

Impact of project governance on project success, with mediating role of organizational support and project team cohesion

Impact of
project
governance

Muhammad Waseem and Shahid Iqbal
*Department of Management Sciences, Bahria University,
Islamabad, Pakistan, and*

Khalid Khan
*Department of Business Administration, Federal Urdu University of Arts Science and
Technology – Islamabad Campus, Islamabad, Pakistan*

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to determine how project governance influences project success. According to the authors, such an effect is mediated by organizational support and project team cohesion. The direct and indirect effects of organizational support and project team cohesion provided helpful information. The authors' objective is to contribute to the project management knowledge of how project team cohesion plays a significant role in project success.

Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected from 350 employees working in Pakistan's oil and gas industry. Four prime oil and gas exploration companies were selected as samples based on their contribution to the revenue. SPSS v23 and AMOS v23 were used for constructing structural equation modeling and path analysis to examine the direct and indirect effects.

Findings – The results revealed that project governance is positively related to project success. Furthermore, organizational support and project team cohesion mediated the relationship between project governance and project success.

Originality/value – Team cohesion has been primarily a topic of interest in sports psychology literature, education and medical sciences. There is an expressed need to investigate team cohesion issues in the broad domain of organizational development, specifically the project management literature. This study contributed by discussing team cohesion in the project context. Second, project governance was investigated using the conservation of resources theory. The lens of intellectual capital was applied to examine intangible resources of project governance like rules, regulations and directives for project success.

Keywords Project governance, Project success, Organizational support, Project team cohesion, Leadership, Project management

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The discipline of project management has been viewed as having multiple dimensions, consisting of strategies and methodologies for project planning, execution and delivery to its intended sponsor. On the other hand, the project strategic wheel guides the organization on how to carry out the project activities (ul Musawir *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, the project strategic wheel comprises several components, including, but not limited to, strategy formulation and implementation (Serra, 2015; Young *et al.*, 2012). This strategy execution is the source of project success (PS) in the sturdy and competitive business environment.



Besides this, one such component of PS is based on project governance (PG), which is broadly defined as “the management of project management,” i.e. a system present at the top level known as the strategic view of the organization. From the top level, management views the market and provides insights to project management, which leads the organization toward the successful completion of the project (Bygballe *et al.*, 2021; de Medeiros, 2021; Löwstedt *et al.*, 2018; Young *et al.*, 2012), and this successful completion of projects is highly dependent on teams.

Teams are regarded as core pillars of any project, and without these, PS is a nightmare (Kozłowski and Bell, 2013), and teams working on projects are called project teams (Batistič and Kenda, 2018). Project teams are composed of members belonging to interdisciplinary and intercultural settings, having diverse skill sets, which are essential for project execution and grouped for a specific time or till the completion of task and project (Kerzner, 2017). The efficiency and effectiveness of teams are highly dependent on their cohesiveness. Thus, project team cohesion plays an integral role in PS (Tang and Schmidt, 2021).

The empirical research identified that PS is primarily studied in the information technology (IT), engineering and construction sectors. There is a need to investigate PS in other sectors and different organizational settings and cultures (de Medeiros, 2021; Turner, 2020). This study will fill this gap by investigating PS in the oil and gas sector of Pakistan and how PG impacts PS in this culture. Furthermore, the investigation will be carried out on how project team cohesion and organizational support mediates PS (Ali *et al.*, 2020).

Project success

In project management studies, the most investigated construct is PS. In the era of 1980s, researchers measured PS applying the traditional criteria of time, cost and scope (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2020) in conventional businesses where deliverables are visible and could be measured. As time passed away, researchers and scholars analyzed that customary principles are not sufficient to measure PS due to the advancement in project management methodologies, tools and techniques. Furthermore, different stakeholders and customers are evaluating PS with the lens of benefits realization (Breese *et al.*, 2020). Nowadays, PS includes criteria of attaining organizational strategic objectives, exceeding stakeholders' expectations, satisfying project sponsors and acquiring business success (Ika, 2015).

Organizations are undertaking projects to take maximum benefits from the business ventures. The investment made on projects has paramount importance for the sustainability of the organizations (Badewi, 2021). Furthermore, in developing countries, where financial resources are always limited, and no organization can afford to waste them, they pursue a business that will yield the highest profit. Therefore, they invest in projects where a profitable outcome is foreseen, and for such profitability, understanding the components of PS is essential for them (Aubry *et al.*, 2021). In contemporary times, PS is viewed from the lens of the iron triangle, i.e. from the parameters of time, cost and scope, also known as triple constraints (Kandengwa and Khoza, 2021). Besides this, PS in the era of 1990s and 2000s was determined by scientific performance and the impact on the organization's strategic objectives.

In empirical investigations, new elements are considered, such as project efficiency (Khan *et al.*, 2022), organizational success, future planning, consumer impact, environmental effect, stakeholder satisfaction (Haverila and Twyford, 2021) and team impact (Kakar and Khan, 2021). Despite the fact that project settings are growing more complicated, with an increased emphasis on lean and agile project management methodologies (Sudrajat, 2021), time, money and quality remained at the top of the PS measures list. Traditional definitions of PS are only a part of the picture and can be deceiving. That does not mean that time, cost

and quality are not salient features for a project; comparatively, project performance too influences PS (Gemino *et al.*, 2021). Nonetheless, if a project is completed late and over budget, it may still have a positive impact on the organization's net value. It has been noticed that early estimates of time and cost are frequently inaccurate. The iron triangle is still significant with regard to PS (Venczel *et al.*, 2021).

Project professionals and scholars are increasingly concerned about organizations' strategic objectives, financial performance and stakeholder benefits (Kadak and Laitinen, 2021). Broader notions of project measures were constructed in an attempt to measure PS at the corporate level, addressing the stakeholder interest and formalizing post-project measures (Kadak and Laitinen, 2021). Project management success may contribute to gaining PS; yet, even effective project management, a project can fail in terms of results (Amoako-Gyampah *et al.*, 2021). As a result, PS criteria must be tailored to the demands of the organization.

