Competitive Educational Research Journal (CERJ)
ISSN (Print): 2709-9784, ISSN (Online): 2709-9792
Volume 3 Issue 1
https://cerjournal.com

PAKISTANI COMMUNITY ATTITUDES AND SUPPORT FOR CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC) DEVELOPMENT

***Muhammad Ibrar**
Department of Sociology, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan
Hamadullah Kakepoto
Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan
Bushra Manzoor
Department of Sociology, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan
Muhammad Asghar Khan
School of Economics and Management, Panzhihua University, Panzhihua, China

*Email of the corresponding author: ibrarshabjani@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Transport corridors are important for the development of any country. China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is launched by China and Pakistan under the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI). CPEC transportation and policy making is important for the development of Pakistan. By using formal survey data from diversified socio-demographic respondents in Pakistan, the paper empirically investigates the relations among the perceived benefits of the China-Pakistan economic corridor (socio-cultural and economic), the overall attitude of the community, and the community's support for the implementation of the project. The results show a strong indication that the perceived benefits of the project have a significant influence on the community's attitude towards supporting the project. It also shows that overall attitude plays a strong mediating role on the relationship between each of the perceived benefits and community support. Furthermore, According to the findings of this study, the majority of respondents were optimistic about the benefits of the project. This knowledge is fruitful for researchers, policy makers, business executives, and entrepreneurs.

Keywords: CPEC development; Economic Corridor; Economic benefits, CPEC support

INTRODUCTION

The idea of an economic corridor was inspired by a transportation corridor. The routes, channels, or ways that connect one economic center to another, either within a single country or between two countries, are known as transport corridors. (Asian Development Bank, 2014). Getting evolved after a long time the term corridor has expanded its scope to a broader developmental and economic perspective. In the very start, corridors were only considered as transport routes but after some time it was realized that governing services such as: logistics services, institutional and regulatory framework have similar importance for managing the trade routes properly (Sequeira, Hartmann, & Kunaka, 2014). The basic purpose of a corridor; especially in the case of landlocked countries, is

to offer efficient transport and logistics to promote domestic and international trade. Here comes the question that what will be the impact of a corridor? The answer to this question depends on many factors including the objectives and purpose of each of the stake holders involved i.e. users of corridor, regulatory and controlling institutions, and history of the corridor itself (Sequeira et al., 2014). The major problem of developing countries is that they do not have an access to the international markets due to their poor transportation infrastructure (Coşar & Demir, 2016). Economic corridor can help such countries to overcome this hurdle. Economic corridors are essential for integrating regional economies. CPEC is crucial for a region's development. For instance, lowering transportation costs both within and between regions expands access to global markets, boosts income, and eradicates poverty. (Vickerman, 2002). Thus, the purpose of economic corridors is to promote pro-poor socioeconomic development and close infrastructure gaps in the region, thereby fostering regional economic integration. A typical economic corridor is a clearly defined area that typically crosses a major transportation route. They contribute to boosting trade, generating employment, and poverty alleviation. As the region's extraordinary success in recent decades demonstrates, South Asia's diversity offers a wealth of opportunities for trade, investment, and economic growth. Their economies have grown and are now more intertwined with one another and the rest of the world. Without much interregional interaction, the economies of South Asian nations have developed significantly over the past 20 years. According to some studies, if regional economic interaction increases, South Asian countries could possibly experience much higher growth (Srinivasan, Winter, & Nunez, 2006).

Pakistan is reforming its public sector businesses that deal with national connectivity, creating the National Trade Corridor (NTC) in 2005, and allowing foreign direct investment in the transport and communication sectors (FDI). The government's top priority is to connect Pakistan's road and rail networks to those in Central Asia and South Asia. (Government of Pakistan, 2010). In July 2013, Beijing and Islamabad signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to construct an economic corridor (China Pakistan Economic Corridor) by linking Kashgar to Gwadar Port of Pakistan through extension of Silk Road initiative which is widely known as One Belt One Road (OBOR), via a network of highways, railways and pipelines through Gilgit-Baltistan and the other provinces of Pakistan (Cherng-shin Ouyang, 2013; Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Rafiq, & Karan, 2016). With its connections to Central Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, the CPEC will help to connect the entire region. The total cost of construction is estimated to be around more than $46 billion, and the project should be finished in a few years (Zhang & Shi, 2016). The development of the CPEC, which would involve the establishment of numerous industrial and economic zones as well as actual railway and road links connecting China and Pakistan, is also anticipated to have the potential to transform Pakistan into a hub of trade and commerce in the region (Sial, 2014). Huge industrial clusters do have positive as well as negative impacts. They increase the demand of raw material which subsequently leads to high cost of production which further results into price hike. Policy makers would require coming up with innovative initiatives to mitigate these effects. It is essential for the policy makers of Pakistan to manage the given opportunity through professional precision by converting the potentials of Pak-China corridor into substantial and sustainable economic growth (A. A. Shaikh, 2014). A wide range of research studies have shown that the success of mega projects especially those

involving economic collaboration among countries depends upon the extent of community support (L Ali, Mi, Shah, Rafiq, & Ibrar, 2016; Ofuoku, Emuh, & Ezeonu, 2014). Previous studies in psychology and knowledge management have also shown that the existence of significant relationship among perceived economic and socio-cultural benefits of mega events (Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Rafiq, & Ali, 2019; Kanwal, Rasheed, Pitafi, Pitafi, & Ren, 2020; Látková & Vogt, 2012). But the findings of these studies are not applicable to the mega project of economic collaboration. Research on local community and their support for developmental projects has, therefore a systematic, active field of investigation in social exchange theory and theory of reasoned action theory. Social exchange theory and theory of reasoned action postulates that "individuals' attitudes towards developmental project and subsequent support for its development will be influenced by their evaluation of resulting outcomes in the community". Therefore, host community's support for the developmental projects would depend on the perceived effects of development. The application of social exchange theory and theory of reasoned action to host community's attitudes towards tourism has found support in the literature; however, some studies have not been conclusive (Campón-Cerro, Folgado-Fernández, & Hernández-Mogollón, 2017; Kanwal, Chong, & Pitafi, 2018b).

