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## Impact of Psychosocial Factors on Quality of Life: A Case Study of End Stage Renal Disease

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### ABSTRACT

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End-stage renal disease (ESRD) occurs when the kidneys are severely impaired. In Pakistan, the prevalence of ESRD is 37.9% among the adult population (Hashmi, 2023). This case study explores how psychosocial factors significantly impact a client with ESRD, ultimately influencing her overall quality of life (QoL). The client, F.A., a 55-year-old married female, was diagnosed with ESRD due to primary hypertension and Type I diabetes. She was referred to a trainee health psychologist for psychosocial assessment following hemodialysis. She presented with both physical and psychological complaints, including fatigue due to low hemoglobin levels, muscle cramps, difficulty breathing due to myocardial infarction (MI), irritability, anger over minor issues, automatic worrying thoughts about her condition, and restlessness. An in-depth case history interview was conducted to gather information using both informal and formal assessments. Twelve case history and intervention sessions were conducted with the client. These assessments covered various psychosocial aspects such as illness perception, health locus of control, health beliefs, perceived health status, perception of the doctor-patient relationship, perception of healthcare services, personality/life orientation, adherence to

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dietary, fluid, and medication regimens, and QoL. Personality was assessed using the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) developed by Gosling et al. (2003), and QoL was measured using the Ferrans and Powers Quality of Life Index, Generic Version-III (1995). The client scored below average on QoL as indicated by formal assessments. She appeared to be non-adherent to dietary habits, prescribed medications, and the treatment for HCV and MI. Furthermore, she exhibited negative illness perceptions, poor health status, maladaptive health beliefs, a spiritual health locus of control, and dissatisfaction with the doctor-patient relationship. The intervention plan included psychoeducation, cost-benefit analysis, coping statements, role-playing techniques, religious coping strategies for anger management, attention strategy techniques, a baseline chart for monitoring thoughts, and the ABC model of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). The intervention plan resulted in significant improvements in addressing the psychosocial issues targeted during the sessions.

**Keywords:** End Stage Renal Disease, Psychosocial factors, Quality of Life

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## Introduction

The kidney is an important organ that filters waste from the blood, helps to maintain homeostasis, and controls many other body processes. Humans typically have two bean-shaped kidneys located below the rib cage on either side of the spine. About 150 grams and 10 to 12 cm in length constitute each kidney (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, 2018). Maintaining kidney health is crucial, as reduced kidney function can lead to serious health complications (Centres for Disease Control & Prevention, 2022). The final stage of chronic kidney disease (CKD) is kidney failure, sometimes referred to as end stage renal disease (ESRD). According to Carroll and Laurence (2006), kidney failure indicates that the kidneys have stopped functioning adequately to support life without dialysis or a kidney transplant.

## Prevalence & Causes of ESRD

The prevalence of ESRD is a significant global health concern. The incidence of ESRD is increasing, with estimates suggesting that around 50 patients per million population are maintained on dialysis (International Society of Nephrology, 2021). In Pakistan, the prevalence of ESRD is 37.9%

of the adult population overall, with rural and urban prevalence rate respectively of 16.4% and 21.5%. 33% of Pakistanis over the age of 45 have hypertension. According to a World Health Organization report, CKD and ESRD account for 42% of all fatalities in Pakistan (Zhang & Rothenbacher, 2008).

Worldwide, CKD affects between 8% to 16% of the population; nevertheless, both physicians and patients commonly misdiagnose the condition (Coresh et al., 2007). It is defined as having a kidney damage indicator (hematuria, anatomical anomalies like polycystic or dysplastic kidneys) that lasts longer than three months, or a glomerular filtration rate (GFR) of less than 60 mL/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup> and albuminuria of at least 30 mg per 24 hours (Kidney Disease, 2013).

CKD is more prevalent in low- and middle-income countries than in high-income nations due to factors such as limited healthcare access and environmental exposures (Mills et al., 2015). While glomerulonephritis, infections, and environmental exposures (e.g., air pollution, air pollution, herbal medicines, and pesticides) are common in Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and many developing nations, diabetes and hypertension are the most common causes of CKD globally (Jha et al., 2013).

Serum chemical profiles, routine screening, and urine studies are the usual means of detecting CKD. It may also be found by accident. Less frequently, people may experience symptoms such as foamy urine, which is an indication of albuminuria, reduced urine flow, nocturia, or extensive hematuria. If a patient's CKD is advanced, they may have dyspnea, pruritus, weariness, poor appetite, nausea, vomiting, metallic taste, and changes in their mental state (Skorecki et al., 2016).

Medical practitioners should inquire about any additional symptoms that may indicate a urinary obstruction (urine hesitancy, urgency, or frequency) or systemic cause (hemostasis, rash, lymphadenopathy, hearing loss, neuropathy) when evaluating a patient with a confirmed or suspected case of CKD. A patient's history of nephrolithiasis or recurrent UTIs, the presence of comorbidities (such as diabetes, hypertension, autoimmune disease, or chronic infections), a family history of kidney disease, and, if available, other known genetic risk factors like sickle cell trait should also be considered when evaluating a patient for kidney disease (Naik et al., 2014). Furthermore, patients should be assessed for possible nephrotoxins from the past, including chemotherapy, antibiotic treatments, phosphate-based bowel preparations, herbal remedies (such as aristolochic acid), non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), and bowel preparations.

The major causes of CKD are Hypertension, Diabetes, Non-Steroids Anti Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs), Acute Kidney Injury and Nephrolithiasis

(Hallan & Orth, 2010). Key risk factors for development and progression of CKD include Diabetes, Hypertension, and older age. Diabetes causes nearly 45% of incident kidney failure, and hypertension is responsible for another 20% (Kurella et al., 2005). Biological factors such as obesity, low birth weight and gender are also risk factors of CKD (Hippisley-Cox & Coupland, 2010). Furthermore, unhealthy life style such as smoking, intake of alcohol, lack of physical activity and poor diet are also significant contributing factors in the progression of CKD to ESRD (Gelber et al., 2005).

### **Psychosocial Impact of ESRD**

Chronic ESRD patients require artificial excretion techniques to stay healthy. Patients with ESRD are therefore required to follow a range of dietary, lifestyle, and hydration restrictions in order to manage their illness. Maintaining protein, iron, and vitamin levels requires patients to do a balancing act that significantly affects their social functioning. According to Christiansen and Ehlers (2002) these restrictions may have an impact on how patients perceive their health and sense of personal control, which may lead to feelings of worry and melancholy as well as make it more difficult for them to manage and adjust.

Research indicates that psychological factors such as anger, hostility, and stress may influence the progression of CKD to ESRD (Fremont & Bird, 2000). CKD draws heavily on patient's daily functioning. The disease, treatment, and related pressures significantly impact patients' physical and emotional well-being, as well as their social functioning, ultimately reducing QoL (Gelber et al., 2005).

Kimmel et al. (1998) looked at how behavioral compliance and survival in urban hemodialysis patients were affected by psychosocial factors. Reduced treatment adherence has been associated with depression. It is widely acknowledged that depression is a prevalent psychological issue among individuals receiving hemodialysis. Compared to people with other chronic ailments, the rate of psychological problems was much greater in the ESRD patient population.

According to Chilcot et al. (2010) compared to the 16% lifetime prevalence of depression in the general population, 20 to 30% of ESRD patients experience substantial depressive symptoms. Long-term disorders can be made more difficult by depression, which may eventually make them more treatment-resistant. According to research, depressed people are three times more prone than non-depressed patients to disregard treatment suggestions (DiMatteo et al., 2000). Biochemical imbalance, physiological abnormalities, neurological disorders, cognitive decline, and sexual dysfunction are additional stressors linked to ESRD. Any of these could be involved in depression.

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## **Review of Literature**

As dialysis requires patients to make modifications to their daily routines and lifestyles for themselves and their families, it has a substantial impact on the patient's overall quality of life (QoL). Their social and economic standing, interpersonal relationships, physical well-being, and functional status are all significantly impacted at the same time (Theofilou, 2011).

The QoL of patients with ESRD is greatly influenced by a variety of psychosocial consequences. These may include coping strategies, social relationships, emotional well-being, and general mental health of patients receiving ESRD treatment. ESRD patients' QoL is impacted by a variety of psychosocial factors, which are examined in this review of the literature using data from numerous research and clinical observations.

Research indicates that depression is quite common among ESRD patients, with rates in dialysis populations ranging from 20% to 30%. Because of the chronic nature of the condition and the stress that comes with continuing treatment, anxiety disorders are also rather common. These psychological disorders have the potential to significantly reduce QoL by impacting patients' motivation, treatment compliance, and general mental health (Palmer et al., 2013).

Because of the significant stress that comes with having ESRD, patients need to develop healthy coping strategies. While maladaptive coping mechanisms such as avoidance and denial are linked to worse outcomes, adaptive coping mechanisms including asking for social assistance and overcoming problems are linked to a greater QoL (Cukor et al., 2008). The physical symptoms of ESRD and dialysis might change a person's perception about their body and themselves. According to Weisbord et al (2005) individuals frequently experience a sense of loss and lowered self-worth, which has an adverse effect on their psychological health and social relationships.

For individuals with ESRD, having social support from friends, family, and medical professionals is essential. Robust social networks can mitigate the adverse consequences of the illness by offering psychological, educational, and practical assistance that improves QoL (Griva et al., 2002). On the other hand, because dialysis treatments are challenging and ESRD patients have limited social support, many of them face social isolation. As a result of this isolation, QoL may be further reduced by anxiety and sadness (Hedayati et al., 2009). The time and physical constraints of treatment for ESRD may lead to less opportunities for employment. Patients' mental health and QoL are adversely affected by financial instability, which also increases stress (Kutner et al., 2005). According to a qualitative study by Gregory et al (2001) patients with ESRD thought they had a new sense of self. The patients' altered

emotional and psychological states suggested that they were becoming aware of their new situation, the uncertainty of their future, the demands of their disease, and their reliance on medical professionals, machines, and medication.

ESRD patients can improve their QoL by managing their anxiety and sadness with the aid of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and other therapeutic techniques. Platforms for exchanging experiences and coping mechanisms are offered by counselling services and support groups. Patients might feel more empowered by learning about their conditions and participating in their care plans, which can enhance psychosocial outcomes and treatment adherence (Devins et al., 2003). Better QoL can be achieved by addressing the full needs of ESRD patients through models that integrate medical and psychological treatment. In order to provide comprehensive treatment, these models place a strong emphasis on provider collaboration (Jablonski, 2007).

### **Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study was to provide a comprehensive understanding of how kidney failure affects not only physical health of the patients, but also influence their psychosocial functioning that ultimately affect overall quality of life (QoL).

### **Method**

This case study focuses on a single patient diagnosed with end-stage renal disease (ESRD), undergoing dialysis treatment, and experiencing notable psychosocial challenges. Case history interviews were conducted to explore the different psychosocial aspects and overall QoL. Observations of patient-clinician interactions were also recorded to assess the healthcare relationship. 12 sessions has been conducted with client for the purpose of psychological intervention. All ethical considerations were kept in mind while dealing with patient. Informed consent was obtained. Privacy, confidentiality and client's autonomy was maintained.

### **Case Report**

The Client F.A, was 55 years old married female. She was educated till graduation and was elder among 4 siblings; 3 sisters and 1 brother, lived in nuclear family system with her husband and son. She was referred to trainee health psychologist for psychological assessment as the consequences of Hemodialysis. The Client was presented with the physical complaints as she felt fatigue due to low Hb level (8.6 grams per deciliter), muscles cramps after Hemodialysis, and difficulty in breathing due to Myocardial Infarction (MI). Further she reported psychological complaints such as irritability, anger over little matters, automatic worrying thoughts regarding her condition and restlessness. The client was diagnosed with CKD at the age of 52 due to

primary hypertension and Type I diabetes, conditions for which she had a genetic predisposition. She used to feel severe pain in both kidneys but not paid attention due to lack of knowledge or education and showed non-adherence towards medication of Primary Hypertension and Type-I Diabetes. One day, client's urine was not passed adequately so her family took her to the general practitioner where she was diagnosed with CKD through Ultrasound report and prescribed medication course of 7 to 8 months. Her condition did not improve with medication, and she experienced difficulty breathing. In 2016 she suddenly felt pain in left arm and lost her senses.

Her family took her into Cardiology Hospital where doctors diagnosed her with MI as her heart rate was not stable due to narrow arteries (atherosclerosis) and CKD. They recommend Angiography or Bypass but client refused for doing any type of surgery because she was afraid of it. After using medication client's condition got worse than before. Her face and ankles were swelled. She felt excessive pain in bladder and kidneys. Her family took her into emergency ward to Shaikh Zayd Hospital where doctors diagnosed ESRD through EGFr (Estimated Glomerular Filtration rate) test and asked for immediate Hemodialysis as her both kidneys were not filtered waste products adequately. In September, 2016 her Hemodialysis was started thrice in a week base till now. After the diagnosis of ESRD she was also diagnosed with HCV and not taking any treatment at the time of interview.

### **Exploration of Targeted Areas**

After taking detailed medical information, case history interview was conducted as informal assessment to probe the psychosocial targeted areas of the client for psychological intervention such as illness perception, health locus of control, health beliefs, perceived health status, perception of doctor-patient relationship, perception of health care services, personality/life orientation, adherence (dietary, fluid and medication), and QoL. Formal assessment was also done using Ferrans and Powers Quality of Life Index Generic Version-III (1995) and Ten Item Personality Inventory (Gosling et al., 2003).

Informal assessment revealed that she seemed to be non-adherent towards suggested dietary habits, prescribed medication and treatment of HCV or MI. Furthermore, she seemed to have negative illness perceptions, poor health status, maladaptive health beliefs, spiritual health locus of control and dissatisfied doctor-patient relationship. She found below average on QoL depicted by Ferrans and Powers Quality of Life Index Generic Version-III (1995) which showed that different psychosocial factors including negative illness perceptions, poor health status, maladaptive health beliefs, non-satisfactory patient physician relationship, pessimistic life orientation, non-adherent towards medication and dietary patterns along with spiritual locus of

control altogether caused significant impact on her overall QoL that adversely affect her physical and mental state. Moreover, client obtained high scores on introvert personality trait suggesting that people with introvert personality trait are likely to be in denial phase and did not accept or understand the severity of their chronic conditions (Pugi et al., 2022). In this case, patient reported that her illness was directly controlled by Allah and she cannot do anything.

### **Intervention Protocol**

Insight into the importance of adhering to dietary habits, medications, and treatment for HCV and MI was developed using a cost-benefit analysis technique based on cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). Further, insight was developed through psycho-education about the actual causal factors of ESRD as client seemed to have poor insight about it. Role playing technique was used for dissatisfied doctor-patient relationship. Coping statements were given to the client to improve the self-efficacy of client relevant to her poor health status. Psycho-education was given to the client regarding financial constraints which causing distress into the client. Counseling was given to her by maximizing the positive aspects of her life for her pessimistic life orientation. Baseline chart was provided to the client for examining the nature, intensity and frequency of her automatic worrying thoughts and deal with ABC model of CBT. Religious coping for anger management was provided as it is an important strategy that can be used to cope with stressful situations (Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005). Positive religious coping is thought to be associated with benefits in psychosocial adjustment (Pargament, 2001). Additionally, attention strategy techniques based on CBT were used to address the client's concerns about anger.

### **Discussion**

The psychosocial factors influencing the overall QoL in patients with ESRD are multifaceted and significantly impact the well-being of these individuals. This discussion integrates the findings from various studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of how psychological, social, and economic factors interplay to affect QoL in ESRD patients. Previous literature showed that negative illness perception, maladaptive health belief, poor health status, spiritual health locus of control, dissatisfied doctor-patient relationship, and non-adherence towards medication and dietary habits are commonly found in patients with ESRD which may result poor perception of QoL (Romero et al., 2013).

The presence of depression and anxiety among ESRD patients is a critical concern. Studies indicate that these conditions are not only common but also severely debilitating, affecting patients' motivation and adherence to treatment regimens. The chronic and demanding nature of ESRD treatments, such as dialysis, contributes to these psychological burdens. Effective

management of depression and anxiety through interventions such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) can lead to improved QoL. The relationship between psychological well-being and QoL underscores the need for routine mental health screening and intervention in ESRD care (Jablonski, 2007).

Genetic predispositions and automatic worrying thoughts causing distress and anger are also the contributing factors (Fremont & Bird, 2000). Psychological or physical stress can contribute to the onset of diabetes and hypertension, impairing kidney function and increasing vulnerability to kidney diseases (Hippisley-Cox & Coupland, 2010). ESRD patients encounter considerable stress, necessitating effective coping mechanisms. Using adaptive coping mechanisms like problem-solving and reaching out to others for help is linked to improved psychological outcomes and a better quality of life.

In contrast, maladaptive strategies, including denial and avoidance, exacerbate stress and diminish QoL. Interventions aimed at improving coping skills can empower patients to manage their condition more effectively, thereby improving their overall QoL. Studies indicate that ESRD has a high comorbidity with HCV and cardiovascular disease (CVD) (Hamilton & Fagot, 2000).

HCV infection is notably prevalent in ESRD patients, particularly those undergoing hemodialysis. Studies suggest that the cases of HCV in dialysis patients range from 5% to 60%, depending on geographic region and dialysis practices. HCV infection in ESRD patients is related to increase liver-related morbidity and death rates, poor QoL and higher healthcare costs. The risk of HCV transmission in dialysis units remains a significant concern despite advancements in infection control practices (Nguyen et al., 2019).

Similarly, the incidence of CVD in this population is relatively higher compared to the general population, with studies indicating that over 50% of ESRD patients have some form of CVD (Go et al., 2004). The high rates of traditional risk factors such as hypertension, diabetes, and dyslipidemia, along with non-traditional factors like chronic inflammation and oxidative stress, contribute to this elevated risk. All of these literature findings are in line with the above mentioned case study.

## **Conclusion**

The patient's lack of good communication with the doctor, pessimistic outlook on life, maladaptive health beliefs, and negative impression of sickness, poor health state, and high medication costs were discussed as contributing factors to the patient's poor QoL and non-adherence. This case study discovered that the ABC model, cost-benefit analysis, and other previously discussed strategies were useful for controlling these psychosocial

components, in that order. Psycho-education proved beneficial in addressing her discontent with the doctor-patient dynamic. Furthermore, she was able to change her negative life orientation by emphasizing the positive aspects of her existence.