Around 13 years ago, Ika (2009) proposed two approaches to measuring PS:

- (1) The first approach is the "contingent approach," in which measurement of PS is based on situational factors using specific tools for attaining project objectives and goals.
- (2) The second approach is the "subjectivist approach," in which measurement of PS is grounded on realistic descriptions of success and failure (Ika, 2009).

Moreover, a point of caution is that situational factors metrics for the measurement of PS must be regularly updated and modified to cater to the needs of the industry, the nature of the endeavor, sector and requirements of the stakeholders, as the environment is dynamic and obstacles occur frequently (Ahmadabadi and Heravi, 2019). Such obstacles are a hindrance in assessing PS. Furthermore, past research was unable to find consistent and unanimous patterns of measuring PS across all industries, and research is still in progress to find one measure to fit all contexts (Ahmadabadi and Heravi, 2019).

Although there is no consensus in the project management literature on PS criteria, there is an agreement on the need for PS assessment (Castro *et al.*, 2020). PS is influenced by how organizations define success. The more significant a condition is, the more probable it is that it will be met at the end of the project (Shaukat *et al.*, 2021). This is because PS criteria that are explicitly defined increase outcomes and resource use. As a result, a more generic model for evaluating project performance that provides a standard guideline should be devised (Castro *et al.*, 2020).

Project governance

PG is generally characterized as the managing framework for project management, i.e. a framework that exists beyond the project management system and offers oversight of it (Cordeiro *et al.*, 2020). PG is pertaining to defining the formal environment in which projects are executed, decisions regarding the utilization of resources toward the successful attainment of organizational strategic goals and objectives are made. Moreover, how stakeholder interests and relationships with all the concerned parties will be managed (ul Musawir *et al.*, 2020). As a result, the PG system plays a critical role in confirming that projects deliver as per the agreed scope and the benefits realization, which aids in the execution of organizational strategy (Derakhshan *et al.*, 2019).

The notion of PG is frequently used in various forms and to varying degrees based on the organization's presumptions and capabilities, yet it is broadly misinterpreted in the literature. According to scholars Joslin and Müller (2016b), the bulk of literature on PG is theoretical or lies under a qualitative classification, which is the indication that it is still

under investigation and still being developed. There is no universally agreed-upon definition of PG, and studies reveal a wide range of definitions, interpretations, views and settings (Laine *et al.*, 2020).

PG holds a significant place to confirm that projects are in ordnance with the organization's strategic goals. Yet, there is a lack of how PG might permit businesses to devise strategies that align the projects according to business goals (ul Musawir *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, PG literature is fragmented, posing significant challenges in establishing a comprehensive definition (Roe, 2015). Author Muller(2011, p. 4) provided the most cited definition of PG, which is as follows:

[...] the value system, responsibilities, processes, and policies that allow projects to achieve organizational objectives and foster implementation that is in the best interest of all stakeholders, internal and external, and the corporation itself.

The PG process confirms that resources are available and consumed in a timely way to ensure the project's success. The focus is on tracking the project's progress and, if necessary, taking corrective action. PG also emphasizes the association between all stakeholders, such as project sponsors, financiers and teams (Khan *et al.*, 2021). By contrast, Renz (2007) claimed that it is necessary to analyze how governance fundamentals will be applied to projects and in entire organizations to conform to the governance standards.

Relationship of project governance with project success

The literature has investigated the association of PG with PS from diverse angles to analyze the impact of PG on PS under the various cultural setting. The primary goal of the PG system is to direct the project management system (Too and Weaver, 2014) to establish the alignment of project objectives with the project sponsoring agency (Levie *et al.*, 2017). PG uses a systematic strategy to follow and speak about project progress, allowing stakeholders to completely comprehend and influence project decisions (Bowen *et al.*, 2007). PG, in public projects, according to Brunet and Aubry (2016), allows the organization to make better and more rational decisions for enhanced stakeholder management. Moreover, Zwikael and Smyrk (2012) revealed that PG establishes a framework of accountability to ensure that initiatives meet their business objectives.

Other mechanisms influence PG's ability to influence PS. According to Joslin and Müller (2015), an organization's PG directions can influence project management methodology, selection of projects and implementation, which has a moderation effect on PS. Furthermore, the scholars Khan *et al.* (2021) found that excellent PG boosts project performance, allowing for prompt and efficient risk management and control. In addition, Anago (2022) discovered that well-articulated and receptive governance configurations are significant PS elements for "public-private partnership" (PPP) initiatives. Although empirical research on the association between PS and PG is limited (Biesenthal and Wilden, 2014; PMI, 2016), it depicts a favorable trend. According to Murray-Webster and Dalcher (2019), an excellent PG mechanism has a robust and reliable association with the dimensions of PS. Furthermore, Lu *et al.* (2015) identified that contractual and relational types of PG had a considerable significant impact on civil work projects. By contrast, governance failure is generally identified among the most common reasons for project failure (Jenner, 2015) in all sizes of projects, together with large-scale projects (Patanakul, 2014) and megaprojects (Jenner, 2015). Projects that have a deranged or lagging PG system are ineffectual to adjust to the vibrant elements of the business environment (Too and Weaver, 2014). As a result, a PG mechanism can assist the organizations in not just improving PS but also avoiding typical project failure causes (APM, 2011; Murray-Webster and Dalcher, 2019).

The theoretical underpinning of this paper is based on the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018), which provides a significant foundation for the flourishing of PG in the organizations. The theory has broad scope and application, and based on that, a new paradigm is introduced in the paper. From the lens of intellectual capital, PG's rules, regulations, principles and guidelines, which are intangible assets, have a dominant impact on the success of the project (Muwardi *et al.*, 2020). These factors are critical resources, according to the COR theory, which plays a pivotal role in the success of the project. The efficient application of intellectual capital elements ensures the smooth execution of the project, which ultimately leads to the successful completion of the endeavors which bring PS to the organization. Therefore, the first hypothesis states:

H1. PG has a positive impact on PS.