Pakistan would become very important by putting this project into action, not just in this area but also globally. Both Pakistan and China have been working hard in recent years to launch large-scale projects that are in the interests of both countries. One of the shortest, oldest, and most significant trade routes in history is the Silk Road. It will be of great assistance in moving trade from (China) Kashgar to (Pakistan) Gwadar. By putting the CPEC into action, Pakistan will strengthen its economy. The purpose of this study is to build on the existing body of knowledge. It develops a model that demonstrates the effect of various factors on residents' perceptions and support of the perceived economic and socio-cultural and benefits of CPEC, and shows how these perceptions affect their attitudes in the context of historic and cultural attractions. In addition, this research will try to empirically test the association among community perception, overall attitude of the Pakistani community and its implication for the success of mega projects. The research objectives are to: develop a theoretical model to examine the causal effects of economic and socio-cultural effects on the host community's support for CPEC. More specifically, this study focuses on the CPEC from the Pakistan's point of view in detail.

Hypothesis development and theoretical model

Sustainable development has received a lot of attention in the transportation and tourism industry because it can accommodate visitor needs, provide opportunities to improve the economy, protect the environment, and improve the quality of life for locals while increasing the likelihood of future development (Eagles, McCool, Haynes, & Phillips, 2002; Kanwal et al., 2020). Sustainable development requires serious importance to understand that, how local community is thinking about the project because it is an outcome of successful management and administration (Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Mumtaz, Rafiq, & Buriro, 2018; Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2019; Nicholas, Thapa, & Ko, 2009). Because the nature of the project has a significant impact on the economy and the project's collaborative activities have an impact on the government in addition to the economy, host community interest in and support for any developmental project is crucial to ensuring economic growth and development (Jamal, Othman, & Muhammad, 2011).

The antecedents of community support for megaprojects have been the subject of a number of research works in the field of psychology (L Ali et al., 2016; Kanwal et al., 2020; Vargas-Sánchez, Porras-Bueno, & de los Ángeles Plaza-Mejía, 2011). Though, according to Prayag, Hosany, Nunkoo, and Alders (2013), assert that there was ambiguity regarding the distinction between community attitude and community support in the existing studies. With that respect, two important problems are of worth consideration, interchangeable usage of the two terms (Ko & Stewart, 2002) and the issue of measurement (Zhou & Ap, 2009). As one of the implications of this paper is the encroachment of related theory, it argues that community's attitudes and community's support for mega projects are two different terms. Consequently, it further argues that a positive attitude about the benefits to be gained out of the implementation of mega projects motivates the community to support its implementation (Kanwal, Chong, & Pitafi, 2018a; Kanwal, Pitafi, Rasheed, Pitafi, & Iqbal, 2019; Kwon & Vogt, 2010). Thus, we hypothesized that;

H_1: *The overall attitude is positively related to the community's support for CPEC development.*

The benefits and scope of the project have an impact on socio-cultural and economic development(Akkawi, 2010). Therefore, equitable benefit distribution is necessary for local communities to have positive perceptions of community development projects. Any development project's economic benefits are generally well received by the host community. First of all, by bringing in new money from outside sources, development projects function as an export industry. Local community will gain foreign exchange, which can boost the local economy (Dogan, 1987).

Some economic benefits include: increased income levels, employment, diversification of local economy, keeping local business viable, stimulation of inward investment and contributions to the local economy from the multiplier effect. It helps create employment opportunities in a variety of industries such as: transportation and communication, construction and increasing demand for new infrastructure investment, (Milman & Pizam, 1988). Research suggests that local community is willing to host these projects due to the positive economic benefits (additional sources of income and tax revenues and improved economic and living condition of the host community) of projects (Getz & Getz, 1997).

According to research, the majority of host community support for developmental projects as an economic development strategy because they see them as tools for economic growth (Gursoy, Jurowski, & Uysal, 2002). Local community may also see mega-projects as a tool for attracting new investment, developing new business opportunities, and generating income for the community development (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004). Approximately all studies that looked at the connection between beliefs about economic benefits and opinions of development projects found a encouraging association (Allen, Long, Perdue, & Kieselbach, 1988; Jurowski, Uysal, & Williams, 1997).

According to the literature, residents' attitudes toward development projects are mostly influenced by the financial gains linked to jobs, tax revenues, and other sources of income (Getz & Getz, 1997) .A number of studies have acknowledged that mega projects have wider range of economic benefits associated with new business opportunities,

creation of massive employment and increased tax revenue (Lorde, Greenidge, & Devonish, 2011; Prayag et al., 2013; Zhou & Ap, 2009). The building of infrastructures could motivate the investment spirit of locals and increase economic expenditure of the local community along with the change in lifestyle could have more economic benefits for the host nation of mega projects (Bob & Swart, 2009; Dwyer, 2007). If properly managed, implementation of the China-Pakistan economic corridor is expected to bring an immense economic benefit through breakage of the energy bottlenecks, ensuring connectivity and will change the international image of the nation to attract foreign investments (Akbar, 2015; S. Ali, Daud, & Ibrar, 2021). According to (Akbar, 2015), the transportation and communication sector costs Pakistan 4% to 6% of its GDP annually due to low performance. Thus, a better infrastructural development resulted from the CPEC can create new opportunities for the economic development of the nation.