It is concluded that psychosocial factors influencing QoL in ESRD patients are multifaceted, encompassing psychological, social, and economic dimensions. Addressing these factors through targeted interventions and support systems is crucial for enhancing the QoL of ESRD patients. Future researches should focus on developing and evaluating comprehensive care models that integrate psychosocial support with medical treatment.

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## Relationship Between Communication Skills and Classroom Management Skills of Elementary School Teachers

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This study explores the relationship between communication skills and classroom management skills of elementary school teachers. It aims to evaluate the proficiency of teachers in communication, assess their classroom management abilities, and identify the correlation between these two critical skill sets. The study was conducted among female teachers of grades one to five in Rawalpindi's urban area, using a quantitative research design. A total of 93 teachers from government girls' elementary schools were selected through random sampling. Data was collected via a structured five-point Likert scale questionnaire, measuring dimensions of communication skills (verbal, non-verbal, written, visual) and classroom management skills (time, discipline, instructional, resource management). Data analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between communication skills and effective classroom management. Findings highlighted that the teachers with strong communication skills, particularly in writing and verbal communication, exhibited better classroom management. Conversely, deficiencies in specific communication domains negatively impacted instructional management. Based on these results, the study underscores the importance of teacher training programs focused on enhancing communication and classroom management skills in school teachers.

**Keywords:** communication skills, classroom management skills, primary school teachers

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## **Introduction**

Reading, writing, speaking, listening and both verbal and nonverbal communication are among the many skills required for effective communication. A teacher needs to be very knowledgeable in each of these areas in order to help students learn and make it easy to understand. Teaching requires effective communication, especially when it comes to running the classroom and interacting with the students. To motivate students to learn, a teacher needs to be a skilled communicator (Kavrayıcı, 2020).

Sustaining classroom order, enhancing the learning process, and achieving satisfactory outcomes all depend on effective communication. Talebi Khansari (2020) asserts that teachers are in charge of overseeing the classroom. Teacher education remains one of Pakistan's most pressing issues. This has long been criticized by stakeholders and special interest groups. Researchers are concentrating on it. They asserted that the Pakistani government is doing a dismal job of preparing teachers and that teacher training programmes are out of step with school contexts, curricula, sufficient funding, and universal admission requirements for teacher education programmes. Most crucially, teacher education programmes do not effectively bridge the theory-practice gap, despite their best efforts to highlight theory and content (Khan et al., 2020).

Effective communication is crucial to the way that education is delivered. Teaching students without the ability to communicate is nonsensical. A teacher who is proficient in communication may impart knowledge to pupils with ease and help them understand it better. In reality, teachers use their abilities to control the classroom and create a better learning environment (Demir & Sad, 2021). The management of the class is just as important as how well-kept and pleasant the classroom is. In a setting that is supportive, students perform better. The classroom setting is especially crucial for learning. Positive classroom environments where teachers show their students love, care, affection, sincerity, commitment, responsibility, and dedication are conducive to effective learning. Thus, teachers' ability to effectively communicate and manage the classroom both of which are closely tied to their professional growth and training is necessary to create a healthy learning environment (Kaya & Selvitopu, 2019).

The techniques and approaches teachers employ to sustain a suitable learning environment are referred to as classroom management. The classroom serves as a setting where educators supply instructional materials and resources, including time, space, and motivational elements, to support students' learning (Francis & Oluwatoyin, 2019). Based on

studies, it is widely acknowledged that effective classroom management is an essential aspect of teaching. Studies indicate that this is one of the most important teaching competencies (Agbaria, 2021). The sort of education and discipline in schools and classrooms is determined by the opinions and beliefs of teachers regarding the nature of teaching, learning, and students (Meriç, 2023).

### **Problem Statement**

Teachers, Communication skills and classroom management skills play a key role at the elementary level. The elementary level is the foundation of a child's life, where a student's cognitive and mental development occurs and he needs to learn behaviors as well as the content. At the elementary level, Students' behavioral problems increase because of their age and it is quite difficult for teachers to manage the classroom at this level. Moreover, teachers have subject matter knowledge, but they are unable to deliver the lesson due to a lack of communication and classroom management skills. Teachers' communication skills and classroom management skills are absolutely essential in the learning of students and to managing the classroom environment. This is a major issue in primary institutions, where the teaching at that level makes it quite difficult for teachers to manage the classroom environment. Therefore, this study was intended to identify the relationship between the communication skills of teachers and their classroom management skills at elementary level

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were:

1. To determine the level of teachers' communication skills in a class
2. To investigate the classroom management skills of teachers
3. To identify the relationship between the communication skills of teachers and their classroom management skills

### **Hypotheses**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between time management and discipline management.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between writing skills and time management.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between writing skills and instructional management.

**H<sub>04</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between verbal skills and time management.

**H<sub>05</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between verbal skills and

discipline management. **H<sub>06</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between

verbal skills and instructional management. **H<sub>07</sub>:** There is no significant

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relationship between nonverbal skills and discipline management. **H<sub>08</sub>**:

There is no significant relationship between nonverbal skills and time management.

**H<sub>09</sub>**: There is no significant relationship between nonverbal skills and instructional management.

**H<sub>010</sub>**: There is no significant relationship between visual skills and discipline management.

**H<sub>011</sub>**: There is no significant relationship between visual skills and time management.

**H<sub>012</sub>**: There is no significant relationship between visual skills and instructional management.

**H<sub>013</sub>**: There is no significant relationship between communication skills and classroom management skills.

All occupations require strong communication abilities, but teaching and learning are especially dependent on effective communication. It is impossible for teachers to teach pupils without the ability to communicate effectively. Teachers have the capacity to help pupils grow, and this can only happen through good communication skills (Duță, 2015).

### **Communication Skills**

Communication is described as the process through which thoughts, feelings, facts, attitudes, and views are passed from one individual to another (Duță, 2015). Communication skills can be defined as the capacity to communicate with people in a suitable and productive manner (Chen & Starosta, 1996). In terms of the interactions between teachers and students, communication is the foundation of the teaching profession—a talent that is essential for all vocations (Duță, 2015). In the classroom, communication happens on a daily basis. Since communication is essential to both teaching and academics, teachers should engage with their students on a daily basis. Since effective communication is essential for academic success, teachers should possess strong communication skills. Likewise, poor communication skills on the part of the teacher will result in pupil failure. The ability of teachers to communicate with students is crucial to their academic performance. A teacher's ability to communicate effectively in the classroom has a direct impact on students' progress (Muste, 2016).

The only criteria by which we may assess a teacher's competency while discussing their competencies are their training and experience. These are not going to be adequate. It is impossible to communicate without communication skills (Khasawneh, 2021). An effective communicator makes for a competent teacher. The first thing we should

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consider when searching for a qualified instructor is their ability to communicate well. This ought to come first in importance. A teacher and an educational system are closely intertwined. Its quality will depend on its instructors. Achieving policies that increase teacher effectiveness remains a struggle. A synthesis of knowledge and practical skills is required to carry out a professional function in a certain domain (Ibrahim et al., 2019).

Proficiency in communicating is essential for advancing academic success and student development. The only way for teachers to develop a good rapport with pupils is through effective communication. According to Khan et al. (2017), the only method of student engagement that results in academic success is effective communication. Numerous research works have emphasized the significance of proficient communication abilities in the field of education. After conducting study, Muste (2016) concluded that good teacher-student connections help students achieve academically. Effective communication is crucial for primary school teachers, according to Khasawneh (2021). Setting clear objectives and goals for kids requires effective communication skills as well. Numerous research studies have been conducted to investigate various approaches that might be employed to improve communication. Proficiency in communicating is crucial for advancing academic success and learning among students. Teachers and students cannot develop a strong relationship unless they communicate well. The only method of involving students that results in academic success is effective communication (Khan et al., 2017). Numerous studies have been conducted that emphasize the value of good communication skills in the classroom. According to Muste's (2016) research, academic attainment is enhanced by positive teacher- student connections. According to Khasawneh (2021), elementary school teachers must be very proficient communicators. To clearly define objectives and goals for pupils, effective communication skills are also essential. There is numerous research investigating various approaches to improve communication.

In essence, communication skills are the art of conveying concepts and meanings via symbols and signals. It can be characterized as the reciprocal communication between two or more individuals. According to Garg (2017), communication skills are activities. In actuality, communication skills are the ability to convey ideas through signs, symbols, gestures, motions, words, photos, figures, graphs, and other media. As per the report from Corporate Finance Institute (2015), effective communication skills are essential tools that we employ in our daily lives. These abilities are necessary in both the personal and professional spheres.

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Transferring ideas and meanings via writing, voice, spoken word, and nonverbal cues is the definition of communication skills. According to Baruch et al. (2015), there is a good rapport between educators and learners. Teachers' inadequate interaction with students. These abilities are crucial in both the personal and professional spheres. Transferring ideas and meanings through writing, voice, spoken word, and nonverbal cues is the definition of communication skills. Teachers and students have a beneficial relationship inadequate teacher-student communication

Diverse modes of communication exist. Language is one of the most vital forms of communication. Verbal communication is considered to be one of the most significant forms of communication. A greater amount of nonverbal communication is ignored. Based on the medium, communication was separated into verbal and nonverbal categories. For the teaching and learning process to be fully understood, both verbal and nonverbal communication are crucial. The transfer of knowledge is significantly more dependent on verbal communication (Bjekić et al., 2020). According to Chaudhry and Arif (2012), nonverbal communication has a greater influence on students' hearts and minds than verbal communication does. There are various forms of communication. Linguistic communication is among the most vital forms of communication. Verbal communication is one of the most crucial forms of communication when it comes to communication. A greater degree of neglect is applied to nonverbal communication. Based on the medium, communication was classified as either verbal or nonverbal. For students to fully comprehend the material being taught during the teaching and learning process, both verbal and nonverbal communication are crucial. In order to impart knowledge, verbal communication is far more important. Nonverbal communication has a greater influence on students' hearts and minds than verbal communication (McDuffie, 2021).

A teacher's ability to effectively communicate with students has a direct bearing on both the students' academic progress and the teacher-student dynamic (Nediger, 2020). Nonverbal communication is another crucial area of communication skills. Facial expressions and body language are examples of nonverbal communication. Effective teaching also involves nonverbal communication. Non-verbal communication is crucial for fostering trust between educators and students. Effective communication is essentially a teacher's competence (Doyle, 2017). The teacher uses these skills to communicate with the student in a different way. The capacity of a teacher to transmit information, emotions, and ideas to two or more people is known as communication skill. This demonstrates the evident connection between communication and teaching (Ruswandi

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& Arief, 2024).

### **Classroom Management**

Classroom management refers to the "skills and strategies used by the teachers to keep students organised, focused, and academically productive during a class." The first and most crucial step in management is planning. To attain the best results, planning is crucial when executing certain tasks. The methods or techniques that help teachers and students focus on their education are what constitute effective classroom management. To help students achieve their learning objectives, teachers should concentrate on classroom management techniques. Because of the age of the kids, teaching at the primary level is challenging. It takes time for teachers to gain the necessary classroom management skills. As a representative of society, teachers have an obligation to develop classroom management techniques in order to meet expectations as role models (Wong & Wong, 2018).

Students' adherence to and maintenance of the classroom rules are the responsibility of the teachers. Teachers employ the organizing component to help them accomplish the necessary goals. Essential components of the classroom are the seating arrangements and furniture. It is the most effective method of interacting with various class members. Effective learning can only be facilitated in this manner. The teacher-centered approach is the only way for teachers to maintain classroom control. They can manage the misbehavior of the pupil by employing this strategy. Only a teacher-centered approach is appropriate for elementary education. Teachers employ controlling as a management strategy to reach their highest objectives. By diverting one another's attention, students in the rear rows cause disruptions in the classroom. Additionally, they divert the teacher (Wikaningrum & Yuniawan, 2018). There are various facets to classroom administration. These include the management of the physical environment, the management of the teaching process, the management of time, and the management of successful management. The arrangement of the seats is crucial for maintaining the physical environment. It can be set out in columns and rows for various uses. Before entering the classroom, a competent teacher needs to have a plan in place. An effective teacher needs to be familiar with the fundamentals of organizing what to teach and when (Aydin & Karabay, 2020).

Lesson plans, or sequences of activities, are essential for any competent teacher. Teachers struggle to fit everything within the allotted time between creating lesson plans, conducting assessments, and instructing students. The idea that classroom management is just about discipline is merely a myth. This notion is completely incorrect. Good

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teachers set up their classrooms so that most behavioural problems are resolved.

Thus, learning management, classroom management, and student management are only a few of the many factors that go into instructional management. The caliber of learning outcomes in each learning session is determined by the teacher's proficiency in these areas. Year after year, a teacher's ability to manage a diverse group of students is put to the test. These difficulties are discussed in meetings or during training sessions, and the lessons discovered are incorporated into the range of instructional management abilities that teachers possess. In an effort to advance in their careers, some educators would get graduate degrees. The research suggests that teachers employ proactive, reactive, or supportive tactics to promote classroom management and discourage misbehavior. These tactics include verbally instructing students, averting a child's attention by lowering to eye level, providing hands-on assistance, and others, there are a number of strategies for establishing and enforcing clear and understandable rules, talking supportively, explaining the consequences of behaviour, offering choices, sending time-outs, and so on (Shanshan, 2024).

According to research, it is extremely difficult to eliminate every problematic situation in the classroom using a single classroom management model. As a result, teachers must select and implement a variety of models, customizing the ones that best fit their needs. In terms of classroom management tactics, instructors can be effective if they foster a friendly environment and prioritize preventive and supportive measures that support children in meeting their emotional needs and developing self-regulation abilities (Gulanes et al., 2022). It is well recognized that encouraging learning settings in the classroom improve the rapport between students and teachers and lessen behavioral issues (Praprom et al., 2022). It is also emphasized that educators pay attention to avoid favoring punishing in terms of classroom management tactics, instructors can be effective if they foster a friendly environment and prioritize preventive and supportive measures that support children in meeting their emotional needs and developing self-regulation abilities. It is well recognized that encouraging learning settings in the classroom improves the rapport between students and teachers and lessens behavioral issues (Khokhar et al., 2023).

Gaining more knowledge about how to deal with misbehavior from students would help teachers spend less time dealing with behavioural issues and more time on educational activities and building strong teacher-student relationships. Thus, by deterring misbehavior, the time allotted for teaching is spent more wisely and would boost children's achievement in

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school. The importance of providing teachers with training to enhance their knowledge and abilities in classroom management has also been highlighted in other studies (Chen & Lu, 2022).

One cannot refer to discipline as punishment. Knowing students' attitudes is what discipline means from an educational perspective. These attitudes should alert educators to situations in which an attitude is deemed harmful, such as when it impedes students' ability to learn. Children's behaviours are influenced by various factors, including their age, sex, family dynamics, ability, and economic background. Regarding the teachers, a variety of factors influence their behaviour, including the teachers' personalities, pedagogical approaches, and enforcement of rules (Valente et al., 2019).

The efficacy of instructors has been the subject of classroom management research in the 2000s, with a focus on the characteristics of highly trained teachers. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 brought forth standards for all facets of education, including classroom management, which led to the evolution of accountability. Accountability in the context of classroom management encompasses activities including lesson planning, differentiation, and assignment supervision. In addition to overseeing student conduct, the teacher's role as the classroom manager includes academic management. Highly effective instruction has a direct impact on classroom behaviour issues, although it does not completely eradicate them. Specifically, disruptive behaviours in the classroom are reduced when a teacher provides excellent education (Ahmed, 2020). It is critical to acknowledge that effective classroom management is a prerequisite for excellent student accomplishment (Cho et al., 2020).

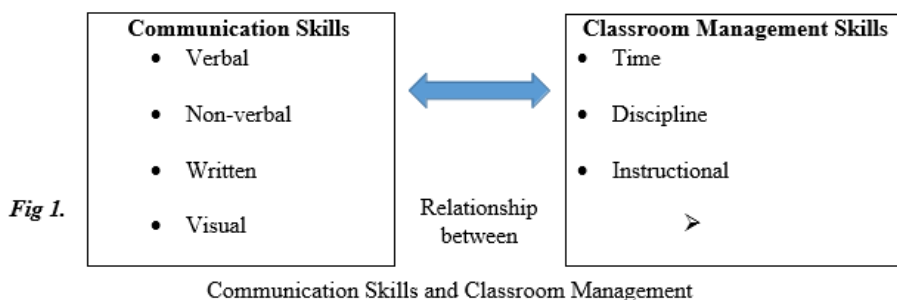
### **Relationship of Communication Skills and Classroom Management**

The literature describes the pivotal role of communication and classroom management skills in fostering effective teaching and student success. A classroom is a setting where several things happen at once and teacher needs to consider both managing the classroom and imparting knowledge. In essence, good classroom management is essential to successful instruction. Teachers' proficiency in verbal and nonverbal communication, active listening, and written skills not only enhances teacher-student relationships but also contributes significantly to students' academic performance. In a classroom setting, a child's main interaction is with the teacher. Permanent traces are left by the initial encounter. A teacher ought to serve as an example for the kids. In order to facilitate effective teaching and learning, teachers should give students the chance to develop meaningful relationships. Thus, for a safe, tranquil, and encouraging learning atmosphere during this phase, instructors' classroom

management is crucial. To satisfy students' requests, teachers need to employ a variety of classroom management techniques. Research demonstrates that teachers employ a variety of techniques, including vocal instruction and maintaining eye level, to ensure efficient classroom control (Ergin, 2019).

Effective communication helps clarify misconceptions and establish clear goals, creating a positive learning environment. Simultaneously, classroom management techniques, such as proactive planning, time management, and the use of teacher-centered approaches, are essential for maintaining discipline and promoting productive classroom interactions. A teacher must have highly developed communication skills to call them professionals. A teacher must have highly developed oral and written communication skills to communicate with the pupils. Communication skills are important in this aspect that she communicates with the students efficiently (Khan et al., 2017). In this respect, a teacher's ability to communicate effectively is directly related to the excellence in instruction. Research highlights that fostering supportive, structured environments and prioritizing preventive measures over punitive strategies are critical for addressing behavioral issues and encouraging student engagement. Ultimately, teachers' communication and management skills are fundamental in achieving educational objectives, with ongoing professional development necessary to equip educators with the tools to navigate diverse classroom challenges effectively.

### Conceptual Framework of the Study



### Research Methodology

Survey research design was employed in this study to find the relationship between communication skills and classroom management of elementary school teachers.

