

This is a self-archived version of an original article. This version may differ from the original in pagination and typographic details.

Author(s): Alharthi, Majed; Alamoudi, Hawazen; Shaikh, Aijaz A.; Bhutto, Maqsood H.

Title: "Your ride has arrived" : Exploring the nexus between subjective well-being, socio-cultural beliefs, COVID-19, and the sharing economy

Year: 2021

Version: Accepted version (Final draft)

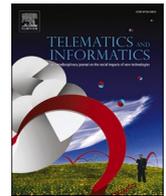
Copyright: © 2021 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Rights: CC BY 4.0

Rights url: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Please cite the original version:

Alharthi, M., Alamoudi, H., Shaikh, A. A., & Bhutto, M. H. (2021). "Your ride has arrived" : Exploring the nexus between subjective well-being, socio-cultural beliefs, COVID-19, and the sharing economy. *Telematics and informatics*, 63, Article 101663.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2021.101663>



“Your ride has arrived” – Exploring the nexus between subjective well-being, socio-cultural beliefs, COVID-19, and the sharing economy

Majed Alharthi ^a, Hawazen Alamoudi ^c, Aijaz A. Shaikh ^{b,*}, Maqsood H. Bhutto ^b

^a College of Business, Finance Department, P.O. Box 344, Zip Code 21911, King Abdulaziz University, Rabigh, Saudi Arabia

^b Jyväskylä University, School of Business and Economics, P.O. Box 35, FI-40014, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

^c College of Business, Marketing Department, P.O. Box 344, Zip Code 21911, King Abdulaziz University, Rabigh, Saudi Arabia

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Ridesharing
Sharing economy
Subjective well-being
Socio-cultural beliefs
COVID-19

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify and explain different facets of the sharing economy and to differentiate between micro- and macro-mobility services. We also aimed to examine the correlation between the sharing economy and subjective well-being, cultural beliefs, and COVID-19. An exploratory research technique with face-to-face semi-structured interviews was used to collect data from a sample of 22 rideshare app users in a developing country between January and May 2020 and in July 2020. The data were analyzed using the NVivo 12 application. The major findings suggest that, considering their scope and use, sharing economy technology and services can be divided into four major domains: (1) hospitality and dining, (2) retail and consumer goods, (3) media and entertainment, and (4) automotive and transportation. In ridesharing services, the well-being of users is influenced (and suppressed) by eight factors. In addition, socio-cultural beliefs are prevalent in developing markets, and the impact of COVID-19 on the sharing economy is evident. However, the pandemic has promoted the use of micro-mobility services. This study, which contributes to the existing knowledge on the theory of subjective well-being and cultural beliefs, has major theoretical and managerial implications and offers a rich future research agenda.

1. Introduction

The sharing economy's services are growing exponentially worldwide, and mobile and telecommunication technology systems and applications are considered critical to the success of shared services. Telecommunication facilitates near-ubiquity, free flow and the exchange and sharing of personal and business-related information between and among different stakeholders and devices. This exchange and sharing of information, thoughts and ideas comes in various formats, such as text, images, pictures, videos and audio-recorded messages.

Inspired by the volume and value of the information, which flows uninterrupted between and among connected devices, many technology, service and manufacturing firms began developing and deploying innovative business ideas, products and services since

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: mdalharthi@kau.edu.sa (M. Alharthi), hoalamoudi@kau.edu.sa (H. Alamoudi), aijaz.a.shaikh@jyu.fi (A.A. Shaikh), mbhutto@student.jyu.fi (M.H. Bhutto).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2021.101663>

Received 13 January 2021; Received in revised form 7 May 2021; Accepted 8 June 2021

Available online 12 June 2021

0736-5853/© 2021 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY license

(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

last few decades. Notable among these are telecom-dependent services, including ridesharing (or ride-hailing) platforms, such as Uber, Lyft, Careem, BlaBlaCar, etc. The underlying motivation for telecom-based technological developments was perhaps the proliferation of handheld and smart devices, broadband services and growing access to internet connectivity in many countries globally. Developed countries dominated the use of sharing economy services (including ridesharing) among the masses at one time (cf. Binder, 2013; Monahan, 2020). However, the last two decades have reflected a gradual shift, and ridesharing began slowly appearing in the most densely populated and consumer-centric markets in emerging and developing countries, including Southeast Asia, which boosted the popularity, types and use frequency of ridesharing services.

Therefore, there are some reasons to believe that the centre of gravity of the sharing economy – defined as the redistribution of idle resources to those in need to borrow or hire cheaply while providing resource owners with benefits they might otherwise forego (Chen and Chang, 2018) - now rests within the developing and emerging countries, which mainly comprises countries that are facing pressing socio-economic and environmental challenges, including wealth and gender inequality, climate resilience, tumbling public transportation infrastructure, etc. The sharing economy came as a blessing to many in the developing world because it provided several new job opportunities, a new revenue stream, and effective utilisation of idle assets, such as a home, clothes and cars, reduced traffic congestion and reduced CO₂ emissions. Consequently, developing markets provide a strong launchpad for sharing services (Wallenstein and Shelat, 2017).

The sharing economy is expected to grow significantly in the coming years (Räsänen et al., 2020) and several market reports have endorsed the need for and importance of sharing services and demonstrated the worth of the sharing economy. For example, PwC (2015) and Statista (2020) projected that the economic value of the sharing economy will grow from USD 15 billion in 2014 to USD 335 billion by 2025, globally. Especially with regard to the Southeast Asia, Google has revealed that the estimated worth of the ridesharing market will be over USD 13.00 billion in 2025 (Aw et al., 2019).

Despite several benefits to the sharing economy, including its market potentiality, popularity, and changing the consumption paradigm from owning to sharing (Lee et al., 2020), its concept remains unexplored in the context of physical aspects (Chen and Wang, 2019). Research on the sharing economy is in its infancy (Jin et al., 2018) and heavily reliant on marketing theories and concepts (Kumar et al., 2018). Ridesharing services are especially far from ubiquitous (McKinsey & Co, 2017), and the sharing economy and related services are still relatively young and undeveloped, although technological possibilities are maturing (Eckhardt et al., 2019; Wallenstein and Shelat, 2017). Also, innovations, automations and other similar developments are considered the hallmarks and key features of Western economies (Binder, 2013), which have resulted in sustained growth in these economies and have had immense social and economic welfare and happiness benefits. Here, Cheng (2016) argued that most research publications on the sharing economy and associated services have been conducted from a Western perspective and in Western regions, with less attention paid to emerging and developing regions.

Similarly, understanding sharing economy services' user behavior and well-being in the use of various products and services was necessitated in past research (Afonso et al., 2018; Ma et al., 2018a, 2018b). Social and cultural barriers are also evident when considering the sharing economy's services and their uses (Han, 2015). According to Gupta et al. (2019), it is critical to incorporate a cultural perspective into the sharing economy stream of research because end users from different countries espouse different cultural beliefs and values. Moreover, developing societies in most developing countries are less prone to accepting changes and adaptability. Investigating the social and cultural behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs of these societies is worthwhile and in line with future research directions, as suggested by past research (Jeon et al., 2020; Shaikh et al., 2019; Cheng, 2016), because such perspectives could provide researchers with a more comprehensive picture of sharing/gig economies worldwide. The COVID-19 pandemic is significantly affecting many sub-sectors of the economy. Activities within the sharing economy, although disruptive, are in the same precarious situation (Hossain, 2020). For example, market reports projected that the market size of global ridesharing would grow by 56% from 2020 to 2021. However, this projection for 2021 is now estimated to be down by 2% or more due to the pandemic and a delayed transition to normalcy (Morshed et al., 2021). Given these unprecedented circumstances, examining how COVID-19 affects sharing services is timely and significant for researchers, practitioners, regulators, and policymakers.

Following these research directions and gaps, we used the exploratory research technique to collect and analyze data from a sample

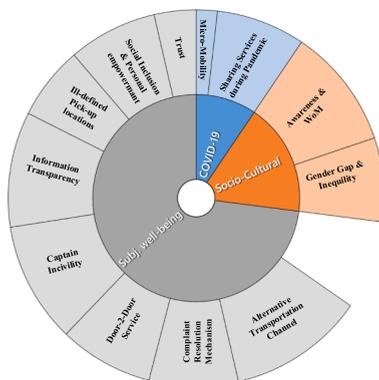


Fig. 1. Hierarchy Chart (Source: NVivo 12).

of 22 ridesharing users in a developing country between January and May 2020 and July 2020. The research aim was two-fold: to contribute to the sharing economy literature by identifying and explaining four major domains in the sharing economy and to contribute to subjective well-being theory by examining the correlation between subjective well-being, social and cultural beliefs, COVID-19, and the sharing economy.

