

Assessing the Socio-economic Impacts of CPEC on the Fisherfolk Community in Gwadar

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Abstract

This paper examines the fisherfolk impacts of the CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) experienced by fisherfolk community in Gwadar. This study provides an insight into how the fisherfolk community is being ignored by the concerned authorities. The disturbance the fisherfolk community is facing in their livelihood since the development work has started in Gwadar. Quantitative methods were used for data collection, which include questionnaires and observation to assess the impacts of CPEC fisherfolk community is facing. The findings reveal that the concerned authorities are paying less interest in the fisherfolk community. Understanding the socio-economic issues of the fisherfolk community in Gwadar is critical for the policymakers to ensure an inclusive approach towards development planning. Finally, the Researcher has proposed a series of recommendations to policymakers about the inclusion of the fisherfolk community which is a major stockholder in these projects.

Keywords: CPEC, Development, Displacement, Fisherfolk, Gwadar

Introduction

The mega project CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) considered as a game changer for both Gwadar and overall Pakistan was set up in 2015. CPEC was planned to be completed in three phases. The first phase of CPEC was to remove key economic bottlenecks namely energy and infrastructure. The current phase is about industrialization, socio-economic and agricultural cooperation and promoting business and combining developments (Planning Commission Pakistan, 2019). The budget for CPEC was estimated \$46 Billion (which has now reached about

\$62 billion) (Siddiqui, 2017) investment in Pakistan by the Chinese in order to provide Pakistan with capitals to overcome its energy short-comings and to overrule its blackouts as well as assisting it in the up gradation of its infrastructure (Small, 2016). It is biggest ever foreign investment received by Pakistan in its history (Ashfaq, 2015). The aim of this ambitious was to enhance connectivity between Gwadar Port in Pakistan and China's northwestern region for fostering economic growth, trade, and regional development. The mega project CPEC includes infrastructure, energy, industries, etc. Currently, CPEC has changed the perception of foreign investors, they are willing to invest in the country. China's mega project has turned Pakistan into a safe destination for investment (Bashir, 2023) . Gwadar city has a significant importance for its deep-sea port and geographical location, it has the potential to offer a shorter trade route between China and the middle east, Africa, and Europe.

Balochistan, Pakistan's largest province by land area, now has access to new opportunities because to the CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor). Balochistan is crucial for CPEC, because Gwadar lies at the heart of the project. The initiative is expected to address the province's related social and economic challenges and may even contribute to the growth of the entire region. Pakistan is eager to strengthen its ability to fulfill its own socioeconomic demands and to align its policy orientations with the region's and the world's dynamic and ever-changing geopolitical and economic landscapes. Since 2015, the federal government has tried to address the province's political and economic issues by adopting a series of economic packages, including Aghas-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan and a particular package for south Balochistan. Raising the standard of living for the people of Balochistan is essential, as is socioeconomic progress, improved communication infrastructure, and job creation, all of which have hampered the province's social, political, and economic development (Shaheen, 2020). Given all these considerations, it is critical to analyze the potential consequences of the multibillion-dollar CPEC projects in Balochistan.

On other hand Gwadar port has long been source of income, employment, and fishing for the people of Gwadar. The fishery community has been living in Gwadar for so many years. Their basic source of income is the sea, and made it their livelihood, approximately 70-80 percent of the population is dependent on fishing (Baloch, 2016). Despite challenges like water shortages, electricity outages, and inadequate health care, they are afraid of being displaced due to the ongoing construction in the city. The local fisherfolk in Gwadar once have already been displaced from west Bay (Paddi Sir) to east Bay (Demi Zirr) at Mulla Band where currently the Gwadar port is situated (Abbas, 2019). East bay is the main route of trading, which soon will be restricted for fishing and fisherfolk once the expressway reaches Gwadar. The expressway will Connect Makran costal highway to Gwadar port, which will ultimately result to a closure of jetty, so far there any other alternative jetty has not been planned by concerned authorities. While GDA (Gwadar Development Authority) is constructing a new jetty at Sur Bandar, which the residents suspect the fisherfolk of Gwadar would eventually be displaced from Gwadar jetty to Sur Bandar jetty (Ebrahim, 2017). In Indonesia, 40,000 to 50,000 people have been displaced by multiple routes and Infrastructure as part of the Jabotabek Urban Development megaprojects (Cernea, 1993). The CPEC project is delivering similar results for the residents of Gwadar, Balochistan (Hashmi, 2022). They are already struggling and complaining against the concerned authorities, who have limited their time and space in the sea, due to the ongoing development of deep-sea port and other CPEC-