Previous studies on the economic benefits of mega projects have found that even though mega projects have both negative and positive economic implication for the local people, the positive economic impacts outweigh the negative impacts (Yoon, Gursoy, & Chen, 2001). Consequently, the attitudes of local community are more likely to be influenced by the positive impacts and are motivated to support the implementation of mega projects (Bob & Swart, 2009; Lee, Kang, Long, & Reisinger, 2010). According to McGehee and Andereck (2004), the social exchange theory has postulated that perceived economic gains from mega projects positively influence attitude of communities to support the implementation of projects. Thus, the following hypothesis holds true for this paper;

H_2: *The perceived economic benefits have direct effect on the overall attitude of the community attitude to support CPEC development.*

Generally, defining socio-cultural effects or consequences of transport infrastructure are very hard, because the words socio-cultural cover all the activities which effect human being either positive or negative, which are too broad definition but can be defined with limitation (M Ibrar, Mi, & Rafiq, 2016). So, it can be defined as the changes through transport corridor which affect human life as happiness, activities, and perception of common people, group or society which are maybe positive. Some major effects like demographic changes, job opportunities, and effect on family life are measured as socio-cultural effects (L Ali et al., 2016; Esteves, Franks, & Vanclay, 2012; M Ibrar et al., 2016). Numerous previous works have shown that mega projects and events have positive implications for the socio-cultural conditions of a nation (Pillay & Bass, 2008; Ritchie, Shipway, & Cleeve, 2009). According to Zhou and Ap (2009), mega projects will enable the host community to understand other cultures and act in a way that could build national identity for better international image of the country. It is also a tool for the governments in getting support from others in subsequent national capacity building efforts (Cornelissen & Swart, 2006).

The culture of Pakistan has the finger prints of the western world and the economic collaboration between china and Pakistan will open a new horizon for countries to have an influence on the socio-cultural conditions mutually. The socio-economic implication of the CPEC will help Pakistan to expand its cultural values and open the doors to the world to interact with its rich culture which will in turn render a positive national identify (M Ibrar et al., 2016; Irshad, 2015). The planned mega project will open door for better cultural exchange as well as will boost opportunities in infrastructural development to

create better entrepreneurial culture in the community (Liang, Liu, & Wu, 2008). Transportation and road (Such development can) provide an easy access to basic services like health, education, banking and access to market etc (Asomani-Boateng, Fricano, & Adarkwa, 2015; Barrios, 2008; Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Karim, et al., 2018; Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2019; Jacoby, 2000; Van Wee, 2016). Consequently, the resulting socio-cultural implications of the projects will influence the community's attitude towards supporting the implementation of the proposed project. Hence, considering these facts, it is hypothesized that;

H_3: *The socio-cultural benefits has a positive effect on the community overall attitude to support CPEC.*

Both, the social exchange theory and theory of reasoned action has been the most dominant theoretical perspectives used to explain a number of individual and group behaviors and community attitudes towards their support for the success of mega projects and events (Kanwal et al., 2018b; Zhou & Ap, 2009). With its ability to account the divergent behaviors and beliefs, the social exchange theory has been successful in explaining community support towards mega events and projects (Prayag et al., 2013). According to Prayag et al. (2013), the social exchange theory is based on the fundamental assumption that individuals will have more tendencies to participate in an exchange if they perceive a gain of benefit without incurring unacceptable cost. Moreover, the finding shows that the higher the perceived benefit, the more the level of support of the individuals (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006; Kanwal et al., 2018b). For the reason that it accounts both the negative and positive impacts of mega projects, it becomes an important theory to study the support of a community on mega events and projects (Kanwal et al., 2018b). According to Prayag et al. (2013), the social exchange theory revolves around three important elements, economic benefits, environmental benefits and socio-cultural benefits. The negative and positive perceptions signifies the presence or absence of certain factors such as: rationality, benefits and reciprocity related to the economic, environmental and socio-cultural gains related to the mega projects (Kanwal et al., 2018b; Kanwal et al., 2020).

Several researchers and knowledge management philosophers have also used the theory of reasoned action and social exchange theory to explain the attitudes and behaviors of the local community people (Zhou & Ap, 2009). With its fundamental consideration that intention is the most important predictor of behavior, the theory of reasoned action suggests that individual as well as group intents drive community behavior which in turn determines both attitude and subjective norms (Ofuoku et al., 2014). According to Ofuoku et al. (2014), individual and community attitudes towards an action is defined as a belief about particular behavior and a consequential judgment resulting from such behavior. Such behavior also can be influenced by normative beliefs including social pressure and motivation to comply with particular group behavior. With respect to the fundamental assumptions of both the social exchange theory and theory of reasoned action, mega projects have multifaceted economic, socio-cultural and effects on the host nation (Kanwal et al., 2018b; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). And the perceived gain and loss in these factors have the power to shape the attitude of the community to support the implementation and success of the mega project (Kanwal et al., 2020; Kitnuntaviwat & Tang, 2008). As a result, it has been discovered that the

general attitude of the local community members acts as a mediator in the relationship between the perceived benefits and the degree of community support for mega projects (Kanwal et al., 2020; Yoon et al., 2001). These facts lead to hypothesizing that;

H_4: *Overall attitude of local community mediate between economic/socio-cultural benefits and CPEC support*