### Population and Sample of the Study

The population of this study consisted of 129 female teachers

teaching in 15 governments girls' elementary schools situated in Rawalpindi urban area. A sample of 93 female teachers was selected as a sample of the study by using the simple random sampling technique.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

For checking Communication Skills a structured, a close ended questionnaire, based on five- point Likert scale (always, often, sometime, rarely, never) with total 23 items was developed. The indicators used for communication skills were written, visual, verbal and non-verbal.

Classroom Management Scale was a structured, close-ended five-point Likert scale (sometimes, rarely, quite often, most often, never) with total 18 items, to figure out the classroom management skills of teachers. The indicators of classroom management skills were time management, discipline, instructional and resources management.

### **Validity of the Instruments**

The validity of data collection instruments was determined by expert opinions and pilot testing. Pilot testing was conducted to test the clearness of the instructions, the effectiveness of the questions asked in the instrument, precision and clarity of the instruments for the responses. After the validity of the instrument the researcher conducted the pilot test. For pilot testing 10 female teachers were taken from population. The developed questionnaire was sent to the subject experts and modified according to their suggestions.

### **Reliability of the Instruments**

The Cronbach's alpha test was used to determine the reliability of the data collection instruments.

**Table 1**

*Reliability of the Communication Skills Scale*

Communication skills	Reliability Score
Writing Skill	0.836
Verbal	0.767
Non-Verbal	0.776
Visual	0.872

Range of Mean Values	Remarks
1.00-1.50	Very low
1.51-2.50	Low
2.51-3.50	Moderate
3.51-4.50	High
4.51-5.00	Very high

**Table 2**

*Reliability for the Classroom Management Skills Scale*

Classroom Management Skills	Reliability Score
Discipline Management	0.896
Time Management	0.793
Instruction Management	0.772

**Data Analysis and Results**

The data were analyzed through mean scores and percentages with SPSS 22.0 by applying Pearson's correlation.

**Table 3**

*Mean Values according to Range of Score*

The table 3 shows mean value of range score of teachers' communication skills and classroom management skills. Minimum score is (1.00) and maximum score is (5.00), values between ranges score to 1.00 to 1.50 shows very low score, values between 1.51 to 2.50 show low level, values between 2.51 to 3.50 show moderate level, value between 3.51 to 4.50 show high level, value between 4.51 to 5.00 show very high level.

**Table 4**

*Mean Score of Teachers' Communication Skills*

Teachers' Communication Skills	Mean Scores
Writing Skill	3.1
Verbal communication skill	2.0
Non-verbal communication skill	2.67

Visual skill	3.0
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Table 4 shows that mean score of teachers' writing skill is at moderate level 3.1, mean score of teachers' verbal communication skill is 2.0, mean score of teachers' nonverbal communication skill is 2.67 and mean score of teachers' visual skill is 3.0 teachers' writing skill have the highest mean score 3.1 which shows that teachers are highly involve in writing communication skills. The lowest score is 2.0,, which shows that teachers are less involve in nonverbal communication skills.

**Table 5**

*Mean Scores of Classroom Management Skills of Elementary Teachers*

Classroom Management Skills	Mean Scores
Discipline management	2.41
Time Management	2.5
Instructional Management	3.3

Table 5 shows mean score of classroom management skills of elementary teachers. Mean score of discipline management is 2.41, mean score of time management is 2.5 and mean score of instructional management is 3.3. Instructional management has the highest mean score 3.3.

**Table 6**

*Relationship between Writing Skill and Discipline Management*

Variables	N	R	p value
Writing skill and discipline management	93	.568**	.000

Table 6 indicates the value  $r=.568$  and  $P=.000$  that was smaller than the significance level of 0.05 which indicates that there was significant moderate positive relationship between writing skill and discipline management. Thus, the Hypothesis 1 is failed to accept as there is a significant moderate positive relationship between writing skills and discipline management.

**Table 7**

*Relationship between Writing Skill and Time Management*

Variables	N	r	p value
Writing skill and Time management	93	.162	.121

Table 7 indicates the value  $r=.162$  and  $P=.121$  which indicates that there was a non- significant weak positive relationship between writing skill and time management. Thus, the Hypothesis 2 is failed to accept as there is a significant weak relationship exist between writing skill and time management.

*Relationship between Writing Skill and Instructional Management*

Variables	N	r	p value
Writing skill and instructional management	93	-.364**	.000

Table 8 indicates the value  $r=-.364$  and  $P=.000$  that was smaller than the significance level of 0.05 which indicates that there was significant moderate negative relationship between writing skill and instructional management. Thus, the hypothesis 3 is fail to accept as there is a significant very weak relationship between writing skill and instructional management.

**Table 9**

*Relationship between Verbal Skill and Time Management*

Variables	N	r	p value
Verbal skill and time management	93	.139	.183

Table 9 indicates the value  $r=.139$  and  $P=.183$  that was smaller than the significance level of 0.05 which indicates that there was a significant weak positive relationship between verbal skill and time management. Thus, hypothesis 4 is fail to accept as there is a significant weak positive relationship exist between verbal skill and time management.

**Table 10**

*Relationship between Verbal Skill and Discipline Management*

Variables	N	r	p value
Verbal skill and discipline management	93	.568**	.000

Table 10 indicates the value  $r=.568$  and  $P=.000$  that was smaller than the significance level of

0.05 which indicates that there was a significant moderate positive relationship between verbal skill and discipline management. Thus, the hypothesis 5 is fail to accept as there is a significant very weak positive relationship exist between verbal skill and discipline management.

**Table 11**

*Relationship between Verbal Skill and Instructional Management*

Variables	N	r	p value
Verbal skill and instructional management	93	-.486**	.000

Table 11 indicates that  $r=-.486$  and  $P=.000$  indicates that there was a significant moderate negative relationship between verbal skill and instructional management. Thus, the hypothesis 6 is fail to accept as there is a significant moderate negative relationship between verbal skill and instructional management.

**Table 12**

*Relationship between nonverbal skill and time management*

Variables	N	r	p value
Non-verbal skill and time management	93	.032	.764

Table 12 indicates that  $r=.032$  and  $P=.764$  indicates that there was non-significant zero relationship between nonverbal skill and time management. Thus, the hypothesis 7 is fail to accept as there is a significant strong relationship exist between nonverbal skill and time management.

**Table 13**

*Relationship between nonverbal skill and discipline management*

Variables	N	r	p value
Non-verbal skill and discipline management	93	.200**	.054

Table 13 indicates that  $r=.200$  and  $P=.054$  which indicates that there was a significant weak positive relationship between nonverbal skill and discipline management. Thus, the hypothesis 8 is fail to accept as there is a significant weak positive relationship exist between nonverbal skill and discipline management.

**Table 14**

*Relationship between nonverbal skill and instructional management*

Variables	N	r	p value
Non-verbal skill and instructional management	93	-.206**	.048

Table 14 indicates that  $r=-.206$  and  $P=.048$  which indicates that there was a significant very weak positive relationship between nonverbal skill and instructional management. Thus, the hypothesis 9 is failed to accept as there is a significant very weak positive relationship exist between nonverbal skill and instructional management.

**Table 15**

*Relationship between Visual Skill and Time Management*

Variables	N	r	p value
Visual skill and time management	93	.590**	.000

Table 15 indicates that  $r=.590$  and  $P=.000$  which indicates that there was a significant moderate positive relationship between visual skill and time management. Thus, the hypothesis 10 is fail to accept as there is a significant very weak positive relationship exist between visual skill and time management.

**Table 16**

*Relationship between Visual Skill and Discipline Management*

Variables	N	r	p value
Visual skill and discipline management	93	.332**	.001

Table 16 indicates that  $r=.332$  and  $P=.001$  which indicates that there was a significant weak positive relationship between visual skill and discipline management. Thus, the hypothesis 11 is fail to accept as there is a significant moderate positive relationship exist between visual skill and discipline management.

**Table 17**

*Relationship between Visual Skill and Instructional Management*

Variables	N	r	p value
Visual skill and instructional management	93	.281**	.006

Table 17 indicates that  $r=.281$  and  $P=.006$  which indicates that there was a non-significant weak positive relationship between visual skill and instructional management. Thus. the hypothesis 12 is accepted as there is a non-significant weak positive relationship between visual skill and instructional management.

**Table 18**

*Relationship between Communication Skill and Classroom Management Skill*

Variables	N	R	p value
Communication skill and classroom management skill	93	.331**	.001

Table 18 indicates that  $r=.331$  and  $P=.001$  indicates that there was a significant weak positive relationship between communication skill and classroom management skill. Thus, the hypothesis 13 is fail to accept as there was a significant weak positive relationship exist between communication skill and classroom management skills.

**Analysis & Discussion**

Transferring ideas and meaning between two or more people is referred to as communication. If information and messages are not shared, then communication has not occurred. A key component of the teaching and

learning process is the teaching methodology (Rahman et al., 2019). A variety of communication techniques exist, including verbal, written, nonverbal, and visual communication. These techniques are applied in educational settings. In the teaching and learning process, enabling elements like relatable examples from everyday life, good eye contact, asking questions in the classroom, and employing suitable facial expressions are also very important (Rybchynska, 2023).

The present study was designed to determine the relationship between communication skills and classroom management skills of elementary school teachers. Overall result of communication skills and classroom management skills show a significant positive relationship between two variables. The present study shows a relationship between

communication skills and classroom management skills. It shows the mean score differences between the indicators of communication skills and classroom management skills.

It was revealed that the responses of female teachers on communication skills and classroom management skills were not different from each other. The mean score of female teachers regarding communication skills indicate that the teachers are moderately involve in communication skills and the means score regarding classroom management skills indicate that female teachers are less involve in discipline management skills.

### **Conclusion**

There was no discernible difference in the instructors' opinions regarding the relationship between communication skills and classroom management skills of elementary school teachers. Instructors thought they were well-versed in their disciplines. Their instruction was concise and clear to some extent. They were not competent enough, in terms of explaining the principles through examples from everyday life. However, educators successfully explained the ideas on the blackboard. They were not good enough to answer the pupils' questions while maintaining acceptable face expression and eye contact. They were not communicating verbally in the classroom in a clear, succinct, and understandable manner. Instructors felt that they made appropriate eye contact, spoke in a loud tone, and used body language with their students. Teachers felt that they were able to maintain contact with pupils by managing their time properly.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made:

1. The study found that teachers usually adapt their body language, eye contact, gestures, and facial expressions to the circumstance at

- hand. It is advised that the methodologies of macro and micro teaching be implemented in teacher training institutions.
2. In order to get students' attention, teachers may employ a range of instructional strategies. Refresher course participation by teachers needs to be mandated.
  3. As it is concluded that the instruction was not very clear so teachers may focus on the clear instructions in classes.

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## Pandemic-Induced changes in Travel Behaviour: Insights of Pandemic's Lasting impacts on Lahore's Urban Mobility

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### ABSTRACT

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The COVID-19 epidemic spread globally in early 2020 and created an abrupt change in human life. This research shows how this pandemic transformed travel patterns in Lahore, Pakistan. It analyses the surveys conducted to understand people's travel behaviours before, during, and after the pandemic's peak. Factor analysis has determined seven latent variables. The results show a significant change in the travel patterns of individuals. During the pandemic, the use of public transportation fell drastically, this decline persisted longer. As a result, personal car usage was increased. In addition, there was a decline in carpooling and social visits following a subsequent partial recovery. Moreover, the pandemic pushed people towards online shopping and remote working. The research indicates that the adoption of remote-work and virtual communication eventually become standard practices impacting the urban living.

**Keywords:** Travel behaviour, COVID-19 impacts, Urban mobility, Sustainable transportation, Pandemic impacts.

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## **Introduction**

The COVID-19 epidemic, beginning globally in early 2020, drastically altered many aspects of human life, particularly their travel patterns using multiple transportation systems. This research analyzes the pandemic's ongoing impact on users' travel patterns in the city of Lahore, Pakistan. This study focuses on the commuters' preferences of using public transportation and change in travel patterns during the pandemic. The objective is to understand the long-term modifications in urban mobility that are affected by some factors e.g. remote working and online shopping.

Lahore has several transportation systems which includes bus rapid transit system, speedo buses and orange line metro train system along with a number of private vehicles on road. The city has experienced significant changes in users' travel patterns during the pandemic years. Before pandemic (pre-pandemic) transportation system in Lahore was defined by active streets having various transportation modes throughout the city. The pandemic years brought the lock-downs and restriction of travelling both by public and private transportation modes directing people towards remote works and online activities. Knowing the long-term impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on travel patterns it is important to address the future challenges within the realm of transportation.

The existing body of research on transportation during the COVID-19 pandemic primarily focuses on short-term disruptions in mobility patterns, particularly during the peak lockdown phases. However, there is a noticeable lack of studies that systematically examine the long-term impacts of the pandemic on travel behavior, specifically in the context of developing countries like Pakistan. While much attention has been paid to advanced transportation systems in developed nations, the unique challenges and adaptations of cities like Lahore, with its hybrid public and private transportation modes, remain unexplored.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly influenced travel mode choices worldwide, prompting numerous studies to investigate these behavioral shifts. For instance, a study in China explored how the pandemic impacted individuals' travel mode choices and car purchase intentions, revealing substantial changes in travel activities due to COVID-19 (Luan et. al, 2021). Similarly, research in Dalian analyzed commuters' mode choice behavior during the pandemic, utilizing stated preference data to understand the factors influencing these decisions (Bhattarai et. al, 2024). In the United States, a panel study examined the lasting effects of COVID-19 on travel behavior, including telecommuting, mode choice, online shopping, and air travel, highlighting significant observed and expected changes in habits and preferences (Javadinasr et. al, 2021). Additionally, a comparative study between Italy and Sweden assessed changes in mobility choices during the

first phase of the pandemic, focusing on the sustainability level of modal choices under different containment policies (Giubergia et. al, 2023). These studies collectively provide valuable insights into the global impact of the pandemic on travel behavior, emphasizing the need for adaptive urban mobility strategies.

Unlike many studies centered around developed nations, this research investigates the interaction between Lahore's distinct transportation systems such as the rapid bus transit system, speedo buses, and the orange line metro train along with private vehicle use in a post-pandemic duration. By examining commuters' preferences and the sustained effects of pandemic related changes like remote working and online shopping, this study fills the gap in understanding whether these shifts represent permanent modifications or temporary disruptions. This research explicitly compares travel patterns across three distinct phases: pre-pandemic, pandemic peak, and post-pandemic. This temporary separation allows for a refined understanding of the evolution in commuters' behavior and the continuity or reversal of observed changes.

The study's social significance lies in its perception of how the COVID-19 pandemic altered travel behavior with long-term implications for public health, urban planning, and sustainability. It focuses on shifts to remote work, homeschooling, and reduced public transport use which guides policymakers in adapting transportation systems for future crises. The study emphasizes the connection between public health and transportation, depicting the measures to restore confidence in public transport. Additionally, the reductions in traffic and environmental benefits suggest that pandemic-driven changes could contribute to more sustainable urban living systems.

By addressing these gaps, the study not only contributes to theoretical knowledge but also provides actionable vision for urban planners and policymakers to accommodate transportation systems to future challenges in cities similar to Lahore.

## **2. Literature Review**

The worldwide happening of the COVID-19 pandemic during the year 2019 has deeply affected the travel behaviour of people which forces them to change their travel preferences. These changes have occurred due to the restrictions by the government, economic instability, technological roles, social and mental pressure. The researchers based on their studies have revealed a strong impact of this pandemic on travelers while opting their choice of travelling.

Hall et. al. (2020) show a strong relationship between tourism and environmental sustainability within any particular region. In continuation to this many studies have also revealed economic losses in tourism during such pandemics and revealed that such communities required efforts to recover such losses by introducing some specific policies (Ferretti, 2023; Nicola et al, 2020;

Lee, 2003). Furthermore, Smith (2006) found out that travel advisories and health regulations also influenced tourism demand and traveller behaviour during pandemics.

Moreover, studies have also discovered some government policies and restrictions that had impacted the socioeconomic aspects of people (Nicola et al, 2020). Some studies have found out that travel restrictions had drastically reduced the international travel to control the spread of the such disease (Chinazzi et al, 2019; Grépin et al., 2023). Throughout the world the environmental impact of pandemic has been notable, a study highlighted the reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions due to decreased human activity during such times (Quere et al, 2020). Many studies showed positive effects on wildlife and ecosystems due to reduced human disturbances (Behera, 2022; Thapa & Diedrich, 2023).

Molloy et al. (2021) highlighted the changes in travel behaviour where people shifts towards remote work and virtual communication was noted, reducing the need for traditional commuting. In addition, researchers revealed an increase in the use of private vehicles based on safety concerns (Du et al., 2024; Audi et al., 2021). The study of Dabadi and Nagarkoti (2021) supports another finding that discovers the increase in domestic travels due to closure of international borders.

Some psychological factors including health fear, life risks and safety concerns have also affected the travel decisions of people (Prideaux, 2020; Borbon & Pulhin, 2023). Rapid advancements in the technologies discouraged the people for business or work travel. Therefore, people relied on telecommunication and virtual working which eventually have benefited the environment. Studies have also demonstrated the environmental benefits of telecommuting and virtual conferences (Tussyadiah & Pesonen, 2016; Alanzi & Ratten, 2023; Zhang et al., 2021) .

The literature tells that during the pandemic the main services were continued by keeping the cleaning protocols and contact less payment systems in order to facilitate the people (Brodeur, 2021; Paul, 2022). Moreover, contact less and online shopping had a great impact on travel patterns during this time of restrictions (Gao et al., 2023; Chen & Bashir, 2022).

Socioeconomic factors (age, income, education) had more impact on peoples' behavior while travelling. Nicola et al. (2022) found that aged people showed more caution while travelling and young people were more flexible towards the technology. Moreover, Molloy et al. (2021) showed that people with higher income were more flexible for using private vehicles compared to low income class. Urban residents experienced more significant changes in travel patterns compared to rural dwellers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has importantly influenced travel behavior, with notable variations with in developing countries. Recent studies have

highlighted shifts in mode choice behavior, especially in densely populated urban centers where public transport systems faced interruption due to health concerns and lockdown scenarios (Abdullah et al., 2021; Shaheen & et al., 2022). In the context of Pakistan, many researches have examined these dynamics, revealing a noticeable increase in private vehicle usage and a decline in public transport usage due to safety concerns and reduced operational capacities (Iqbal et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2023). Lahore, a major metropolitan city, provides a unique example study where socio-economic factors, informal transport systems, and infrastructure limitations shaped mobility patterns during the pandemic. Insights from these studies emphasize the need to explore adaptive strategies, such as promoting active transport and integrating technology to improve urban mobility resilience in similar developing countries. The findings also emphasize the importance of policy making to address the lasting impacts of the pandemic on travel patterns in Lahore and beyond.