The proposed research questions (RQs) are as follows:

RQ1: What are the different facets of the sharing economy, and how has the research differentiated between micro- and macro-mobility services?

RQ2: How do ridesharing services influence subjective well-being (i.e., what are the key drivers of [or hindrances to] subjective well-being in ridesharing services)?

RQ3: How do social/cultural beliefs and the COVID-19 crisis influence, promote (or suppress) the adoption, continuous usage, and success or failure of ridesharing services?

RQ1 divides sharing economy technology and services into four major domains: (1) hospitality and dining, (2) retail and consumer goods, (3) media and entertainment, and (4) automotive and transportation (Fig. 2). Within the automotive and transportation domain, which is the scope of this study, we have differentiated between micro- and macro-mobility services. RQ2 is key, given the increasing belief that growth in the sharing economy does not ensure growth in subjective well-being (Eckhardt et al., 2019). Concerning RQ3, the relationship between ridesharing services and social and cultural beliefs is particularly important in the context of collectivist societies, which are dominated by cultural, social, and religious beliefs and norms. Therefore, we proposed RQ3 given the significant influence of social and cultural beliefs on the behaviors and attitudes of citizens in culturally rich developing countries, such as Pakistan. Moreover, we aimed to explore the role of COVID-19 (including social distancing and the delayed transition to normalcy) when ordering and using a ridesharing service in a developing country. Importantly, a few empirical findings (cf. Hossain, 2020) have raised concerns about the survivability of the sharing economy due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our findings offer several contributions. For example, we contributed to the sharing economy literature by organizing the vast literature on the sharing economy and dividing sharing services into four major domains. Within the automotive and transportation domain, we identified two major categories: macro- and micro-mobility services. Regarding subjective well-being theory, we uncovered key sub-themes that either promote or suppress users' subjective well-being. Finally, based on the findings derived from the data, we offered valuable research propositions that will further strengthen theoretical contributions and benefit future research in the sharing economy field.

Regarding the study's scope, we considered the well-being and socio-cultural beliefs of end users but did not consider the interests of providers, workers, suppliers, and entrepreneurs who contribute their idle or underutilized resources and assets for sharing/earning purposes. While the sharing economy is also known as the gig economy, peer-to-peer economy, on-demand economy, and collaborative economy (Räisänen et al., 2020; Ertz and Leblanc-Proulx, 2018; Hou, 2018), in this research, we use these terms interchangeably without considering any difference in their meaning, purpose, or scope. Similarly, the terms "macro-mobility" and "ridesharing" have been used interchangeably with "ride-sourcing," "ride-hailing," and "mobility service providers." This study considered popular

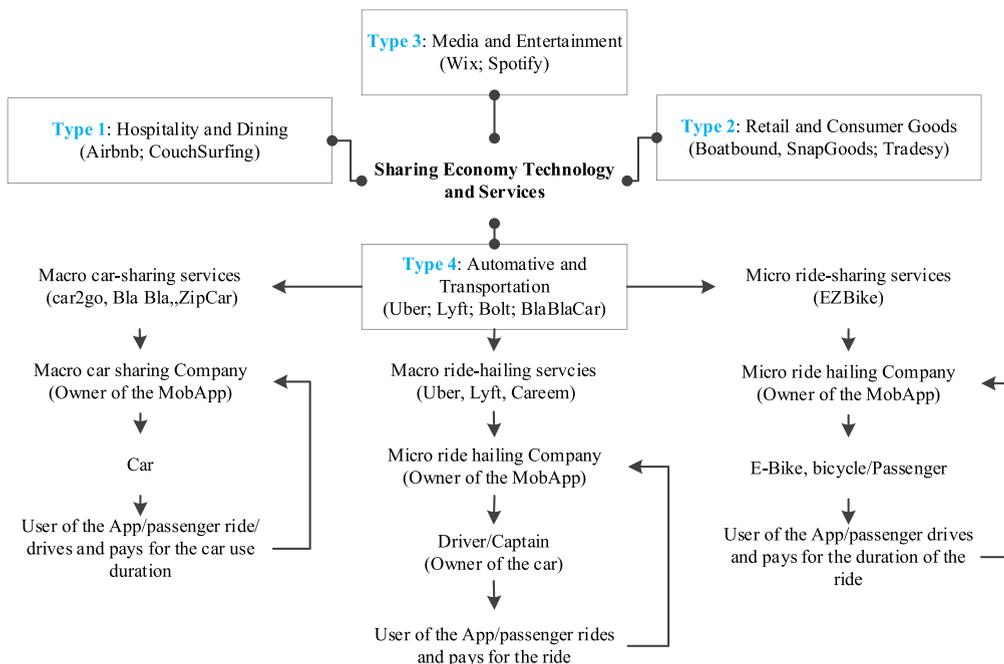


Fig. 2. Sharing Economy Types (Source: Developed by the authors).

ridesharing services operating in Pakistan, such as Uber and Careem. Other terms, such as “rider,” “customer,” “user,” “passenger,” and “commuter,” have also been used interchangeably in this study.

Section 2 provides a detailed overview of subject well-being theory, social and cultural beliefs, and COVID-19. The research methodology is explained in Section 3, followed by the findings (Section 4) and discussion (Section 5), including all implications, limitations, and future research directions.

2. Theory

2.1. Subjective well-being theory

Subjective well-being (also known simply as well-being or human well-being), which is a widely used term across varying disciplines, relies equally on the hedonic, utilitarian and social aspects offered by a service or product. Considering the nature of the term ‘well-being’ and its outcomes or implications, it is used interchangeably with happiness, life satisfaction and quality of life. Many scholars have defined subjective well-being as ‘the degree to which people are content with their lives and jobs’ (Deng et al., p. 195, 2019; Marshall et al., 2020). According to Aboelmaged et al. (2021), subjective well-being is a broad category of phenomena that includes consumers’ or users’ emotional responses, domain-specific satisfaction and global judgments of life satisfaction. In the context of smart service systems, Henkens et al. (2020) defined customer well-being as the customer’s optimal psychological condition. Any situation that could detract a customer from their optimal psychological condition with decreasing happiness and satisfaction would be considered subject or customer ill-being (Deci and Ryan, 2000). While evaluating the benefits derived from using sharing services, Eckhardt et al. (2019) explained that engaging in access rather than ownership would increase ecological well-being and allow underutilised resources to be fully employed. Table 3 summarizes past research on subjective well-being in the context of the sharing economy and beyond.

Prior research has provided many important drivers of well-being for consumers in ridesharing and other innovative services, such as reduced commuting time compared to public transportation services (Sha et al., 2019), high perceived value, real-time location services and an effective complaint resolution mechanism (Shaikh et al., 2019). The lower risks of using ridesharing services would also increase users’ trust in them and subjective well-being (Ma et al., 2018a, 2018b).

The sharing economy provides a particularly interesting context in which to study the subject of consumer well-being, especially considering the global prevalence of sharing services and the diversity that we see in sharing products and services. Ownership of the asset does not change or transfer in a sharing service, yet anyone can rent and use the services and products to enjoy the bonuses of possession. Ensuring subjective well-being in this situation seems quite challenging and indispensable to the success of the mobile-driven sharing economy.

2.2. Social and cultural beliefs

Social factors and cultural beliefs and norms have long been recognised as integral to shaping consumer behaviors, attitudes, likes and dislikes (Changchit et al., 2020). Social and cultural aspects/beliefs refer to the act of sharing and individuals’ behavior, which should be considered when examining the sharing economy’s services and associated products. Indeed, cultural values and social norms, which ‘govern the actions of people towards one another, provide some indication on whether a given behavioral assumption is tenable’ (Hill, 1997, p. 68). Hofstede (1984) labelled and derived cultural aspects/beliefs to measure culture and discovered differences across four dimensions: individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, power distance and uncertainty avoidance.