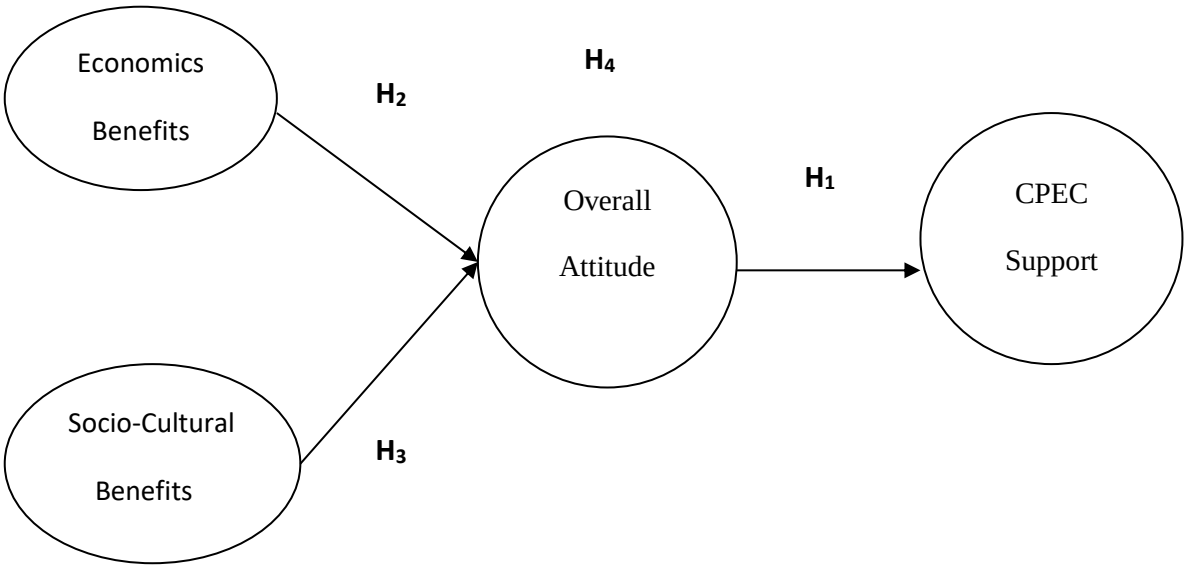

Figure 1. Research model

Research methods

Study context

By using the social exchange theory and theory of reasoned action, the paper examines the socio-cultural perception of China-Pakistan economic corridor and its influence on the overall community's attitudes to support the implementation of the project. This paper concentrates on the aggregate community perception and support for the implementation of the China-Pakistan economic corridor (CPEC). Pakistan's geography has drawn many global powers in pursuit of their economic and political interests. Most importantly, Pakistan is strategically located at the crossroads of West Asia, South Asia, and western China, making it the primary source of energy for the energy-hungry Indian and Chinese economies (Deling, Diren, & Tiantian, 2016; F. Shaikh, Ji, & Fan, 2016). As a result, Pakistan in general, and the Gwadar port in particular, have become the focus of Chinese policymakers for Chinese energy supply and the establishment of western China's economic connectivity to the rest of the world (F. Shaikh et al., 2016). The long-standing economic, political, and geostrategic relationship between the two countries is reflected in CPEC (Hussain, 2017). CPEC is a Chinese funded multi-dollar project that

focuses on the establishment of railway networks, energy transmissions and power grids and communication infrastructures (Irshad, 2015; Prayag et al., 2013). A number of studies show that the community participation and attitude which are both affected by the perceived economic and socio-cultural benefits of the project are necessary for the successful implementation of the planned project (Esteves et al., 2012; Ritchie et al., 2009; Zhou & Ap, 2009).

Development of instrument

A survey questionnaire with five point Likert scale was used to capture the study's main variables; perceived impact, overall community attitude and community support. For the perceived socio-cultural and economic benefits, respondents were asked to rate the level of their agreement/disagreement (1= strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree). Measurement items were developed from previous studies related to mega projects and events (Choi & Sirakaya, 2005; Gursoy & Kendall, 2006; Yoon et al., 2001; Zhou & Ap, 2009).

All the variables of the study were considered at the aggregate level and measurement items tried to capture the summative behavior and opinion of the respondents. Existing literatures show that self- reporting data collection tools are susceptible of common method variance problem (Lindell & Whitney, 2001; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003)Thus, this paper has taken a number of steps to minimize the effect of common method variance on the collected data. First, all necessary steps of (Podsakoff et al., 2003) have been followed and respondents were assured about anonymity and confidentiality.

Second, Haman's single factor test was conducted to assess common method variance (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). The EFA result divulges the existence of multifactor structure where the first factor accounts only less than 10 percent of the total variance. Hence, common method variance was not a problem with the data collected.

Sampling techniques and data collection

With its perceived challenges and prospects, the China-Pakistan economic corridor magnifies Pakistan's international image. Accordingly, similar to other studies (e.g: (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006; Wang & Noe, 2010), respondents were residents of Pakistan including people from different walks of life in the country. Since the main aim of the paper is to determine the influence of the residents' attitude towards the CPEC, only Pakistani citizens were considered as respondents.

In the introduction section of questionnaire, respondents were informed about the objectives of the study. The data was collected in three months (March to May, 2017). Consistent with previous related studies (e.g. (Liaqat Ali et al., 2018; Gursoy & Kendall, 2006; Kanwal et al., 2018b; Kanwal et al., 2020; Lorde et al., 2011), a convenience sampling technique was employed to select the respondents.