### **3. Research Methodology**

An extended questionnaire survey was conducted to collect data on the pandemic's impact on travel patterns focusing on both public and private transportation. Based on the requirements, the study area was selected. Furthermore, secondary data was collected from the Punjab Mass-Transit Authority (PMA) which was also used in the analyses. The ridership data from PMA (Orange Line Metro Rail (OLMT), Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), and Speedo Bus services) provided a strong foundation for analysis. The questionnaire was designed comprehensively focusing on the changes in travel patterns, their causing factors, and individuals' prospective regarding these changes. The questionnaire was based on the demographic data, travel patterns of three scenarios; pre-pandemic, during-pandemic, and post-pandemic and long-term affects in travel patterns. Surveys were distributed both online and in-person to ensure diverse and accurate results. In total 602 responses were obtained through both online as well as in person surveying.

Descriptive statistics and factor analysis were selected to identify the related factors influencing the travel patterns. The methodology guarantee an extensive perspective of the affects of pandemic on travel patterns in the Lahore city.

### **4. Data Collection**

This study has collected a detailed data about the changes in travel patterns based on three scenarios of COVID 19 pandemic; before i.e. pre-pandemic (September 2018 to February 2020), during (March 2020 to August 2021), and after i.e. post pandemic (September 2021 till today). The survey

questionnaire was designed based on the analysis of PMA data of Lahore's public transportation. Cochran's formula was used to calculate the sample size. Based on the formula and city's population the calculated sample size was 384 which was raised to 602. The responses have received through a combination of in-person visits to offices, universities, and public transportation hubs, as well as online forms. The survey covers the socioeconomic factors including age, education, marital status, employment, and income. It also gets the information regarding transportation modes used by respondents, frequency of public transportation usage and changes in travel patterns based on the three mentioned scenarios. The questionnaire has also covered the information about the long-term changes in travel patterns that continued after pandemic was over e.g: mode shift, carpooling, remote working, online shopping, and sustainable transportation practices. The collected data was analyzed to come across the main factors that plays an important role affecting the travel behaviors.

## **5. Results and Discussions**

### *5.1 Descriptive Statistics*

#### **5.1.1 Public Transport Ridership**

Data from PMA revealed significant changes in ridership during the pandemic times. In pre-pandemic situation a stable ridership with some increase in infrequent users has been observed. Whereas, during pandemic a substantial decline (60%) in BRT ridership is observed, while feeder routes witnessed a surprising drop in ridership during this time. The newly introduced OLMRTS had very low ridership as expected. Post-pandemic condition shows a gradual recovery in BRT ridership, though not reaching back to pre-pandemic levels. Feeder routes displayed a significant increase (41%) compared to pre-pandemic levels. OLMRTS ridership surged post-pandemic due to its launch during the pandemic.

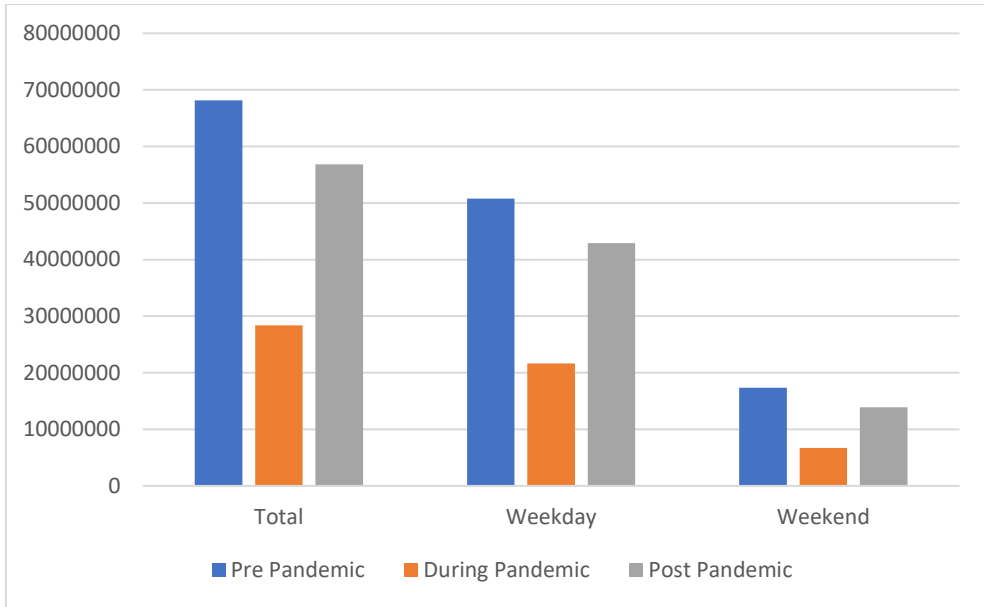


Figure 1: Metro Bus Passenger Ridership

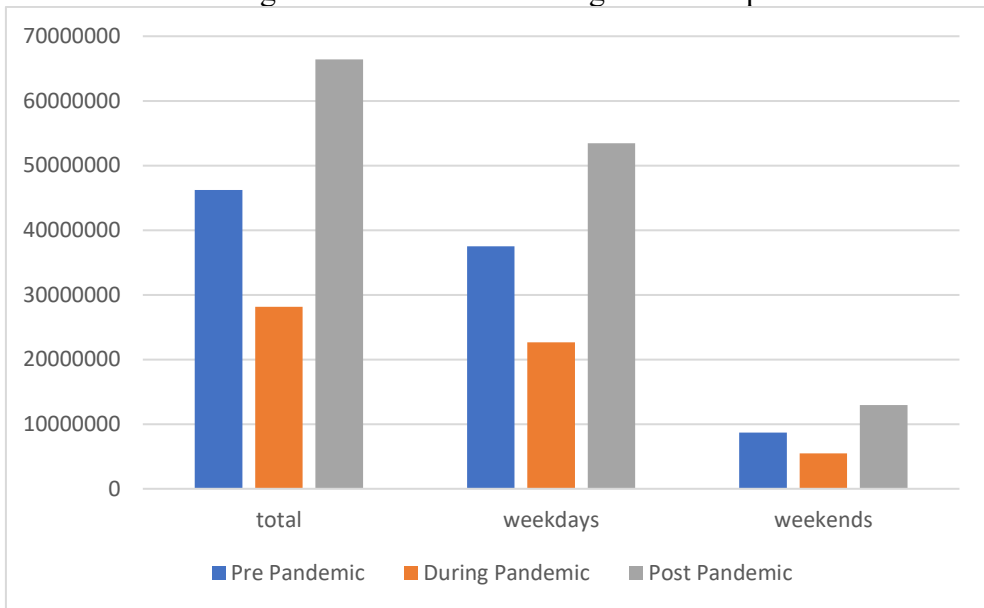


Figure 2: Feeder Route Passenger Ridership

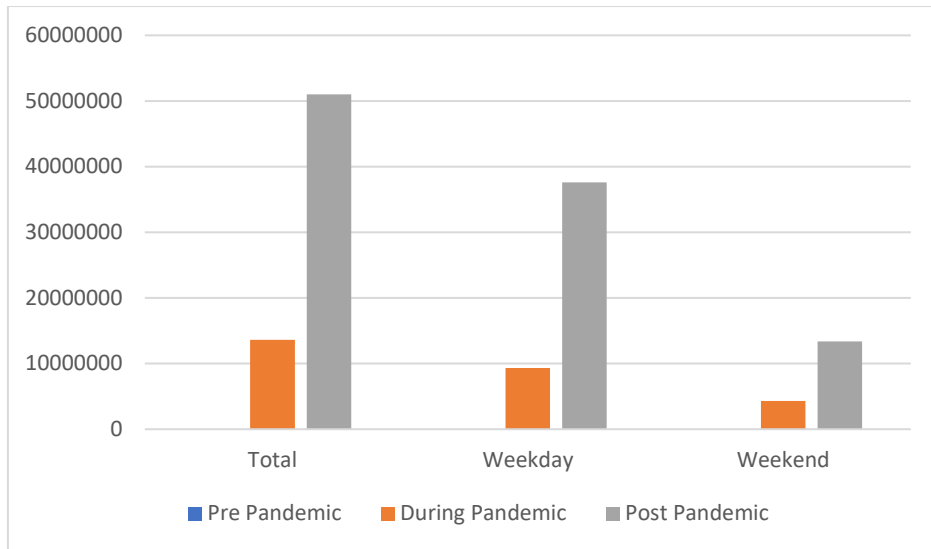


Figure 3: Orange Line Metro Rail Transit Passenger Ridership

### 5.1.2 Socio Economic Factors

A total of 602 participants completed the survey, representing a diverse demographic profile. The majority of respondents were young adults between 18-25 years (47%), followed by those aged between 25-50 years (30%). The remaining participants were divided between under 18 years (11%) and over 50 years (12%). The survey included a majority of male respondents (55%) and a substantial female participation (39%). A small proportion chose not to disclose their gender (6%).

Moreover, a high proportion of respondents were graduates (61%), followed by those with matriculation (18%). A minor portion reported having no formal education (6%). Nearly half of the respondents were unmarried (47%). The survey captured a diverse occupational background. Employed individuals constituted the largest group (47%), followed by students (41%) and unemployed individuals (12%). A further breakdown of job types showed that two-thirds of employed participants worked for a company (67%), while the remaining were self-employed (33%). Monthly income data displayed a range of earning capacities. With a high proportion of student participants (41%), 34% reported no income. The remaining income brackets included 45k-100k rupees (28%), less than 45k rupees (23%), and over 100k rupees (15%).