Research shows that in collectivist societies, which prevail in most developing and emerging countries with limited access to resources and technology, the sharing concept seems embedded in the society, culture, beliefs and attitudes of the people. For example, according to Davidson et al. (2018), sharing economy concepts are more common in collectivist cultures with low access to resources; many in this culture are used to sharing for the sake of gaining more access or more efficient use of scarce resources. Consequently, the high use of sharing economy services, such as Uber and Careem, was not surprising to many in Pakistan—the context of the current study. Nonetheless, for a global ridesharing service, such as Uber, understanding the local cultural norms, beliefs and traditions is crucial to the success of ridesharing services in Pakistan and other developing and emerging countries. Therefore, minimising the factors that may degrade or challenge the local culture and exercising factors that may promote cultural heritage and demonstrate local impact (Petruzzi et al., 2021) are key to the success of the sharing economy in the developing and emerging countries.

2.3. COVID-19

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic. Many deaths quickly followed, leaving the world in shock. Industry was not ready to digest this shock, and many businesses either halted services or disappeared altogether. The sharing economy was affected by COVID-19 due to the associated measures put in place by central and state governments, including strict social distancing and lockdowns. However, these actions may have highlighted weaknesses in the sharing economy business model, which will allow this industry to make necessary adjustments and introduce new changes to position it for long-term success. To begin to understand how COVID-19 has and is affecting sharing economy services and how consumers have reacted requires proper attention. Contemporary research (cf. Hossain, 2020; Teixeira and Lopes, 2020) has also argued that understanding the effect of COVID-19 on the sharing economy and providing evidence of the impact on urban transport systems is essential.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Identification of the themes

Given their prominence in the sharing economy literature (cf. Ma et al., 2018a, 2018b; Shaikh et al., 2019), the knowledge and identification of three major priori themes—subjective well-being, users' social and cultural beliefs, and the COVID-19 pandemic—come from previous literature, our values, theoretical orientations, and personal experiences (Ryan and Bernard, 2003), and the delayed transition to normalcy due to the pandemic. Therefore, instead of relying on the inductive approach (themes derived from the data), we adopted a priori or deductive approach, considering the theoretical underpinning and personal experiences of the phenomena under study. Nonetheless, identifying several sub-themes (Fig. 1) within each category of three major prior themes was purely inductive and identified in the corpus of data. Given that the interviews were conducted in the local language (Sindhi), certain metaphors were also identified (especially under the theme social and cultural beliefs) and grouped into sub-themes, where necessary. Nonetheless, the repetition of these metaphors was sparse in the corpus and could not be identified as separate themes or sub-themes.

3.2. Interview protocol

The interview protocol was developed based on these three priori themes. However, to strengthen the protocols' reliability, the Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) framework (Castillo-Montoya, 2016) was followed. The IPR framework suggests a four-phase systematic approach to developing and administrating the protocols for soliciting information that identifies key informants through personal interviews: (1) aligning the interview questions with research questions, (2) constructing an enquiry-based conversation, (3) receiving feedback on the protocols and (4) piloting the protocol (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

During the second phase, an enquiry-based conversation approach was adopted while drafting protocols that were understandable and accessible to participants. Similarly, in the third phase, the protocol was deployed and feedback was solicited from a marketing executive at one of the ridesharing companies and from a marketing professor at a local university. The protocol was refined based on the feedback where deemed necessary. Finally, the revised protocol was piloted with five people—two faculty members, one staff member and two doctoral students—who had experience using ridesharing services in Pakistan. Based on their valuable feedback and considering our own observations, the protocol was further modified (e.g. the interview questions were drafted in the everyday language of the interviewees).

The finalised protocol consists of a semi-structured approach, followed by the target questions about the pre-defined themes (such as well-being). These were implemented by the two authors, who were well aware of the local culture and norms, could speak and understand the native language (Sindhi) and had experience using ridesharing services, such as Uber and Careem, in Pakistan and abroad.

The semi-structured questions involved why and how questions to infer user insights regarding pre-developed themes to explore the developing country context. For example, the subject of well-being contains happiness or user well-being questions regarding pleasant vs unpleasant experiences when using Uber/Careem or other ridesharing services, its usage in terms of enriching quality of life, whether it is easily accessible and if it promotes feeling good and satisfied while considering it an important part of users' everyday lives. Questions regarding the socio-cultural aspects covered positive and negative social and cultural aspects of the ridesharing economy to society. These include opportunities and ridesharing options for conservative people (e.g. feeling uncomfortable with a male driver or vice versa). There were also questions concerning the impacts of the critical COVID-19 situation on the ridesharing economy.

3.3. Sampling and data collection

A hybrid of purposeful and snowball sampling techniques was used to identify and recruit both male and female study participants in different age groups. The participants had different qualifications and comprised students and professionals as well as those with two years or more experience in using ridesharing services for various purposes.

The data were collected via face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Prior to implementing the interview protocols, the authors contacted people in their network, including friends, colleagues and relatives, using WhatsApp, social media and email channels. Initially, four people were recruited for the interview. Based on recommendations received from those 4 participants (snowball sampling), 18 more people were recruited and interviewed. At the outset, the study participants were informed about the purpose and scope of the study as well as the consent forms to participate in the study were obtained. The interview conversations were tape-recorded and transcribed.

In total, 22 interviews were conducted and tape-recorded between January and May 2020. Due to the social distancing measures, lockdowns and disruptions created by COVID-19, a few interviews were conducted in July 2020 using Zoom application.

3.4. Coding and data analysis using NVivo

Coding and data analysis were performed using the well-known qualitative data analysis application NVivo 12. It is widely believed that NVivo enhances the qualitative research process, quickly processes queries and expands analytical avenues (cf. Auld et al., 2007). Considering the quantity of the interviews (22), the interview transcripts were standardised by using different font colours and styles to distinguish between the author (interviewer) and the respondent.

Given that the major themes (subjective well-being, social-cultural aspects and COVID-19) were already identified, the transcripts were imported into the NVivo application. The coding process was started immediately after the first interview was transcribed. One of the authors managed the coding process and ran different queries including the ‘word frequency query’ function in NVivo to identify the participants’ frequently used words or terms. Careful analysis of the information retrieved from the NVivo revealed interesting sub-themes, such as several factors promoting or suppressing subjective well-being, which were placed into sub-categories. During the coding process, the passages or paragraphs in each of the 22 interview transcripts were moved to the relevant themes and associated sub-themes for efficient sorting and retrieval. Fig. 1 depicts the hierarchy chart summarising the notes and sub-notes extracted from NVivo.

4. Findings

Themes were identified from the 22 interview transcripts using the NVivo 12 application. Each theme provides a unique perspective on the use of ridesharing services in a culturally rich society in a developing country. Nevertheless, an analysis of the participants’ demographic profiles (Table 1) suggests that most were female (59%). Females’ participation in the sharing economy as well as their enthusiasm for Uber and Careem were unusual, especially when considering that Pakistan has a conservative, male-dominated society. Approximately 32% of the participants were aged 20–25 years, followed by 27% aged 26–30 years, 23% aged 31–35 years, 14% aged 36–40 years. The remaining 4% were aged more than 41 years old. More than half (55%) were professionals, and the remaining 45% were students. Approximately two-thirds of the participants (68%) possessed undergraduate and master’s degrees, and several (32%) possessed a doctoral degree. The demographic profile of the respondents is summarised in Table 1.

An important criterion when choosing the study participants was their duration of experience using ridesharing services, which was set at 2 years and/or having taken a minimum of 20 rides in the last 2 years, preferably in different cities across the country. Of the 22 participants, 9 (41%) had been using ridesharing services for the last 5 years. The average interviews lasted 21–29 min.

Most of the participants were using ridesharing for work, shopping and meeting with friends and relatives during cultural and religious festivals. Some participants also used ridesharing for emergency and non-emergency hospital visits. This study asked participants about their ability to understand the differences between various taxi services. The results show that almost all the participants did understand the difference between a traditional taxi and ridesharing, and they expressed these differences clearly. The differences between traditional and non-traditional (ridesharing) services are explained in Table 2.

Table 1
Demographic profile of the study participants.

No.	Characteristics	N	Percentage (%)
1	Gender		
	Male	9	40.91
	Female	13	59.09
2	Education		
	Under-Graduate	5	22.73
	Masters	10	45.45
	Post-graduate	7	31.82
3	Age		
	20–25	7	31.82
	26–30	6	27.27
	31–35	5	22.73
	36–40	3	13.64
	More than 41	1	4.55
4	Usage Experience (Years)		
	1–2	6	27.27
	3–4	7	35.7
	5 or above	9	40.91
5	Place		
	Khairpur	3	13.64
	Sukkur	12	54.55
	Hyderabad	1	4.55
	Karachi	6	27.27
6	Profession		
	Professional	12	54.55
	Student	10	45.45
7	Interview Time (Minutes)		
	20 or less	5	22.73
	21–29	15	68.18
	30 or above	2	9.09

4.1. Different facets of the sharing economy (including macro- and micro-mobility services)

The sharing economy has engendered “drive less, ride more” behavior among consumers (Aw et al., 2019, p. 1442). Sharing economy technologies and services have been placed into four major categories, considering their purpose, scope, and use, and include hospitality and dining, retail and consumer goods, media and entertainment, and automotive and transportation. Within the automotive and transportation category are the subsections macro- and micro-mobility services.