Organizational support

Literature acknowledges the relationship between workers and their managers, and because of their importance and impact on organizational success, researchers are concentrating on how organizational support can enhance and strengthen this mutual association among employees and organizations. These phenomena are presented in the literature under the construct of "organizational support," which is defined as how employees consider their bosses to recognize their efforts, boost their morale, work for their welfare and care for them (Côté *et al.*, 2021). The degree to which employees recognize organizational efforts toward them influences their performance, loyalty, which ultimately enhances job satisfaction (Rasool *et al.*, 2021). Job satisfaction is improved if an employee feels the organization listens to them and fulfills their requirements. Also, if they are appreciated and rewarded for outstanding performance, their job satisfaction is increased (Côté *et al.*, 2021).

According to Sepúlveda-Rivillas *et al.* (2021), organizational support is the conviction that our organization thinks about us and values our contribution to organizational success. Employees also keep an eye on organizational policies, which influence them positively or negatively. Policies could be beneficial for employees, as well as they could harm the employees by eliminating the benefits (Rasool *et al.*, 2021). To be effective, organizational support must fulfill some fundamental needs of the workers, e.g. treating them with respect, being owned by the organization, emotional care and being endorsed by the organization (Rasool *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, if an employee receives the stated benefits, it ultimately improves the overall wellbeing of the organization, which enhances its image in society. Literature endorses that during the employment process, candidates prefer to join such organizations whose image is of an employee welfare organization. There are specific steps that organizations could adopt for the well-being of employees and especially rewarding outstanding performers (Rasool *et al.*, 2021).

Besides the above-stated benefits provided through organizational support, the perception of employees plays a crucial role in building trust, respect and morality among employees. The more the employees are satisfied, the more they are productive, and they will perform tasks and duties under unfavorable conditions. Because they knew in return, organizations would provide them extraordinary benefits of performing such duties (Canboy *et al.*, 2021). On the other hand, if an organization does not care about employees nor appreciates them or rewards them for performing duties under unfavorable conditions, the overall image of the organization will destroy as organizational support is not there (Khusniah *et al.*, 2022).

The mediation effect of organizational support

A mediator is a variable that transmits an antecedent's effect to a dependent variable. This implies that a mediator delineates the causal relationship between two variables, which is attributed as mediation (Mathieu and Taylor, 2007). Employees develop general opinions about their organization and the views organizations have about the employees. Furthermore, how an organization values the employees' contribution toward the attainment of organizational objectives is of paramount importance (Chen *et al.*, 2020). In the project management domain, project-based organizations (PBOs) have a significant impact on the success of the project (Samimi and Sydow, 2021). Such an organizational structure is a source of resource acquisitions for the project from where teams could acquire them comfortably for the projects as compared to traditional organizations (Schulman, 2020). Without organizational support, project teams are not able to execute the activities efficiently. Project teams required incentives and motivation to strive for PS (Kanyesige, 2021). Team members respond to organizational support by working hard and demonstrating a positive attitude toward the success of the project (Sepúlveda-Rivillas *et al.*, 2021).

Project teams feel delighted when they feel their organization values their contribution, appreciates their efforts and respects their opinion in the successful completion of project tasks (Kanyesige, 2021). When project team members believe the organization takes care of their socio-emotional needs related to project tasks and provides them with the necessary support, they put extra effort into the accomplishment of tasks (Kanyesige, 2021). Moreover, the PG mechanism in PBO is perfect for project execution, where instructions, guidelines, directions are more perfectly executed toward the PS (Turner, 2020). Project teams adhere to those instructions and ultimately align their efforts, thus achieving PS.

According to the COR theory, conservation and acquisition of resources are highly dependent on organizational support (Halbesleben *et al.*, 2014). Every project consumes resources, and during the same process, most of the resources have to be conserved for future use in later stages of projects (Wang *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, it is of paramount influence that significant importance has to be given to human resources and financial resources. Thus, organizational support in terms of resource conservation, acquisition and monitoring of the project activities has the utmost value in attaining PS (Irfan *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, the acquisition of timely resources like human resources and finances has a considerable impact on the success of the project. Therefore, it is inferred that without organizational support, conservation and acquisition of resources are not possible, which can jeopardize the project's success (Halbesleben *et al.*, 2014). Thus, keeping in view the significant importance, the study's second, third and fourth hypotheses are formulated as:

H2. The relationship between PG and PS is mediated by organizational support.

H3. PG has a positive impact on organizational support.

H4. Organizational support has a positive impact on PS.

Project team cohesion

In the past 60 years, one of the most extensively studied constructs of team level is team cohesion, which shows its significance in the team domain (Chiniara and Bentein, 2018). Literature provides numerous definitions of team cohesion, and all of which are deeply rooted in the explanation of Festinger (1950), who said "cohesion is the resultant of all forces acting on the members to remain in the group"; later on, the definition further extended by these thoughts "be united to reach on a common goal" (Kwayu *et al.*, 2021).

Project team cohesion, as described by [Nosker et al. \(2021\)](#), is a bond of mutual trust and cooperation that evokes an aspiration to remain part of the team. A significant component of this construct lies in its behavior, which traverses different levels, i.e. the individual level, at the team level and organizational level. Along with these parameters, researchers acknowledge team cohesion as a construct that shapes over the lifetime and is impacted by changes in the team ([Van der Voet and Steijn, 2021](#)). Henceforth, while measuring project team cohesion, it is essential to consider the time factor that impacts this construct ([Salas et al., 2015](#)).

Furthermore, the research work of [Imam and Zaheer \(2021\)](#) analyzed staying in the team depends on multiple factors, including appeal or ugliness of either the prominence of the group, prestige of the group members or the events wherein the group is involved. In this manner, cohesion has by and large been operationalized as appreciation for the group, which is evaluated by asking group members' opinions about others and to what extent they need to remain in the group ([Forsyth, 2021](#)).

Recently, academic literature identified a multidimensional perspective of cohesion. Among these dimensions, one dimension is a commitment to a task ([Forsyth, 2021](#)), and this commitment is more firmly associated with work performance ([Fragoso et al., 2021](#)).