related projects, which is causing a significant impact on their livelihoods (Hashmi, 2022). CPEC might be a fantastic opportunity for the people of Gwadar, however as the megaproject's completion date gets nearer, the people of Gwadar, particularly the fisherfolk community, exhibit less interest in it. They believe that they are being ignored by the concerned authorities.

Literature Review

This literature review about the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has linked as a transformative initiative, purpose of that to improve economic connectivity between China and Pakistan. This literature review on the socio-economic impact of CPEC specifically on the Gwadar region. Different studies explain the significant and important infrastructural developments in Gwadar due to CPEC, which include that the construction of the Gwadar port, energy projects and roads and these developments are expected to improve the regional trade and economic activities (Bashir, 2023), and the potential of CPEC to stimulate trade in the Gwadar region, creating new opportunities for local business and facilitating cross-border economic cooperation (Khan U. , 2023). Researcher also examining the impact on employment and studies suggest that CPEC projects have the potential to generate job opportunities in the Gwadar region for local fisheries business also attention is drawn to the importance of skill development and local workforce inclusion (Nazir, 2021). The Gwadar port's strategic location is seen as a catalyst for economic cooperation among neighboring countries but the socio-economic impact requires acknowledging potential challenges, such as displacement of local communities, security concerns, and the need for transparent governance in project implementation and examine these issues is important for ensuring sustainable development in the region (Bashir, 2023).

The port is strategically located near the lanes of the road linking three major continents, Asia, Africa, and Europe have become a major strategic and commercial port. In fact, more than 60% of the world trade and tanker transport takes place across the waters of the neighboring Strait of Hormuz. The Gwadar port offers itself as the best alternative and storage port, where it can handle large ships and tankers. "The 14.5-meter port project will be able to accommodate Fifth Generation ships, including Panamax ships and mother ships." Moreover, the deep-sea port of Gwadar can remain a factor throughout the year and can handle large oil transport vessels. Being a meeting place between energy-efficient countries and energy shortages, China and India, and Asia's growing economies, can make it easier to connect them to the energy-rich Middle East and Central

Asia. The CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor), linking Gwadar and Kashgar, has the Strategic and economic importance of Gwadar Port (Khan H. , 2016).

CPEC One Belt, One Road as the major development project by China, will connect Asia with Africa and Europe for trade. The megaproject with initial investment of 44 billion, out of which 11 billion is fixed for public investment and 33 for private invest, which will create economic opportunities for Pakistan as well as neighbor's countries. This megaproject will fuel Pakistan economy and will overcome economic crisis. The game changing project (CPEC) will create 70,000 job opportunities in coming 11 years for the people of Pakistan. The One Belt, One Road will offer China a shorter route to import oil from gulf countries and expand her market production all over the world (Ali, 2018).

Hypothesis

H₁: China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has a positive impact on livelihood of the fisherfolk Community in Gwadar.

H₂: China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has a positive socio-economic impact on the fisherfolk community in Gwadar.

Theoretical Framework

Development Induced Displacement

Development induce displacement refers to the forced evacuating of people from their indigenous areas of residence or communities as a direct result of development projects or infrastructure. Development projects include Infrastructure development, roads, railways, industrial plantation, and other big projects aimed for economic and social development. To understand the dynamics of displacement, it is necessary to examine and intersect the factors that lead to displacement, the dynamics of decision-making and socioeconomic and environmental aspects from affected groups.

There are two aspects of displacement primary and secondary. Primary displacement is initial and forced movement of individuals or communities from their indigenous area of residence as result of development projects. Secondary displacement is the forced movement of individuals or communities who once have already been displaced and are forced to move again to face additional relocation.