Regarding the sharing economy, the global sharing firm Airbnb (Est. San Francisco, 2008) is widely considered a pioneer in the hospitality industry, followed by Uber (Est. San Francisco, 2009) in the automotive and transportation industry. Uber has been disruptive due its innovative business model, which is changing the consumption paradigm from traditional owning to sharing (Lee et al., 2020). Country- and region-specific local counterparts have already started reaching Uber’s scale as well as showing tangible improvements in operational efficiency, cost savings, and customer intimacy. For example, in France and other countries in the European Union, the BlaBlaCar macro-mobility service (Est. France, 2006) is highly popular amongst a wide local population and tourists. Similarly, Careem (Est. Dubai, 2012) has received tremendous attention and popularity in Southeast Asian and Gulf countries. Taxify/Bolt (Est. Estonia, 2013) is providing a new way to hire a taxi in Estonia, Hungary, and other European countries using a mobile app. Admittedly, the sharing economy is becoming indispensable in the taxi market (Qian and Ukkusuri, 2017). Baffled by its astonishing success and after considering its disruptive nature, many car manufacturing firms, such as General Motors, Toyota, and BMW, started making important strategic moves to adapt to the sharing economy (Parente et al., 2018), including modifying their business models, creating sharing business models, acquiring stakes in Uber and Lyft, and partnering with start-ups.

Qian and Ukkusuri (2017) have used the terms “traditional taxi service” (TTS) and “app-based third-party taxi service” (ATTS). Here, TTS mainly serves passengers via street hailing, and it is diligently regulated. By contrast, ATTS is based on the sharing economy concept and offers rides through smartphone apps.

Within the emerging concept of ATTS, the dynamic ridesharing system represents a significant opportunity to satisfy people’s increasing travel demands without increasing the number of vehicles (Cohen and Munoz, 2016; Wang et al., 2018). Ridesharing aims to unite travelers with similar itineraries and time schedules on short notice (Agatz et al., 2012). Wang et al. (2018) used the term “static taxi ridesharing” and explained that it requires all taxi trips to be known beforehand. Furthermore, research (e.g., Chan and Shaheen, 2012) has segregated ridesharing into different categories: families and friends, organization-based, which requires participants to share their trips within formal organizations, and casual carpooling.

In addition to macro-mobility services, such as car-sharing, car-hailing, or ridesharing, the rise of micro-mobility services has also been noticed globally. Micro-mobility services, such as scooters, e-bikes, traditional bicycles, and Segways, can accommodate one or two passengers at a time and are usually used intra-city and for short distances. According to McKenzie (2020), micro-mobility services, such as dockless scooter sharing, have significantly changed the urban transportation landscape, with adoption rates reminiscent of other shared-mobility services, such as ridesharing.

4.2. Factors influencing (and suppressing) subjective well-being

Several questions aimed to determine which factors promote user well-being, satisfaction and happiness when engaging in the sharing economy. Given that sharing economy services allow travelling with strangers (Uber/Careem) or staying at unknown places (Airbnb), this area of enquiry was of particular interest in the context of a conservative Muslim majority society that is largely dominated by cultural and Islamic values. Such values considerably influence people’s motivation and choices to get involved in the sharing economy. Study participants recorded several factors that promote their well-being and stated that sharing services were becoming a source of happiness and satisfaction.

4.2.1. Door-to-door service

One of the driving factors of well-being is the availability of the service at any time at one’s doorstep. This is particularly important to female customers in a developing country context who were previously largely dependent on the availability of a male family

Table 2
Traditional taxi services versus ridesharing (Source: Study participants’ viewpoint).

Traditional Taxi	Ridesharing
Cannot be ordered in advance	Rides can be ordered from one’s home or office via cell phone
Fare bargaining	No bargaining; the fare is visible when booking the ride on a mobile app
Usually not available near the doorstep	Available near the doorstep
The driver is unknown	Driver and vehicle details are available
The driver’s credentials are unknown (i.e., are they licensed?)	Drivers are screened by Uber/Careem, and their driving skills, credentials, and attitudes toward customers are continuously monitored
No complaint resolution mechanism in place	Customer service is available for complaint monitoring and resolution
No discount coupons	Offers regular discounts on rides and even free rides
Vehicle condition is either normal or below average	Vehicles’ conditions are regularly monitored, and passenger safety is ensured by Careem and Uber
No time monitoring; unable to follow the schedule	Expected arrival times are known in advance
Unable to monitor movement	Cell phone screens show movement in real time, which can be shared with family and friends
Few or no regulations	The service is regulated and monitored by the government

Table 3

Summary of past research on subjective well-being in the context of the sharing economy and beyond.

Citation	Purpose/scope	Context	Major Findings
Ma et al. (2018a) and Ma et al. (2018b)	This study develops an integrated model to investigate factors that affect the subjective well-being of shared bike users in China.	Sharing economy	Perceived value has a positive effect on subjective well-being through users' trust attitude. Hedonic value has a major impact on subjective well-being, followed by social value and utilitarian value. Personal accomplishment and users' trust attitude have a positive effect on subjective well-being.
Lee et al. (2011)	This research investigates the use of Social Networking Sites and users' subjective well-being.	Social media	The time spent using a social networking site is not related to well-being, and the amount of self-disclosure on social networking sites is positively related to subjective well-being.
Kim and Lee (2011)	This paper explores how Facebook increases college-age users' subjective well-being by focusing on their number of Facebook friends and self-presentation strategies.	Social media	Users' number of Facebook friends and positive self-presentation may enhance their subjective well-being, but the resulting happiness may not be grounded in perceived social support.
Shaikh et al. (2019)	This study examines ridesharing services and investigates two significant post-adoption and marketing consequences: satisfaction and subjective well-being.	Sharing economy	Ridesharing services promote customer satisfaction and subjective well-being.
Zhang et al. (2017)	This paper aims to develop an integrated model to investigate factors that affect shared bicycle users' subjective well-being.	Sharing economy	Perceived value has a positive effect on subjective well-being. Hedonic value has the greatest impact on users' subjective well-being, followed by social value and utilitarian value. Perceived risks, including privacy risks, financial risks, and functional risks, have a moderating role between perceived value and users' subjective well-being.
Ma et al. (2018a) and Ma et al. (2018b)	This study examines factors that affect social media users' sharing intention and the relationship between users' sharing intention and subjective well-being.	Social media	Utilitarian value, hedonic value, user satisfaction, and information source credibility are important factors affecting users' sharing intention. Users' sharing intention positively affects their subjective well-being.

member to drive them places. The mobile-driven sharing economy has provided a safe and convenient transportation mechanism to a large part of the population. Of the 22 study participants, 16 (73%) considered the door-to-door services offered by Careem, Uber and other ridesharing services valuable.

'When it comes to relaxation, and when I wanted to reach a place tension free, I would always choose Careem. Me and my family members are very happy; we feel good availing the prestigious service at our doorstep, especially when you have an emergency, when you have children or when you have urgency; ridesharing services are at your doorstep just a few clicks away. This is what makes it an exciting service' (Female, 27, Professional).

4.2.2. Social inclusion and personal empowerment

Ridesharing services allow the female customer segment to secure sustained benefits, including social inclusion. Many participants (17; 77%) claimed that ridesharing services have enriched their social lives and travel by helping them attend social gatherings, reach their workplace, have fun and go shopping. Some factors that promote well-being include increased comfort, constant availability and low cost. All these factors develop positive emotions and promote a sense of personal empowerment among sharing economy users in Pakistan.

'When choosing between a taxi and Careem, I would always choose Careem. I believe Careem is quite a comfortable and convenient service. It provides good transportation services. We need to just go online and book a ride. There is no need to go outside to look for a taxi and bargain the fare. Being a woman, I don't like wasting my time bargaining the fare. Careem is available at my doorstep within 10–15 min, and I can see the expected fare online' (Female, 32, Professional).