In addition, people from different socio-demographic characteristics were approached to minimize the selection bias including public and private employees, students at different levels and people in the age group 20 to 65 years old. Out of the 800 questionnaire distributed, 550 were returned (68.75%).

Data analysis

To test the proposed hypotheses, this study deploys the maximum likelihood estimation method of structural equation modeling (SEM) using AMOS 20. The data was also tested for the statistical assumption of SEM including multivariate normality and linearity (Kline, 2015) and the result shows that these fundamental assumptions were not desecrated.

The measurement model

Following the recommendations of (Kline, 2015), the composite reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity of the measurement model were evaluated (see Table 1) before the evaluation of actual structural model. Firstly, the composite reliability (CR) assessment was done to test the reliability of the measurement model (Di Stefano, Gambardella, & Verona, 2012).

The results displayed in Table 1, show that all reliability values were above the recommended value of 0.70 indicating that the measurements used are reliable (Di Stefano et al., 2012; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The discriminant validity was then assessed by comparing the correlation coefficients between each construct and the other constructs with the average variance extracted for each construct in Tables 1 and 2. For the sake of discriminant validity, all the AVE values (the diagonal elements) should be greater than all off diagonal values (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Thus, the result in Table 1 is an indication of the presence of strong discriminant validity.

Finally, the factor loading and average variance extracted were used to evaluate the convergent validity. All the factor loadings are more than the recommended threshold (>0.70) of (Kline, 2015) and the average variance extracted (AVE) are greater than 0.50, indicating the measurement convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 1. Validity and reliability test results

Construct	Item	Factor loading	t-value	CR	AVE
Economic	EC1	0.77	r.i	0.91	0.58
	EC2	0.76	19.08		
	EC3	0.75	18.75		
	EC4	0.78	20.69		
	EC5	0.71	17.52		
	EC6	0.72	17.87		
	EC7	0.85	21.90		
	EC8	0.83	21.17		
Socio-cultural	SC1	0.84	r.i	0.94	0.64
	SC2	0.81	23.48		
	SC3	0.82	23.67		
	SC4	0.80	23.36		
	SC5	0.78	22.55		
	SC6	0.80	23.24		
	SC7	0.81	23.08		
	SC8	0.77	21.79		
	SC9	0.79	22.97		
	SC10	0.78	11.30		
Overall attitude	A1	0.72	r.i	0.77	0.53
	A2	0.80	9.06		
	A3	0.73	7.16		
Community support	S1	0.74	r.i	0.76	0.55
	S2	0.76	13.33		
	S3	0.75	11.30		
	S4	0.71	13.70		

Note: * r.i.=Reference index

Hypotheses testing

Prior to test hypotheses, we conducted a correlation analysis to assess the connections between the study variables (Table 2). As shown in Table 2, perceived economic benefit and perceived socio-cultural benefits are positively correlated to overall attitude (r = 0.412, $p < 0.01$; r = 0.348, $p < 0.01$) respectively. Moreover, overall attitude was positively related to perceived community support (r = 0.403, $p < 0.01$). We then proceeded to gather a stronger evidence of causality.

Table 2. Pearson's correlation matrix, Descriptive statistics and AVE

	Mean	**SD**	**Economic**	**Socio-cultural**	**Overall Attitude**	**Support**
Economic	4.22	0.70	**0.58**			
Socio-cultural	4.27	0.73	0.568**	**0.64**		
Overall attitude	4.19	0.64	0.412**	0.348**	**0.53**	
Support	4.26	0.66	0.458**	0.424**	0.403**	**0.55**

Note: SD = standard deviation; **p = 0.001, *p = 0.05

We employed structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis to test proposed hypotheses. The structural equation modeling (SEM) approach has many advantages on regression approach including; SEM better controlling measurement error and also requires a greater sample size than the regression analysis does (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011).

Table 3. Overall structural model path estimation result

Hypotheses for direct relationships	*β*	*t*-value
Overall attitude ➔ Support (H1)	0.71**	8.27
Economic ➔ Overall attitude (H2)	0.51**	8.02
Socio-cultural ➔ Overall attitude (H3)	0.36**	6.42
Hypothesis for indirect relationships	*β*	Bootstrap Bias Corrected 95% Cls (lower, upper)
Economic ➔ Overall attitude ➔ Support (H4)	0.11*	042,210
Economic ➔ Overall attitude ➔ Support (H4)	0.07*	018,129

Results presented in in Table 3 reveal that all the hypotheses are significantly supported. Particularly, the findings from SEM revealed that the residents' perceptions and overall attitude towards CPEC positively related to perceived community support ($\beta = 0.71$, $p < 0.01$). In addition, findings also indicated that the direct associations of economic benefits and socio-cultural benefits are positively related to the local resident overall attitude ($\beta = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.01$) respectively. These results provided support for Hypotheses 1-3. Furthermore, to test the remainder of hypothesis, we need to test indirect effects.

