STRATEGIES FOR MAKING CPEC INCLUSIVE FOR UNSKILLED WORKERS

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ABSTRACT

In the domain of the public-sector strategy prioritizing. very little work has been done bearing the psychology and behavior of the unskilled worker in the country. The employment of unskilled labour is under-represented in majority of the countries that dot the globe. Not surprisingly, documented statistical evidence of the World Bank Report 2015 confirmed that the unskilled labour force in these economies represented up to 50 to 65% of the informal and formal work force. Being a part of the undocumented workforce, it is difficult to measure the value-added contribution of this informal sector in Pakistan. Moreover the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) being planned and designed under CPEC will allow for increased participation and inclusion of the unskilled labour (only after relevant training) for those residing there and in the peripheries. In our exploratory field study that was conducted in two upcoming SEZs of Nowshera and Islamabad; we expose the economic and social flaws of the very foundations of labour markets in Pakistan. Hence, concluding that if policy-makers do not address the flaws urgently, the whole exercise of making SEZs will go in vain.

Keywords: Pakistan, CPEC, Special Economic Zones (SEZs), Unskilled Labour.

INTRODUCTION

The employment of unskilled labour is under-represented in majority of the countries that dot the globe. Not surprisingly, documented statistical evidence of the World Bank Report 2015 confirmed that the unskilled labour force in these economies represented up to 50% of the informal and formal work force. For example, in Latin America it was found to be 39.8%, where as in Uruguay 75% of the workers were involved in informal

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work. Similarly, 24.3% females in Brazil represented the unskilled workforce, as compared to 58.3% in Honduras. Moving towards South East Asian Countries, excluding China, it was indicated that unskilled employment in all reported countries ranged from minimum 42.3% to a maximum of 83.6%.

In the case of Pakistan, as per the 2019 International Labour Organization (ILO) Report on Pakistan's Labour Policy, almost 22 million of the employed labor force is earning its livelihood in streets and the government has no record of it. This unskilled sector accounts for 43.3% of the total labor force (Amir, 2016). These informal workers can be categorized as self-employed, casual wage workers, family based petty traders, paid employees for informal enter prices, home based workers, street vendors, vehicle drivers, and casual agricultural and non-agricultural workers.

Being a part of the undocumented workforce, it is difficult to measure the value-added contribution of this informal sector in Pakistan. Moreover the special economic zones being planned and designed under CPEC will allow for increased participation and inclusion of the unskilled labour (only after relevant training) residing there and in the peripheries. Indirect estimation approaches on the basis of employment, and hours worked are being used to estimate the contribution unskilled workers, but they do not allow for documenting robust findings. Moreover, previous studies done by international donors signified that the contribution of unskilled labour accounts for nearly 30% of total income, and over 40% of total urban income. Consequently, it has been widely recognized that the contribution due to this to gross domestic product (GDP) is of prime significance.

Importance of Special Economic Zones in Poverty Alleviation and Economic Growth

Setting up Special Economic Zones (SEZs) is key to economic growth of any region via increased employment opportunity which not only positively impact GDP growth rate but also play a significant role in poverty alleviation. In 2017, SEZs of Dominican Republic has generated 166,000 direct and approximately 250,000 indirect jobs in the region, majority of which comprised of low-skilled workers. To fill the employment gap Government of Dominican Republic has signed agreements for skill development with Universities and institutions. Similarly, there are currently 500 SEZs in Latin America and the Caribbean region employing approximately 1 million people (United Nations, 2019).

The increase in employment opportunities is not just limited to these areas only, India has reported to generate 178,000 jobs from SEZs within 10 years of establishment of first SEZ (Aggarwal, 2007) and anticipated to have these number tripled and raised to approximately 15,75,452 by December 2009. This has created a need to invest more in filling these jobs by local people through skill development (Raheem, 2011).

