



PLANNING MALAYSIA:

Journal of the Malaysian Institute of Planners

VOLUME 21 ISSUE 1 (2023), Page 180 – 192

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES ON SUPPORT FOR TOURISM IN DEVELOPING COMMUNITY: AN INTERVENING EFFECT OF TOURISM RESOURCES

Nazirullah¹, Ahmad Puad Mat Som², Amer Al Qassem³

^{1,2}Faculty of Applied Social Sciences,

UNIVERSITI SULTAN ZAINAL ABIDIN, MALAYSIA

³School of Business,

SKYLINE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Abstract

The focus of the study is on social and economic inequalities that influence tourism resources and support for tourism. Social and economic influence has dramatically affected the modern tourism industry and the achievement of the sustainable development goal (SDG) agenda. The aim of the study was to explain social and economic inequalities and tourism resources' influence on tourism support at the national level. The study applied a quantitative research method, and data were collected through a questionnaire from 470 respondents in Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan. Data were analysed with the help of descriptive and inferential statistics using statistical package for social science (SPSS V-28) and analysis of a moment structures (AMOS V-28). The study found that social and economic inequalities have no direct association with tourism support, and indirectly tourism resources have a significant negative influence on support for tourism. The study concluded that a more reflective view is necessary for the tourism industry to fully comprehend the consequences of social and economic inequalities, tourism resources, and action to support tourism. A practical policy-wise effort would be needed to address all social and economic inequality national-wise issues related to tourism support.

Keywords: Social, Economic Inequality, Support for Tourism, Tourism Resources Planning

¹ Postgraduate Researcher at Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin. Email: nazirkhan730@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The study focuses on the influence of social and economic inequality and tourism resource on tourism support. Social and economic inequality has affected tourism industry and also environment of small rural society (Hatipoglu et al., 2022). According to the UN (2020), socio-economic inequality is a significant stumbling block for tourism sustainability, tourism support and resources. The phenomenon of unequal economic distribution causes a substantial effect on tourism support and also a hindrance to achieving SDGs 8 and 10, respectively. Such as, Hall (2019) explained socio-economic inequality's effect on supporting tourism. In order to better understand the role of socio-economic inequality's negative impact on tourism support, future research should apply practical modern conceptual framework (Munanura & Kline, 2022; Munanura et al., 2021). Although social and economic disparities in supporting tourism are still one of the research gaps in the tourism industry of developing countries, especially in rural areas, this advanced predictive model could solve the theoretical and empirical gap in the previous literature. Such as, unequal income distribution, resources, and tourism opportunities are more meagre. Overall, social and economic inequalities are not supporting tourism and achieving the agenda of SDGs 8 and 10. Similarly, this particular study explains the intervening predictive effect of tourism resources between social and economic inequality and support for tourism in rural tourism areas.

For instance, Moscardo and Murphy (2014) invented a new sustainable tourism framework for the reconceptualization of tourism, but it was considered a traditional approach (Moscardo & Murphy, 2014). Likewise, Musavengane et al. (2022) found that socio-economic and environmental inequality should not overcome traditional approach and it will decrease the plan of supporting tourism. Therefore, these notable limitations of past research do not focus on unequal tourism resource distribution for the local community's tourism planning, which is a problem. The already set social and economic negative impact scale needs to be improved with measurement scale analysis because these constructs have different contents and statements issues in the past. Moreover, several authors described that SDGs are based on a growth-oriented mindset, which is the long-term concept for planning and resource sustainability (Baum & Hai, 2019; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018). Choe and Lugosi (2022) justified that socio-economic inequality undermines sustainable supporting tourism.

However, tourism resources and tourism support planning need neoclassical methodologies, which can generate a sustainable economy for developing countries (Gretzel et al., 2020). Such as, Azinuddin et al. (2022) found that social, cultural and economic impact can bring a sustainable future for tourism support from the perspective of UNESCO. Likewise, Rasdi et al. (2022) discussed social, cultural and economic impact on community tourism support

and satisfaction. In general, more costs and unbalanced income status could not support tourism and its effect on environment (Ngan et al., 2022). The results revealed that traditional approaches do not need to counter the significance of socio-economic disparities regarding tourism support at the global level (Grandcourt, 2020). From the above critical discussion, it is hypothesized that social and economic inequality indirectly affects tourism support and directly effects tourism resources.