'I believe it is a lifetime experience of using Uber because I can reach my destination peacefully without the fear of getting robbed or lost. I can see where I am going and where I am in real time on my cell phone screen. It is like a huge change in my lifestyle, with less dependence on other forms of transportation. Uber encourages people to start their own self-employment and business. This has in fact streamlined transportation services in Pakistan' (Male, 47, Professional).

4.2.3. Alternative transport channel

A consensus was found among a majority of the study participants (20; 91%) when asked if they considered sharing economy services an important part of their everyday lives. In addition to explicit agreement, many suggested that it is important when someone cannot afford a vehicle yet is living, travelling and working in a metropolitan city, such as Karachi or Hyderabad, with dwindling and unsafe public transportation systems. Uber and Careem provide the best alternative transportation service. In addition, long commutes on public transportation systems create stress, which reduces well-being and creates dissatisfaction.

'I think it is quite good. When you have some urgent or important matters, Careem adds value to your life. I think it is quite good in the sense that it makes me feel secure and comfortable, and it is convenient that I can avail this service to go anywhere. So, it has value

towards quality of life. Reduced travelling time and immense convenience are something that makes my life easier' (Male, 35, Professional).

'I feel very good because, unlike traditional taxis, they take me from my doorstep, and they leave me happy at my destination. It is comfortable, air conditioned and feels good. I feel very motivated, especially when the driver is good and we have good conversation during the ride. So, I feel very satisfied, and I try to get the same driver the next time' (Male, 22, Student).

4.2.4. Trustworthy service

As argued by Räsänen et al. (2020, p. 18), trust is at the core of the sharing economy; without trust, there is no sharing. The most crucial barrier to the sharing economy is a lack of trust in people (Hawlitschek et al., 2018). However, trust in the sharing economy could promote subjective well-being, as discussed by one of the study participants. Based on the interview transcripts, we found that increasing trust in ridesharing provided user confidence and promoted the service among the masses. Half (11) the participants shared their opinion on the trustworthiness of the ridesharing service and its significance in increasing their satisfaction with the service.

'I didn't see any problem, yet. Using a ridesharing service is safe and secure. Before hopping in, I knew the details of the driver and the car. Everything is known, which increases my trust in the service' (Female, 20, Student).

4.2.5. Information transparency

In addition to trust, most participants (19; 86%) highlighted the need to understand the correlation between information transparency features and well-being. The ridesharing application, which most participants found easy to use with no skill barriers, provides a real-time tracking function for users and family/friends, which is considered paramount for female passengers in view of the growing unrest in Pakistan. The ability to obtain information on the driver and vehicle, including the registration number, make, model and even colour, provides a sense of safety and assurance as well as comfort and satisfaction to customers when requesting a ride.

'Before embarking on a journey, I always match the details of the ride with the details available in the application as soon as I book the ride. One day, I found a different car and driver. I refused to take the ride and informed Careem's customer service. Careem immediately booked a new ride for me. This feature is amazing. I could not afford to accept the risk of riding with an unknown driver in an unknown car' (Male, 37, Professional).

'I am a working woman, and I need to work late sometimes. Considering my situation and being a woman, I understand that Careem and Uber are important for me. The reason is that if I am travelling alone somewhere or if I am stuck in traffic, I have a proper location as well as the details of the vehicle and driver, which I can share with my immediate family and friends. For me, it's very important' (Female, 32, Professional).

4.2.6. Complaint resolution mechanism

Careem and Uber offer several channels to registered users to record or submit their complaints and share grievances. These channels include web chat, 24/7/365 helpline numbers and emails. An effective complaint resolution and grievance redress mechanism maintains a strong relationship with subjective well-being and conversely ill-being if the user's voice is not heard and complaints are not addressed regularly and in a timely manner. This leaves a lasting effect on users and becomes the hallmark of a service's success or failure. When asked about user satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the complaint resolution mechanism, more than 77% (17) of the respondents praised the service providers for addressing their complaints and grievances on time. The nature of these complaints included excess fare deduction.

'I was overcharged PKR 100 for being late. It was the captain whose number was continuously busy that caused the lateness, and he charged me extra because of the late contact. I registered a complaint and got it resolved, with Careem paying back PKR 100 into my account. I realised that Careem is a good service-oriented company that listens to the customer about any issues or problems. I am happy with and trust Careem' (Female, 40, Professional).

4.2.7. Captain incivility

As argued by Veenhoven (2008), the concept of subjective well-being is also largely considered close to Bentham's (1970) widely used definition of happiness as the sum of pleasure and pain. This is especially true regarding dissatisfaction, ill-being and pain. Captain or driver incivility as well as allegations from the captain against consumers can damage subjective well-being and deteriorate a customer's satisfaction level. A majority of the respondents (19; 76%) had some kind of issue with the driver or the company related to an uncivilised attitude. However, some respondents were vocal and angry when sharing the attitude of the captain or driver. This could be due to the dominance of male drivers serving Uber and Careem; the percentage of female captains is almost negligible. Female passengers generally face bigger challenges than male passengers do, as narrated by one female study participant:

'I was travelling with my younger brother using Careem. My brother asked the captain to play the radio or music. The captain not only refused but also behaved inappropriately with my younger brother. This time, I asked for the music, and the captain with highly conservative and religious views didn't acknowledge our wish but suggested not listening to music, which, according to his opinion, is prohibited in religion. The captain then stopped the car and asked me and my brother to leave the car. The captain's attitude was uncivilized, harsh and painful. I had booked the ride, and I had to pay the invoice. I should have the right to ask the captain to play music or even drive carefully and follow the speed. I was angry but helpless. We decided to continue the journey without music' (Female, 23, Student).

'One day, the captain cancelled the ride and informed Uber that the customer had cancelled the ride. I contacted Uber and clarified the situation and asked to release the penalty amount, which was imposed on me because of the baseless allegation from the captain. This damaged my motivation, and I could not use Uber for a few months' (Male, 38, Professional).

4.2.8. Ill-defined pick-up points

Some respondents wanted ridesharing to reassess their meeting points or pick-up service criteria due to the increasing incidents of theft and violence. In public places, including parks, shopping centres and cinema houses, the ride could not pick up the passenger from the main entrance due to restrictions mandated by management or the local government as well as non-simultaneous arrival. Unless explicitly identified, the pick-up would be established as impossible, unsafe or inconvenient for boarding. These factors seriously hamper the growth of ridesharing and reduce the usability of ridesharing services. In total, 16 (or 68%) of the study participants identified the ill-defined pick-up points as the main issue deteriorating their confidence, satisfaction and happiness with the service.

'Booking a ride from a public place is challenging and a headache. I could not locate the ride. The pick-up location or the meeting place is not properly identified or conveyed via the mobile app. Sometimes, I had to walk for over 15 min with shopping bags (and sometimes groceries) to locate the ride. This delay also increases the ride charges. This problem should be addressed immediately' (Female, 37, Professional).

'... a well-identified parking place with a proper shelter and seating arrangement would increase the well-being as well as the usage and frequency of ridesharing' (Male, 22, Student).

4.3. Social and cultural influences on the sharing economy

From the interview notes, observations and transcripts, we determined that in a collectivist/interdependent society, such as Pakistan, social and cultural beliefs and norms occupy an important position and influence the lifestyle of people when buying a product or ordering a service. Therefore, customers' perceptions of and intentions towards ridesharing are influenced by culture. Similarly, [Räisänen et al. \(2020\)](#) argued that local geographical areas, laws, regulations and cultures significantly influence the success or failure of a business and therefore should be considered. Consequently, any attempt to undermine the cultural values or norms in a collectivist society would compromise the success of the sharing economy.

4.3.1. Word of mouth

According to [Ma et al. \(2018a\)](#) and [Ma et al. \(2018b\)](#), subjective well-being is determined at two levels: individual (perceived value) and others (social influence). Our findings suggest that subjective norms (social influence or others' influence on a user's behavior and choices), word of mouth and other referrals play a key role in a collectivist society. Thus, the opinions of others, usually those within the user's social network (cf. including family and friends), influence motivation as well as intention to decide and act accordingly. Similarly, a recommendation from a family member, friend or acquaintance highly influences selecting and using a product in a collectivist society.

As argued by [Lam et al. \(2009\)](#), people tend to place more trust in word of mouth from people they know personally. Considering this, when asked how they considered a recommendation from family and friends and how much it affected their attitude towards ridesharing services, a majority of participants (19 or 86%) suggested that they follow recommendations from their family members and friends when choosing to adopt and use ridesharing services.