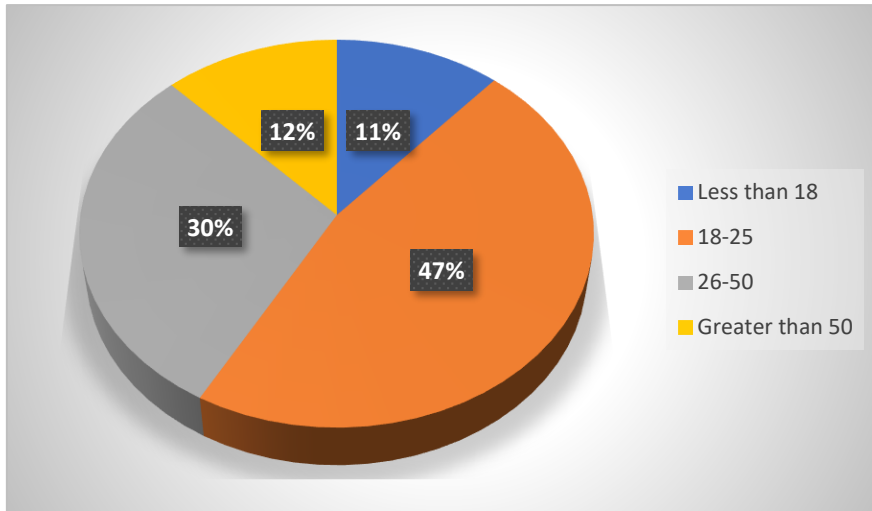


Figure 4: Age Category



Figure 5: Gender

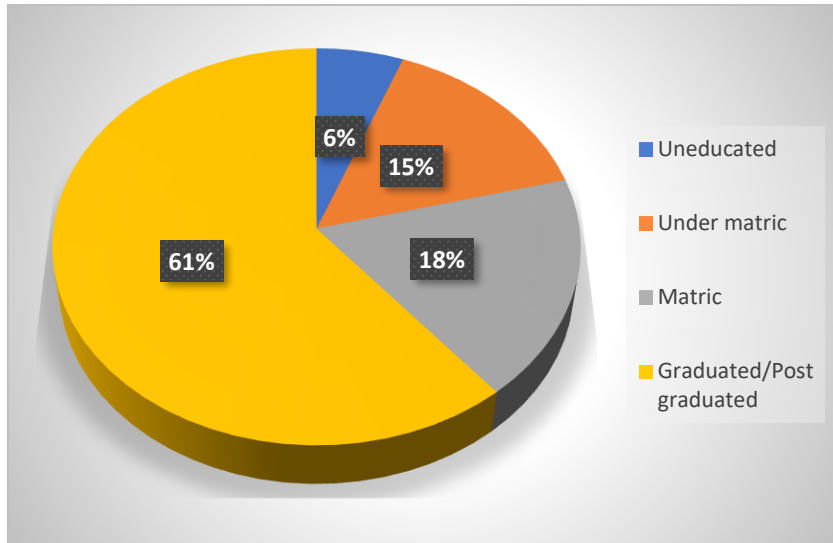


Figure 6: Level of Education

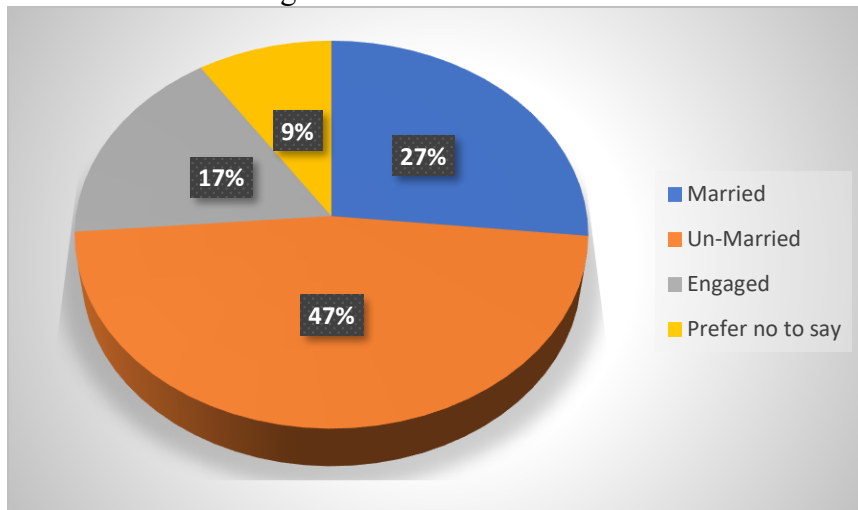


Figure 7: Martial Status

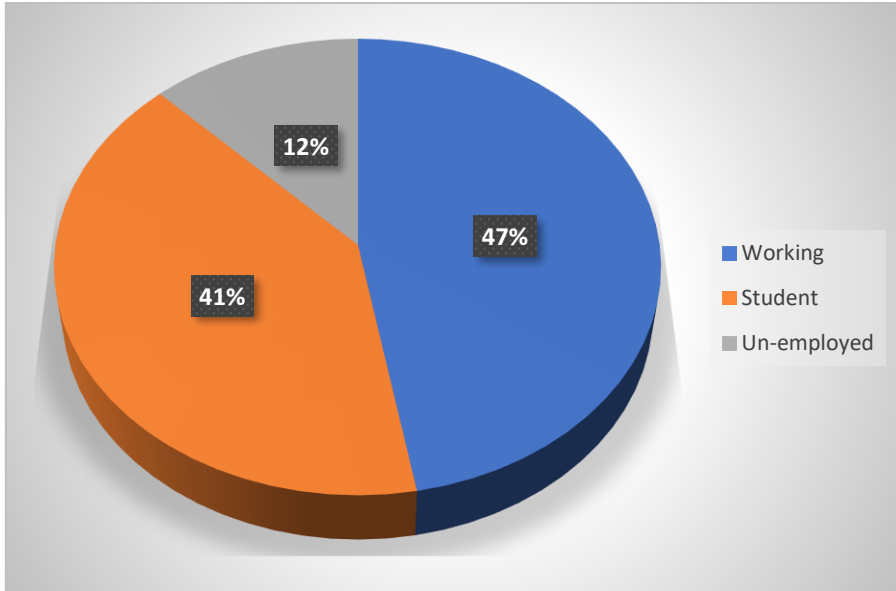


Figure 8: Employment Status

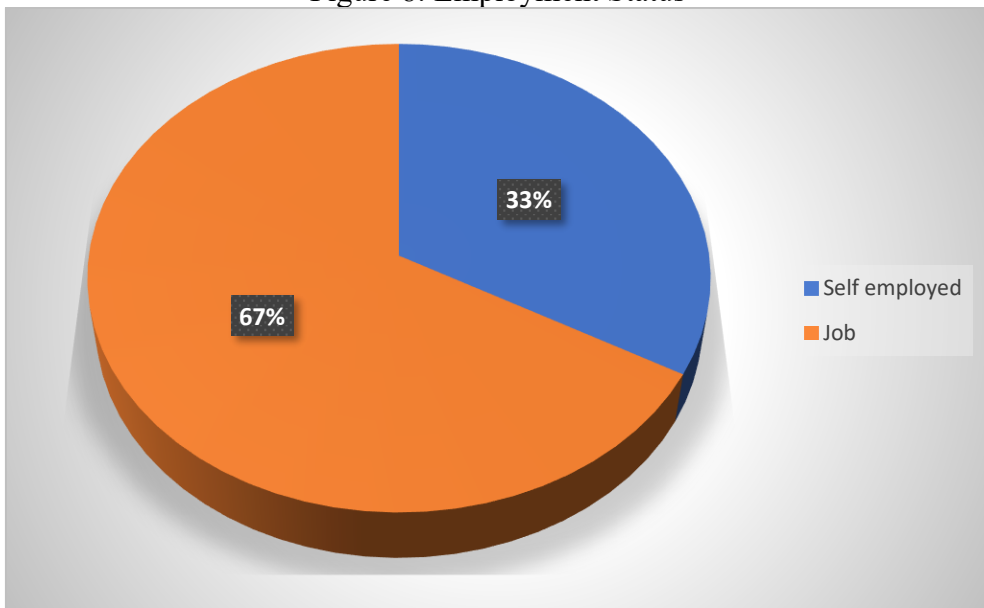


Figure 9: Working Status

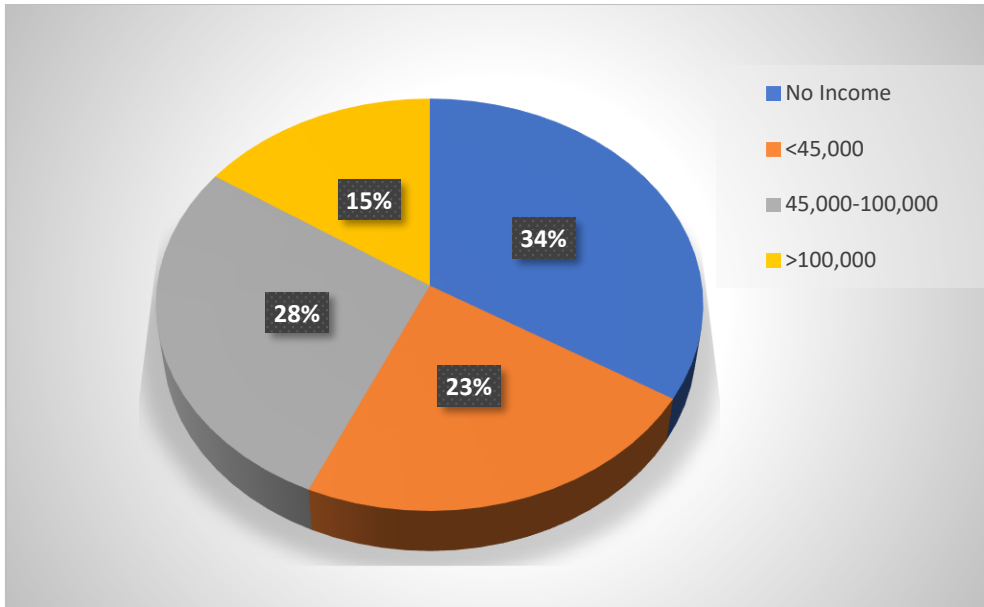


Figure 10: Monthly Income Level

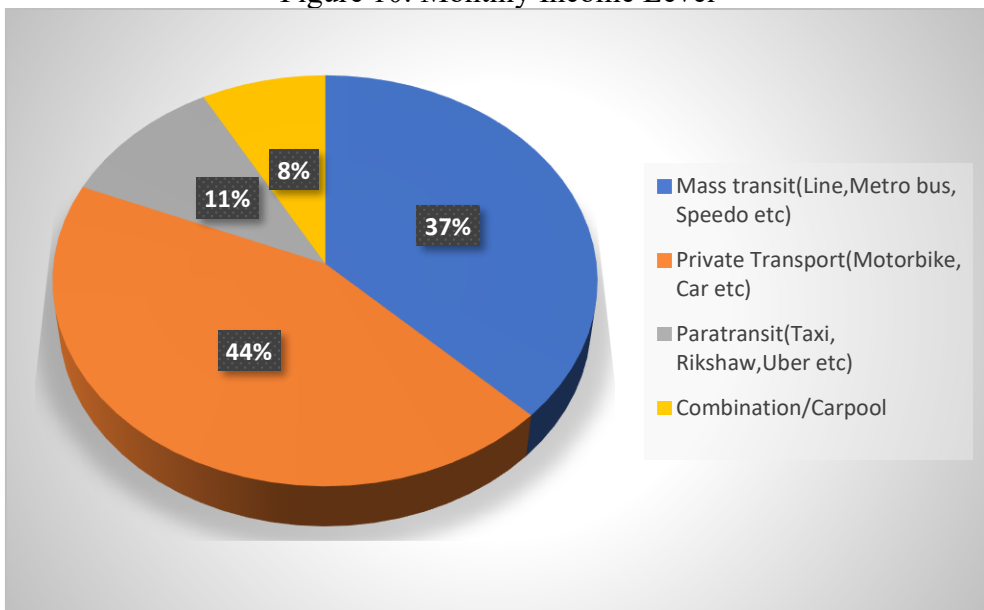


Figure 11: Mode of Transport

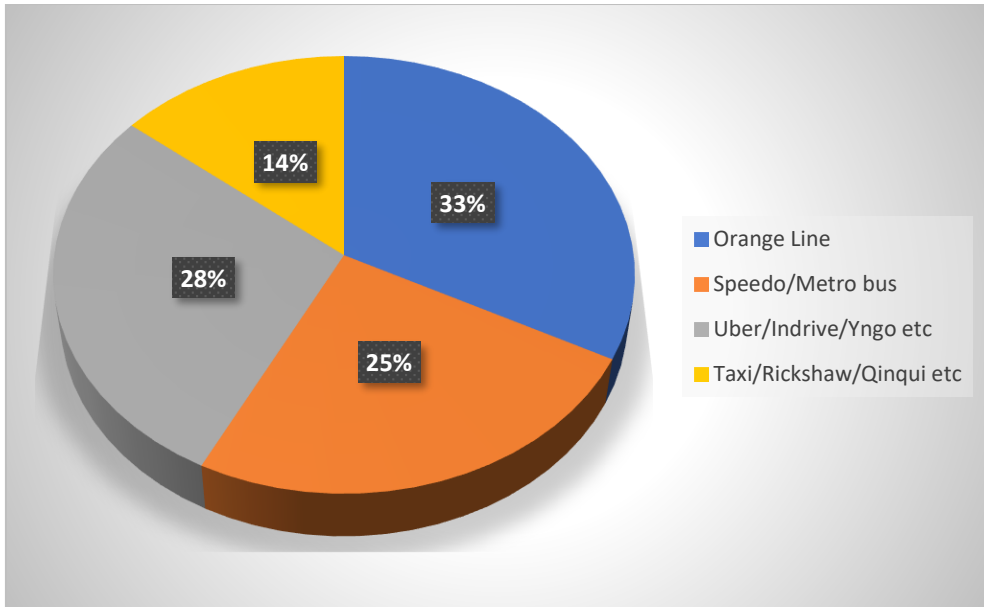


Figure 12: Mode of Public Transport

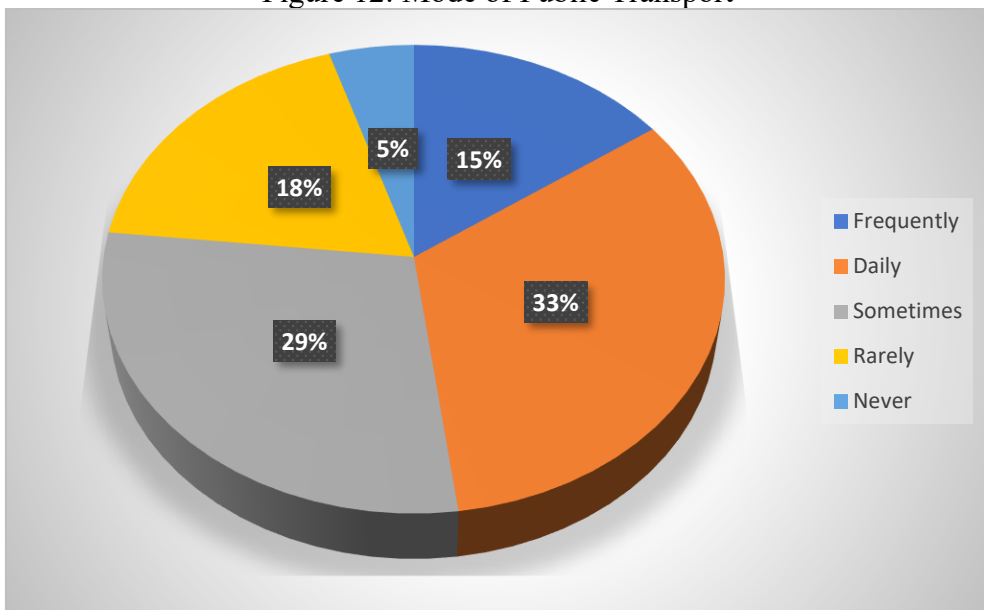
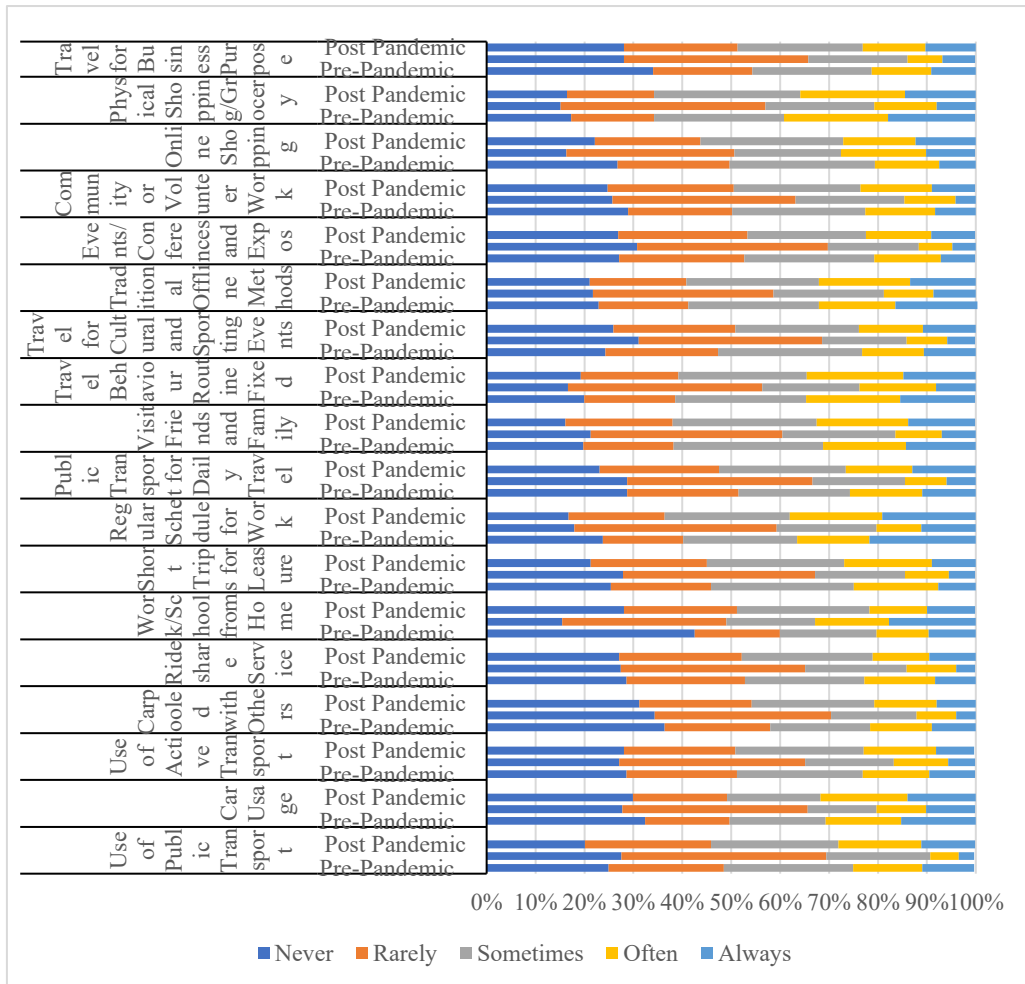


Figure 13: Frequency of Use of Public Transport

### 5.1.3 Travel Behaviour Comparisons (Pre-Pandemic, During-Pandemic & Post-Pandemic)

Before the pandemic, many people used cars infrequently, walked or cycled often, rarely carpoolled, and seldom used ride-share services. During the pandemic, there was an increase in car use among those who rarely drove, a drop in walking and cycling, more carpooling among infrequent users, and



a shift toward ride-shares by occasional users. Remote working and schooling became common, with many adopting regular schedules, while short leisure trips and public transport use decreased. After the pandemic, there is a partial return to previous habits; more people are walking, cycling, using cars, ride-shares, and carpooling again, but not as much as before. Visiting friends and family and taking leisure trips have also started to increase but have not fully recovered.

### 5.1.4 Long Term Travel Patterns

The survey explored how people think the pandemic will affect long-term travel habits, revealing mixed opinions. For personal car use, 22% doubt it will increase, while 25% believe it will become common, with 31% undecided. A large portion (44%) does not expect a shift to homeschooling, but 24% think it might grow. When it comes to permanent changes in daily travel, 40% are sceptical, 33% think it's likely, and 27% are neutral. For carpooling, 34% are neutral, 24% foresee an increase, and only 16% disagree.

Opinions on remote work are varied, with 22% agree, 21% disagree, and 31% are neutral. Sustainable transport, shared mobility services, and remote jobs show similar divisions, with many neutral but some agreeing or disagreeing with the concept. Moving to work closer to home and changes in shopping patterns also brought a mix of opinions, with roughly equal support for and against these shifts and a sizable neutral group in each case.

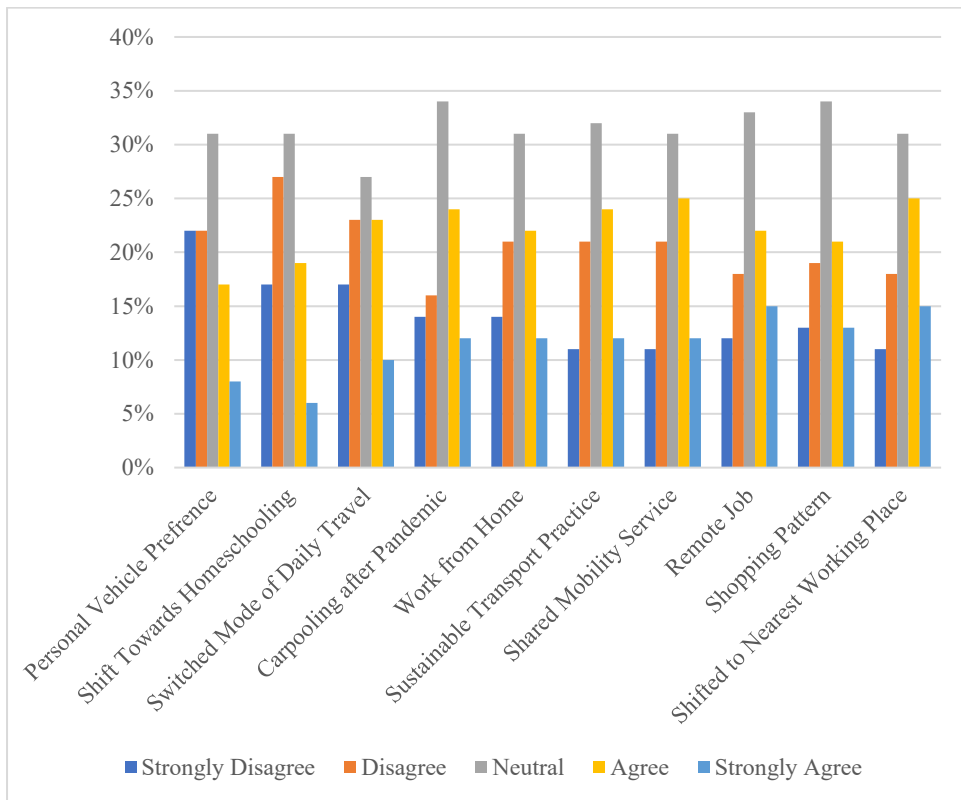


Figure 15: Long Term Travel Behaviour

## 5.2 Factor Analysis

This study investigated the long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on travel patterns in Lahore, Pakistan. Factor analysis was employed to identify underlying factors influencing respondents' perceptions and decision making regarding travel before, during, and after the pandemic.

### 5.2.1 Methodology

Principal factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted on 70 variables representing travel behaviors. A cut-off of 0.5 was used for factor loading to identify significant associations between variables and latent factors. Table 1 shows the observed variables with their factor loading.

Table 1: Factor Loading in Latent Variables

Observed Variables	Latent Variables						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Regular Schedule for Work/School Travel (Pre-Pandemic)	0.613						
Fixed Travel Behaviour (Pre-Pandemic)	0.564						
Traditional Offline Work/Study Methods (Pre-Pandemic)	0.658						
Physical Shopping/Grocery (Pre-Pandemic)	0.666						
Regular Schedule for Work/School Travel (Post-Pandemic)	0.723						
Fixed Travel Behaviour (Post-Pandemic)	0.662						
Traditional Offline Work/Study Methods (Post-Pandemic)	0.700						
Physical Shopping/Grocery (Post-Pandemic)	0.703						
Short Trips for Leisure (Dur-Pandemic).		0.551					
Travel for Cultural/Sporting Events (Dur-Pandemic)		0.706					

Traditional Offline Work/Study Methods (Dur-Pandemic)		0.588					
Attended Events/Conferences/Expos (Dur-Pandemic)		0.700					
Involvement in Community/Volunteer Work (Dur-Pandemic)		0.641					
Physical Shopping/Grocery (Dur-Pandemic)		0.544					
Travel for Business Purposes (Dur-Pandemic)		0.571					
Permanently Changed Personal Vehicle Use Preference			0.554				
Permanently Shifted from Traditional Schooling to Home Schooling			0.551				
Permanently Switched mode of Daily Travel			0.555				
Carpooling/Drop-off as a Permanent Preference			0.530				
Change from Traditional (Office Only) to Hybrid (Office + Work from Home)			0.567				
Travel only, when Necessary, as a Long-Term Habit			0.544				
Shared Mobility Services as a Long-Term Preference			0.569				
Permanent Change in Work Mode to a Remote Job (IT, Free-Lancing).			0.625				
Permanent Change in Shopping Pattern from Physical to Digital (Online Shopping)			0.551				

Permanently Shuffled/Transferred to nearest working place from Residence			0.577				
Carpooling (Ridesharing) with others for Travel (Pre-Pandemic)				0.700			
Using Taxis/Ride-Share Services (Pre-Pandemic)				0.688			
Carpooling (Ridesharing) with others for Travel (Dur-Pandemic)				0.658			
Using Taxis/Ride-Share Services (Dur-Pandemic)				0.612			
Carpooling (Ridesharing) with others for Travel (Post-Pandemic)				0.763			
Using Taxis/Ride-Share Services (Post-Pandemic)				0.661			
Travel for Cultural/Sporting Events (Pre-Pandemic)					0.613		
Attended Events/Conferences/Expos (Pre-Pandemic)					0.689		
Involvement in Community/Volunteer Work (Pre-Pandemic)					0.692		
Travel for Business Purposes (Pre-Pandemic)					0.568		
Travelled to Work/School by Car (Pre-Pandemic)						0.782	
Travelled to Work/School by Car (Dur-Pandemic)						0.795	
Travelled to Work/School by Car (Post-Pandemic)						0.821	

Travelled to visit Friends/Family (Pre-Pandemic)							0.577
Travelled to visit Friends/Family (Dur-Pandemic)							0.680
Travelled to visit Friends/Family (Post-Pandemic)							0.557

### 5.2.2 Results and Discussions

The study identified seven latent variables (Table 2) that explain major changes in travel patterns. First, latent variable ‘non-pandemic travel patterns (work)’ is associated with nine observed variables included regular work commutes, fixed routines, and physical shopping etc. Second variable ‘during pandemic travel pattern (work + recreational)’ is related with seven observed variables including work and leisure travel, such as short trips, events, shopping, and business activities. Third latent variable ‘long term pandemic effects in travel patterns (work and recreational)’ covers ten observed variables including personal vehicle use, homeschooling, hybrid work, and sustainable transport. Fourth variable ‘ride sharing travel patterns (pre, during and post pandemic)’ is associated with six observed variables showing the ride-sharing habits were mostly remained unchanged with a slight drop during restrictions. Fifth variable ‘non-pandemic travel patterns (Recreational)’ included four observed variables covering activities like events and business trips. Sixth latent variable ‘affected private vehicle use (pre, during and post pandemic)’ enclosed three variables showing decrease in car use during the pandemic but has slightly returned. Lastly, the seventh latent variable ‘affected friends/family meetups (pre, during and post pandemic)’ associated with three observed variables showing that visits to friends and family dropped during the pandemic but have partially recovered.