The mediating effect

Hypothesis 4 proposed that the overall attitude of the community mediates the direct relationship between perceived benefits and CPEC support. To test this hypothesis, we used the approach suggested by (Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007). Results for mediation analysis are presented in Table 3. Results from the meditation analysis revealed that the indirect effect of perceived socio-cultural and perceived economic benefits on community support were significant with a point estimation of 0.11, (95% Cl: [042,210]), 0.07 (95% Cl: [018,129]) respectively. Based on this finding, we may affirm that the Hypothesis 4 is supported by our data (Figure 1).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study concluded that the effects of residents support on the benefits of China Pakistan Economic Corridor and the overall attitudes were significant. This verified the result of (Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2019; Kanwal et al., 2020; Kwon & Vogt, 2010). Thus, local residents in Pakistan have expressed strong support for hosting CPEC. The main aim of this paper was to investigate the effect of perceived socio-cultural benefits of CPEC on the overall attitude of the Pakistani community to support the implementation of the project. There is still much ambiguity in both psychology and knowledge management disciplines concerning the relationship between overall community attitude and community support for mega projects (L Ali et al., 2016; Kanwal, Chong, & Pitafi,

2019b; Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2011). Most importantly, previous research efforts have failed to create a conceptual difference between the two terms and this in turn obstructs the development of the related theory (Prayag et al., 2013). This paper, by considering both the social exchange theory and theory of reasoned action, has investigated the aforementioned interrelationships. Consistent with the proposed hypothesis (**H_1**), the result has shown that overall community attitude and community support have positive and significant relationships expanding the results of previous works (Kanwal et al., 2020; Lorde et al., 2011; Zhou & Ap, 2009). The result has also indicated that there is a positive and highly significant relationship between the perceived economic impact of the project and overall community attitude (**H_2**). Which verified the findings of (Kanwal, Chong, & Pitafi, 2019a; Kanwal et al., 2020; Lorde et al., 2011; Prayag et al., 2013; Zhou & Ap, 2009) This signifies that economic benefits have the power of triggering the community positive attitude to support the implementation of the projects. Similar result was observed with respect to the relationship between perceived socio-cultural impact of the project and the overall community attitude (**H_3**) signifying that a positive socio-cultural change can support the implementation of the project and it will have the potential to motivate positive community attitude to implement the project (Liaqat Ali et al., 2018; M Ibrar et al., 2016; Prayag et al., 2013). Based on the evaluation of the mediating role of overall attitude on the relationship between perceived benefits of the project (socio-cultural and economic), the result shows that the effect of perception over community support didn't necessarily imply a direct relationship (Liaqat Ali et al., 2018; Gursoy & Kendall, 2006; Kanwal et al., 2020; Prayag et al., 2013), instead it is mediated by an overall attitude of the community **(H4).** By implementations of this project, Pakistan would gain great importance not only in this region but in the entire world. Pakistan will become strong economically through implementation of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor plan.

The findings of this paper will have important implication for both theory and practice. Firstly, the model used in the paper has created a conceptual difference between attitude and support and will help further development of the theory. Secondly, the results have shown that the overall community attitude has significant mediating role between the relationship of perceived benefits (socio-cultural and economic) and the community support. Moreover, the findings will have practical importance for project leaders and governments of the both countries. The result of the paper will guide the determination of the level of community participation in the project implementation process and the amount of information to be disseminated in order to get adequate support of the community.

References

Akbar, J., Alahdad, Z., Ali, A., Grewer, S., Kugelman, M., Lesnick, R.M., Mansoor, K., Malik, M., and Sethi, N. (2015). Pakistan's intermediate energy crisis: Is there any way out?

Akkawi, M. (2010). *Resident attitudes towards tourism development in conservative cultures: The case of Qatar*. University of Waterloo,

Ali, L., Mi, J., Shah, M., Rafiq, M., & Ibrar, M. (2016). *Socio economic impacts of China Pakistan economic corridor and local residents support using structure equation modeling approach.* Paper presented at the International Conference on Psychology, Management and Social Science Bangkok, Thailand.

Ali, L., Mi, J., Shah, M., Shah, S. J., Khan, S., Ullah, R., & Bibi, K. (2018). Local residents' attitude towards road and transport infrastructure (a case of China Pakistan economic corridor). *Journal of Chinese Economic and Foreign Trade Studies, 11*(1), 104-120.

Ali, S., Daud, S., & Ibrar, M. J. P. J. o. I. A. (2021). CONNECTIVITY AND COMMUNICATION IN SOUTH ASIA: A CASE STUDY OF BRI. *4*(4).

Allen, L. R., Long, P. T., Perdue, R. R., & Kieselbach, S. (1988). The impact of tourism development on residents' perceptions of community life. *Journal of Travel Research, 27*(1), 16-21.

Asian Development Bank. (2014). Developing economic corridors in South Asia. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/11540/5062

Asomani-Boateng, R., Fricano, R. J., & Adarkwa, F. (2015). Assessing the socio-economic impacts of rural road improvements in Ghana: a case study of Transport Sector Program Support (II). *Case Studies on Transport Policy, 3*(4), 355-366.

Barrios, E. B. (2008). Infrastructure and rural development: Household perceptions on rural development. *Progress in Planning, 70*(1), 1-44. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.progress.2008.04.001

Bob, U., & Swart, K. (2009). *Resident perceptions of the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup stadia development in Cape Town.* Paper presented at the Urban Forum.

Campón-Cerro, A. M., Folgado-Fernández, J. A., & Hernández-Mogollón, J. M. (2017). Rural Destination Development Based on Olive Oil Tourism: The Impact of Residents' Community Attachment and Quality of Life on Their Support for Tourism Development. *Sustainability, 9*(9), 1-16.

Cherng-shin Ouyang. (2013). *The Sino-Pak Trade and Energy Corridor- An Assessment,*. Paper presented at the 8th Pan – European Conference on International Relations.

Choi, H.-S. C., & Sirakaya, E. (2005). Measuring residents' attitude toward sustainable tourism: Development of sustainable tourism attitude scale. *Journal of Travel Research, 43*(4), 380-394.

Cornelissen, S., & Swart, K. (2006). The 2010 Football World Cup as a political construct: The challenge of making good on an African promise. *The Sociological Review, 54*(s2), 108-123.

