human development no longer represents a single discourse but a composite narrative where the humanistic intersects with the technological, the ethical with the functional, and the local with the global. This opens the door to a necessary critical discussion about the nature of this transformation: Are we witnessing a natural evolution in development thought, or a shift that risks emptying development of its human dimension in favor of pragmatic and technical frameworks?

Thirdly: The Relationship of Human Development with Other Sciences: Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Positive Psychology, and Religious Psychology Human development has become an integrated vision intersecting with numerous disciplines, including psychology, education, economics, and philosophy. This is confirmed by Dr. Badr al-Din Zawaga, who states: “Official institutions have employed ‘human development science’ through its hypotheses, skills, models, and strategies across various life domains. This led to numerous initiatives that transformed Western societies in areas such as business management, marketing arts, conflict management, meeting management, time management, crisis management, leadership skills, communication and interpersonal skills, public speaking arts, influence skills, academic excellence, and marital relations...¹.

Below, we attempt to approach human development through the lenses of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Positive Psychology, and Religious Psychology:

1. Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP): This refers to a set of techniques and concepts derived from behavioral studies. It focuses on how an individual perceives the world, patterns of thinking and behavior, and rapid behavioral and cognitive change. Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) is considered one of the most prominent techniques in human development today. Anyone discussing communication, personality development, or practicing hypnosis would likely have studied NLP in depth².

The founders of Neuro-Linguistic Programming are: First, the mathematician Richard Bandler (a student of behavioral psychology and a computer programmer)³. He compared the human mind to a computer—composed of a set of files that can be added to, removed, or modified—making it possible to adjust human behavior to achieve success. The second founder is the linguist John Grinder, known for his strong ability to analyze complex linguistic and behavioral patterns.⁴... In 1975, researchers John Grinder and Richard Bandler published their discovery in a two-part book titled *The Structure of Magic*. The field of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) then experienced a wave of innovation and development during the 1980s in the United States. It later spread to parts of Europe. This surge in interest has continued from the 1990s to the present. Many other disciplines have since been derived from it, including photo reading and accelerated learning.⁵

The founding idea behind Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) was very simple. The question was: If we imitate successful people—their speech, their movements, their behaviors—would we succeed like them? The surprising answer was: Yes, you will succeed.

Following this insight, a group of researchers studied the behaviors of the most prominent psychotherapists of the 1960s. They closely observed and analyzed the smallest details of their actions.

Since the late 1970s, the concept of human development has been influenced by NLP. This influence helped simplify behavioral psychology and apply it to areas such as child-rearing, academic achievement, dialogue management,

¹ zouaga.blogspot.com, le: 09/24/2016, at: 04:35.

² Sherif Arafa: “What is human development?”, on: www.drsherif.net/ar/articles

³ www.wikiwand.com, le: 17/09/2017, à: 19:00

⁴ <https://m.facebook.com/perlamink>, to: 09/17/2017, to: 19:20

⁵ Neurolinguistic programming, on: tceg.caoa.gov.eg.

leadership training, and many other workshops and training programs¹. Thus, it can be said that Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) is one of the tools of human development.

1. Positive Psychology Perhaps the most comprehensive definition of positive psychology appears in the preface to the Third International Conference on Positive Psychology: Reality and Prospects, held under the theme “Toward a Purposeful Future Vision” on December 11–12, 2018, at the University of Algiers 2. It states: “Positive psychology is a modern trend concerned with studying various psychological and social issues from the positive dimensions of human personality”.

Positive thinking evolved into the field of positive psychology in the late 1990s and early 2000s, through the efforts of four leading scholars, most notably Martin Seligman, along with Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Ed Diener, and Christopher Peterson. Together, they published several works on themes such as happiness, learned optimism, children's optimism, and hope.

Seligman described positive psychology as: “A classification system for human strengths and virtues”³.