FRANK’S DEPENDENCY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study applied the theoretical lens of dependency theory. Susman et al. (2019) advocate that capitalism’s growth has brought under development in developing nations. Several authors supposed that individuals have capital, knowledge (especially in advertising tourism), connections with potential tourists and control over tourism flows. Tour operators control peripheral destinations with the vital link of the distribution system and ongoing development activities (Britton, 1991; Cornelissen, 2017; Tucker & Akama, 2009). Cairó-i-Céspedes and Palacios Cívico (2022) emphasized that core and semi-periphery systems are connected by the individual periphery system. Similarly, the semi-periphery consumes and supplies all the goods and resources to the individual periphery system and send to core system. The circulation of the resources is again unequally distributed to the core system, and they remain underdeveloped (Hitchcock, 2023; Suwandi & Foster, 2022). The above theoretical underpinning discusses a holistic approach, and this research puts together Frank’s dependency theory assumption and relates unequal internal power with social and economic inequalities in response to tourism resources and support for tourism. This theoretical debate leads toward the conceptual framework for the study and relate to research objectives, which is drawn in Figure .1 and discussed in the next section.

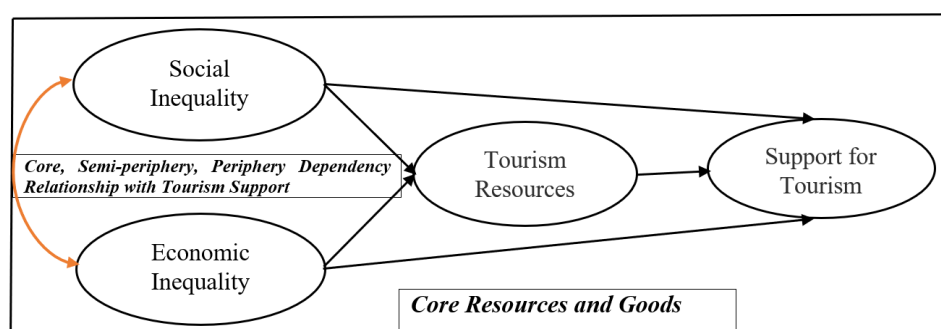


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
 Source: Munanura et al. (2021) and Munanura and Kline (2022)

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- ✚ To explain the influence of social inequality on support for tourism among local citizens.
- ✚ To measure the impact of economic inequality on support for tourism among local citizens.
- ✚ To measure the effect of socio-economic inequality on tourism resources among local citizens.
- ✚ To see the mediating relationship of tourism resources between socio-economic inequalities and support for tourism among local citizens.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study applies a quantitative design to measure social and economic inequalities that influence support for tourism with mediating role of tourism resources in developing countries' local citizens. Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) define that quantitative research deals with objective reality. Several authors discussed that quantitative research has determined the nature of objectivity, which is universal, rigid and inflexible (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019; Singleton, 1999). The location of the study was Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan. The unit of the analysis for the study was local household members. A pilot study with sixty (60) respondents was done to measure the constructs' exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and these sixty responses were not included in the sample size. The sampling technique for the present study was simple random sampling (SRS). G*Power analysis software is a reliable tool for sample size selection (Faul et al., 2007). As mentioned earlier, the sample size was selected through the software and filled the questionnaire face to face from the respondents. Furthermore, sample size was calculated with five (5) number of predictors and noncentrality parameter ($\lambda = 18.800$). The importance of "Critical F" measured the sample size with 2.391 with numerator df (4). Denominator df measured 465, and effect size of f square was 0.04. Such that, power ($1-\beta$ err prob= 0.95), actual power 0.950, as well as the err prob= α = 0.05 were measured. In conclusion, the study's sample size was statistically selected (n= 470) from the given respondents.

DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher used descriptive and inferential statistics to analyse the data with the help of SPSS and SEM (AMOS Version-28). However, descriptive statistics were used to understand the mean and standard deviation. Mediation analysis was employed to understand the direct, indirect, and total effect association among study constructs. The nature of the study was a survey and gathered data with the help of adapted constructs. Such as social inequality with a 6-item scale and economic inequality 6-items by (Ap & Crompton, 1998), support for tourism 8-items scale by Munanura et al. (2021), tourism resources 5-item scale was adapted from the study

of Stanciu et al. (2022). The questionnaire scale was a 5-point Likert scale and control the demographic variable with quasi-experimental survey-based research statistics. The uses of SEM (AMOS) can predict measurement and structural model (Byrne, 2001; Hair et al., 2014), and researchers measured the prediction of exogenous, endogenous and intervening effect of constructs.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY RESULT

The values of reliability and validity suggested that participants were more representative for generalization. As independent constructs in the study design are often presented in the methods portion of the research paper. In this particular paper, researchers have measured EFA which is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis and EFA (N=470)

Items	Loading	Cumulative %	KMO	Alpha Level
SFT		72.932	0.883	0.887
SFT1	0.722			
SFT2	0.772			
SFT3	0.766			
SFT4	0.778			
SFT5	0.695			
SFT6	0.725			
SFT7	0.775			
SFT8	0.757			
SI		66.975	0.895	0.901
SI1	0.868			
SI2	0.817			
SI3	0.813			
SI4	0.842			
SI5	0.849			
SI6	0.713			
E1				
EI1	0.882	77.278	0.926	0.941
EI2	0.862			
EI3	0.885			
EI4	0.900			
EI5	0.902			
EI6	0.841			
TR		72.013	0.879	0.902
TR1	0.894			
TR2	0.824			
TR3	0.835			
TR4	0.864			
TR5	0.823			

Source: Survey, 2022

RELATIONSHIP AND MEASUREMENT

The study measured the correlation between socio-economic inequality, tourism resources and tourism support. Similarly, the results revealed that there was a strong positive relationship between socio and economic inequality. As a result, social and economic inequality has a high negative correlation with tourism resources and support, and this coefficient level was high as compared to other constructs with ($r = -.489$) (See Table 2).

Table 2: Intercorrelation of Constructs and Data Normality (N=470)

Variables	AVE	C.R.	1	2	3	4
1. Social Inequality	0.53	0.88	(.76)			
2. Economic Inequality	0.57	0.87	.454**	(.72)		
3. Tourism Resources	0.50	0.90	-.424**	-.489**	(.78)	
4. Support for Tourism	0.54	0.70	.040	.053	-.117*	(.70)
Mean			2.387	2.764	3.360	3.113
S.D.			1.095	1.252	1.104	0.794
Skewness			0.618	0.207	-0.368	-0.365
Kurtosis			-0.558	-1.200	-0.809	0.271

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Discriminant validity is shown in bracket parallel to correlation value
Source: Survey, 2022

MEASUREMENT AND STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

This research uses confirmatory measurement factor analysis to investigate all indicators and create a formula for each statement. It was found that the model has a significant degree of construct validity and dependability within the domain of measurement equations (see Figure 2). These additional parameters determine whether the model is statistically significant or not (see Figure 2).

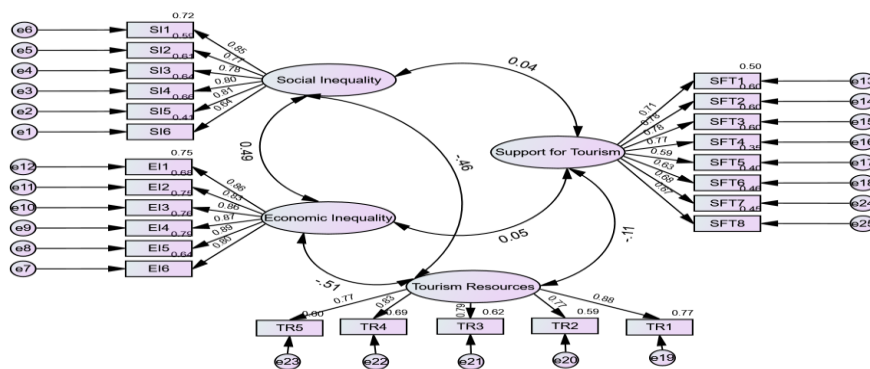


Figure 2: Combined Measurement Model for the Support for Tourism
Source: Survey, 2022

Consequently, the path diagram presents a picture of the theoretical explanation of the interactions between causes and effects relationship among different constructs, leading to numerical outputs (ratio and percentages). Hair et al. (2014) defined that path causal links between predictors and outcomes are one of the essential aspects of path analysis. Moreover, SEM was created and used to assess the relationship between social and economic inequality, tourism resources and support for tourism. The initial model's fit and model fit numerical values are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3: Fit Indices for Tourism Support (N=470)