However, in India since 2006 there have been observed 90% increase in employment opportunities. Total increase in employment rate is reported in 2008- 2009 is 3,87,439 whereas it raised to 13, 50, 071 in 2013- 2014. Besides already skilled workers, most of the labor employed was semi–skilled and un-skilled workers. This economic shift with the establishment of SEZs in India has greatly impacted GDP growth, alleviation of poverty and decreasing unemployment rate (Das, 2017).

The similar and better examples can be found in developing countries like China, where an increase of 10 million employment opportunities is reported from 2002 to 2006. In 2006 alone China has employed 40 million people in different SEZs (Agarwal, 2010).

Economic Stability and Human Development

The development of Human Resource for socio-economic stability is evident and human capital is considered the greater asset of a country. The human resource greatly impacts the development outcome of a nation (Castleman, 2016). Singapore has practically implied this philosophy of Human development and reap its benefits as world 1st biggest competitive economy with the score of 84.5% leaving behind US besides having limited natural resources and a smaller area (World Economic Forum, 2019). Back in 1996, Singapore plan ahead to reach this stage by signing agreements and investing in Human skill development. Even with very limited human resource and outsourcing it from other countries still Singapore managed to sustain its position as biggest emerging world economy in the presence of other developing economies like US and Europe. The competition was not low but planning ahead has paid off.

CPEC and Inclusion of Unskilled Labor

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is bringing these opportunities of economic growth to Pakistan. Reaping its benefits is greatly dependent upon effective policy making in mobilizing and developing human resource. Unfortunately, as reported in World Bank 2015 Annual report, Pakistan has

disappointed international donors with miserable performance in human development area. CPEC is opening new doors of economic growth for Pakistan, by keeping in view the human potential Pakistan currently hold with 64% of young people age between 25-30 years, the greatest number ever in its history (United Nations Development Programme, 2018). Besides up gradation of skilled workers, the reported 43.3% of unskilled-labor force can play a huge role in economic growth of Pakistan if invested and skilled well in time.

A number of studies have been undertaken to study several aspects of the unskilled labour in Pakistan. However with the advent of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), we have a special opportunity to see the potential benefits. There is a dire need to study this issue in order to firstly assess the awareness that unskilled workers have about CPEC and Pakistan's new foreign and trade relations in this regard. Existing studies empirically examined various aspects of unskilled labour sector such as; skill development, constraints on the growth, wage rates, embracing capital-intensity, and labor productivity. A considerable vacuum in the line of these studies is that they were based on a very small sample including urban locations only, thus their results could not be generalized via representative sampling. Representative sampling will allow for a fresh and apt comparison between urban and rural areas because we will be selecting the Special Economic Zone of the capital territory of Islamabad and the Rashakai Economic Zone, M-1, Nowshera. The reason for choosing these is essentially the ultimate urban-rural mix of these relatively better technology-literate cities.

It is also important to note that as per the Dawn newspaper of 13thMarch 2017, it is very essential that communities at the grassroots be involved in this massive growth initiative to set-up Special Economic Zones (SEZs) otherwise one tends to generate hostility of the masses.

At the moment, unskilled labour (mostly informal workers) is hardly able to access social protection and social welfare in Pakistan. However, once part of the formal labour force of the Special Economic Zones (SEZs), the unskilled labour-force will be able to access both. Hence our priori expectation is that the social impact of CPEC will be very positive.

Research Ouestions

In this study we pose the following questions:

1. What is the estimated size of unskilled labour in the regions mentioned above?

- 2. Identify the skill gap of this labour vis-à-vis expected demand in SEZs
- 3. Which specific training interventions would be required to enable this currently unskilled labour to ensure inclusion in to SEZs from the grass root level?

The precise expected research outcomes of this policy study are as follows:

- 1. Demonstrate the career-enhancing socio-economic characteristics of unskilled labour force under CPEC.
- 2. Via exploratory study, give insight to the factors which influence these labourers to work mostly in informal sectors and their potential contribution to the federal and provincial tax-net once they become part of the formal labour force.