Over the past 20 years, team cohesion has been an extensively studied construct in the academic literature ([Braun et al., 2020](#)). The analysis result shows a strong correlation between cohesion and various outcomes like project team performance, retention of project team members and their capabilities and the attitude of project team members ([Kanyesige, 2021](#)). Besides this, studies acknowledge positive team cohesion with team performance in small- to medium-sized teams. The researcher's argument for such a strong positive correlation is that when teams have a strong affiliation, commitment and helping behavior, they are cohesive ([Imam and Zaheer, 2021](#)). And, this cohesiveness enables them to communicate, cooperate and share knowledge so that team can achieve its desired objectives and goals. Such cohesiveness also energizes the teams, boosts their morals through which teams make work strategies and execution of strategies ensures PS ([Kanyesige, 2021](#)).

Project team cohesion is frequently portrayed as the degree of the fascination of colleagues with the team and the craving of individuals to remain in the group ([Braun et al., 2020](#)). Analysts concluded that there is a strong relationship between team cohesion and team performance ([Braun et al., 2020](#)). Furthermore, in the study of [Braun et al. \(2020\)](#), the authors compared team cohesion and team performance and concluded that cohesive project teams outperform non-cohesive project teams by roughly 18%.

A strong relationship between team cohesion and team performance enables teams to act faster with solid commitment and adherence to organizational objectives ([Forsyth, 2021](#)) and cultivate strong satisfaction among team members ([McEwan, 2020](#)). Specifically, such affection improves communication, which ultimately brings project team members closer and helps teams in the execution of the task ([Imam and Zaheer, 2021](#)). Another research conducted by [Duffy and Ling \(2020\)](#) found that project team cohesion increases social nearness and team cooperation among team members. Leadership studies also endorsed such closeness among team members in cohesive teams ([Imam and Zaheer, 2021](#)).

The mediation effect of project team cohesion

The degree to which a team is connected until it achieves its aims and objectives in a shared manner is referred to as team cohesion. As discussed above, it can also be defined as the degree to which team members are close to one another and how much they cherish their relationships ([Braun et al., 2020](#)). Project teams are multidisciplinary in nature that collaborate on a customary project goal. As a result, each member's input is crucial to the

project's success, particularly in terms of meeting the client's criteria (Dasi *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, team members' ties with one another are critical in assisting everyone and being focused on completing the task(s) efficiently rather than simply meeting a deadline. Relational governance, which is a dimension of PG, plays an integral role in building trust, information exchange, solidarity and flexibility through which team cohesion is established and strengthened (Aben *et al.*, 2021).

Moreover, in the process of team development, organizational environment, team and individual all affect evolving states and results of the project (Mathieu *et al.*, 2008). The authors Marks *et al.* (2001) defined teams as "Teams are multitasking entities that perform multiple processes simultaneously and continuously to orchestrate goal-directed task work" (p. 1). The daily phenomena of the social element of work revolve around teams and their performance. Thus, team tasks and situational demands are determined by organizational systems, contextual eventualities and environmental changes, with evolving team processes impacting team effectiveness (Alt and Phillips, 2021; Kozłowski and Ilgen, 2006; Menges and Kilduff, 2015; To *et al.*, 2021). Individual-level characteristics lead to organizational outcomes through linked group outcomes (Chiocchio and Essiembre, 2009; Grossman *et al.*, 2021). The consideration of project management is teams and their social systems, both of which are critical to the project's success (Hennel and Rosenkranz, 2021). Teamwork procedures that articulate interdependent activities to accomplish team goals provide project and organizational outcomes (Larson *et al.*, 2020; Marks *et al.*, 2001). Team cohesion is critical to project performance (Allen *et al.*, 2021; Filho, 2019), higher profitability (Michalisin *et al.*, 2004), team outcomes (Allen *et al.*, 2021; Santos and Neumeyer, 2021) and PS (Imam and Zaheer, 2021). Project managers' personalities, style of leadership, teamwork (Yang *et al.*, 2011) and teamwork quality (Lindsjorn *et al.*, 2016) all have an impact on PS (Imam and Zaheer, 2021). Furthermore, PG provides the teams' guidance, instructions and guidelines, which connects them to strive for achieving the project goals (Khan *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, it can be inferred that PG serves as a mediator, assisting team members in collaborating effectively, which increases team cohesion and leads them toward PS (Kiselev *et al.*, 2020). Thus, the study's next hypotheses are:

- H5. The relationship between PG and PS is mediated by project team cohesion.
- H6. PG has a positive impact on project team cohesion.
- H7. Project team cohesion has a positive impact on PS.

Research methodology

From a theoretical standpoint, the model is rooted in the COR theory, which has two elements, i.e. conservation and acquisition of resources. PG and organizational support are examined through the lens of the COR theory. PG is a complete framework for generating value by delegating duties to team members and establishing processes, procedures and regulations that allow projects to achieve organizational goals while meeting the demands of all stakeholders (Muller, 2011). Furthermore, the phrase "intellectual capital" encompasses the allocation of duties, processes, procedures, policies and guidelines, among other things (Muwardi *et al.*, 2020). According to a study published in the "Journal of Intellectual Capital," intellectual capital is defined as "the analytical capability of working with knowledge-based brains (human beings) through combing the meanings of symbols and signs" (Reich, 1991, 2010), which is closely linked with a learning organization (Argyris and Schön, 1997; Bontis, 1998). Furthermore, "human capital, structural capital, and relational" are three components of intellectual capital, which constitute the intangible resource that includes intellectual

property rights, trademarks, copyrights and so on (Hall, 1992; Muwardi *et al.*, 2020). Intellectual capital is an intangible resource studied via the perspective of the COR theory (Hall, 1992; Muwardi *et al.*, 2020). Organizational support is of paramount importance for the success of the project. According to the COR theory, COR, i.e. tangible resources like materials, machinery, labor, etc., will be applied to the execution of the project, and the availability of timely resources (acquisition of resources) is only possible when prompt organizational support is present (Kanyesige, 2021). Besides this, the COR theory also covers the tangible and intangible resources of human resource (HR) practices like rewards, recognition, enhancement of motivation, etc., which are essential for project teams (Zhang *et al.*, 2018; Zhang *et al.*, 2019). These project teams are the pillars of PS. All such incentives provided to employees indicate how much organizational support is there for its employees (Rubel *et al.*, 2020).