'On the recommendation of my cousin, I started using Careem. Although I could see Careem advertisements on Facebook, I didn't pay attention. I have also recommended Uber/Careem services to many family members as well as friends since I enjoyed it. I also recommended it to my sister since she could not find any taxis nearby. I recommended Careem. So, she downloaded the app in less than a minute. I trained her to use it, and she ordered the car and went to the destination' (Female, 20, Student).

'My husband recommended this service to me. Sometimes, I rushed to markets or my workplace. Using Careem is a good addition to my everyday life. Besides, it was recommended by my husband 😊' (Female, 32, Professional).

Despite this cultural norm (i.e. acting on the advice and recommendations of others), Careem and Uber neither designed nor ran any aggressive (or even passive) marketing campaign involving print, electronic or even social media. For example, during the entire duration of the interviews, which were conducted in different cities with different people in different age groups at either their workplace, home or shopping centres, we found no advertisement or promotion activity from Uber and Careem. This indicates that emphasis is placed on personal recommendations and word of mouth in a culturally rich collectivist society.

4.3.2. Gender gap and inequality

The gender gap and inequality are suppressing the growth of ridesharing services. Almost the entire fleets of Careem and Uber are managed by male-only drivers or captains. On many occasions during the interview conversations, female respondents, given their local norms and beliefs, showed a greater desire to have a woman as their Careem or Uber driver for both long and short journeys. This low or virtually negligible gender parity and lack of diversity is damaging the sharing economy business model in developing countries, including Pakistan. One respondent commented:

'These things should change now. I should have the option to choose between male and female captains when ordering a ride considering my social, cultural and religious norms. A female driver could provide more comfort to me, and I could increase my travel frequency as

well as go long distances. In my opinion, companies should think of increasing my social interaction and not just my well-being' (Female, 42, Professional).

4.4. The influence of COVID-19 on the sharing economy

4.4.1. Sharing services during the pandemic

COVID-19 has affected sharing economy platforms (Hossain, 2020), even though strict measures and restrictions have been implemented to minimise spreading this virus. These measures and restrictions save lives yet extensively reduce access to physical products and services, including ridesharing services. The same phenomenon was also noticed in our study, where most participants (17; 77%) described their inability to use ridesharing because it was impossible to maintain the required social distance when travelling with a captain in a car, there was non-implementation of hygienic protocol in the vehicles during the pandemic and most companies and schools moved to working and studying, respectively, remotely.

Consequently, most study participants had reduced their use of ridesharing services, and some had discontinued it completely:

'I don't feel it necessary to travel during the pandemic and unnecessarily put my well-being at risk. Travelling would be risky and could expose me to the virus. However, due to an emergency, I had to book a ride. To my surprise, the captain was not wearing mask, and ridesharing didn't install any protective plastic sheets in vehicles to separate captains and passengers. I refused to take this ride and informed customer service about this madness. Ridesharing companies should define the standard operating procedure (SOP) to keep its customers safe from the pandemic crisis' (Male, 45, Professional).

4.4.2. Micro-mobility

Despite these unprecedented challenges, some participants (7; 32%) used COVID-19 as an opportunity to use other means of transportation that are popularly known as micro-mobility services, including scooters, bicycles and e-scooters. These can be used for short distances and accommodate a maximum of one or two passengers at a time. COVID-19 provided a much-needed impetus to try these micro-mobility services, as one respondent described:

'Travelling with the captain has its own advantages and challenges, but due to social distancing and exposure to the virus, using scooters and e-scooters for daily work and travelling short distances was an exciting experience. I did not use these services previously because of the availability of Uber and Careem services. Using an e-scooter is not only less expensive but also very sustainable and a valuable addition to my routine. Credit goes to COVID-19 for bringing me very close to these services 😊' (Male, 26, Professional).

5. Discussion and conclusion

This study contributes to and expands the body of knowledge on the sharing economy by identifying and explaining four major domains in the sharing economy and differentiating between macro- and micro-mobility services. This study also investigated the nexus between subjective well-being, social and cultural beliefs, and the sharing economy in the context of a collectivist but developing society: Pakistan. Moreover, because this study was conducted in a collectivist and culturally rich society during the COVID-19 pandemic, we also examined how the unprecedented situation created by COVID-19 could impact or promote ridesharing services. Each of these themes was identified from past literature and analyzed using the thematic analysis technique with the help of the NVivo 12 application. Conclusively, this study is the first to explore the relationships between subjective well-being, social and cultural beliefs, COVID-19, and the sharing economy in the developing society of Pakistan.

5.1. Theoretical implications

We found that, with only a few exceptions, such as driver incivility and disorganized pick-up locations, ridesharing services promote subjective well-being, satisfaction, and happiness among male, female, young, and old customer segments. The prominent factors that promote subjective well-being include convenience of service availability, increasing comfort, low cost, increasing social inclusion and equality (for female customers), a less cumbersome and useful mobile application (e.g., easy to download, use, and navigate, information transparency), and an effective complaint resolution mechanism. These findings are partially in line with the findings of prior research (Davlembayeva et al., 2020; Ma et al., 2018a, 2018b; Palmatier et al., 2006). For example, Davlembayeva et al. (2020), while investigating the social and psychological factors and outcomes of social exchange in the sharing economy context, concluded that users of the sharing economy platform feel socially included and, to a great extent, experience subjective well-being. Similarly, when examining the relationship between bike sharing services and subjective well-being, Ma et al. (2018a) and Ma et al. (2018b) found that ease of use and usefulness of the bike sharing system increase users' trust attitude, which enhances subjective well-being. The research propositions are thus as follows:

Proposition 1. *In ridesharing services, subjective well-being is achieved when there is increased convenience, information transparency, and a strong complaint resolution mechanism in place.*

Proposition 2. *Social inclusion and personal empowerment increase subjective well-being, which in turn increases the success and use of ridesharing services.*

Proposition 3. *Ridesharing services, as an alternative transport channel, increase subjective well-being.*

Proposition 4. *Driver incivility and disorganized pick-up locations suppress subjective well-being in ridesharing services.*

In terms of trust promoting subjective well-being, we found that most participants, especially females, felt positive, trusting, safe, and secure while using ridesharing services. When consumers choose not to participate in sharing economy services, it is due to trust barriers and/or the risks involved (Hawlitschek et al., 2018). Our similar findings suggest that users have trust in the community when using sharing economy services and feel satisfied and happy. A similar correlation between trust and subjective well-being was noted by Ma et al. (2018a) and Ma et al. (2018b). Therefore, the proposition for this line of research is as follows:

Proposition 5. *Trust, especially for female customers, plays a decisive role in increasing their subjective well-being in ride-sharing services.*

From the social and cultural perspectives, when revisiting the interview notes, observations, and transcripts, we determined that, in the collectivist society of Pakistan, social and cultural beliefs and norms occupy an important position and influence people's lifestyles when they use ridesharing services. Subjective norms (social influence or others' influence on users' behavior and choices), word of mouth, other referrals, and the availability of female captains or drivers significantly affect the success or failure of ridesharing services in a developing country. This also aligns with the earlier findings of Ma et al. (2018a) and Ma et al. (2018b). Thus, the following two propositions emerged:

Proposition 6. *Social norms and cultural values influence ridesharing services by way of word of mouth and other referrals, which significantly influence service choices, such as ridesharing services.*

Proposition 7. *To successfully promote ridesharing services among the masses in a developing country, addressing the gender gap and inequality between males and females is considered pivotal.*

COVID-19 has affected sharing economy businesses worldwide. Hossain (2020) reported that COVID-19 has affected the current sharing economy model for various stakeholders, including customers, service providers, firms, and regulatory bodies. The pandemic has resulted in cancellations of rides, job losses, anxiety among various stakeholders, hygiene and safety concerns, and income reduction and uncertainty. Our findings are partially in line with the findings of Hossain (2020). However, some participants considered COVID-19 an opportunity to adopt and use micro-mobility services, including scooters, bicycles, and e-scooters. Consequently, COVID-19 provided a much-needed impetus toward micro-mobility services. A proposition reflecting this is as follows:

Proposition 8. *COVID-19 has created challenges as well as opportunities in the sharing economy, with a major opportunity being the revival of micro-mobility services.*

5.2. Managerial implications

Ridesharing companies, regulators and other government agencies could use the results of this study when formulating future business and marketing strategies and regulatory frameworks to further formalise, regulate and promote sharing economy business models and services, especially among female customer segments.

To further promote subjective well-being, ridesharing services should deploy the necessary resources to train captains in conflict management skills. Driver incivility was a major cause of ill-being among most of the participants.