METHODOLOGY

A total of 250 respondents participated in this open interview study. Seventeen respondents belonged to the Federal State (Islamabad). Respondents primarily belonged to the province of Punjab, from Khyber Pakhtunkhawa, and a few respondents were from Sindh, Azad Kashmir, and Gilgit Baltistan. At the 30th interview data reached saturating, and themes started repeating, thus stopped conducting interviews. The respondents who participated in this exploratory study were presented according to; gender, age group, religion, education, job occupation, and province. A complete descriptive demographic, and geographic data of respondents was summarized in Table 1.

A large part of our findings includes the discussion around current skills gap, investment for acquiring skills as per future demand will be addressed through open ended questions posed to current and potential employer organizations in the above mentioned regions.

We may also consider other variables after carefully looking at the recent literature on labour market impact of public investment.

The questionnaire will undergo a pilot and before being fully implemented on-site. Responses from the team will be validated through random on-site visits. The survey link will also be shared with the employers of the sample workers. Henceforth, cross-sectional wage

function shall be estimated which shall explain the interesting determinants.

RESULTS

This section discussed results on; initial inquiry, managerial implications, and implications for government policy makingin light of "CPEC Inclusive for Unskilled Labor Force in Pakistan". The actual results obtained were based on open interview session, conducted with each of the respondent on a one-to-one basis in this exploratory endeavor.

OBJECTIVITY AND RELIABILITY

Being an exploratory study, it pertains to human involvement and interpretations. Keeping this in view, the researchers focused on objectivity, as a fundamental component of analysis. This was concerned with the overall quality of the coding process of complex data especially that received from open interview responses.

Hence, systematic procedures using MAXQDA 12 for organizing data, and interpreting themes were adopted. Transcripts were manually coded using spread sheet method, and were planned and implemented at the outset. This ensured accurate and consistent coding behavior across the coders. This also helped in reducing personal bias in this study.

Table 1: Demographic and Geographic Summary of Respondents

Major Segmentation Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage %
Geographic		•	
Region	Federal Capital	1707	56,7%
	Punjab	03	23.4%
	Nowshera	01	10.0%
	Sindh	01	03.3%
	Gilgit Baltistan	01	03.3%
	Azad Kashmir		03.3%
Demographic	•		
Gender	Male	18	60%
	Female	12	40%
Age	35-40	18	60.0%
	40-45	07	23.4%
	45-50	04	13.3%
	50-60	01	03.3%
Education	Bachelors	09	30%
	Masters	21	70%
	Doctor		

Job/Occupation	Private Sector	22	73.3%
	Government Sector	08	26.7%
	Own Business		
	Others		

Source: Developed from the Qualitative Field Report.

Coding

A four step manual process was used for coding the spread sheet. At first, all the 30 interviews were transcribed on a separate sheet. At second, each segment of text which ended with a full stop, and a segment of text which had a comma in between was treated as a single cognitive unit. At third, each sentence starting from left to right was numbered separately. At fourth, each page was given a separate page number. Table 2 established the criteria for coding the spread sheet manually.

Table 2: Criteria for Coding the Spread Sheet

Interviews (I)	All the 30 interviews would be coded separately.
	A segment of text which ends with a full stop, and a segment of text which has a comma in between is treated as a single cognitive unit.
Lines (L)	Each sentence written from left to right would be numbered separately.
Pages (P)	Each page would be given a separate page number.

The analysis for this qualitative endeavor was designed to search for emerging themes, within the segmented interview transcriptions. Six hundred and twenty seven (627) units of raw texts were identified using the manual spread sheet method. These six hundred and twenty seven (627) units of raw themes were coded in to forty (40) groups of coding/themes called theme list. The overall emerging groups of coding themes for "Making CPEC Inclusive for Unskilled Labor Force in Pakistan" are presented in Appendix A.

As presented in Appendix A, the entire seven hundred and twenty eight (728) units of raw text were coded using the criteria in Table 2. All of these themes were categorized into clusters. A brief summary of several interviews conducted is presented in the following paragraphs:

When asked about the reason for unskilled labor in Islamabad, and Rashakai Economic Zone M1, Nowshera, chosen interviewees responded as follows; "The main reason is poverty".