Data and methods

The study design was quantitative in nature, and a deductive research approach was adapted to empirically analyze the causal relationship between the proposed model and the prevailing dominated method of cross-sectional survey procedure in the project management literature (Joslin and Müller, 2016a; Ul Musawir *et al.*, 2017).

The population of the proposed study consists of the exploration companies in the oil and gas sector of Pakistan. First, a gap was identified to investigate the PS construct to other sectors to explore the project-related variables like PG with PS (Ali *et al.*, 2021). The second factor behind choosing this sector is based on their contribution to revenue generation (Hussain *et al.*, 2021). The third reason was that, in the oil and gas sector, exploration of oil and gas is continuously in progress across the country with the help of foreign investors (Yasin *et al.*, 2021). These are all the projects on which teams are working, and project activities like execution, monitoring and control are performed by these teams. Fourth, in terms of high-performance work practices, these companies are highly paid; thus, organizational support is there. All the above-highlighted points depict that the chosen population is appropriate for the study, which will help in examining the constructs appropriately.

Sample and procedure

The four prime oil and gas exploration companies were taken as samples. These four companies are Oil and Gas Development Company Ltd. (OGDCL), Mari Petroleum Company Ltd., Pakistan Oilfields Ltd. (POL) and Pakistan Petroleum Ltd. (PPL). The questionnaire was prepared using Google Forms, and the link was shared through WhatsApp and email. The technique of probability sampling was not applicable as this requires the sampling frames, which provide the information of the exact number of employees in these four oil and gas exploration companies. As such information is classified in Pakistan, no company was willing to provide this information. Second, projects are in remote areas, and accessibility was not possible. So, based on these constraints, the non-probability sampling technique was admissible. A purposive sampling technique was implied, and with the help of personal contacts and social networks, the questionnaire link was shared in these four companies. The personal contact and social network were also requested to share the questionnaire in their organizations. All the questionnaires were marked as compulsory, so without answering any questions, respondents could not proceed to the next stage for filling out the rest of the questionnaire. This technique helped the scholars in receiving a completely filled questionnaire. Moreover, scholars were in contact with the reference link and were continuously updating the response rate. In total, 350 valid samples were received

for analysis, and no sample was rejected. The sample size of 350 respondents was sufficient and appropriate for the analysis of the causal relationship and the structural equation model (SEM) (Chumney, 2013; Kline, 2015). Confidentiality of the respondents was assured, and anonymity was guaranteed, which helped in controlling the common method bias (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). The demographic of the study is given in Table 1.

Female respondents were working in the head office. Their duties include liaison with the field staff and collecting updates regarding the oil exploration activities. Furthermore, there were responsible for providing administrative and managerial support to the field force.

Measures

The instruments were adapted from previous literature. All the constructs were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree. PS was measured using a 14-item scale developed by Aga *et al.* (2016). The scale has a high Cronbach’s α 0.993, which is an indication that it is a highly reliable scale. Whereas, PG was measured using a 24-item scale developed by Chow *et al.* (2012), Goo *et al.* (2009), Griffith and Myers (2005), Luo (2002), Pinto *et al.* (2009). The scale has a Cronbach’s α 0.998, which is the depiction that it is also a highly reliable scale. PG comprises of two dimensions, i.e. contractual governance and relational governance. Contractual governance consist of a further three sub-dimensions, namely, fundamental elements (Goo *et al.*, 2009; Luo, 2002), change elements (Goo *et al.*, 2009; Luo, 2002) and governance elements (Goo *et al.*, 2009). Relational governance comprises of four sub-dimensions trust (Chow *et al.*, 2012; Pinto *et al.*, 2009), information exchange (Griffith and Myers, 2005), solidarity (Griffith and Myers, 2005) and flexibility (Griffith and Myers, 2005). Project team cohesion was measured using the eight-item scale developed by Carless and De Paola (2000), Zaccaro and Lowe (1988). Project team cohesion consists of two dimensions: task cohesion and social cohesion. Both dimensions contain four items each (Carless and De Paola, 2000). The scale has Cronbach’s α 0.993, which shows it is highly reliable. Organizational support was measured using the short version of scale developed by Eisenberger *et al.* (1986). The scale consists of 16 items,

Measures	Items	Frequency	(%)
Gender	Male	279	79.71
	Female	71	20.29
Age (years)	20–30	55	15.71
	31–40	167	47.71
	41–50	72	20.71
	51 and above	56	16.00
	Engineering degree	149	42.57
Education	Diploma holders	127	36.29
	Management sciences degree	74	21.14
Job titles	Rig operators, equipment operators, technicians, supervisors	127	36.29
	Drilling engineer, petroleum engineer	69	19.71
	Engineering geologist, geoscientist, geophysicist	80	22.86
	Project managers	23	6.64
	Head office staff, including managers and other clerical and non-clerical staff	51	14.57
Work experience	Less than 5 years	143	40.86
	5–10years	91	26.00
	11–15years	43	12.29
	16 years and above	73	20.86

Table 1.
Demographics

and the scale a Cronbach's α 0.997, which shows it is a highly reliable scale. The higher value of Cronbach's α is associated with the number of items in the scale. The more the number of items, the higher Cronbach's α value will be, and vice versa (Tavakol and Dennick, 2011). In this study, all the constructs have a large number of items.

Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 23 and AMOS version 23. Before performing the detailed analysis of the data, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed to verify that any item that does not aid in the construction of latent variable. Construct items having a factor loading of less than 0.5 were eliminated from the variable because they undermine the fundamental assumption of the validity of the construct (Fabrigar and Wegener, 2011; Goretzko *et al.*, 2021). In the present study, all items were loaded based on the factor loading, and no item was deleted. Principal component analysis (PCA) was used as the extraction method (Bro and Smilde, 2014; Hasan and Abdulazeez, 2021), and varimax with Kaiser normalization was applied as the rotation method (Corner, 2009). Table 2 presents the factor loading and communalities of the items. Commonalities refer to "the proportion of each variable's variance that can be explained by the factors" (Hogarty *et al.*, 2005).

Moreover, "Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test" produced a value of 0.983, which signifies that there is an ample correlation in the data (Dziuban and Shirkey, 1974).