Seligman focused his research on positive emotions, positive traits, and the study of positive institutions. His approach emphasized strengths rather than concentrating solely on illnesses and disorders. He defined happiness not merely as the absence of sadness, but as the presence of pleasure, engagement, and meaning. Positive psychology is thus seen as both a preventive and therapeutic approach. It aims to identify human strengths, nurture them, and maximize their potential. This contributes to the healing process and plays a role in disease prevention³. Seligman's approach becomes clear upon reviewing the titles of his works: *Authentic Happiness*, *Flourish*, *Learned Optimism*, *The Hope Circuit* — all of which carry a positive tone. One of Seligman's groundbreaking ideas, presented in his book *Authentic Happiness*, is that happiness is not the result of luck or genetics but can be consciously built and cultivated. He argues that true happiness can grow through intentional effort and awareness”⁴.

Positive psychology focuses on an individual's strengths rather than their weaknesses. It emphasizes opportunities over risks and seeks to enhance potentials rather than dwell on obstacles. Its goal is to activate functional effectiveness, competence, and overall well-being, instead of concentrating solely on disorders and their treatment. It is concerned with building strength, capacity, pleasure, and health in both healthy and unwell individuals. The ultimate goal is to reach the highest levels of empowerment, achievement, satisfaction, happiness, and quality of life.

Positive psychology contributes to the provision of psychological and counseling services that foster the development of positive psychological and social behavior. This, in turn, supports human development. Applying positive psychology strategies shifts the focus away from a narrow view centered on individuals or on experiencing negative situations and mental illnesses. Instead, it promotes a new approach—developing positive traits, virtues, and strengths throughout life, benefiting health, relationships, and work⁵.

Some of the research topics in positive psychology include optimism, hope, satisfaction and gratitude, creativity, meaning in life, emotional intelligence, happiness, psychological resilience, positive emotions, and flow.

The applications of positive psychology cover areas such as health, family, school, work, and society. These fields overlap significantly with human development. Later, positive psychology expanded to include foundational approaches, including attempts to integrate spiritual and religious dimensions in explaining concepts such as “flourishing” and “meaning” This expansion leads us to a broader comparison between psychological disciplines and human development.

¹ zouaga.blogspot.com, le: 09/24/2016, at: 04:35.

² Riyadh Nail AlAsimi: *Clinical Positive Psychology*, Vol. 1, 1st ed., Dar AlA'sar AlIlmi, Amman, 2016, p. 21.

³ Preamble to the Third International Conference on: “Positive Psychology, Reality and Prospects” under the slogan “Towards a Purposeful Future Vision” December 11/12, 2018, University of Algiers 2.

⁴ Martin EP SELIGMAN: *Authentic Happiness: Using Positive Psychology Talk to Uncover What You Have for a More Fulfilling Life*, translated by: Safaa AlAasar and others, 1st ed., Dar AlAin Publishing, Cairo, 2005, p. 7.

⁵ Preamble to the Third International Conference on: “Positive Psychology, Reality and Prospects” under the slogan “Towards a Purposeful Future Vision” on December 11 and 12, 2018, University of Algiers 2

1- Religious Psychology: Religious psychology is a branch of psychology that aims to understand the impact of religion on the individual and society. It also seeks to explore the psychological causes behind religious behavior. Among the subjects it examines are questions such as: Do religious individuals have a distinct personality? Does religion promote greater life satisfaction? Do religious people enjoy better physical and mental health?¹. It studies the human religious experience and the impact of faith and spiritual practices on mental health.

The psychological studies religion not to determine its truth or falsehood, but because it holds meaning for fellow human beings through their shared understanding and reflection. The psychological researcher may hold personal religious beliefs or a philosophy of their own; However, this should not compromise their integrity when examining the rituals of other sects or the doctrines of different cultures...².

Despite differences in frameworks and methods, religious psychology and human development converge on one point: the inner development of the individual.