Before the pandemic, people's travel habits were permanent in their daily routines, such as commuting to work and going out for shopping in person. However, during the pandemic, many shifted to online systems for work and education. The data also indicates that a large number of people preferred remote jobs during this duration, a trend that has continued in the long term. After the pandemic, carpooling services gained popularity and remained a preferred option for many users. Additionally, the use of private vehicles increased during the pandemic, mainly due to restrictions limiting public transportation availability. Overall, the findings highlight that the pandemic significantly altered travel behaviors, causing both temporary adjustments and lasting changes, such as the rise of remote work, a growing

interest in sustainable transport options, and a shift toward online shopping. The findings reveal significant impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on travel patterns. The pandemic triggered short-term adaptations in travel behaviors and led to long-term changes, including a potential rise in remote work, increased adoption of sustainable transportation practices, and a shift towards online shopping.

The rise in trend of remote work and online shopping needs the policies that reduce traffic congestion and support digital infrastructure while encouraging sustainable urban development where urban planners could transform parking areas into recreational or green spaces. To address the long-term shift towards personal vehicle usage, there is need to promote electric vehicles, carpooling, and congestion pricing. Public transportation must prioritize hygiene to rebuild the trust of commuters, whereas, ride-sharing services need to adapt policies ensuring affordability, safety, and reliability. Policymakers should support sustainable practices like shared mobility and hybrid models through subsidies, campaigns, and infrastructure upgradation. The trend toward shorter commutes and localized work spaces underscores the need for mixed-use developments that foster community interactions and reduce travel demand. Moreover, evolving recreational travel patterns highlight the need for safe and accessible community spaces alongside hybrid event formats. By implementing these strategies, decision-makers can create urban mobility systems that are resilient, comprehensive, and sustainable for the post-pandemic future. The study also highlights the need for further research to explore the long-term implications of these changes on urban planning, transportation infrastructure, and social interactions. This study highlights the need for further research to explore the long-term implications of these changes on urban planning, transportation infrastructure, and social interactions.

Table 2: Latent and Observed Variables

<b>Latent Variable</b>	<b>Observed Variable</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
Non-Pandemic Travel Pattern (Work)	Regular Schedule for work (Pre)	0.613	0.847
	Routine/Fixed Travel Behaviour (Pre)	0.564	
	Traditional Offline method for work (Pre)	0.658	
		0.666	
		0.723	

	Physical Shopping/Grocery (Pre)	0.662	
		0.700	
	Regular Schedule for work (Post)	0.703	
	Routine/Fixed Travel Behaviour (Post)		
	Traditional Offline method for work (Post)		
	Physical Shopping/Grocery (Post)		
During Pandemic Travel Pattern (Work + Recreational)	Leisure	0.551	0.788
	Culture/Sports event	0.706	
		0.588	
	Traditional offline method	0.700	
	Events, expos	0.641	
	Community work	0.544	
	Physical shopping	0.571	
	Business Purpose		
Long Term Pandemic Effects in Travel Patterns (Work + Recreational)	Personal vehicle preference	0.554	0.765
	Traditional to home schooling	0.551	
	Switch mode of daily travel	0.555	
	Car polling after pandemic	0.530	
		0.567	
	Traditional to hybrid	0.544	
	Sustainable transport practice	0.569	
		0.625	
	Shared Mobility Service	0.551	
		0.577	

	Remote jobs Online Shopping Shuffled to nearest working place		
Ride Sharing Travel Patterns (Pre, During and Post Pandemic)	Car pooled (Pre) Taxi Use (Pre) Carpooled (During) Taxi Use (During) Car pooled (Post) Taxi Use (Post)	0.700 0.688 0.658 0.612 0.763 0.661	0.808
Non-Pandemic Travel Patterns (Recreational)	Culture, sports (Pre) Events, conferences (Pre) Community Work (Pre) Business Purpose (Pre)	0.613 0.689 0.692 0.568	0.740
Affected Private Vehicle Use (Pre, During and Post Pandemic)	Work/ School by car (Pre) Work/ School by car (During) Work/ School by car (Post)	0.782 0.795 0.821	.818

Affected Friends/Family Meetups (Pre, During and Post Pandemic)	Visit to friend and family (Pre)	0.577	0.739
	Visit to friend and family (During)	0.680	
	Visit to friend and family (Post)	0.557	

## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

In the city of Lahore, the impact of COVID -19 had significantly changed the travel behaviour of people. The restriction by the authorities and safety concerns by the people had decreased the use of public transportation, as 60% of people stopped using the BRT and 40% stopped using the feeder routes during this time. In comparison to this 41% of individuals revived their use of feeder routes, indicating the post pandemic time which shows their return to public transport. There was also a decrease in the use of personal vehicle as 37% of respondents adopted the shared services and 34% had shifted to remote working which shows the reduction in traffic congestion and improvement in air quality supporting the environmental benefits.

Descriptive statistics and factor analysis discovered important trends in travel patterns. Results show that 47% of respondents were of the age between 18-25 years including 55% of male, indicating a young and predominantly male respondents. Moreover, 25% of respondents shifted to homeschooling, while 34% have adopted the choice of online shopping. As well as, 37% of respondents shifted to remote jobs showing quite a flexibility towards such working options.

The results show that most of the people shifted to online methods of working, schooling and shopping during the COVID-19 showing a drastic decrease in their travels. Analysis also shows that long-term impacts include the adaptability of remote working, carpooling and private vehicle usage. This shift has shown the choices of people during such times which eventually guides the policy makers and urban planners to focus on peoples' choice for future work.

To address these behaviors authorities involvement are necessary to restore public confidence in transportation during such unexpected times. This could be done by adopting some measures including sensitization protocols, ventilation systems, increased service frequency, and options of active mobility during unforeseen situations. Observing and evaluating the effectiveness of these measures based on continuous data collection and analysis can help to address the future challenges in urban mobility.

This study mark the connection between public health and transportation system which recommends the future urban and transportation planning based on these dynamics. The significant trends in travel patterns

based on pandemic situations provide guidelines for developing a strong transportation system that can resist future crises while promoting environmental sustainability and public well-being.

The study has several limitations, including a sample that was predominantly young and male, which may not represent the broader population. It focused only on Lahore, limiting the approach to other areas. The research lacked a detailed approach and relied only on self-reported data and have not incorporated qualitative insights. Additionally, external factors like economic shifts or policy changes were also not considered. Environmental benefits were noted but not supported by direct data, and the proposed measures for restoring public confidence in transportation were not assessed for practical effectiveness which is needed to have a detailed analysis for the betterment of developing countries.

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## Chinese Investment in Latin America: Case of Argentina, and Venezuela

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### ABSTRACT

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This article examines the growing influence of Chinese investments in Latin America, focusing on Venezuela and Argentina. It explores how these countries benefit from Chinese capital and how this investment impacts their economies. Venezuela has relied on oil-backed loans to sustain its political system, worsening its economic challenges. In contrast, Argentina has channeled Chinese investment into infrastructure, including hydroelectric dams, nuclear plants, railway modernization, and energy diversification projects. The study highlights that while infrastructure investment can enhance economic stability and reduce reliance on further loans, both countries remain vulnerable due to their dependence on raw material exports. Despite these challenges, the study underscores that with institutional improvements and a shift toward diversification, such investments can contribute to sustainable growth in both nations. A qualitative research approach using secondary sources was employed to analyze the long-term implications of Chinese investments in these two economies.

**Keywords:** Investment, Economy, China, Argentina, and Venezuela

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## **Introduction:**

China's ambitions have grown dramatically in Latin America to pursue opportunities for the importation of natural resources and generate exports to the region. The Chinese presence in Latin America has also become more attractive because of emerging international investment prospects other than America. In Latin America, China has four interests: primary goods gained, China's export markets received, Taiwan's foreign isolation acquired, and China's global role as a superpower protecting its geopolitical allies. China has various political and economic motives for retaining close relations with Latin America. Ellis (2009) stated that China establishes strategic alliances with Latin American countries that have a powerful influence over their territories, such as Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, and Argentina, which are more geographical than simply economic. The Chinese counterweight is established to defend against unwanted American sovereignty in these territories. Furthermore, Kaplan says that China's state-led capitalism is an effective form of patient wealth (Kaplan, 2016). Compared to the short-term view of private market money, both long-term and short-term partnerships define patient capital. Furthermore, Kaplan claims China is an additional trading partner with Latin America because, compared to the United States, China does not need to shield its agricultural products as the U.S. government does with tariffs, thus providing a cheaper commodity exchange for both nations. China does not need to safeguard its agricultural products. It promotes trade between Latin America and China much better than the rivalry between America and Latin America regarding agricultural trade.

Between 2015 and 2019, Chinese President Xi Jinping vowed to provide the Caribbean and Latin America with about \$50 billion a year in foreign direct investment, according to David Dollar, (2017). Although not all the beneficiaries of these funds were known, the Chinese plan to continue to invest in the area. The Chinese FDI in other countries, which is now 10 percent of world FDI, compared to just 2 percent a decade earlier, is surprising to many economists, such as Sean Miner, Angel Melguizo, and Rolando Avendano. FDI has recently crossed \$200 billion. This foreign investment flow is centered on fusions and investments from higher-value firms with technical expertise, market value, and strategic properties, such as semiconductors and other specialized manufacturers (Avendano, 2017). This article offers the context for China's energy stability needs and the Chinese vacuum filled by Venezuela's anti-American upturn. The article also outlines the changes that the populist leftist governments of President Kirchner introduced to reverse the crisis and how they have paved the way for Chinese investment in Argentina. Argentina compares and contrasts with the previous case study of Venezuela to assess if Chinese investment has been advantageous to Argentina

in the last ten-and-a-half years. Argentina keep an eye on its manufacturing sector and stop focusing on product exports to China because Argentina has been distracted by its investment in many countries.

Theotonio Dos Santos, a leading pioneer of dependency theory, defines reliance as a scenario in which the growth and expansion of one economy influence the development and extension of another economy. In addition, this theory would explain Venezuela and Argentina's ability to benefit from Chinese investments in Latin America.

### **Research Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology to investigate the dynamics and implications of Chinese investment in Latin America, focusing on the cases of Argentina and Venezuela. A qualitative approach is well-suited for exploring the multifaceted nature of international investments, emphasizing interpretive analysis rather than numerical quantification. The research relies exclusively on secondary sources, including academic journal articles, books, of, publications by international organizations, and credible news articles. These sources provide comprehensive and diverse perspectives on Chinese investments and their economic, political, and social impacts.

### **Latin America—Chinese Investment and Interest:**

Latin America is vital to China; however, in the coming years, Chinese participation will be offset by barriers to more recent and sustained intervention at home and abroad. A study on-the-ground trends in Latin America currently shows that Chinese investors or Latin American governments, which are in some cases pursuing links with a broader spectrum of economic partners, are moderating their level of operation. Though the exchange is still volatile, foreign direct investment and financing of China in Latin America are now slightly slow. According to the Sustainable Development Policy Center, fusions, acquisitions, and greenfield investments plummeted from a historic \$17.5 billion in 2017 to just \$7.6 billion in 2018 (Margaret, 2019). Projects from Greenfield in 2018 contributed to a mere \$1.6 billion, the lowest in 2006. In the past two years, reasonably modest amounts of funding have been provided to Latin American governments by the China Export-Import Bank, the China Development Bank, and Chinese policy banks. Various causes trigger this drop-in activity, some of which have hindered Chinese activity in the area for decades. China's official policies cast Latin America as a land full of vitality and promise. Still, Chinese investors have seen the area's distance from Asia as prohibitive, with distances averaging around 12,000 miles from Santiago, Montevideo, and Buenos Aires. Others consider the geographic regulatory environments to be extremely complex or taxing bidding procedures. (Margaret, 2019)

Furthermore, as it retains ties with the government of Nicolás Maduro, Venezuela has been a frequent source of tension for the Chinese leaders and several banks and companies that trade there. In 2018, China extended Venezuela another \$5 billion loan, but at that moment, Venezuela's crucial debt payment grace period expired. The latter was seen as a symbol of Beijing's becoming gradually impatient with Maduro's economic mismanagement. Chinese policymakers face another challenge, especially if a new Venezuelan government tries to restructure remaining debts against China. Juan Guaidó's claims to the Venezuelan presidency are another challenge for Chinese decision-makers. Some in China regretted the danger of openings given to Chinese firms in Latin America, taking Venezuela and other partners into account. As Xu Peiyuan and Wang Yongzhong of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences stated in a 2018 journal paper, China must allocate money to higher-risk countries and regions as a latecomer in foreign investment (Margaret, 2019).

Governments must resist the temptation of using simple Chinese funds to free Western institutions from the inconvenience of surveillance and good governance. As shown by Rafael Correa and Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, this is essentially an undermining of the regime's negotiation role and its bureaucratic capacity to properly compromise, creating a downswing of corrupt ventures that favor the insiders that are signing them, to the detriment of the populace and the government (Christopher, 2017). At the same time, they are undermining their position. While governments of all political orientations would still cooperate with China, considering their perception of risks. For that purpose, they must improve their supervision capacities to ensure that the terms and conditions decided upon on the use of labor and conformity with environmental and other legislation are upheld by Chinese institutions and other contractors of public funds. Finally, governments in the region could restrict China's entrance into vulnerable areas such as telecommunications and security, which might jeopardize its leaders' and managers' capacity to make successful and autonomous choices. Allowing Chinese firms or their business and political leaders' details to handle the most confidential commercial and political data encourages misuse, thus rendering the job of sharing sensitive information impossible for other allies, such as America (Evan, 2019).

### **China's Interests and Investment in Venezuela:**

Although Beijing is an important political and economic partner for Caracas, China also attaches great importance to the Latin American nation. China finds the communist oil-rich nation a significant trade partner. Moreover, Venezuela has been an essential component of China's potential economic growth and protection due to China's investments over the past few

decades. After Hugo Chavez's rise to power in 1999, a collaboration between Venezuela and China started to expand significantly. The friendly ties between the two nations continued under Maduro's presidency after Chavez's death in 2013. Trade between the two countries rose more than 20 times between 2000 and 2018, and the volume of direct Chinese investment amounted to \$6 billion.

Meanwhile, Venezuela exceeded \$60 billion in gross Chinese loans. Most loans and investments from China in Venezuela refer to the petroleum industry. In 2007, Beijing set up the FCCV, which allowed Venezuela to accept loans of up to \$5 billion from China and be reimbursed for crude oil shipments. The FCCV authorized the Chinese government, which is believed to have the world's largest oil reserve, to invest in oil production in the Orinoco Oil Belt (Carlos, 2019).

China is developing as a diplomatic and economic power in the region and seeks to influence Latin American strategy. The Chinese presence is neither open nor market-oriented in Latin America, and no nation has suffered more repercussions than Venezuela. China provided funds for Venezuela at the detriment of the Venezuelan citizen and its long-term progress with loans and outbound direct investment. Xi Jinping's foreign strategy to increase Chinese power includes a presence in Venezuela (Bonnie, 2017). Following China's worldwide aspirations, the government took advantage of Venezuela's collapsed, cash-strapped financial deals. Nicolas Maduro and Hugo Chavez accepted China's financial help to stimulate their 21st-century socialism influenced by state-dominated economic structures. While other countries have withdrawn from Venezuela, China has doubled its funding. Venezuela received 53 percent of all Chinese loans to Latin America a decade ago, more than 62 billion dollars (David, 2017). China is the highest creditor to the nation, with \$23 billion worth of Venezuela's external debt. Venezuela is undergoing an ongoing refugee crisis, hyperinflation, and the country's first oil output crash, triggered by an artificial economic and humanitarian catastrophe. China was the only source of cash to assist Maduro's government in repaying its debt. In 2017, Venezuela did not issue a sovereign bond, and according to Caracas Capital reports, 16 sovereign bonds and coupons totaling 1.81 billion dollars are already in default (Katia, 2017). Recently, China seemed hesitant to expand its exposure to Venezuela, given Venezuela's debt restructuring (Tracy, 2017).

Whereas other Latin American countries perceive Chinese participation as an exciting road to growth, short-term advantages also lead to long-term dependence. China's spending is concentrated on natural resource exploration and trade of Latin American commodities with Chinese high-value-added producers. China can only raise its demand for commodities. Since 1980, half of the Chinese citizens have entered the middle class, and the

middle class is expected to grow by over 80% (Salvatore, 2018). It would generate enhanced consumption and demand for energy services. In the coming decades, China will become more reliant on Latin American natural resources, leaving little cause for producing more advanced goods of higher value for countries like Venezuela. Commodity-led ties in resource-rich countries such as Venezuela will rapidly improve economic efficiency but do not need expanded institutions. While China may be able to sustain these economies, for the time being, the region could be devastated by a shift in resource demands or the discovery of more cost-effective products elsewhere. Venezuela, a nation entirely reliant on its natural capital, has disproportionately influenced such a partnership. Also, the most common accountability requirements are missing in Chinese investment.

Usually, China spends as outbound direct investment or as loans from Chinese policy banks. Chinese activity in Venezuela was difficult to trace in the context of petroleum-for-loan agreements. Moreover, China declined to join the Paris Group, which establishes bilateral investment requirements. The international community cannot grasp the scale of Chinese investment in Venezuela without the transparency of a platform like the Paris Club. This lack of accountability only contributes to Maduro's deep-seated abuse. Since 2017, Venezuela has been ranked as the 11th most corrupt country (Transparency International, 2018). The international community may be suspicious of the huge amounts of untraceable money that have entered a world with a history of graft and narcotics trade in remote nations with no checks and balances.