The analysis was carried out in two steps: confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural model testing. CFA test is performed in an attempt to ensure that measured items underpin the latent variables that have been hypothesized (Kline, 2015). After performing the CFA test, the hypothesized relationships are verified using the SEM (Westland, 2016).

Confirmatory factor analysis

The CFA test was performed to verify the data fitness into structural model. CFA results depicted the excellent model fitness ($\chi^2 = 4,031.109$, $df = 1,807$, $\chi^2/df = 2.231$, $p < 0.001$, CFI = 0.964, TLI = 0.962, SRMR = 0.013, RMSEA = 0.059). In the next step, reliability and validity are measured by applying analysis of composite reliability (CR), convergent validity using average variance extracted (AVE) method and discriminant validity. The analysis revealed that the CR value of all latent variables is greater than 0.8, which portrays excellent internal consistency (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The convergent validity was tested by calculating the AVE value. The threshold value of AVE is greater than 0.5 (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2016) to confirm the convergent validity. In the present study, the AVE value of all constructs is greater than 0.5, which is evidence of robust convergent validity. Finally, the test of discriminant validity is carried out using the Fornell-Larcker method (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). In this approach, SQRT of AVE is compared with the correlation matrix of the respective construct; if the values of each construct of the correlation matrix are less than the SQRT of AVE of the construct, the constructs hold the discriminant validity. In the present study, discriminant valid is held; see Table 2. The italic values diagonally placed in Table 3 the table are the values of SQRT of AVE.

Structural model testing

The path analysis was conducted for the testing of the hypothesis. Figure 1 shows the path diagram with unstandardized weights (Figure 2).

The SEM result revealed the significant relationship between PG and PS ($\beta = 0.110$, $p < 0.05$); thus, the study's first hypothesis (*H1*) is accepted. *H3* of the study was the relationship

	Items	Factor loading	Communalities
	PS1	0.803	0.894
	PS2	0.839	0.921
	PS3	0.815	0.904
	PS4	0.827	0.926
	PS5	0.837	0.922
	PS6	0.822	0.926
	PS7	0.843	0.936
	PS8	0.838	0.936
	PS9	0.829	0.921
	PS10	0.831	0.930
	PS11	0.823	0.919
	PS12	0.837	0.924
	PS13	0.818	0.910
	PS14	0.787	0.901
	PG1	0.836	0.975
	PG2	0.825	0.966
	PG3	0.827	0.966
	PG4	0.821	0.963
	PG5	0.825	0.957
	PG6	0.834	0.973
	PG7	0.837	0.976
	PG8	0.829	0.971
	PG9	0.813	0.959
	PG10	0.823	0.949
	PG11	0.834	0.975
	PG12	0.825	0.966
	PG13	0.838	0.970
	PG14	0.828	0.966
	PG15	0.835	0.976
	PG16	0.835	0.964
	PG17	0.821	0.965
	PG18	0.817	0.965
	PG19	0.834	0.974
	PG20	0.835	0.970
	PG21	0.829	0.971
	PG22	0.822	0.951
	PG23	0.832	0.962
	PG24	0.824	0.972
	OS1	0.873	0.960
	OS2	0.866	0.950
	OS3	0.834	0.934
	OS4	0.863	0.946
	OS5	0.851	0.941
	OS6	0.867	0.961
	OS7	0.873	0.955
	OS8	0.861	0.949
	OS9	0.876	0.960
	OS10	0.863	0.962
	OS11	0.867	0.961
	OS12	0.862	0.934
	OS13	0.858	0.952
	OS14	0.862	0.958

Table 2.

Factor loading and commonalities

(continued)

Items	Factor loading	Communalities
OS15	0.878	0.962
OS16	0.878	0.962
TC1	0.792	0.953
TC2	0.811	0.956
TC3	0.812	0.966
TC4	0.777	0.935
TC5	0.805	0.947
TC6	0.803	0.961
TC7	0.809	0.962
TC8	0.802	0.957

Impact of
project
governance

Table 2.

Constructs	PS	PG	OS	PTC
PS	<i>0.825</i>			
PG	0.695**	<i>0.828</i>		
OS	0.687**	0.715**	<i>0.864</i>	
PTC	0.624**	0.759**	0.445**	<i>0.802</i>

Notes: PS = project success, PG = project governance, OS = organizational support, PTC = project team cohesion, The Italic values diagonally placed in the table are the values of SQRT of AVE; "**" means Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 3.
Correlation matrix
table