To gain a deeper understanding of the nature of the relationship between human development and psychological sciences, the following table can be presented as a comprehensive comparison:

human development	Religious psychology	positive psychology	traditional psychology	Dimension
Self-development and motivation	Spiritual and psychological balance	Mental strength and well-being	Diseases and disorders	the focus
Training, motivational, practical	My interpretation and faith	Experimental and preventive	Diagnostic and therapeutic	Curriculum
Workshops, books, lectures	Meditation, prayer, guidance	Psychological measures, research	Psychotherapy, tests	Tools
A mixture of science and rhetoric	Religious texts and spiritual experiences	Scientific - Experimental	Medical science	Reference
Media, Development, Corporate	Mosques, religious centers	Schools, prevention institutions	Clinics, hospitals	Application field
Easy access and strong motivation	Promote reassurance and meaning	Focus on the positive	Diagnostic accuracy	Strengths
It may lack scientific foundations.	Weakness in scientific methodology	He ignores the spiritual dimension	He may focus only on the negatives.	Weaknesses

4- Mental Health as a Shared Topic in Religious Psychology, Positive Psychology, and Human Development

4-1- Definition of Mental Health:

The World Health Organization defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which an individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to contribute to their community. It is a fundamental human right and is critical for personal, community, social, and economic development"³.

¹ Masoud Azerbaijani: "The Psychology of Religion: An Analytical Reading of Freud and Jung's Theories," in the Journal of Occidentalism, Issue 3, April 2, 2016, at: istighrab.iicss.iq

² Cyril Burt: The Psychology of Religion, translated by Samir Abdo, 1st ed., Dar AlAfak AlJadida Publications, Beirut, 1985, p 9.

³ www.who.int, published on: 06/17/2022

Mohamed Hassan Ghanem attempted to provide a detailed definition of mental health, as follows:

It is the complete harmony or integration between the different psychological functions, along with the ability to face the common psychological crises that usually occur to individuals, accompanied by a positive sense of happiness and adequacy.

Mental health is the absence of conflict between two opposing drives through a process of resolution, as hesitation indicates a lack of mental health in the individual.

Mental health is the necessary condition, or the set of conditions, required for an individual to adapt effectively both to themselves and to the external world. This adaptation leads to the highest possible levels of adequacy and happiness for both the individual and the society to which they belong¹.

Mental health is a dynamic condition. It is reflected in an individual's ability to adapt flexibly to the circumstances faced by the person or society. This adaptation includes two types of harmony:

- **Objective harmony:** The individual's ability to form social bonds is characterized by giving and receiving, cooperation, and tolerance.
- **Subjective harmony:** The individual's ability to:
 - Reconcile conflicting motives in the face of life's challenges.
 - Accept or reject, meaning recognizing oneself as a distinct and independent person from others.
 - Maintain self-confidence and a sense of responsibility.
 - Endure life's frustrations.

Mental health is defined as sound adaptation combined with a sense of well-being and a desire to live.

4-2. Mental Health in Human Development Reports:

As noted earlier, mental health has become a new focus within human development. This shift is particularly evident in the 2024 Human Development Report. It responds to growing anxiety and a general loss of trust, as the report highlights:

- Before 2020, anxiety was often mentioned implicitly, mainly as fears or increasing risks.
- After the COVID-19 pandemic, anxiety was addressed more explicitly. It is now seen as part of mental health and has a direct impact on human development.
- Human development reports no longer measure only what people have (income, education, health). They also assess how people feel (satisfaction, anxiety, hope, and even meaning). This marks an important evolution in the comprehensive human perspective.

The methods used by the reports to measure feelings include:

- **Life Satisfaction Index:** Participants rate their lives on a scale from 0 to 10. For example: "If 10 is the best possible life and 0 the worst, where do you see yourself now?"
- **Daily Emotion Measurement:** Direct questions ask if participants felt pleasure, anger, or sadness yesterday. The percentage of people experiencing positive or negative emotions is then calculated.
- **Use of International Data:** Data from organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) database are used. These include rates of anxiety, depression, suicide, and psychological support.

4-3. Mental Health at the Intersection of Psychology and Human Development:

¹ Muhammad Hassan Ghanem: Religious Psychotherapy, p. 104.

Mental health forms a shared focus among religious psychology, positive psychology, and human development.