Coşar, A. K., & Demir, B. (2016). Domestic road infrastructure and international trade: Evidence from Turkey. *Journal of Development Economics, 118*, 232-244.

Deling, H., Diren, L., & Tiantian, H. (2016). Analysis of Public Opinion About China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. *Journal of Applied Sciences, 16*, 286-292.

Di Stefano, G., Gambardella, A., & Verona, G. (2012). Technology push and demand pull perspectives in innovation studies: Current findings and future research directions. *Research Policy, 41*(8), 1283-1295.

Dogan, H. (1987). Turizmin Sosyo-Kültürel Temelleri (Socio-cultural foundations of tourism). *Izmir: Ugur Ofset*.

Dwyer, L. (2007). *International handbook on the economics of tourism*: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Eagles, P. F., McCool, S. F., Haynes, C. D., & Phillips, A. (2002). *Sustainable tourism in protected areas: Guidelines for planning and management* (Vol. 8): IUCN Gland.

Esteves, A. M., Franks, D., & Vanclay, F. (2012). Social impact assessment: the state of the art. *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal, 30*(1), 34-42.

Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of marketing research*, 39-50. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3151312

Getz, D., & Getz, D. (1997). Event management & event tourism.

Government of Pakistan. (2010). Economic Survey of Pakistan. *Economic Affairs Wing, Finance Ministry, Islamabad*.

Gursoy, D., Jurowski, C., & Uysal, M. (2002). Resident attitudes: A structural modeling approach. *Annals of tourism research, 29*(1), 79-105.

Gursoy, D., & Kendall, K. (2006). Hosting mega events: Modeling locals' support. *Annals of tourism research, 33*(3), 603-623.

Gursoy, D., & Rutherford, D. G. (2004). Host attitudes toward tourism: An Improved Structural Model. *Annals of tourism research, 31*(3), 495-516. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2003.08.008

Hair, J. F., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2011). PLS-SEM: Indeed a silver bullet. *Journal of Marketing theory and Practice, 19*(2), 139-152.

Hussain, E. (2017). China–Pakistan economic corridor: will it sustain itself? *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences, 10*(2), 145-159.

Ibrar, M., Mi, J., Karim, S., Laghari, A. A., Shaikh, S. M., & Kumar, V. (2018). Improvement of Large-Vehicle Detection and Monitoring on CPEC Route. *3D Research, 9*(3), 45.

Ibrar, M., Mi, J., Mumtaz, M., Rafiq, M., & Buriro, N. (2018). *The Importance of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor from Regional Development Perspective.* Paper presented at the 31st International Business Information Management Association (IBIMA 2018), Milan, Italy.

Ibrar, M., Mi, J., & Rafiq, M. (2016). *China Pakistan economic corridor: Socio-cultural cooperation and its impact on Pakistan.* Paper presented at the 5th EEM international conference on education science and social science (EEM-ESSS 2016).

Ibrar, M., Mi, J., Rafiq, M., & Ali, L. (2019). China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Ensuring Pakistan's Economic Benefits. *Khazar Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 22*(1), 38-51.

Ibrar, M., Mi, J., Rafiq, M., & Karan, A. L. (2016). *The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Security Challenges.* Paper presented at the 2nd Asia-Pacific Management and Engineering Conference (APME 2016), Shanghai.

Irshad, M. S. (2015). One Belt and One Road: Dose China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Benefit for Pakistan's Economy? *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development, 6*(24), 200-207.

Jacoby, H. G. (2000). Access to markets and the benefits of rural roads. *The Economic Journal, 110*(465), 713-737. doi:10.1111/1468-0297.00562

Jamal, S. A., Othman, N. A., & Muhammad, N. M. N. (2011). Tourist perceived value in a community-based homestay visit: An investigation into the functional and experiential aspect of value. *Journal of Vacation Marketing, 17*(1), 5-15.

Jurowski, C., Uysal, M., & Williams, D. R. (1997). A Theoretical Analysis of Host Community Resident Reactions to Tourism. *Journal of travel research, 36*(2), 3-11. doi:10.1177/004728759703600202

Kanwal, S., Chong, R., & Pitafi, A. H. (2018a). China–Pakistan economic corridor projects development in Pakistan: Local citizens benefits perspective. *Journal of Public Affairs*, e1888.

Kanwal, S., Chong, R., & Pitafi, A. H. (2018b). Support for China–Pakistan Economic Corridor development in Pakistan: A local community perspective using the social exchange theory. *Journal of Public Affairs*.

Kanwal, S., Chong, R., & Pitafi, A. H. (2019a). China–Pakistan economic corridor projects development in Pakistan: Local citizens benefits perspective. *Journal of Public Affairs, 19*(1), e1888.

Kanwal, S., Chong, R., & Pitafi, A. H. (2019b). Support for China–Pakistan Economic Corridor development in Pakistan: A local community perspective using the social exchange theory. *Journal of Public Affairs*, e1908.

Kanwal, S., Pitafi, A. H., Rasheed, M. I., Pitafi, A., & Iqbal, J. (2019). Assessment of residents' perceptions and support toward development projects: A study of the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor. *The Social Science Journal*.

Kanwal, S., Rasheed, M. I., Pitafi, A. H., Pitafi, A., & Ren, M. (2020). Road and transport infrastructure development and community support for tourism: The role of perceived benefits, and community satisfaction. *Tourism Management, 77*, 104014.

Kitnuntaviwat, V., & Tang, J. C. (2008). Residents' attitudes, perception and support for sustainable tourism development. *Tourism and hospitality planning & development, 5*(1), 45-60.

Kline, R. B. (2015). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling*: Guilford publications.

