

## ANALYSIS OF CHINA-PAKISTAN LEISURE SPORTS INDUSTRY UNDER THE BACKGROUND OF "THE BELT AND ROAD"

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### Abstract

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*Scholars stress the importance of leisure sports activities for a healthy body and mind. There is a positive correlation between socioeconomic uplift and leisure sports activities. China-Pakistan economic corridor (CPEC) is the flagship project under the "The Belt and Road" initiative led by the Chinese government, with pouring in of huge investment centered around CPEC. It is hoped that it would have positively affected leisure sports activities. Relying on qualitative and quantitative data, the study analyzed the impact of CPEC on leisure sports activities. The findings suggest the positive impact of CPEC on leisure activities. These activities were facilitated with the provision of sports facilities, infrastructure development, economic uplift, and cultural influence.*

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Keywords: CPEC; leisure sports activities; economic uplift; healthy body and mind; Pakistan leisure sports industry.

### Introduction

Leisure sports activities have been variously defined by different scholars (Chin, 2011; Jian, 2014; Minwei, 2015; Taylor, et al., 1978). Certain basic underlying concepts unite all the definitions. These concepts are sports matching performance, recreational nature of activities, directed towards achieving the happiness of body and mind, fitness-oriented, cultivate physical activities and team spirit. The increase in the importance of leisure sports activities coincides with the rise in modern and nuclear society (Minwei, 2015). Modern life dynamics have placed a lot of demands on human beings and left them with little time for recreational activities (Jian, 2014). This is perhaps the reason that sound health of body and mind is a major issue of present-day man. This led to the stress on leisure sports activities to maintain the fitness of body and mind (Zheng, 2018).

However, leisure sports activities despite their paramount importance have not been institutionalized by many states of the world. There is still less awareness among the masses with regards to its importance for health and fitness. The majority of the developing countries are shrinking from their responsibilities with regards to its institutionalization for

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ensuing the economic costs (Hu & Zou, 2009). Much research studies found a close relationship between the economic uplift of the masses and leisure sports activities (Hu & Zou, 2009; Jian, 2014; Zheng, 2018). This explains the reason for a gap in terms of leisure sports activities in developed and developing countries.

China and Pakistan signed a landmark agreement worth 46 billion dollar's pact (Detsch, 2015; Haider 2015; Haider & Haider 2017). The project has been much celebrated and nicknamed as CPEC (China-Pakistan economic corridor). It is believed that the said investment would generate economic activities and would create jobs (Irshad, Xin & Arshad, 2015; Tehsin et al., 2017; Wasim & Siddiqi, 2018). Through the creation of jobs and the development of infrastructure, a new era of economic prosperity will begin (Zhang, et al., 2018). Now that CPEC is seven years old and considerable progress has been recorded (Government of China, 2020), it needs to see how the development influence leisure sports activities.

The study is motivated by the impact of CPEC and resulting in improved economic conditions on leisure sports activities. The study aimed at analyzing the impact of CPEC on the leisure activities being carried by the people of the area. Port city of Gwadar is selected for the city. The reason is that Gwadar is the major recipient of CPEC related investment, and all three major highways begin from here. The study is guided by the following research questions

Q.1. What are the major leisure sports activities been carried out by the people of the area?

Q.2. Is there any impact of CPEC related projects and economic uplift on the leisure sports activities been done by the people?

Q.3 In what ways, the projects, and economic uplift facilitated or otherwise the leisure sports activities?

### **Literature review**

While scholars agree on the importance of leisure sports activities as a way forward for managing better health in the modern era and purging negative tendencies (Jian, 2014; Minwei, 2015; Zheng, 2018). However, there is a realization among scholars in the field that the leisure sports industry could not keep pace with the development in the sport industry (Minwei, 2015). This led scholars to find directions for the leisure sport industry to accurately judge people needs and demands and synchronize with modern life dynamics

(Xu, 2013). Zheng (2018) suggested statistical operation with association rule algorithm to improve the accuracy of data for boosting leisure sport industry. Jian (2014) stress the need for utilizing network marketing as a data to help boost leisure sport industry. These research studies point towards a gap in the data necessary to base production of leisure sports equipment.

On the other hand, many research studies point towards human aspect in carrying out leisure sport activities frequently. Haycock and Smith (2012) research study underscore the importance of parents' involvement, finance and transport as crucial factors in the early childhood to achieve high level of adulthood leisure sport socialization. Xu (2013) research study highlight the importance of economic and geographical location for the flourishing of leisure sports industry. In many research studies better, economic life emerged as a fertile ground for leisure sport activities (Rohrn et al., 2006). These studies pointed out that increase in leisure sports activities is positively related to socioeconomic well-being of the people.