Over the last decade, 12 of China's 17 energy-specific loans to Venezuela totaled \$55 trillion. China was most notably engaged in the oil sector in Venezuela by participating in the Orinoco Belt, which generates extra-heavy crude oil and is located in central Venezuela, one of the world's wealthiest oil zones. In 2010, China's domestic petroleum firm signed a 25-year land subsidy for 40% of expenditure in the Orinoco Belt. From an economic policy and social perspective, the oil sector is essential to Venezuela (Joseph, 2018). Oil accounts for 95% of the country's exports and offers the cash needed to purchase all other goods. China's move should be seen as a power maneuver to assert control over Venezuela's social and political institutions and its large petroleum reserves. In reality, the Maduro government has prioritized buying guns and military equipment over food and medication, even as the extreme food and medicine shortages have devastated Venezuelans. Venezuela gained more than \$5.6 billion in arms between 2000 and 2017, and China also bought \$628 million in arms. Russia was historically Venezuela's leading weapons supplier, but China took over this position in 2013. Venezuela ranks among the countries that spend the most on military

goods and is the first in Latin America (Madrid, 2017). Venezuelan military police were firmly responsible for the future flow of lethal and nonlethal weapons, which raised questions about domestic and regional security. The military leadership of Venezuela is aggressive and corrupt, which has prompted the International Criminal Court to investigate officially (Moises, 2018).

Year	Investment
2000-2018	Trade between China and Venezuela rose more than 20 times, with direct Chinese investment reaching \$6 billion.
2007	Beijing established the FCCV, allowing Venezuela to accept loans of up to \$5 billion and repay them through crude oil shipments
2013	China provided a \$4.7 billion loan to cover 85% of the costs for two hydroelectric dams in Patagonia, Argentina.
2015	Construction of the Patagonia hydroelectric dams, financed by China's loan, began.
2015-2019	Chinese President Xi Jinping pledged \$50 billion annually in foreign direct investment to the Caribbean and Latin America.
Currently	China remains Venezuela's largest creditor, holding \$23 billion worth of its external debt.

Source: <https://www.transparency.org/en/news/corruption-perceptions-index-2017>

### **Investment of China in Argentina and Interest:**

According to Inter-American Dialog fellow Bruno Binetti stated that China has "demonstrated persistence for and may continue to do Argentina's economic and political changes." They try to search for medium-term financial resources and contemplate short-term investment shocks. After the default in 2001 and the conflict with U.S. hedge funds, Argentina was shunned by financial markets. At the time, analysts, including Macri, cautioned that

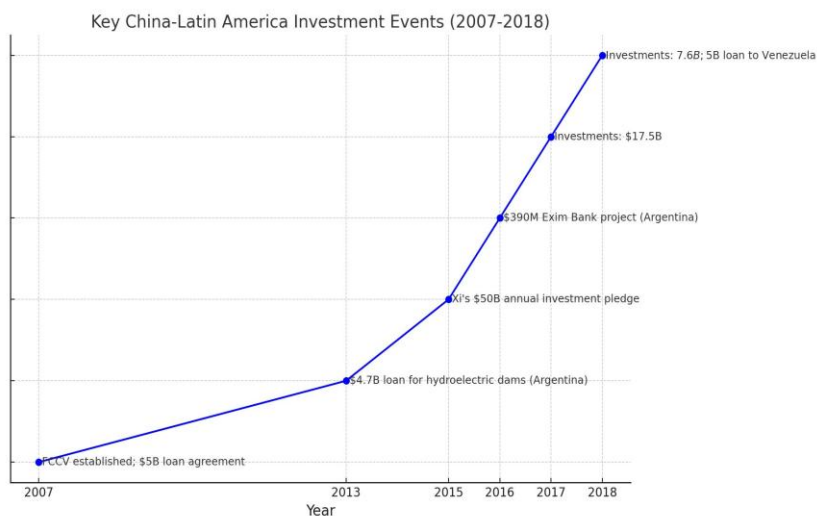
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Argentina is connected to costly infrastructure investments that restrict the government's potential policy choices.

Over the past decade, Argentina has received Chinese funds from the Chinese Export-Import Bank of China and the China Development Bank for eleven ventures, including dams, nuclear energy, hydro, and roads (Fermin, 2018). The nation even had a currency exchange of US\$19 billion. It led to the Central Bank strengthening its foreign currency reserves, which have declined by US\$28 billion. Leonardo Stanley, a research assistant at the Argentina Center for State and Society Studies, said China had become one of Argentina's most important creditors. The largest, according to Stanley, is multilateral organizations such as the IMF, for which Macri received a \$57 billion bailout package (Uki, 2018). One notable Chinese loan came in at \$4.7 billion, covering 85 percent of Patagonia's costs for building two hydroelectric dams. The building scheme was won in 2013 and began in 2015 (Fermin, 2017). It then stalled because of the fears of environmental activists over unsatisfactory environmental studies. The Chinese Development Bank Lender included a credit clause that required acceptance of the dams for other irrigation projects in Argentina. Macri understood that, albeit on a smaller scale, and offered them the green light. Chinese lenders backed similar adaptability with a US\$ 10 billion loan for the construction of the two-story nuclear complex (Fermin, 2019). When Macri took power in 2015, he broke the contract despite concerns over nuclear energy's present and potential affordability. He accepted the proposal once again but limited it to one farm. Despite the losses, Chinese investors are always looking to Argentina for prospects. According to economist Ariel Slipak, Chinese businesses still find connections to their core primary capital and hope to secure markets for their goods. China's loans to Latin America also have a geopolitical motive. China adapts and demonstrates versatility to the political characteristics of each region. In addition to mega-projects, China is mobilizing capital for lower-cost, faster implementation firms. Some often advocate green energies in the country's vital gas and oil matrix. That is the case with Cauchari, a solar farm in the Jujuy province of northern Argentina. In 2016, China Exim Bank decided to finance the 390 million U.S. dollar project cost. China must guarantee that debts are repaid until the management transition because it is now exploring further short-term ventures. The plant is expected to start producing electricity next month. Binetti said it is part of the learning process (Martin, 2019).

Furthermore, Argentina decided to build massive dams and nuclear power plants without any long-term energy sector policy or cost-benefit analysis of various energy resources. Former energy secretary Jorge Lapea stated that, while the loans provided for unfeasible projects, they concentrated

Argentina's debt obligations to China on significant projects that would take a long time to repay. The approval of the ventures under Fernández de Kirchner, which China sponsored, was now carried out by Lapel and a group of other energetic secretaries who reported political links rather than sound economics. In a 2017 report, Argentina demonstrated that a nuclear kilowatt generation costs 4.8 times more than a wind turbine and 6.6 times more than a solar panel, which was downgraded to the rank of the secretariat in 2018. Those arrangements constrain Argentina's policy-making sovereignty. "We need a proper energy policy where the government has a great role to play," said Lapel. An administration under Fernandez will accelerate or even negotiate new initiatives that were postponed under Macri. The currency exchange arrangement may also be extended to ease Argentina's interest payments. Fernández recently proposed that, after believing he would draw investment from international lenders, Macri had not understood China's position as a credible foreign investor (Fermin, 2019).



Source: Developed by author

### Chinese investments in the oil industry :

Back at the beginning of the 1990s, China became the second-largest oil importer after the U.S. This shift was directly connected to its rapid economic development, growing urbanization, an extension of its transport networks, and increasing refinery demand. Since the mid-1980s, China's oil output has increased rapidly, with current volumes double those of their previous peaks. Consequently, its share of world oil output has risen from 3.3% in the 1980s to 5.0%. According to the American Energy Information

Administration, in 2012, China was the fourth-largest oil producer and second-largest buyer. The output of natural gas has grown exponentially. Between 1990 and 2012, China's share of global production increased from 0.6% to more than 2.5%, accounting for 3.9% of the global market for natural gas. So, China is a net energy importer in both situations (Julian & Andrés, 2015). In China, the energy market is dominated by three big oil firms.

Next, the CNOOC regulates much of the development and discovery of offshore oil. Secondly, Sinopec is associated with processing and marketing. Third, as a spin-off of the Oil Industry Ministry in 1988, the Chinese National Petroleum Corporation was founded and focused on onshore development (Strecker & Levaux, 2000). In the late 1990s, the Chinese government sought the development of multinational, vertically integrated companies, pressuring SINOPEC and CNPC to renovate. In the upstream segment, CNPC remains influential, while Sinopec dominates the downstream segment. While the major oil firms are SOEs, they somehow enforce the private management requirements and work in a dual pricing structure to sell gas and oil exceeding the government's quota at market rates. Residual profits or bonds would fund the investment, eventually decreasing public financial assistance (Houser, 2008). In turn, the refining sector has been modernized and consolidated as public policies have facilitated fusions and closures of smaller refineries for economies of scale and improved efficiency. Chinese corporations' increasing energy requirements led to increased exploration and development at sea and the pursuit of foreign expansion

Another goal of internationalization in non-conventional resource production is to obtain access to lucrative parts of the upstream sector (EIA, 2013). Wu (2008) notes that it does not represent the strategic policy of the Chinese government but domestic political concerns and rivalries between agencies. Indeed, instead of competing with each other, the Chinese government has pushed companies to form investment alliances abroad. Lastly, Chinese firms are eager to invest in countries that some foreign oil companies deem overly dangerous. In summary, China's oil FDI continues to be motivated by a mixture of market-based SOE decisions, rivalry for government favor between them, and political constraints on rising access to electricity. In addition to the foregoing, China's aggressive approach to acquiring new businesses has raised concerns about the country's global energy demand development in the coming years. Outward Chinese FDI has risen since the beginning of the 21st century, with Chinese companies purchasing assets in the Middle East, America, Latin America, Asia, and Africa since 2009.

In 2011, according to EIA numbers, the undertakings, mainly in connection with natural and unconventional gas, invested USD 18 billion in

energy reserves. Consequently, China's oil production abroad fell to over \$1.5 billion in 2011 from 140 million barrels daily in 2000. Projects show that their share will continue to grow in the years to come. Currently, 20% of Chinese corporations' gas and oil output comes from overseas (EIA, 2013). Alone, Chinese oil corporations acquired assets worth over USD 38 billion, more than a third of the overall amount linked to activities in Latin America (Diario, 2020).

### **Chinese Investment Effects in Argentina:**

Instead of a Washington arrangement, Chinese investment has developed a product agreement. Sly says that the term "commodity consensus" has been used by several writers since the Chinese ties are entirely focused on neo-extractive, significant commercial asymmetries, the lack of food control, and environmental destruction (MercoPress, 2016). Argentina's reliance to exports to China increasing by 156% between 2003 and 2007, compared to China's 886 percent growth with Argentina. In comparison, Argentina's trade deficit with China rose by over 700 percent between 2008 and 2014, which was the same time as the Argentinean debt with China started, implying that its associations with Chinese goods began as loans. The dependence on raw soy and crude petroleum as primary products has been steadier than the agricultural peripheral appendage of the Chinese industrial center.

In 2017, for example, both countries signed a nuclear cooperation agreement in which China supplies two nuclear plants worth \$15 trillion to Argentina, and China is willing to lend 85% of the programs. Thousands of units of special equipment are needed to operate each exported Chinese nuclear reactor, and hundreds of factories are necessary to produce and construct the facilities. It is calculated that 150,000 new employees for the Chinese industry will be shipped to Argentina for specialist components, instruments, and skills. In addition, the Chinese economy would profit from expenditures amounting to RMB 100 billion over the entire lifetime of the reactor. If nuclear plants in Argentina are successful and are transferred to other South American countries, this could be lucrative for China.

Chinese factories may profit, but manufacturing in Argentina would probably have a less positive effect. However, for South Americans, more opportunities can be developed because they have the requisite expertise and can make acceptable arrangements with China to participate in their work and manufacture ample domestic supplies. Soybean remains the foundation for sustaining a united China and Argentina. However, Argentina once exported to China soybean oil and soy meal, which are better than raw soybeans. China has substituted its locally manufactured soybean oil and meal for Argentina's crushed and refined soybean oil and meal. It is an outstanding example of Argentina's soy supply chain erosion. With China boosting its home soy

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industry, it reduces Argentina's demand for soy and oil plants, rendering Argentina more dependent on raw materials.

Sly also argues that China has artificially increased Argentine soy oil's price to enable its domestic soy oil supply to expand and improve by placing a 9 percent tariff on soy oil imports (Sly, 2017). President Macri intends to double soya exports, but if commodity prices stay low, such an initiative does not even raise revenue. Gallagher points out that 600,000 workers in Argentina's shoe industry felt the strain from low-cost China shoe imports, and Argentina launched an anti-dumping lawsuit against China in 2009. In exchange, China boosted shoe exports to Argentina to reduce the shoe cost further and stopped Argentina from competing at such low rates. Five years ago, Argentina shot back at Chinese shoes with heavy tariffs. As China was unintentionally aware of Argentina's dependence on soybean exports to China, there is a solid incremental soy export tax to finance the famous programs that import 77 percent of Argentina's soybeans, and the nationalist government relies on it to hold the taxes. As a result, China reduced its imports into Argentina by 65%, importing only 12% of Argentina and paralyzing its farmers and government profits. Finally, President Cristina Kirchner visited China to discuss plans for a rail modernization program that would raise Chinese debt and connect with Chinese funds (Gallagher, 2016).

It is a classic case in geo-economics, as China targeted Argentina's principal export, soya, to sell low-cost goods while preserving and boosting its factories. It forecasts what countries can anticipate if they want to drive China down, which would not reverse its operation internationally. As Leslie Gelb says, Beijing played the modern market game at the master level. By avoiding war and political confrontations and focusing on business and its global impact, it went far beyond the current economic power. People do not fear the military might of China; they fear its capacity to exchange, invest, or withhold it (Leslie, 2010).

President Macri has a challenging problem for himself. He wants to collaborate with China to stop withdrawing financing and construction to finalize the \$20 billion highway, dam, and two nuclear power plant contracts. For example, President Macri felt he might use the TPP to forge new dealings with countries such as Canada, Singapore, Japan, America, and others to secure new transactions for Argentina, and he took a bold step and halted the development of two controversial Santa Cruz dams in the area. China also said in an exchange that if one project is halted, it has a "cross-default" provision to halt both projects. In comparison, China started to consume less soy, putting Argentina on the table. After that, Macri flew to Beijing, reversed his firm decision to stop the dam building, and interconnected further ties between Argentina and China by signing 16 additional investment dealings in China

(Patey, 2017). Macri's relations with China have also driven China to use soft leverage to sustain deep financial inclusion and link itself more tightly with European and American markets and investments. As Argentina's government moved from a populist system to a more open foreign economy, China remained highly relevant to Argentina (Los, 2015). He wanted to reverse Chinese investments but quickly discovered that there wasn't as much room as he had hoped. China might be in danger of ending all ventures with the cross-default provision if the dam-building was canceled. President Macri is not ready to abandon the strengthened and extended rail infrastructure in all ventures in light of questionable hydroelectric dams.

Although it is too early to determine precisely how Chinese expenditure in energy diversification has supported Argentina, the 930 kilometers of railway and the quintupling of cargo capacity prove that the growth of the infrastructure has helped Argentina. The connection makes it possible for more grain, building materials, and minerals to rapidly enter ports and sites, grow soy export taxes, and speed up Chinese development activities. Consequently, it seems that Chinese investment is not a promise of economic prosperity but is still focused on the structures of the recipient region. Douglass North describes institutions as humane limitations that shape the foundations of social, economic, and political engagement (Douglass, 1991). Strong institutions were the cornerstone to prosperity, progress, and equality, as were the most effective development transformations. Argentina has developed reasonably stable political institutions and vital economic planning that ensure the people are not exposed to a similar crisis as in 2001. Although the structures are still incomplete, free elections have enabled the change from a 12-year populist dictatorship to a center-right government feasible in Argentina, guaranteeing that no faction controls the political landscape for a limited time and raising the possibility for corruption.

### **Conclusion:**

China's advancement and economic growth abroad, as well as the fact that investment is strongly privatized and removed from solid government control and forces. However, one of the world's biggest economies is led by a one-party regime and involved in multinational financial negotiations and ventures. Venezuelans face economic circumstances associated with an incompetent administration, with China's total lending, more spending by Chinese state-owned firms, and China's laissez-faire approach towards its courts. The negligence on both sides contributed to the disintegration of the petroleum sector. With China focused on oil and Venezuela dependent on oil to boost its government, the reasoning will lead us to conclude that oil output is at a record high. Venezuela's oil production facilities are state-of-the-art, thanks to massive Chinese credits and substantial investments. However, such

apathy now highlights the costs of the populist regime's destructive policies. Venezuela might easily enjoy improved links with China, but the emphasis should be shifted toward less dependence on oil rentals and diversifying its wealth. Venezuela's crown jewel oil market has been ignored to a considerable degree, with rigs, refineries, and tankers in chaos and an unprecedented drop in oil demand. It is time for Venezuelans to demand that technical expertise be allowed into the country to fix the broken petroleum industry without fear of penalization, to demand Chinese loans made without legislative competition be requested as evil, and to start increasing efforts to produce more refined products gradually in their own countries and then ship them to Chinese markets. The institutions of Venezuela have used oil revenue to avoid the obligation to tax their citizens, contributing to intensified repression and authoritarian rule. It led to governments having so much financial leverage, culminating in greater dominance and a resulting decay of society due to the widespread patronage of widely demanded social services. Institutional improvements are the best means of fixing the issues.

The landlords and farmers in Argentina have the power to influence soy taxes by lobbying, hitting and storing soy when circumstances are unfavorable, and then cutting soy revenue off from the government if the acts of the state are viewed as abusive or unethical or if the price of commodities is considered too low. Thus, the sponsorship of crooked government officials has not contributed to detrimental secondary problems in Chinese investment. Often disproportionate soy taxation has raised the country's income to fulfill debt commitments and provide social services. The voice of the citizens was able to maintain an acceptable balance. Overall, China seems to have the same geopolitical relationship as the Kirchner administration with the non-populist Macri administration, even though the Macri administration seems to have introduced defense nets to make it easier to mix in foreign investment diversification. Chinese-Argentina diplomacy remains unchanged and indicates that China can infiltrate both modes of the regime in South America. It has undoubtedly weakened China's soft power—at least throughout its government. Chinese investment has strengthened Argentina's railways, eventually improving their capacity to carry goods from the state's interior to remote markets at a cheaper rate and offering Argentinean employees better transportation. It is too early to see how the construction of nuclear facilities and hydroelectric dams will impact the nation. If the capital market in Argentina stays strong for building significant ventures, they may succeed. As long as good governance takes place, China's investment can be advantageous. During the unbinding cycles of democracy, driven by Chinese credit, crooked officials were able to open foreign countries and their people to Chinese investment. Argentina gains mainly from Chinese funding, but the

deterioration of manufacturing employment should be emphasized in greater detail. In developing these ventures, Argentina must ensure that Chinese investment includes local firms to generate additional jobs while studying the best practices of Chinese companies.