Methodology

This research uses a quantitative approach, the data has been collected from both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The primary source of data includes questionnaire and Observation with the locals of Gwadar, which highlighted their experiences, understanding, expectation, and opinion regarding CPEC (China-Pakistan economic corridor) projects. The rating scale was used to measure the opinion data. The secondary source of data includes research papers,

articles, news, and official websites. The target population of the research was fisherfolk, locals, and students.

Research Questions

1. Will CPEC be a game changer for the people of Gwadar?
2. Is the construction of Deep-Sea port likely to displace the fisherfolk community?
3. Is Chinese and local government providing skill development training for local fisherfolk community?
4. Is fishing the only source of income for the fisherfolk community in Gwadar?

Survey Data

I. CPEC a game changer:

Many people consider that CPEC along with Gwadar port is a game changer not only for Gwadar or Pakistan but also for the whole of the region. According to the survey data 28% of the respondents strongly agree and 32% agree on CPEC as a game changer for the people of Gwadar, whereas 10% of the respondents do not comment on it and remaining of the respondents disagree with that.

II. Construction of Deep-Sea port in Gwadar:

The construction of deep-sea port is the most important project of CPEC as a One Belt, One Road initiative. And the construction of deep-sea port is likely to displace local fisherfolk community. According to the survey result 24% and 45% of the respondents strongly agree and agree respectively that the deep-sea port is likely to displace the fisherfolk community and 18% of the respondents do not comment on it while 13% revealed disagree. Which means the local people agree that the construction of deep-sea port is likely to displace the fisherfolk community.

III. Fishing as an only source of income for fisherfolk:

As mentioned earlier, that Gwadar economy mostly depends on fishing. 40% and 37% of the respondents strongly agree and agree on fishing as the only source of income for the fisherfolk community in Gwadar, while 13% remain neutral and 10% of the respondents disagree with that. Which shows that fishing is the only source of income for the fisherfolk community in Gwadar.

IV. Skill development training for local fisherfolk:

The fundamental source of income of the people of Gwadar is fishing and fishing related jobs. In this regard the main responsibility of Chinese and local government should be to provide skill development training for local fisherfolk in the field of fishing. It is surprising that 19% and 33% of the respondents strongly disagree and disagree regarding any skill development

training by Chinese and local government. While 13% stay neutral and 33% respondents agree with that. Which shows that the Chinese and local government is not providing skill development training for local fisherfolk.

Results and Discussions

The results of the data analysis suggest that there are more negative and less positive impacts of CPEC, which is causing a significant impact on the fisherfolk community livelihood. The people of Gwadar agree with the fact that CPEC is a game changer for the people of Gwadar. But when they were asked about displacement, most of them agreed that fisherfolk community is likely to be displaced due to construction of deep-sea port by Chinese, and they will be restricted to fish at their prime fishing spot and yet no alternative location has been recommended by the concerned authorities. Most of the people of Gwadar agree that fishing is the only source of income for the fisherfolk community in Gwadar but unfortunately most of the people of Gwadar mention that there is not any skill development training regarding fishing provided by Chinese and local government. Overall findings revealed that CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) has a negative socio-economic impact on the fisherfolk community of Gwadar.

Conclusion

Using the theoretical framework of development-induced displacement, the study provided a comprehensive analysis of the socioeconomic impacts of the CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) on the Gwadar fisherfolk community. We investigated the multifaceted consequences encountered by fishermen because of the mega infrastructure project by using a combination of quantitative methodology. The restrictions and displacements of the fisherfolk community without any compensation have had a significant impact on their livelihood. The findings illustrate the difficulties that fisherfolk experience, as not being compensated, fear of being displaced which is causing a disturbance in social and economic structures and cultural links. The fisherfolk community, being at the frontline of project's impact zone, have experienced a disproportionate burden, and need immediate attention from policymakers and stakeholders involved in CPEC development projects.

Recommendations

- Immediate upgradation of infrastructure is required with new fair and transparent resettlement policies, which provide basic amenities like adequate health care, education, water, electricity, gas as well as construction of a new jetty within the city.
- Designing new skill development programs that align with their expertise and relevant to their traditional livelihood.
- Fishing is the only source of income policymakers must consider their interests while making policies.

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