Pakistan and China signed 46 billion China-Pakistan economic corridor (CPEC). CPEC involve the construction of array of highways, railways, pipelines and power generation plants (Makhdoom et al., 2018). The focus of the CPEC is Gwadar port to be connected with Xinjiang province of China via roads and rail network to facilitate trade (Zhang, et al., 2018). Gwadar city would be the recipient of huge chunk of this investment (Hameed, Ali & Khan, 2019).

While the focus of discussion and research is more directed towards pros and cons of this mega project (Huang, 2016; Sheu and Kundu, 2018; Sial, 2016; Wolf, 2016). Little research was done to know the effect of this mega investment on the leisure sports activities in Pakistan and particularly Gwadar. This is because where research study suggest link between socioeconomic development and leisure activities. To fill the niche in the existing research literature, this study was undertaken.

## **Methodology**

The study is unique in its nature, as it studies the impact of CPEC on the leisure sport activities. Furthermore, the study relies on both quantitative and qualitative data to report findings. The study was carried out in the port city of Gwadar. The Gwadar was selected because all the three major routes originate from Gwadar and the city is the greatest beneficiary of CPEC projects (Hameed, Ali & Khan, 2019). To get representative sample of

the population, cross-sectional nature of the population was taken into an account. The demographic details of the representative population are as follow.

Table 1. Demographic information of the samples.

	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	241	87.63%
Female	34	12.36%
Age 21-30 Years old	175	63.63%
31-40 Years old	69	25.09%
41-50 Years old	27	9.81%
51-60 Years old	4	1.45%
SSC degree	52	18.90%
HSSC degree	101	36.72%
Bachelor's degree	48	17.45%
Masters	49	17.81%
Higher degree (MS/Phd)	25	9.09%
Urban	184	66.90%
Rural	91	33.09%

The respondents were administered 38 items closed ended questionnaire to record their responses on the impact of CPEC on leisure sport activities. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. First part contains questions about leisure activities and their frequencies. The leisure activities were adapted from Taylor, et al., (1978). The second part of the questionnaire dealt with the consistency with which these activities have been carried out over the past five years. The purpose of this part of the questionnaire was to analyze the impact of CPEC related projects which started from 2015 (Kanwal, Pitafi, Rasheed, Pitafi & Iqbal, 2019). The third part was related to the CPEC impact on these leisure activities. The operationalized definition of leisure sport activities was adopted from Jian (2014) as, 'leisure sports is a kind of entertainment leisure style, which is chosen by people in their leisure time, mainly pursuing the pleasure on the emotional experience, and take physical exercise as the basic characteristics and the primary means. This definition stress on the voluntarily nature leisure sports activities. It was thought suitable definition for the purpose of our study. The responses were recorded on Likert scales of 5 points. Validity of the questionnaire was established in three ways, first pilot study was carried out on small scale to identify any discrepancies, inconsistencies in the questionnaires. Secondly, questionnaire was shared with 5 research experts in the field and using content validity ratio (CVR) formula (Lawshe, 1975), content validity was calculated which stand at 0.09. Thirdly, validity was also established by using principal component analysis, all items loaded was above 0.40 and no item cross loading was above 0.40 (Koh & Nam, 2005). Moreover,

respondents were asked to respond their willingness for structural interview by writing the contact details. Total numbers of 69 respondents expressed their willingness for structural interview.

To get representative sample, the respondents were divided into three groups. Group A include participants with high leisure sports activities, qualifications and high socioeconomic background (SEB), group B includes participants less leisure sports activities, qualification and middle SEB. The last group includes participants with lowest leisure sports activities, qualification and SEB. Three participants were selected from each group for structural interview. However, one participant left the country in the meantime, so it was decided to conduct structural interviews with two participants from each group.

In the first phase of the study 330 questionnaires were administered to the study participants, of which 277 were returned, constituting return percentage of 83.93%. Two questionnaires were incomplete, so they were not included in the data analysis. In this way 275 questionnaires were used for data analysis.

In the same way, interviews from the participants were recorded, transliterated for thematic analysis (Ellis and Barkhuizen, 2005; Riessman, 2008). The data was coded, that is given descriptive wordings to each chunk of information in the data (Baralt, 2011; Creswell, 2012). This was followed by categorizations of codes based on similarity, related literature and scope of study. In this way, 47 categories were generated. These categories were put to various mental visualization and shared with friends for their valuable insight. At last, all these categories broke down into 4 themes.