Model	χ^2/df	χ^2/df	GFI	CFI	NNFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Initial Model	10.111	8.521	0.801	0.821	0.87	0.31	0.334
Model Fit	2.321	2.122	0.906	0.897	0.920	0.052	0.072
$\Delta\chi^2$	7.790						

Note: N= 470, All the changes in chi square values are computed relative to model, $\chi^2 > .05$, GFI = Goodness of fit index, CFI = Comparative fit index, NNFI (TLI) = Non-normed fit index, RMSEA = Root mean square error of approximation, SRMR = Standardized root mean square, $\Delta\chi^2$ = Chi square change” *Source: Survey, 2022*

Likewise, the model modification process suggested that social, economic inequality and tourism resources need modification because the model fit effect were not significant for tourism support, and it is advised to change the statistical modification indices. Furthermore, the study of Tomás et al. (1999) found that covariance in a survey-based study is an important method to draw variance between legitimate factors. Such as, Byrne (2016) described that some covariance errors should be at least 4.0 difference during the modification process for the model fit indices. Moreover, the value of covariance, and the “Chi-square Chang” were higher than 4.0 and it was originally measured at 7.790. Basically, it was a modification process of the models and the last model suggested that the value of 7.790 is approved. Likewise, in the process of modification all the non-significant paths were removed in step two and added some covariance paths, control variable (income). As a result, the research found that absolute and relative fit are measured with the values of GFI, CFI, NNFI, and RMSEA. The result of relative and model fit was measured. Also, the value of RMSEA and SRMR of the model fit was again calculated with covariance and removed insignificant paths of the relationship. The results of RMSEA = .052 and SRMR = .072 had given the absolute fit point. The importance of GFI = .906, CFI = .897, and NNFI = .920 were measured for the model fit indices. Similarly, the value of goodness of fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.321$) was decreased, which is a sign of the good model fit prediction. As a result, the study findings discovered that unique differences found between proposed and saturated models, and it was impartially measured

for model fit. Now this saturated model was the perfect model when added mediation path of tourism resources and measure the effect of tourism support. Therefore, the study concluded that saturated model was fit, and no further modification was found for the model fit indices (See Figure 3).

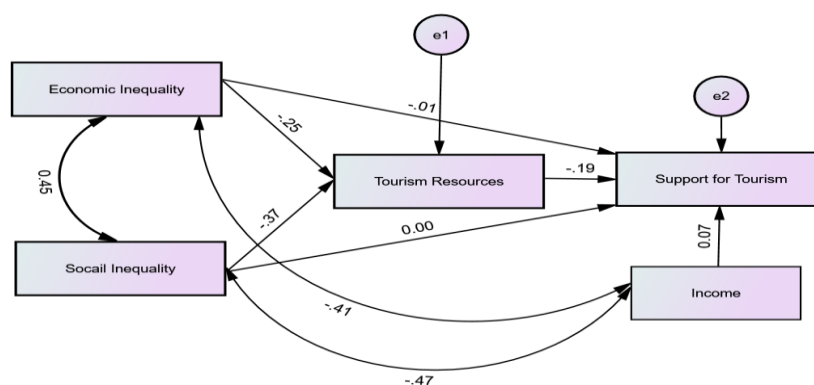


Figure 3: Empirical Results from Complex Multivariate Model Fit Representation Standardized Regression Coefficient. Note: “A complex multivariate model of three exogenous constructs and one endogenous factor along with one control factor (income). Completely standardized maximum likelihood parameter estimate for tourism support”.
Source: Survey, 2022

Table 4: Standardized Estimates of Direct Effects for the Paths of Tourism Support (N=470)

Variables	Tourism Resources		Support for Tourism	
	β	S.E	β	S.E
Economic Inequality	$-.256^{***}$.044	$-.008$.040
Social Inequality	$-.370^{***}$.047	$-.002$.037
R ²	0.09			

In this paper, it was hypothesized that social and economic inequality do not directly influence tourism support, but mediating role of tourism resources negatively influences tourism support. Likewise, the results of direct effects revealed that social inequality has a weak positive predictor for tourism support. At the same time, economic inequality has an insignificant negative influence on tourism support. The results showed that social and economic inequality might decrease tourism support via tourism resources with $\beta=-.256$ and $\beta=-.370$.