(Interviewee 01, Federal State, age 37)

"Lack of training provided to the labor".

(Interviewee 03, Punjab, age 35)

"One of the main reasons is lack of education".

(Interviewee 04, Sindh, age 38)

When asked about the impact on labor force of CPEC, chosen interviewees responded as follows;

"Unskilled labor force would be hired on low wages".

(Interviewee 07, Federal State, age 42)

"No plan for decent wages introduced, due to lack of policies".

(Interviewee 13, Azad Kashmir, age 39)

"Due to massive unemployment labor will be hired on a very low daily wages".

(Interviewee 19, Federal State, age 40)

"Due to CPEC development, and in majority low labor literacy rate would lead to hiring labor below minimum wages".

(Interviewee 23, Punjab, age 36 years)

Furthermore, these interviewees also discussed some reasons for how these unskilled labor can become a part of SEZ's, which are as follows;

"Unskilled labor will become a part by providing them a good environment".

(Interviewee 25, Federal State, age 39)

"Another reason is that, it will reduce the poverty level. Would get opportunity for providing them trainings".

(Interviewee 27, Gilgit Baltistan, age 45)

"Raise the awareness regarding the strategic nature of CPEC, the labor policies and regulations".

(Interviewee 28, Nowshera, age 60)

"Provide them trainings and workshops, and basic level certifications".

(Interviewee 30, Nowshera, age 49 years)

Forty (40) new raw themes were predicted using the manual coding method. Table 3 discussed the details on established raw themes.

Table 3: Raw Themes

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035Collaborate with NGO's.12.5%036Personal Interaction with Individuals.12.5%037Provide Appropriate Working Environment.12.5%038Offer Diplomas in Engineering Fields.12.5%039Over Time Bonuses.12.5%	033	Self-Development Programs.	1	2.5%
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	038	Offer Diplomas in Engineering Fields.	1	2.5%
040 Provide Accommodation. 1 2.5%	039	Over Time Bonuses.	1	2.5%
	040	Provide Accommodation.	1	2.5%

While analyzing Table 3 established on raw themes for "Making CPEC Inclusive for Unskilled Labor Force in Pakistan" it was identified that, out of 30 respondents, 4 respondents each mutually agreed and emphasized that, individuals not working for skilled labor were from poorer back grounds, thus needed skilled level training programs. 3 respondents each gave high weightage to themes such as; hiring on minimum wages, job security issues, proper engagement plan, and technical training courses.

2 respondents' views were directed towards unattractive remuneration packages, whereas 2 emphasized the significance of labor advisory group. In comparison, 2 gave high weightage to conducting a campaign highlighting the benefits of skilled labor force. The remaining 14 respondents came up with themes such as; minimal government involvement, lack of education, non-financial incentives, large scale unemployment, lack of opportunities, unclear policies, unclear wage incentive, minimal health insurance, lack of labor awareness programs, fair reward system, safe and healthy environment, labor certification programs, self-development programs, overtime bonuses, and accommodation issues.

However, while viewing the forty (40) established themes in Table 3 it was also observed that, majority of the themes were overlapping. Therefore, further analysis was conducted by the researcher to merge these themes into more clear, and established domains in accordance with the field of economics. While doing so, 6 broader themes were identified. Table 4 presented the emerging themes in 6 clusters. The next section would discuss the managerial implications for this study.

Table 4: Emerging Themes

No	Cluster Wise Themes
Theme 1	Basic Necessity of Life Issues.
001	Belong to Poor Backgrounds.
002	Lack of Education.
Theme 2	Minimal Government Support.
003	Large scale unemployment.
004	Lack of Opportunities.
005	Unclear Policies.
Theme 3	Capacity Building Programs.
006	Introduce Poly Technical Colleges.