## Data Analysis and discussion

Eleven different leisure sports activities were found common out of 28 listed activities and further choice given they can expand the list if their choice is not there. Table 4.1 explained it

Activity	Percentage always	Percentage Often	Percentage Sometime	Percentage Rarely	Percentage Never
Walking for pleasure	69	15	7	6	3
Walking and jogging	58	20	9	8	5
Running	51	19	13	10	7
Volleyball	47	23	12	19	9
Swimming	41	15	18	12	14
Basketball	39	22	10	12	17
Football	35	12	8	16	29
Gardening	32	19	10	16	23
Fishing	27	19	15	9	30
Hunting	22	17	11	19	31
Table tennis	18	12	7	26	47

The eleven listed above were more often carried out by the people living in the area. The highest percentage was of ‘walking for pleasure’ followed by ‘walking and jogging’. The least two activities performed as a part of their daily routine are ‘hunting and ‘table tennis’. However, the percentage of the activities were low in relation to other leisure activities in the group of more frequent leisure activities observed by the people of the area. Overall, their percentage of observance was still high when compared to other 28 activities listed in the questionnaire.

The second part of the questionnaire elicited the information about the above listed activities being a part of their life routine for a long time or just a recent phenomenon.

**Table. 4.2 Leisure activities before CPEC**

Item	SD	SD %	D	D %	N	N %	A	A %	SA	SA %
Frequency of activities	98	35.63	75	27.27	31	11.27	42	15.27	29	10.54
Motivation in carrying out activities	103	37.45	63	22.9	34	12.36	50	18.18	25	9.09
Parental and Family background effect on these activities	79	28.72	56	20.36	58	21.09	56	20.36	26	9.45
SES condition	12	4.36	29	10.54	47	17	70	25.45	117	42.54
Continued activities	81	29.45	62	22.54	39	14.18	47	17.09	46	16.72

Note\* SD=Strongly disagree, D= Disagree, N= Neither agree nor disagree, A=Agree, SA= Strongly agree.

The table above present responses of the study participants regarding their carrying activities even if no developmental activities would have been done. As the responses point that these activities have been recent phenomenon. As the response suggest majority of them indicate that they have not been carrying out these activities for the last five years. It suggests that before the start of projects related to CPEC, these activities were not the part of their daily routine, or they did not perform it as frequently. The same hold true for family background influence and motivation. The study participant observe that improved SES conditions has made it possible for them to carry these activities, suggesting the positive impact of CPEC related developmental projects and ensuing socioeconomic uplift of the people. Another closely related question about the possibility of carrying out these activities even without CPEC related projects, responses suggest that participants are of the view that it would have been difficult for them. It again suggests the positive impact of CPEC related projects.

The third part of the questionnaire relate with questions directly related with CPEC and ensuing facilitation regarding these activities. The table 4.3 presented below records the participants' responses.

**Table 4.3 Surge in leisure after CPEC**

Item	SD	SD %	D	D %	N	N %	A	A %	SD	SD %
Activities after CPEC	35	12.72	75	27.27	27	9.81	81	29.45	57	20.72
Motivation after CPEC	52	18.9	38	13.81	18	6.54	99	36	68	24.72
Economic uplift	8	2.9	21	7.63	31	11.27	88	32	127	46.18
Culture influence	52	18.9	37	13.45	40	14.54	88	32	58	21.09
Infrastructure and sports facilities	18	6.54	29	10.54	38	13.81	77	28	113	41.09

Note\* SD=Strongly disagree, D= Disagree, N= Neither agree nor disagree, A=Agree, SA= Strongly agree.

The response of the study participants believe that projects related to CPEC has positively affected their involvement in these activities. The highest number of agree and strongly agree point towards the positive influence that study subjects believe to have in facilitating in carrying out these activities. The highest positive response was for economic uplift. The participants believe that improved SES conditions helped them with the necessary leisure time and economic means to divert our attention to these activities. Sizable numbers of participants though disagree that CPEC provided necessary motivation and the culture exposure that they get in outsiders and foreigner coming to the city. However, still the number of participants is high, who think that it helps in making positive change I term of carrying out these activities. There is high numbers of participants who believe that surge in leisure activities is post CPEC phenomena.

For triangulation, qualitative data in the form of structural interviews were also made part of the data. Five major themes emerged from the data. These themes are discussed below.