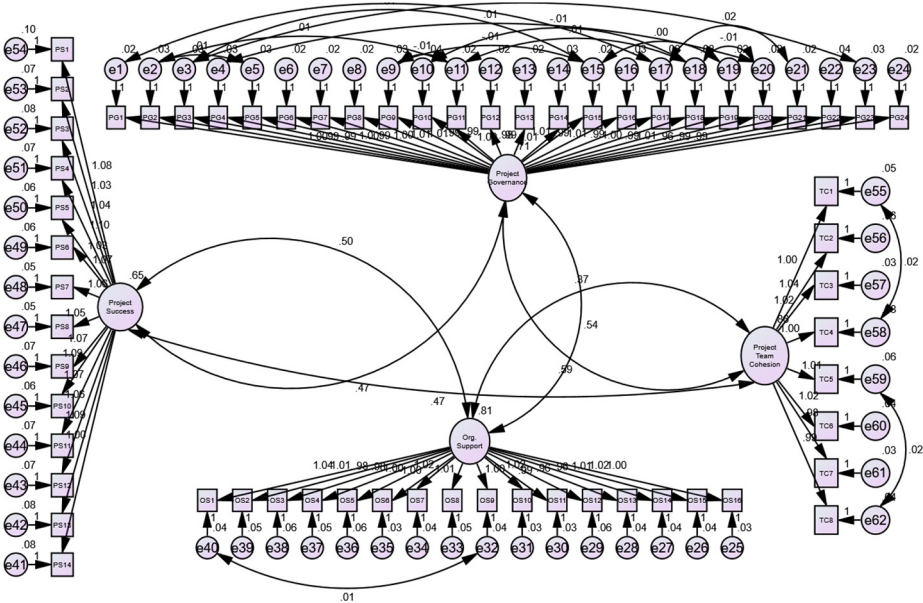


Figure 1.
SEM

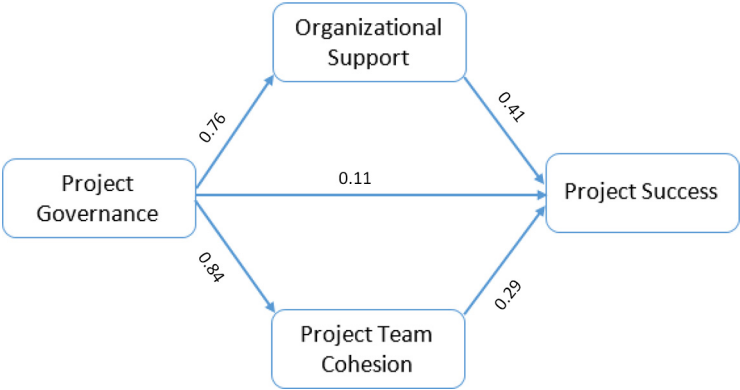


Figure 2.
Path diagram

between PG and organizational support. The result shows a significant positive relationship PG and organizational support ($\beta = 0.762, p < 0.001$), so the study's third hypothesis (*H3*) is accepted. Furthermore, there is a significant and positive relationship between organizational support and PS ($\beta = 0.409, p < 0.001$); therefore, the study's fourth hypothesis (*H4*) is accepted. *H6* was the relationship between PG and project team cohesion. The result revealed a significant and positive relationship with ($\beta = 0.835, p < 0.001$) values; thus the sixth hypothesis (*H6*) is also accepted. The relationship between project team cohesion and PS was the seventh hypothesis of the study. The result confirms the significant and positive relationship between them ($\beta = 0.292, p < 0.001$), so the seventh hypothesis (*H7*) is also accepted.

H2 and *H5* were related to the indirect effect. The authors followed the [Preacher et al. \(2007\)](#) mechanism and performed bootstrap analysis. As per the researcher, [Wang et al. \(2017\)](#) bootstrap method produces the most accurate confidence interval (CI) for indirect effect estimation. The author calculated 95% bias-corrected bootstrapped CIs using a data sample of 5,000. The bootstrap results revealed a significant and positive mediation effect of organizational support between PG and PS ($\beta = 0.284, SE = 0.042, p < 0.05, 95\% CI$), and a significant and positive mediation effect of project team cohesion between PG and PS ($\beta = 0.177, SE = 0.047, p < 0.05, 95\% CI$). Therefore, the study's sixth (*H6*) and seventh (*H7*) hypotheses are also accepted. Furthermore, the analysis revealed the positive and significant direct relationship of PG with PS. This means organizational support and project team cohesion mediate the effect of PG and PS.

Discussion

The present era of globalization poses severe challenges to businesses' ability to achieve success ([Shahid et al., 2021](#)). Organizations are converting their businesses into projects to handle the complexities of business and to get the real benefit of investment. Moreover, due to technological advancement and business environment changes, projects are becoming complex, and attaining PS in developing countries is not a straightforward task ([De Toni and Pessot, 2021](#); [Rasool et al., 2022](#)).

This study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding PG's impacts on PS through the lens of COR theory ([Hobfoll, 2011](#); [Hobfoll et al., 1990](#)). The authors began this research by looking at what has been done in this domain, what has not been done and how to fill the gaps. The authors looked at the past two decades of PG research and analyzed the literature.

It revealed that PG has never been investigated through the COR theory (Ali *et al.*, 2020). Besides this, the literature on COR theory acknowledges that it has a broad spectrum and widespread application (Hobfoll, 2011). Keeping in view the suggestions provided by the literature, the COR theory is applied to PG and organizational support (Rasool *et al.*, 2022). This proposes a new paradigm to view the constructs from this angle, which is the novelty of this study. Furthermore, the study result also complements the previous results on PG and organizational support's role in PS. The results endorse that mediating role of organizational support and project team cohesion is significantly associated with PS (Aksekili and Stettina, 2021).

In this study, the authors empirically examine the model to test the role of PG on PS in the Pakistan culture. A positive relationship between PG and PS was identified, which endorses the results of previous studies (Joslin and Müller, 2016b; Ul Musawir *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, it is evidenced that, in a developing country like Pakistan, PG has an impact on the success of the project. A general view is that here people do not like the instructions of others, precisely if teams are working on the remote location they cannot fully follow the directives of the management. Project teams have to make decisions based on ground realities, which are beneficial for the project's success. The result reveals if PG goes up by 1%, PS goes up by 11%. This is the indication that in developing countries, culture is a hindrance in fully realizing the benefits of PG on PS. There is a need to improve the understanding and knowledge of the project participants regarding the implementation of the PG system in the organization. This study is a stepping stone on the role of PG in developing countries. Furthermore, the results of this study addressed the gap pointed out by prior scholars (Ali *et al.*, 2021).

The outcome of the study has identified the positive relationship between organizational support and PS. The findings support the previous argument that organizational support is essential for PS (Gelbard and Carmeli, 2009). Organizational support is a prime factor in enhancing team members' motivation, recognizing their efforts, acknowledging their contribution, etc. on PS. Rewards, empowerment, autonomy are contributing elements that have a lasting impact on team members' performance (Yang *et al.*, 2020). Organizational support is of paramount importance in terms of the execution of projects. The result acknowledges this phenomenon, which is statistically verified that if PG increases by 1%, organizational support increases by 76%, which has an enormous impact on the success of the project. Furthermore, conservation and acquisition of resources are highly dependent on management support. The timely availability of resources is critical for PS (Sabden *et al.*, 2020). Besides this, the study result reveals that organizational support mediates the effect of PG on PS. This means organizational support is essential to fully implement the PG mechanism to obtain PS, which is statistically verified.