- In religious psychology, it is linked to patience, acceptance, and spiritual tranquility.
- In positive psychology, it centers on satisfaction, meaning, and resilience.
- In human development, it is presented in a motivational context that encourages achievement and “positive thinking”.

Fourth: Foundations for Establishing Human Development as an Independent Science and Academic Research Awareness of This

Despite the widespread presence of human development in many fields—educational, professional, and others—and its remarkable effectiveness in motivating individuals and fostering self-improvement, it remains, to this day, an area that lacks scientific research. It is sometimes criticized for “lacking methodological strictness and scientific verifiability.”

The question we pose is: Can human development become a science? The answer begins with distinguishing between human development as motivational techniques and human development as a field suitable for scientific research.

For human development to be classified as a “science,” it must undergo precise methodological transformations, which include:

1. **Clearly defining the study subject:** For example, studying behaviors that influence success or the effect of positive thinking on performance. We have found that mental health topics are among the most important within human development.
2. **Adopting a clear scientific method:** This involves observation, experimentation, quantitative and qualitative measurement. We have discovered that human development depends on some methods and tools from other sciences, such as the use of Neuro-Linguistic Programming as one of its tools.
3. **Relying on reliable data:** Rather than individual experiences or general slogans. We observe how the United Nations Development Program shifted to using statistical methods and trustworthy data, conducting field studies to issue its annual reports on the state of human development since 1990.
4. **Producing replicable knowledge:** Theories must be verifiable and applicable in various contexts.

Additionally, establishing academic references is necessary. This includes postgraduate programs and specialized scientific journals. In this regard, many peer-reviewed journals titled “Human Development” have emerged. For example, the Human Development Journal of Oran in Algeria, which started publishing in 2007, and the Human Development and Education for Specialized Research journal published by the Malaysian Institute of Science and Development.

In this context, Algerian universities have provided platforms that combine research and practice to improve quality of life through support for mental health. For example, during 2023–2024, various national forums were organized, such as:

- Tlemcen, October 2024: A forum on “Concealment of Mental Illnesses in Marital Relationships—Implications and Solutions.”
- Tiaret, December 2024: A regional meeting titled “Promoting Youth Mental Health,” focusing on crisis management, psychological pressures, and youth addiction.
- Skikda, October 2024: A forum on “Mental Health—Issues Between Psychological Weakness and Social Well-being,” emphasizing school, work, family, and age-related environments.

Human development has also emerged as a key and variable topic in many national and international forums. For example, the international forum held in 2018 at the University of Algiers 2, which I personally attended, focused on “Positive Psychology and Human Development.” It featured rich contributions from Algerian professors and visiting scholars from foreign universities, representing various disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and media and communication sciences.

These numerous discussions indicate that human development is undergoing the birth of a new, independent science called “Human Development.”

However, the psychological nature of the field (as the psychology department organized the forum) suggested an implicit direction: the possibility that human development could evolve into a branch of positive psychology or applied human behavior science, which would help establish it as a recognized scientific discipline.

CONCLUSION:

The field of media and communication sciences has expanded to include a new discipline known as “human development.” Media and communication sciences are interdisciplinary, encompassing many fields and specializations. From their origins, they have drawn from cybernetics, sociology, political science, psychology, and more. The French communication expert Dominique Charaudeau described them as “a sponge that absorbs all sciences.”

If we consider that topics such as : body language, the power of positive thinking, the art of persuasion, social intelligence, time management, and the magic of words... are all part of human development, we can understand its important place within media and communication sciences.

The evolution of the concept of human development, especially through the reports of the United Nations Development Programme, reflects the dynamic and flexible nature of developmental thought in adapting to change. With the 2025 report, we enter a new phase where artificial intelligence will play a central role—not just as a tool, but as a force shaping the very future of humanity.

This raises the question: Can human development preserve its human core in the age of machines?

Answering this challenge requires the collaborative efforts of scholars from various disciplines. Such cooperation may soon lay the foundation for a new science: the science of human development.

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