#### 1. Economic uplift

This theme was obvious in the structural interview of the participants. Many scholars pointed out the positive correlation between economic condition and surge in the leisure sports activities.



Our 4 family members are working in different projects related to CPEC. Now we are economically quite better. Now they can afford my education expenses. They bought for me bicycle to go to my college and travel on my bicycle with my friends to far off places [Inter/4/2/6/20] Inter stands for interview, 4 number assign to participant, and 2/6/20 is the date.

The same theme permeates in the interviews of many participants. As this participant asserts the point, 'my business flourished, I sit a lot in my shop. However, I compensate my doing exercise on treadmill' [Inter/2/2/6/20]. The socioeconomic uplift with ensuing quality life ensures participation in leisure activities.

## 2. Better Infrastructure

Another theme that was also prominent relate to better infrastructure. Many participants attributed better infrastructure to surge in leisure activities like gardening. This participant has this to say, 'Now I work more in my garden because now I have access to quality seeds, fertilizer and pesticide. Earlier, travelling was a great problem'[Inter/6/3/6/20]. Another participant said that hiking has been made easy, 'Now we can walk in the natural beauty of mountainous region and return back in the evening before darkness'[Inter/3/2/6/20]. The development of infrastructure brings economic uplift and increase in the economic activities. However, better infrastructure also brings social uplift in the form of healthy leisure activities. It reduces the distance and make travelling easy for pleasure purposes.

## 3. Cultural influence

Many participants pointed towards the influence of foreigners and outsider for carrying out these activities. This theme was recurrent in the interviews of many participants. 'We did not look at things that way. Our life was just earning and eating. However, watching foreigners especially Chinese made us realize the importance of many activities that we just took for grant. Cultural influence is an inevitable phenomenon in any contact situation between two communities living far apart. The interviews data point towards many healthy aspects of influence in term of leisure activities. 'I work with my boss as a bodyguard. I escort him to ground for exercise in the evening. I also started doing it myself'[Inter/5/3/6/20]. In many advanced countries, people have made leisure activities very much a part of their daily life. Increased facilities in term of sports and creations accord them an opportunity to make good use of it. On the other hand, situation in developing country is not favorable for leisure activities. The economic boom related to CPEC would certainly bring about important change.

#### 4. Sports facilities

Increase in sports facilities across the district also resulted in the many leisure activities. People utilize these facilities in their leisure time. As this participant referred to this aspect in these words, ‘every company working here also has some sort of recreational facility, normally in the form of ground. Our kids play in the ground build by Chinese company for its employee’[Inter/4/2/6/20]. Sometime events are organized which motivate the people to engage in these activities and help to change their attitude towards these activities. One of the participants pointed towards sports gala organized by tourism department of Baluchistan with the help of Chinese company, ‘we really enjoyed, people from across the province and country participated. We saw a lot of talent at display. Such activities are need to bring forward talent for good’[Inter/1/2/6/20]. Sports and leisure are an important source to reduce anxiety and help to keep body healthy. That’s why the importance of these activities has been increasingly stressed in daily life. However, low socioeconomic condition of people and lack of facilities are hindrances in the way. The CPEC is expected to turn around the socioeconomic condition of the people.

#### **Conclusion**

This paper explores the impact of CPEC on leisure sports activities. The study utilized qualitative and quantitative data to report findings. The finding suggests that CPEC related economic activities also resulted in the increase of many leisure activities. The activities that emerged from the list as significant are walking for pleasure, walking and jogging, running, volleyball, swimming, basketball, Football, gardening, fishing, hunting and table tennis. The data indicate that surge in these activities is a recent phenomenon, coinciding with the initiating of mega projects under CPEC. The study subject responses further reinforce the findings of survey research. Better economic conditions helped them to make important changes in their life style and making leisure activities important part of their life. The better economic conditions improved people buying capacity and resulted in better gadgets for leisure sports activities. Furthermore, the data point towards surge in the leisure activities due to the facilitations and provisions in the form of sports facilities, infrastructure and economic turnaround.

Further research regarding leisure sports activities being carried out in urban and rural areas would help explain the effect of lifestyle and economic condition on leisure activities. Moreover such like study needs to be carried out on large scale, as one of the limitation of this study is being restricted to one port city of Pakistan.

**Disclaimer:**

*This article is the research results of the research project of Sichuan Leisure Sports Industry Development Research Center 2017 (Project No: XXTYCY2017A03).*

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