We found that sharing economy models do not specifically cater to the needs of the female customer segment and their well-being, which should be considered a major pitfall in the marketing strategy of ridesharing services, especially considering that females comprise nearly 50% (or over 100 million) of the population in Pakistan. Any attempt to undermine the needs and requirements of this population segment would be a disaster for ridesharing services. The virtually negligible gender parity and lack of diversity are damaging the ridesharing business by reducing profit margins and hampering growth of the service.

In a socially and culturally dominated society, social norms and word of mouth play decisive roles in decisions about services or products and the importance of marketing, advertising and promotion. Uber and Careem should plan for and invest in innovative marketing campaigns using new channels, such as social media and mobile, to create a massive awareness campaign and reach many customer segments, including Generation Z and millennials. The uptake of smartphones among generation Z is high in Pakistan, which should be considered an opportunity to access this customer segment and promote the adoption and use of low-cost ridesharing services.

Some participants placed greater emphasis on ordering green vehicles (i.e. cars built with hybrid/electronic technologies or that use compressed natural gas as fuel). Therefore, ridesharing companies should offer the option of ordering a green vehicle.

Many could not use the ridesharing application due to language barriers. Generation X and baby boomers especially struggled with understanding English and Urdu; they preferred Sindhi or Balochi.

Convenient and clearly identified meeting or pick-up locations are crucial to the success of ridesharing services. Some respondents wanted Careem and Uber to reassess their meeting points or pick-up service criteria due to unrest in the country and increased theft and violence. The participants noted that, especially at public places, including parks, shopping centres and cinema houses, their ride could not pick them up from the main entrance due to restrictions enacted by the management or local government of those places and non-simultaneous arrival. Unless explicitly identified, the pick-up would be either impossible, unsafe and/or inconvenient for boarding. These factors can hamper the growth of ridesharing and reduce its usability.

Having established a presence in Pakistan and other developing countries, expanding the service portfolio and offering new and innovative service options are now needed. Some participants suggested that Careem and Uber should offer regular office, school or university pick-up/drop-off services on existing routes. Many riders would reach their location at a specified time and use ridesharing

like carpooling. This would offer many benefits, such as reduced trip fares, social interaction with other passengers, increased well-being of passengers, improved resilience of urban transportation systems and transferring from private car ownership to ridesharing services.

Some participants suggested having a 24/7/365 experience when booking the ride. During off-peak hours, especially at night, service availability is not only limited but also inefficient (e.g. there is a long wait for the ride). Many have sacrificed their personal vehicles and have either adopted or considered ridesharing services as an important part of their lives. Limited or unavailable services damage the satisfaction and commitment of regular commuters.

5.3. Limitations and future directions

This study has some limitations, including that the three major themes (subjective well-being, social and cultural aspects and COVID-19) identified, examined and discussed in a B2C context using an exploratory research method were not exhaustive. Future studies could explore other factors that either promote or suppress ridesharing services in various contexts using emerging research methods, such as surveys, ethnography, experimental and digital analytics and alternative research designs, such as longitudinal (considering a more representative sample over time). Regarding quantitative or survey studies, Böcker and Meelen (2017) identified the lack of quantitative research on the sharing economy. Irrespective of the research method and design, further insights into consumer motivations are critical to developing a better understanding of the consumer decision-making process in ridesharing and other peer-to-peer platforms.

This research primarily explored the adoption and use factors of ridesharing services, which we consider a scope limitation. Future research could examine which factors hinder the adoption and discontinuation of ridesharing services. These investigations could provide a comprehensive picture to practitioners, regulators and other players in the digital economy eco-system.

We developed several propositions based on the theoretical implications/grounds. The empirical validation of these propositions via a quantitative study should offer valuable evidence to research in the sharing economy field.

This study was conducted in a single country (Pakistan) and considered a single sharing economy service (ridesharing). We consider this a limitation because the results of our study cannot be widely generalised. Transnational and cross-cultural studies comparing developed and developing or emerging countries and using different theories and approaches would be beneficial and are, therefore, recommended.

The focus of this study was limited to a macro-mobility service called ridesharing (see Fig. 2). COVID-19 has disrupted mobility services, and it is believed that the pandemic's effects will linger into 2021 (McKinsey & Co, 2020). Under this unprecedented situation and to offset the effects of the pandemic, future research could explore and examine the role of micro-mobility mechanisms, such as bicycles, e-scooters and mopeds, in providing an effective alternative to macro-mobility services and other players in the sharing economy eco-system.

Similarly, the scope of this study includes ridesharing services within the rich ambit of sharing economy services. Future research could compare various sharing economy factors, such as consumer behavior, attitude and belief towards macro-mobility and micro-mobility concepts, in developed and developing country contexts.

Although this research has contributed to well-being theory, future research should also explore possibilities for using other theories, such as social exchange theory, when examining sharing economy services. The social exchange theory maintains a relationship with ridesharing and other similar services. As explained by Davlembayeva et al. (2020, p. 3), social exchange is defined as 'the exchange of activity, tangible or intangible, and more or less rewarding or costly, between at least two persons or more'.

Most sharing economy scholars (cf. Teixeira and Lopes, 2020; Davlembayeva et al., 2020; Ma et al., 2018a, 2018b) have examined the end-user perspective of using ridesharing services and factors affecting end-user behavior when using ridesharing services. Our understanding is that providers and suppliers of assets (e.g. cars, homes) and goods (e.g. umbrellas, clothes, shoes, drill machines) could have different motivations for participating in the sharing economy and different viewpoints on well-being than those of end users. From the provider or supplier perspective, the research would add new dimensions to the sharing/gig economy and is recommended.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

References

- Abuelmaged, M., Hashem, G., Mouakket, S., 2021. Predicting subjective well-being among mHealth users: a readiness–value model. *Int. J. Inf. Manage.* 56, 1–16.
- Afonso, C., Gavilan, D., García-Madariaga, J., Gonçalves, H.M., 2018. Green consumer segmentation: managerial and environmental implications from the perspective of business strategies and practices. In: *Sustainability in Innovation and Entrepreneurship*. Springer, Cham, pp. 137–151.
- Agatz, N., Erera, A., Savelsbergh, M., Wang, X., 2012. Optimization for dynamic ridesharing: a review. *Eur. J. Oper. Res.* 223 (2), 295–303.
- Auld, G.W., Diker, A., Bock, M.A., Boushey, C.J., Bruhn, C.M., Cluskey, M., Reicks, M., 2007. Development of a decision tree to determine appropriateness of NVivo in analyzing qualitative data sets. *J. Nutr. Educ. Behav.* 39 (1), 37–47.
- Aw, E.C.X., Basha, N.K., Ng, S.I., Sambasivan, M., 2019. To grab or not to grab? The role of trust and perceived value in on-demand ridesharing services. *Asia Pac. J. Market. Logis.* 31 (5), 1442–1465.
- Bentham, J., 1970. *An Introduction to the Principles and Morals of Legislation*. Athlone Press, London.
- Binder, M., 2013. Innovativeness and subjective well-being. *Soc. Indic. Res.* 111 (2), 561–578.