Ko, D.-W., & Stewart, W. P. (2002). A structural equation model of residents' attitudes for tourism development. *Tourism Management, 23*(5), 521-530.

Kwon, J., & Vogt, C. A. (2010). Identifying the role of cognitive, affective, and behavioral components in understanding residents' attitudes toward place marketing. *Journal of travel research, 49*(4), 423-435.

Látková, P., & Vogt, C. A. (2012). Residents' attitudes toward existing and future tourism development in rural communities. *Journal of Travel Research, 51*(1), 50-67.

Lee, C.-K., Kang, S. K., Long, P., & Reisinger, Y. (2010). Residents' perceptions of casino impacts: A comparative study. *Tourism Management, 31*(2), 189-201.

Liang, T.-P., Liu, C.-C., & Wu, C.-H. (2008). Can social exchange theory explain individual knowledge-sharing behavior? A meta-analysis. *ICIS 2008 Proceedings*, 1-18.

Lindell, M. K., & Whitney, D. J. (2001). Accounting for common method variance in cross-sectional research designs. *Journal of applied psychology, 86*(1), 114-121.

Lorde, T., Greenidge, D., & Devonish, D. (2011). Local residents' perceptions of the impacts of the ICC Cricket World Cup 2007 on Barbados: Comparisons of pre-and post-games. *Tourism Management, 32*(2), 349-356.

McGehee, N. G., & Andereck, K. L. (2004). Factors predicting rural residents' support of tourism. *Journal of travel research, 43*(2), 131-140.

Milman, A., & Pizam, A. (1988). Social impacts of tourism on central Florida. *Annals of tourism research, 15*(2), 191-204.

Nicholas, L. N., Thapa, B., & Ko, Y. J. (2009). RESIDENTS'PERSPECTIVES OF A WORLD HERITAGE SITE: The Pitons Management Area, St. Lucia. *Annals of Tourism Research, 36*(3), 390-412.

Nunkoo, R., & Gursoy, D. (2012). Residents' support for tourism: An identity perspective. *Annals of Tourism Research, 39*(1), 243-268.

Nunkoo, R., & Ramkissoon, H. (2011). Developing a community support model for tourism. *Annals of tourism research, 38*(3), 964-988.

Ofuoku, A., Emuh, F., & Ezeonu, O. (2014). Social impact assessment of crude oil pollution on small scale farmers in oil producing communities of the central agricultural zone of Delta State, Nigeria. *Asian Journal of Agriculture and Rural Development, 4*(3), 233-241.

Pillay, U., & Bass, O. (2008). *Mega-events as a response to poverty reduction: The 2010 FIFA World Cup and its urban development implications.* Paper presented at the Urban Forum.

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J.-Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: a critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 88*(5), 879.

Podsakoff, P. M., & Organ, D. W. (1986). Self-reports in organizational research: Problems and prospects. *Journal of Management, 12*(4), 531-544.

Prayag, G., Hosany, S., Nunkoo, R., & Alders, T. (2013). London residents' support for the 2012 Olympic Games: The mediating effect of overall attitude. *Tourism Management, 36*, 629-640.

Preacher, K. J., Rucker, D. D., & Hayes, A. F. (2007). Addressing moderated mediation hypotheses: Theory, methods, and prescriptions. *Multivariate behavioral research, 42*(1), 185-227.

Ritchie, B. W., Shipway, R., & Cleeve, B. (2009). Resident perceptions of mega-sporting events: A non-host city perspective of the 2012 London Olympic Games. *Journal of Sport & Tourism, 14*(2-3), 143-167.

Sequeira, S., Hartmann, O., & Kunaka, C. (2014). Reviving trade routes: evidence from the Maputo Corridor.

Shaikh, A. A. (2014). PAK-CHINA ECONOMIC CORRIDOR: IMPACT ON ECONOMY-HIGHLIGHT COMPARING WITH OTHER GEO-STRATEGIC COUNTRIES". Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/7483117/Indiv_Amir_Shaikh_Individual_Research_PAPER_heikh?auto=download

Shaikh, F., Ji, Q., & Fan, Y. (2016). Prospects of Pakistan–China energy and economic corridor. *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews, 59*, 253-263.

Sial, S. (2014). The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: an assessment of potential threats and constraints. *Conflict and Peace Studies, 6*(2), 1-21.

Srinivasan, R., Winter, W. R., & Nunez, P. L. (2006). Source analysis of EEG oscillations using high-resolution EEG and MEG. *Progress in Brain Research, 159*, 29-42.

Van Wee, B. (2016). Accessible accessibility research challenges. *Journal of Transport Geography, 51*, 9-16.

Vargas-Sánchez, A., Porras-Bueno, N., & de los Ángeles Plaza-Mejía, M. (2011). Explaining residents' attitudes to tourism: Is a universal model possible? *Annals of Tourism Research, 38*(2), 460-480.

Vickerman, R. (2002). Restructuring of transportation networks. *Regional Development Reconsidered*, 148-159.

Wang, S., & Noe, R. A. (2010). Knowledge sharing: A review and directions for future research. *Human Resource Management Review, 20*(2), 115-131.

Yoon, Y., Gursoy, D., & Chen, J. S. (2001). Validating a tourism development theory with structural equation modeling. *Tourism Management, 22*(4), 363-372. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(00)00062-5

Zhang, R., & Shi, G. (2016). Social impacts assessment for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor investment activities. *Energy, 33*, 76-82.

Zhou, Y., & Ap, J. (2009). Residents' perceptions towards the impacts of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. *Journal of travel research, 48*(1), 78-91.