The study also validates the mediation effect of project team cohesion on the relationship of PG and PS. The result of this study is in accordance with the previous studies that team cohesion is essential for goal attainment (González-García *et al.*, 2021). Project teams are integral for attaining PS. The cohesive project teams are more committed to the achievement of team tasks, which are the ultimate objectives of the project. Furthermore, a cohesive project team solves the problems themselves and is always focused on project task completion (Chen and Yu-Jung, 2019). When project team members sense acceptability by their teammates and their team leader, they are more likely to share concerns, cooperate and commit to the project's goal achievement. The result reveals that if PG goes up by 1%, project team cohesion goes up by 83%, a clear sign that project rules, regulations and guidelines are essential, which provide project teams a perfect direction toward the attainment of project goals. Moreover, the results verify that project team cohesion mediates

the relationship between PG and PS. That is, for the successful completion of project tasks, project teams require direction, which a robust PG system provides them.

Theoretical implications

This research study contributed to the scholarly literature immensely by widening the depth and scope of PG and organizational support from the lens of the COR theory. Based on the COR theory, this study addressed the two research questions that were left unattended in the literature of PG and organizational support. That is how conservation and acquisition of intangible resources (intellectual capital), i.e. rules, regulations, guidelines, etc., impact PS (Muwardi *et al.*, 2020). The finding of this study revealed that intellectual capital through the lens of COR significantly impacts PS in developing countries. There were shreds of evidence on how PG mechanism works in developed countries (Tan and Taeihagh, 2020), but how it works in developing countries was unanswered. The present study answered this question. The second question this study addressed was the role of organizational support on PS through the lens of COR. Literature acknowledges that conservation and acquisition of resources are solely the responsibility of the organizations. Timely availability of resources is only possible if the organizational support is there. The study results revealed that organizational support has a significant impact on PS if conservation and acquisition of resources are efficient.

Practical implications

This research endeavor also has practical and compelling implications. First of all, the role of team members, their enthusiasm and cooperation in developing countries are not as per the mark (Le Blanc *et al.*, 2021). This is due to the culture of the society and the organization. In developing countries, organizational politics undermines the potential for growth (Hochwarter *et al.*, 2020). Leg pulling and blaming others are common elements of a hindrance in achieving PS. Under such an environment, team cohesion could not prevail, and PS is impossible (Imam and Zaheer, 2021). Moreover, team formation is not based on project tasks, rather teams are assembled on a liking and disliking basis. With this phenomenon, success is far away. This study provides insights into how to build and enhance team cohesion so that they can work as a unit and complete project tasks successfully (Imam and Zaheer, 2021). Besides this, PG role is critical in creating team cohesion as relational governance plays a crucial part. Trust among team members, information exchange, solidarity and flexibility, the primary components of relational governance, are the fundamental ingredients of team cohesion (Aben *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, study results revealed that project team cohesion as a mediator has a positive and significant effect between PG and PS. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that project teams have strong team cohesion so that success can be achieved (Van der Voet and Steijn, 2021; Zhao *et al.*, 2021). Project teams are a lifeline for any project's success; their valuable contributions are always a step forward toward PS.

Second, the role of organizational support is also necessary. It is suggested that there is a need to change the organizational structure, as most organizations follow a functional organizational structure in Pakistan (Iranmanesh *et al.*, 2021; Rasool *et al.*, 2022). And, in such an organizational structure, effective resource conservation and acquisition are impossible. Due to the red tape phenomena, there is always a delay in the acquisition of resources, which has a negative impact on the project (George *et al.*, 2021). Besides this, if the organizational structure is project-based, conservation and acquisition of resources are always efficient. Therefore, it is suggested that those organizations that are frequently working on projects should consider changing the organizational structure from functional

to project-based (Samimi and Sydow, 2021). If organizations have a project-based structure, organizational support is at its best; on the other hand, if an organizational structure is functional, organizational support will be minimum for project resources. The study results showed a significant mediating role of organizational support between PG and PS (Kirmizi and Kocaoglu, 2021; Rasool *et al.*, 2021).

Limitations and future research directions

Our study has some limitations, which could be addressed in future research. We concentrated on one country (Pakistan) and one sector to obtain data (oil and gas sectors), so the generalizability of the results is limited. A similar study could be replicated in different sectors, and cultural contexts in the future, especially the inclusion of project-based organizational structure could verify the results. The role of organizational culture as a moderating variable was not investigated in this study; future research should take this into account.

The cross-sectional method of data collection was applied in this study. Future researchers may use the longitudinal data collection method to verify the impact of organizational support and the role of project team cohesion on PS. Future studies need to be conducted on how management styles change over time and how management reacts to environmental changes that impact PS. Other areas for future research, including benefits realization, organizational control and stakeholder engagement, should be examined to see how they affect PS.

Conclusion

The expanded landscape of PS encourages scholars to investigate the PS from a diverse range of factors, including different cultures, regions and sectors. This study has demonstrated that PG has an impact on the PS in the oil and gas sector of Pakistan, which has its own dynamics. Furthermore, the study analyzed PG's direct impact on project team cohesion and organizational support and indirect effect on PS. The study acknowledges the mediated role of organizational support and project team cohesion on PG and PS. Thus, it is inferred that the underlying mechanism of PG should continue to flourish for the development of organizations and attainment of PS. The scholars hope this study will guide future research on project team cohesion and PS.

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About the authors

Muhammad Waseem is a PhD candidate in the Management Sciences discipline at Bahria University, Islamabad, Pakistan. He has possessed a Project Management Professional (PMP) certification since 2007 and is a member of the Project Management Institute (PMI). He also has more than 15 years of industry experience. By profession, he is now a Lecturer in a university. Muhammad Waseem's areas of interest include project management, human resource management, management information system, leadership, motivation and strategic management. He has published five case studies at "*the case center*" UK. Muhammad Waseem is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: showgran@yahoo.com

Shahid Iqbal has received his PhD from the University of Engineering and Technology, Taxila, Pakistan. He is currently working as an Associate professor at Bahria University, Islamabad, Pakistan. His areas of interest include engineering management, project management and technology management.

Khalid Khan has received his PhD from the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. He is currently working as an Assistant professor at the Federal Urdu University of Arts, Sciences and Technology, Islamabad, Pakistan. His areas of interest include human resource management, training and development, agile organizations, entrepreneurship. Dr Khalid khan is a Professional Trainer and has conducted many training sessions in national and multinational organizations.