- Böcker, L., Meelen, T., 2017. Sharing for people, planet or profit? Analysing motivations for intended sharing economy participation. *Environ. Innov. Societal Trans.* 23, 28–39.
- Castillo-Montoya, M., 2016. Preparing for interview research: the interview protocol refinement framework. *Qual. Rep.* 21 (5), 811–831.
- Chan, N.D., Shaheen, S.A., 2012. Ridesharing in North America: past, present, and future. *Transport Reviews* 32 (1), 93–112.
- Changchit, C., Klaus, T., Lonkani, R., Sampet, J., 2020. A cultural comparative study of mobile banking adoption factors. *J. Comput. Inf. Syst.* 60 (5), 484–494.
- Chen, C.C., Chang, Y.C., 2018. What drives purchase intention on Airbnb? Perspectives of consumer reviews, information quality, and media richness. *Telematics Inform.* 35 (5), 1512–1523.
- Chen, Y., Wang, L., 2019. Commentary: marketing and the sharing economy: digital economy and emerging market challenges. *J. Market.* 83 (5), 28–31.
- Cheng, M., 2016. Sharing economy: a review and agenda for future research. *Int. J. Hospitality Manag.* 57, 60–70.
- Cohen, B., Munoz, P., 2016. Sharing cities and sustainable consumption and production: towards an integrated framework. *J. Cleaner Prod.* 134, 87–97.
- Davidson, A., Habibi, M.R., Laroche, M., 2018. Materialism and the sharing economy: a cross-cultural study of American and Indian consumers. *J. Bus. Res.* 82, 364–372.
- Davlembayeva, D., Papagiannidis, S., Alamanos, E., 2020. Sharing economy: Studying the social and psychological factors and the outcomes of social exchange. *Technol. Forecast. Soc. Chang.* 158, 1–14.
- Deci, E.L., Ryan, R.M., 2000. The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychol. Inq.* 11 (4), 227–268.
- Deng, Y., Xiang, R., Zhu, Y., Li, Y., Yu, S., Liu, X., 2019. Counting blessings and sharing gratitude in a Chinese prisoner sample: effects of gratitude-based interventions on subjective well-being and aggression. *J. Positive Psychol.* 14 (3), 303–311.
- Eckhardt, G.M., Houston, M.B., Jiang, B., Lambertson, C., Rindfleisch, A., Zervas, G., 2019. Marketing in the sharing economy. *J. Market.* 83 (5), 5–27.
- Ertz, M., Leblanc-Proulx, S., 2018. Sustainability in the collaborative economy: a bibliometric analysis reveals emerging interest. *J. Cleaner Prod.* 196, 1073–1085.
- Gupta, M., Esmailzadeh, P., Uz, I., Tennant, V.M., 2019. The effects of national cultural values on individuals’ intention to participate in peer-to-peer sharing economy. *J. Bus. Res.* 97, 20–29.
- Han, Y., 2015. **The Big Three Challenges for Airbnb Entering China Market.** Accessed 10 September 2020. <<http://tech.qq.com/a/20150820/009329.htm>>.
- Hawlichschek, F., Notheisen, B., Teubner, T., 2018. The limits of trust-free systems: a literature review on blockchain technology and trust in the sharing economy. *Electron. Commer. Res. Appl.* 29, 50–63.
- Henkens, B., Verleye, K., Larivière, B., 2020. The smarter, the better?! Customer well-being, engagement, and perceptions in smart service systems. *International Journal of Research in Marketing-Forthcoming*.
- Hill, C.W., 1997. *International Business: Competing in the Global Market Place*. Irwin, Chicago.
- Hofstede, G., 1984. *Culture’s Consequences: International Differences in Work-related Values*. Sage.
- Hossain, M., 2020. The effect of the Covid-19 on sharing economy activities. *J. Cleaner Prod.* 280 (1), 1–9.
- Hou, L., 2018. Destructive sharing economy: a passage from status to contract. *Comput. Law Secur. Rev.* 34 (4), 965–976.
- Jin, S.T., Kong, H., Wu, R., Sui, D.Z., 2018. Ridesourcing, the sharing economy, and the future of cities. *Cities* 76, 96–104.
- Jeon, M.M., Lee, S., Jeong, M., 2020. Perceived corporate social responsibility and customers’ behaviors in the ridesharing service industry. *Int. J. Hospitality Manag.* 84, 102341.
- Kim, J., Lee, J.E.R., 2011. The Facebook paths to happiness: effects of the number of Facebook friends and self-presentation on subjective well-being. *CyberPsychol., Behav., Soc. Networking* 14 (6), 359–364.
- Kumar, V., Lahiri, A., Dogan, O.B., 2018. A strategic framework for a profitable business model in the sharing economy. *Ind. Mark. Manage.* 69, 147–160.
- Lam, D., Lee, A., Mizerski, R., 2009. The effects of cultural values in word-of-mouth communication. *J. Int. Market.* 17 (3), 55–70.
- Lee, J., Kim, J., Kim, H., Hwang, J., 2020. Sustainability of ride-hailing services in China’s mobility market: a simulation model of socio-technical system transition. *Telematics Inform.* 53, 1–14.
- Lee, G., Lee, J., Kwon, S., 2011. Use of social-networking sites and subjective well-being: a study in South Korea. *Cyberpsychol., Behav., Soci. Networking* 14 (3), 151–155.
- Ma, L., Zhang, X., Ding, X., Wang, G., 2018a. Bike sharing and users’ subjective well-being: an empirical study in China. *Transp. Res. Part A: Policy Pract.* 118, 14–24.
- Ma, L., Zhang, X., Ding, X.Y., 2018b. Social media users’ share intention and subjective well-being. *Online Inf. Rev.* 42 (6), 784–801.
- Marshall, D.R., Meek, W.R., Swab, R.G., Markin, E., 2020. Access to resources and entrepreneurial well-being: a self-efficacy approach. *J. Bus. Res.* 120, 203–212.
- McKenzie, G., 2020. Urban mobility in the sharing economy: a spatiotemporal comparison of shared mobility services. *Comput. Environ. Urban Syst.* 79, 101418.
- McKinsey & Co., 2017. **Cracks in the ridesharing market—and how to fill them.** Accessed 1 October 2020 <<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/automotive-and-assembly/our-insights/cracks-in-the-ridesharing-market-and-how-to-fill-them>>.
- McKinsey & Co., 2020. **When will the COVID-19 pandemic end?** Accessed 20 September 2020 <<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/healthcare-systems-and-services/our-insights/when-will-the-covid-19-pandemic-end>>.
- Monahan, T., 2020. Monopolizing mobilities: the data politics of ride-hailing platforms in US cities. *Telematics Inform.* 55, 1–9.
- Morshed, S.A., Khan, S.S., Tanvir, R.B., Nur, S., 2021. Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on ride-hailing services based on large-scale twitter data analysis. *J. Urban Manag. (Forthcoming)*.
- Palmatier, R.W., Dant, R.P., Grewal, D., Evans, K.R., 2006. Factors influencing the effectiveness of relationship marketing: a meta-analysis. *J. Market.* 70 (4), 136–153.
- Parente, R.C., Geleilate, J.M.G., Rong, K., 2018. The sharing economy globalization phenomenon: a research agenda. *J. Int. Manag.* 24 (1), 52–64.
- Petrucci, M.A., Marques, C., Sheppard, V., 2021. To share to exchange: an analysis of the sharing economy characteristics of Airbnb and Fairbnb. *Int. J. Hospitality Manag.* 92, 203–212.
- PwC, 2015. **Sharing or paring? Growth of the sharing economy.** <<https://www.pwc.com/hu/en/kiadvanyok/assets/pdf/sharing-economy-en.pdf>>. (Accessed 15 August 2020).
- Qian, X., Ukkusuri, S.V., 2017. Taxi market equilibrium with third-party hailing service. *Transp. Res. Part B: Methodol.* 100, 43–63.
- Räisänen, J., Ojala, A., Tuovinen, T., 2020. Building trust in the sharing economy: current approaches and future considerations. *J. Cleaner Prod.* 279, 1–11.
- Ryan, G.W., Bernard, H.R., 2003. Techniques to identify themes. *Field Methods* 15 (1), 85–109.
- Sha, F., Li, B., Law, Y.W., Yip, P.S., 2019. Associations between commuting and well-being in the context of a compact city with a well-developed public transport system. *J. Transp. Health* 13, 103–114.
- Shaikh, A., Karjaluoto, H., Liébana-Cabanillas, F., 2019. What drives customer satisfaction and well-being in ridesharing? A developing country perspective. In: *Proceedings of the International Conference on Electronic Business. International Consortium for Electronic Business, Newcastle, UK.*
- Statista, 2020. **Value of the sharing economy worldwide in 2014 and 2025.** <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/830986/value-of-the-global-sharing-economy/>>. (Accessed 5 December 2020).
- Teixeira, J.F., Lopes, M., 2020. The link between bike sharing and subway use during the COVID-19 pandemic: the case-study of New York’s Citi Bike. *Transp. Res. Interdiscip. Persp.* 6, 1–11.
- Veenhoven, R., 2008. Sociological theories of subjective well-being. *Sci. Subjective Well-being* 9, 44–61.
- J. Wallenstein U. Shelat **What’s Next for the Sharing Economy?** Wallenstein, J. Shelat, U. 2017. **What’s Next for the Sharing Economy?** Retrieved from <<https://www.bcg.com/ennor/publications/2017/strategy-technology-digital-whats-next-for-sharing-economy.aspx>> (August 2019).
- Wang, Y., Zheng, B., Lim, E.P., 2018. Understanding the effects of taxi ridesharing—a case study of Singapore. *Comput. Environ. Urban Syst.* 69, 124–132.
- Zhang, X., Ma, L., Wang, G.S., 2017. Factors influencing users’ subjective well-being: an empirical study based on shared bicycles in China. *Inf. Discovery Deliv.* 45 (4), 202–211.