Similarly, the R^2 variance was $100 \times .090 = 9\%$. It means 9 percent variance or change would occur in tourism support. The statistical data concluded that social and economic inequality have negatively decreased tourism resources in the tourist community area (See Table 4).

Table 5: Standardized Estimates of Indirect Effects for the Paths of Tourism Support (N=470)

Variables	Support for Tourism		
	β	S.E	CR
Social Inequality	-	-	-
Economic Inequality	-	-	-
Tourism Resources	-.134***	.039	-3.429
R^2	.101		

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, Source: Survey, 2022

The results as mentioned above in Table 5 depicted indirect effects of tourism resources in the context of tourism support. Likewise, R^2 was measured for social and economic inequality, which is further linked with mediation model of tourism resources and the variance or change was $100 \times .101 = 10\%$. The R^2 predicted 10 percent change in the support for tourism supposed if social, economic inequality and tourism resource effect were removed, then ten percent variance occurred in the predictive model with $\beta = -.134$. Similarly, tourism resource inequality was found to be a negative mediator for the overall model and also does not support for tourism.

Table 6: Hypothetical Paths and Significant Level of Approval for Tourism Support (N=470)

Hypotheses	Paths	Variables	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
Tourism Resource	<---	Economic Inequality	-0.256	0.044	-5.812	***	Sig
Tourism Resource	<---	Social Inequality	-0.33	0.039	-8.573	***	Sig
Support For Tourism	<---	Tourism Resource	-0.134	0.039	-3.429	***	Sig
Support For Tourism	<---	Economic Inequality	-0.008	0.04	-0.189	0.85	Insig
Support For Tourism	<---	Social Inequality	-0.002	0.037	-0.048	0.962	Insig
Support For Tourism	<---	Income	0.047	0.038	1.224	0.221	Insig

Source: Survey, 2022

The projection of model fit showed that three hypotheses were accepted and the prediction of hiding and observed hypotheses model predict support for

tourism. Finally, the results of the paths concluded that three hypothetical paths were significant and three were rejected according to statistical measurement criteria, which fulfilled our criteria of the research (See Table 6).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In practice, the researchers found that this advanced approach and scale measurement are effective for other academic scholars and government agencies to improve support for tourism and mitigate the social and economic inequality's effect on tourism resources and support for tourism. The analysis was restricted; hence, the findings may assertively apply to other rural and urban tourism-based regions. This particular approach can bring changes in the opinion of the local citizens in the context of tourism support and resources if government agencies will follow in the future. Such as, Grandcourt (2020) suggested that the broader sustainability agenda of tourism has a positive significant influence on sustainable tourism. Likewise, Dredge and Gyimóthy (2015) agreed that direct and indirect effect of social and economic conditions have perceived good indicator for tourism resources, experiences and support. Similarly, the assumption of Frank's dependency theory described that core, semi-peripheral and peripheral system influence internal conditions and power of society (Hitchcock, 2023; Suwandi & Foster, 2022). The current results were linked with the above study and found that social and economic inequalities decrease tourism support and also effect tourism resources in general.

Hatipoglu et al. (2022) described the association between social and economic inequality as well as considerable effect on tourism support in small rural society environment. Numerous authors concluded that supporting tourism and socio-economic inequality's negative impact are interrelated in the modern conceptual interpretation (Munanura & Kline, 2022; Munanura et al., 2021). Such as, Moscardo and Murphy (2014) used traditional strategic planning approaches for tourism support, resources, and community destinations. According to Adnyana and Nurwulandari (2020), the social and economic inequality decrease tourism resources. Furthermore, the present study results were linked with the studies mentioned earlier, and it was found that social and economic inequality and tourism resources decrease support for tourism in rural tourist areas. Moreover, Mahadevan and Suardi (2019) delineated the importance of low and poor income on tourism support and found that unequal resource distribution cannot boost tourism support.

Finally, the study concluded that addressing social and economic inequality for the sustainability of the tourism industry is very important. There is a need for a mixed method approach to explore and explain the social and economic disparities in the context of tourism support in the view of local community leaders. Findings from this research showed that social and economic

inequalities decrease support for tourism, which is a big challenge for the tourism industry in developing countries and creates more and more dependency at the national level. Findings indicate that the proportion of tourism resources needs objective sustainability measures for future generations. Interestingly, the social and economic inequality coefficient indicates a relatively declining tourism resources and support for tourism among local citizen perception.

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Received: 28th Feb 2023. Accepted: 31st March 2023