007	Conduct Workshops.
008	Technical Training Courses.
009	Offer diploma in engineering fields.
010	Regular briefing on policies.
Theme 4	Safe and Healthy Work Environment.
011	Health insurance.
012	Providing accommodations.
013	Employee Awareness Programs.
Theme 5	Remuneration Package.
014	Over time bonuses.
015	T.A/D.A for labor.
016	Build a welfare program for labor.
017	Non-financial benefits.
018	Fair reward system.
Theme 6	Motivation Exercises.
019	Provide appropriate work environment.
020	Personal interaction with individuals.
021	Initiating self-development programs.
022	Job Security.

Managerial Implications

The managerial implications for this study are discussed keeping in view Table 4. Provision of basic necessities of life, sufficient government support, capacity building programs, safe and healthy work environment, remuneration packages, and motivation exercises have a favorable impact towards making CPEC inclusive for unskilled labor force in Pakistan. Furthermore, all the six predicted themes were related to acquiring, and exhibiting a prosperous work culture. Therefore, it is necessary for CPEC to develop and implement strategies which would reduce the unethical and long-standing work practices prevailing in the industrial sector of Pakistan. Furthermore, the industrial sector while promoting these six predicted themes must emphasize on these highlighted issues as a medium for satisfying labor internal motives such as; self-respect and self-esteem. CPEC must underplay the long-term benefits associated with labor force.

In a similar vein, a second long term industrial strategy could be that, genuine production and manufacturing business owners start offering a

safe and healthy work environment, with favorable remuneration packages. This would create an environment of competition amongst major players in the manufacturing and production industry. Subsequently, leading to building a skilled labor force, and would reduce the demand of unskilled labor in Pakistan. This strategy has been successfully imbedded in countries such as; Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and China. Another spillover advantage of this strategy would be that, it would protect the rights of skilled labor force in Pakistan, in comparison to the prevailing undefined labor working environment. The next section would discuss the implications for policy making.

Implications for Policy

The following implications for policy making were suggested:

It was found in this study that, individuals in Pakistan classed as labors had mixed feelings on working as a part of labor force in production and manufacturing industries. Reasons for such an attitude were the absence of defined labor policies. Also, generally the labor force was not fully aware about the benefits of working as a skilled individual. The policy makers in this context should arrange programs and seminars on benefits of skilled labor force, using electronic media for the general public, in educational institutions and other forums. These programs and seminar would help in creating awareness about the greater benefits of working as a skilled labor force, hence changing their attitude towards negative industry practices.

Habits and attitudes developed at early age do not change at adulthood. Therefore the policy makers should also target Kindergarten and primary schools children in attitude formation programs. As a consequence, these children at adulthood would have a positive attitude towards labor work practices, and hence they would be reluctant to indulge in negative and unfair work circles.

It may also be pointed out that besides manufacturers, policy makers are equally responsible for unfair, and unethical work practices. Therefore the government enforcing regulations should not be restricted to prosecuting the manufacturers, but their horizon should be expanded to the law setting, and reinforcing institutions as well. Subsequently, the policy makers should explicitly communicate to the public the consequences of indulging in informal and unethical work practices. For

this purpose, they should use mass media and all other possible sources. Thought provoking advertisements such as individuals being caught and jailed, and family members cutting sorry figure towards the family would also act as deterrent in promoting skilled labor force practices. It may be pointed out that, similar thought provoking advertisements are shown in Pakistan in the context of electricity stealing.

In an eastern, and Islamic country like Pakistan, it was expected, that themes such as basic necessities of life, minimal government support, capacity building programs, safe and healthy work environment, remuneration packages, and motivation exercises have positive attitude towards making CPEC inclusive for unskilled labor force in Pakistan successful. This really poses a challenge to the policy makers. Due to the availability of unskilled informal labor force in Pakistan, individuals don't possess the required skills to meet the 21st century challenges in the field of technology, and innovation. A majority of the workers earned their livelihood outside the economic cycle. The policy makers in this context could appoint appropriate spokesmen for communicating to the masses that, indulging in informal labor practices had a negative impact on the economic growth of Pakistan (Asif, 2011). The same messages could also be part of Friday Sermon by these Islamic Clerics.

The above discussed strategies would be expensive. In developing economies like Pakistan, funding for such programs would always be a major issue. Therefore, a special fund for these activities could be created. Since, all the major manufacturers in Pakistan lose towards these unethical practices, therefore these major companies should contribute toward this suggested fund.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This exploratory study has several limitations and opportunities for future research. To start with, the study has mainly focused on labor force in Federal State (Islamabad), few provinces of Punjab, Nowshera, Sindh, Azad Kashmir, and Gilgit Baltistan. Future studies could explore other rural areas of Pakistan as well. Since it was also found that unskilled labor force practices vary from one country to the other. Therefore, a comparative study of two or more countries would bring further insight in understanding how to engage unskilled labor force in country wide projects. This study has measured the views of employees working in government offices. Since it was also found that, the views vary between

government and private employees, future research could incorporate more than one category of employees.

Appendix A Actual Coding Sheet;

Coder 1 Interviewee (1-8)

Codes: Part. = Participant or Interviewee

P= page, L= line(s)

Theme No	Themes	Part.	Part.	Part.	Part.	Part.	Part.	Part.	Part.
001	Belong to Poor Backgrounds.	L1, P 1	L16, P3			L 91, P10	L97, P11		
002	Minimal Government Involvement.	L 1, P1							
003	Lack of Education.	L2, P1							
004	Unattractive Remuneration Package.			L 35, P5		L92, P10			
005	Lack of Non-Financial Incentives.			L 39, P5					
006	Large Scale Unemployment.				L64, P7				
007	Lack of Opportunities.				L76, P9				
008	Hiring on minimum wages.				L 79, P9		L96, P12	L111, P14	
009	Capacity Building Programs.							L112, P14	
010	UnclearPolicies.							L 128, P14	
011	Minimum Wage Incentive.								L160, P16
012	Non-Financial Allowances.								L161, P16
013	Health Insurance.							L 129, P14	

Coder 1 Interviewee (9-16)

Codes: Part. = Participant or Interviewee P= page, L= line(s)'

Theme No	Themes	Part.	Part.	Part.	Part.	Part.	Part. 14	Part. 15	Part. 16
014	Job Security.	L176, P18		L295, P26			L323, P28		
015	Skilled Level Training Programs.	L188, P18				L318, P27	L324, P28	L343, P29	
016	Introduce Poly Technical Colleges.		L225, P20						
017	Conduct Workshops.			L296, P26					
018	Employee Awareness Programs.			L 308, P26					
019	Motivation Workshops.				L333, P28				
020	Fair Reward System.				L 334, P28				
021	Facilitate Workers.					L319, P27			
022	Labor Advisory Group.					L 321, P27	L325, P28		
023	Safe and Healthy Environment.								L364, P30
024	Consider Labor Concerns.							L344, P29	
025	Regular Briefings on Policies.							L347, P29	
026	Build a Welfare Program for Labor.							L353, P29	

Coder 1 Interviewee (17-24)

Codes: Part. = Participant or Interviewee P= page, L= line(s)

Theme No	Themes	Part. 17	Part. 18	Part. 19	Part. 20	Part. 21	Part. 22	Part. 23	Part. 24
027	Proper Engagement Plan.	L379, P32					L467, P41	L504, P43	
028	Lack of Direction for Labor Force.	L 381, P32							
029	Financial Aid Programs.		L399, P34						
030	T.A/D.A for Labor.			L405, P34					
031	Campaign of Benefits forSkilled Labor Force.				L447, P38		L 476, P41		
032	Time to Time Certification for Labor.				L449, P38				
033	Self-Development Programs.					L457, P39			
034	Technical Training Courses.	L342, P32		L405, P34		L459, P39			
035	Collaborate with NGO's for Training ponsorships.						L475, P41		
036	Personal Interaction with Individuals.						L480, P41		
037	Provide Appropriate Working Environment.							L504, P43	
038	Offer Diplomas in Engineering Fields.							L504, P43	
039	Over Time Bonuses.								L538. P45
040	Provide Accommodation.								L539, P45

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