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## CPEC and Inclusive Development of Balochistan: A Holistic Approach to Human Security and Sustainable Development

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### ABSTRACT

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The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) holds transformative potential for the socio-economic development of Balochistan, a region long characterized by structural inequalities, underdevelopment, and insecurity. This paper explores how a holistic approach integrating the Human Security Model can foster inclusive development and sustainable progress in Balochistan. By addressing various dimensions of human security—economic, food, health, community, and political security—this study outlines a framework to ensure that the benefits of CPEC reach marginalized communities and contribute to regional stability. The focus on inclusive development entails enhancing local capacities, promoting equitable resource distribution, and fostering participatory governance to mitigate socio-political grievances. It emphasizes leveraging CPEC's infrastructure and economic projects to create employment opportunities, improve access to essential services, and strengthen resilience against environmental and social challenges. Additionally, the Human Security Model provides a lens to address the

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unique vulnerabilities faced by Balochistan's population, ensuring that development efforts are people-centric and conflict-sensitive. By integrating human security into CPEC's implementation, this paper argues for a development paradigm that balances economic growth with human well-being. Such a strategy not only promotes sustainable development in Balochistan but also contributes to broader regional stability and prosperity.

**Keywords:** CPEC, Balochistan, Inclusive Development, Sustainable Development

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## **Introduction**

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is regarded as an ambitious and transformative initiative in the realm of global economic cooperation. The CPEC can significantly impact regional trade, infrastructure development, and energy cooperation spanning a vast geographical area linking China and Pakistan. It is a comprehensive infrastructure development initiative encompassing a network of highways, railroads, pipelines, and other infrastructural projects. It is estimated to have a total cost of \$46 billion (Rauf and Zeidan, 2023). Subsequently, the two governing bodies formulated a comprehensive "Long Term Plan" in 2017, which extended the anticipated execution time till 2030. The projected expenditures have experienced an upward revision, reaching US\$ 62 billion (MERICS, 2020).

The project presents mutual interests and benefits for both countries by creating a quicker trade route through the Arabian Sea. This route allows China to avoid the lengthy and congested marine routes through the Malacca Strait. Additionally, it addresses the infrastructural shortcomings in Pakistan that have hindered economic growth. The development of roads, railroads, and energy infrastructure in Pakistan is likely to boost connectivity, energy supply, and transportation within the country, which will foster the growth of trade and industry. Furthermore, serving as a pivotal pearl within Chinese vast Belt and Road Initiative, the CPEC possesses the potential to enhance Pakistan's geopolitical significance and open up opportunities for increased foreign investment. Nevertheless, being primarily sited in Balochistan, the CPEC offers vital implications for the province in particular and the whole of Pakistan in general.

Balochistan, the largest but underdeveloped province of Pakistan, holds abundant natural resources in the region, such as coal, copper, gold, chromite, and limestone. Moreover, the province's geographical significance

and the presence of diverse communities render it a pivotal subject for examining the impacts of the CPEC on inclusive economic development, and the overall welfare of individuals. As the CPEC unfolds, the province is likely to emerge as an important contributor to achieving sustainable development and addressing human security issues.

The Human Security Model (HSM) provides a comprehensive framework that goes beyond traditional state-centric security approaches, focusing instead on the protection and empowerment of individuals and communities. It emphasizes seven dimensions: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. Applying this model to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) located in Balochistan can help assess the human-centered implications of the project while identifying the challenges and opportunities in ensuring sustainable and inclusive development.

Given the context, the objective of this study is to develop a thorough comprehension of the interrelated dynamics of the implementation of CPEC in Balochistan by using qualitative method of research. It intends to examine the potential implications of the project on relations between Pakistan and China, also its impact on the fiscal policies, industrialization process and socio-economic and infrastructural development of the Balochistan through the lens of human security model. It also aims to assess the outcomes of CPEC for the local marginalized communities as human security model underscores the significance of inclusive policies to empower the local communities, protect their rights, and ensure equitable distribution of the resources.

Besides, it will comprehensively evaluate the advancement in economic, social and infrastructural domains along with the issues pertaining to human security i.e., prospects of improved education facilities, healthcare and employment opportunities. Furthermore, the research will also explore sustainability and long-term impact of CPEC on the future of local communities. It also contributes to the ongoing discourse of sustainable development goals and inclusive growth.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Understanding the role of CPEC in the inclusive development of Balochistan requires conceptual framework that includes key dimensions of human security and sustainable development. In this framework, the CPEC is an independent variable which drives the socioeconomic development of the province through infrastructural development, also investments in energy and industrial domains whereas, human security is mediating variable that emphasizes upon addressing the socioeconomic vulnerabilities, and sustainable development is dependent variable which is crucial for the

marginalised communities of Balochistan.

### **Background and Context of CPEC**

The CPEC, a momentous infrastructural project, envisions to promote economic cooperation between Pakistan and China by developing connectivity. Formally inaugurated in 2015, the project was launched under the umbrella of Chinese BRI. Connecting Xinjiang province of China with Gwadar Port located in Pakistan's Balochistan province, the project seeks to establish trade and transportation network.

This ambitious programme comprises an extensive network of transportation infrastructure, including roads, trains, pipelines, power installations, and other related activities.

The origin of the CPEC can be attributed to the year 2013, during which the President of China, Xi Jinping visited Pakistan and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to initiate the planning and execution of the corridor. The investment of the projects for the development of international infrastructure under BRI is projected to cost more than US\$1 trillion throughout the ten years which commenced in 2017 (OECD, 2018).

The importance of the CPEC extends beyond its vast dimensions, encompassing the geopolitical framework within which it functions. It holds significance for China since it is an integral component of its "String of Pearls" strategy. This policy is designed to safeguard maritime trade routes and bolster energy security through the establishment of strategically positioned ports

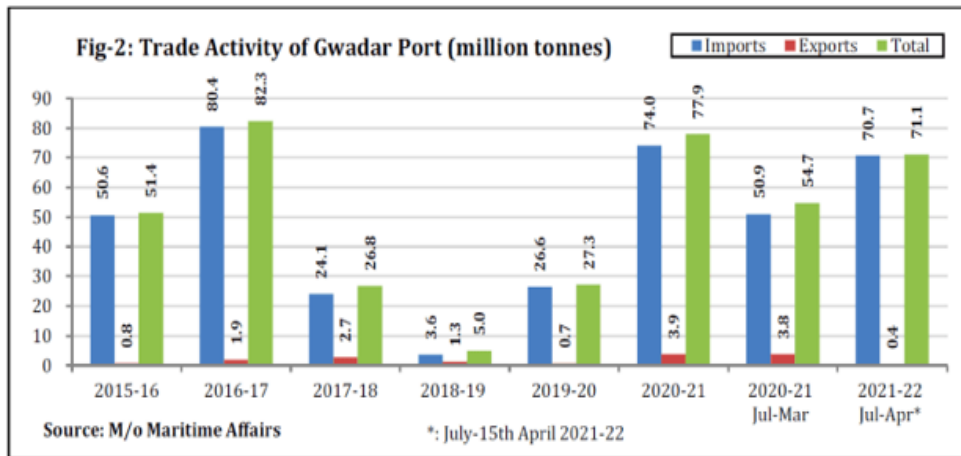
Source: Stratheia, 2023



around the Indian Ocean. The Gwadar Port plays a pivotal role in this strategic

plan, providing China with a more efficient and safe trade pathway to the Arabian Sea, thereby circumventing the need to traverse the Malacca Strait (Malik, 2012).

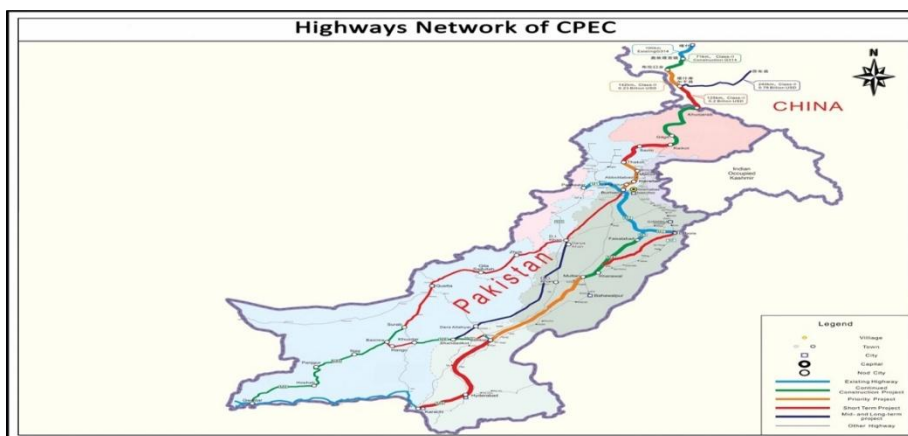
Source: <https://cpec.gov.pk/maps>



From the standpoint of Pakistan, the CPEC signifies a transformative prospect for fostering economic growth, generating employment opportunities, and advancing infrastructure development. The strategic importance of a commerce route connecting Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East is also augmented by the potential of the project. It also aims at effectively tackling the energy deficiencies in Pakistan by enhancing the overall connection throughout the nation.

### What is Inclusive Development?

Inclusive development is an approach that raises the standard of living of every individual in the society leaving none behind (USAID, n.d.). It includes socioeconomic development by empowering the individuals and making them effective part of the society by addressing their vulnerabilities and inequalities of the society. Without inclusive development, the sustainable development is always at risk.



### **Holistic Approach to Human Security & Sustainable Development**

A holistic approach to human security & sustainable development presents a comprehensive framework for the well-being of individuals and communities. It integrates socioeconomic, environmental and governance aspects of a society and a country. It entails human centric focus, interconnectedness of threats like poverty, health crises, and armed conflicts etc., equity and justice and inclusivity for sustainable development in the society.

### **Significance of Inclusive Development and Human Security in Balochistan**

The vitality of inclusive development and human security cannot be challenged in any society so is the case in Balochistan where these are considered essential elements for achieving long lasting prosperity, stability, and social well-being.

Balochistan, as the largest province in Pakistan in terms of area and possessing abundant natural resources, exhibits considerable potential for fostering economic advancement and prosperity. Nevertheless, the presence of historical inequities, ethnic conflicts, and political instability have caused socio-economic inequality and human security concerns within the province. According to the 2017 Pakistan Census, Balochistan is characterised by a diverse array of ethnic and linguistic groups. The Baloch, constituting a significant majority of the populace, represent the most prominent ethnic community in the region of Balochistan. According to the census data, the Baloch community comprises more than 55.6 per cent of the total population in the province (Raisani, 2022). The Pashtuns are around 36 per cent. The remaining 12 per cent is comprised of several minor communities, including Brahuis, Hazaras, Sindhis, Punjabis, Uzbeks, and Turkmens (Singh, 2020).

To mitigate socio-economic disparities, it is imperative to prioritise

inclusive development in the region of Balochistan. This approach is essential for effectively tackling the prevailing socio-economic challenges that exist across many communities and regions within Balochistan. The province encompasses a wide range of ethnic groups and marginalised people, that has substantial challenges in multiple domains including their access to the edification, health care, and other services.

According to official records from the health department, Balochistan is said to have a total of 1661 hospitals, primary health clinics, and rural health centers. However, it is worth noting that out of these establishments, only 250 are operational in practice, while the remaining exist solely in documentation without any physical infrastructure being constructed (The Economic Times, 2023). Furthermore, within the realm of the education sector, it can be observed that Quetta, the capital city of Balochistan, is equipped with educational facilities that exhibit a significantly subpar grade of education. The remaining 32 districts are experiencing a lack of educational facilities. There is no evidence indicating that 17 per cent of the budget is designated for education, neither has there been any formal inquiry conducted to verify this allocation. The proportion of female education in Baluchistan is under 15 per cent, in contrast to the 37 per cent of male education (Nadir, 2022). Similarly, poverty is widespread in the province, with the Multidimensional Poverty Index recording the highest poverty level at 71.2 per cent in the province (with an average intensity of 55.3 percent) (UNDP, n.d.).

### **Literature Review**

The literature review critically evaluates the existing academic literature, encompassing scholarly works, research papers, reports, and studies that pertain to the subject matter at hand. The fundamental objective of conducting a literature review is to get a full comprehension of the present knowledge, and insights of the subject matter. This involves finding major themes, gaps, and contradictions within the existing body of research, to further advance the field of study.

The objective of the CPEC is twofold: firstly, to facilitate the economic transformation of Pakistan through the modernization of its road, rail, air, and energy transportation infrastructure; and secondly, establishing connectivity between the deep-sea ports of Pakistan including Gwadar and Karachi and in China with the Xinjiang, as well as other regions beyond, via land routes. The Chinese province of Xinjiang has connectivity with eight countries including Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, and Russia, where the ancient Silk Road traversed the region historically. The objective of this initiative is to mitigate the temporal and financial expenses associated with the transportation of commodities and energy resources like oil and natural gas, to China. This will be achieved by bypassing the Strait of

Malacca and the South China Sea. Likewise, the plan aimed to establish a number of special economic zones (SEZs), which were designed based on comparable zones in China. These SEZs provide investment incentives, and are intended to stimulate swift economic development. In 2016, the declaration of collaborative space and satellite endeavours amongst Pakistan and China, prompted by the CPEC, materialized. Additionally, the literature review critically examines scholarly research that specifically investigates the province of Balochistan, providing insights into its socio-economic challenges, historical inequalities, and issues about human security (Rauf and Zeidan, 2023).

The CPEC holds substantial importance within the framework of BRI. It can be interpreted as a significant symbol representing a new age characterised by enhanced connectivity and integration inside Pakistan. This transformative initiative holds the potential to not only stimulate the region in terms of economy but also contribute to the overall well-being of the Pakistani population. China is anticipated to derive benefits from alternative trade and energy routes, alongside convenient connectivity to the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. Consequently, it represents a complex initiative which grants China the most direct entry point to the Indian Ocean connecting to the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. Moreover, it serves to foster the development, interconnection, and integration of regional economies and markets, while solidifying Pakistan's position as a crucial participant in the BRI. Additionally, the CPEC provides to China a reliable economic passage in the event of any potential conflicts arising in the South China Sea (Anwar et al., 2022).

Pakistan is presently grappling with a multitude of social, economic, and environmental challenges. The prevailing concerns encompass poverty, insufficient educational opportunities, inadequate infrastructure, security challenges, and worsening unemployment rates. According to officials from both nations, the efficient implementation of CPEC programmes is believed to hold the potential for resolving Pakistan's challenges. On the other hand, China aims to expand its sphere of influence, enhance its global footprint, and safeguard strategic oil and commerce pathways. The CPEC is a comprehensive economic undertaking aimed at enhancing regional connectivity between China and Pakistan, as well as facilitating trade and commercial linkages between China and Europe. Infrastructure encompasses several components such as road networks, electricity systems, manufacturing facilities, industries, and other developmental initiatives (Aman, 2022).

The Western Route of the CPEC is susceptible to security risks due to its trajectory through the politically unstable province of Balochistan. The Baloch separatist parties perceive Chinese investment as a form of resource

exploitation within the region and regard China as an external entity encroaching onto their territory. The outbreak at the Chinese consulate is the testimony to the fact. The establishment of a distinct security division, consisting of 9,000 personnel from the Pakistan Army and 6,000 paramilitary forces, was prompted by the imperative to ensure the safeguarding of the CPEC route. This division was specifically tasked to protect Chinese workers and projects operating within the framework of CPEC. Hence, it can be argued that the existence of the CPEC has the potential to intensify preexisting complaints and foster a surge in separatist sentiments, both inside the province and throughout Pakistan as a whole (Anwar, 2019).

The development of ecosystem in Balochistan presents a multitude of obstacles, encompassing issues such as inadequate governance, a struggling economy, high poverty rates, a pervasive sense of deprivation, limited social capital, gender inequality, water scarcity, underutilised land resources, and insufficient market connections.

The literature review offers a comprehensive analysis of available research pertaining to the subject matter of “CPEC and Inclusive Development of Balochistan.” It develops a solid groundwork, demonstrating that the issues under investigation are widely acknowledged within the society. Furthermore, it is evident that there is a certain level of understanding regarding potential solutions. Nonetheless, the primary challenge is in the effective implementation of these strategies. This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis, propose policy recommendations, and make innovative contributions to the ongoing conversation surrounding the attainment of sustainable and equitable development in Balochistan. It specifically focuses on the execution of the CPEC as a means to achieve these goals.

### **CPEC’s Impact on Balochistan’s Inclusive Development**

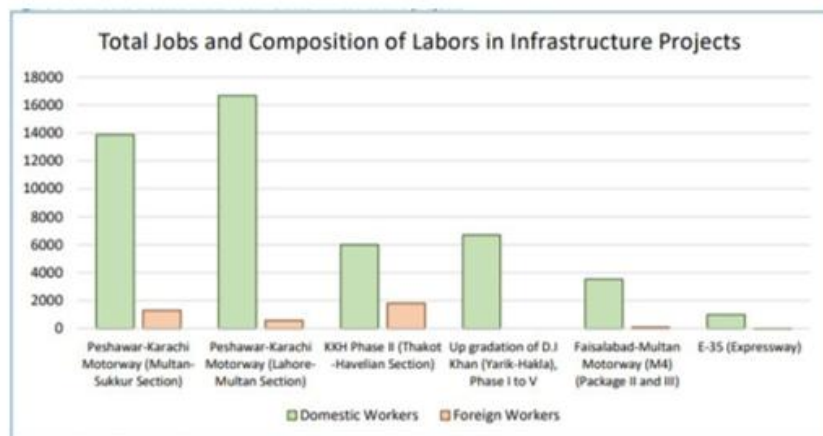
The CPEC, being a transformative endeavour, possesses the capacity to exert a substantial impact on the economic growth, infrastructure development, and social well-being of the province. Nevertheless, a thorough analysis is necessary to assess the influence of this phenomenon on inclusive and sustainable development, taking into account historical discrepancies, regional inequities, and concerns related to human security in the province of Balochistan.

### **Economic Development**

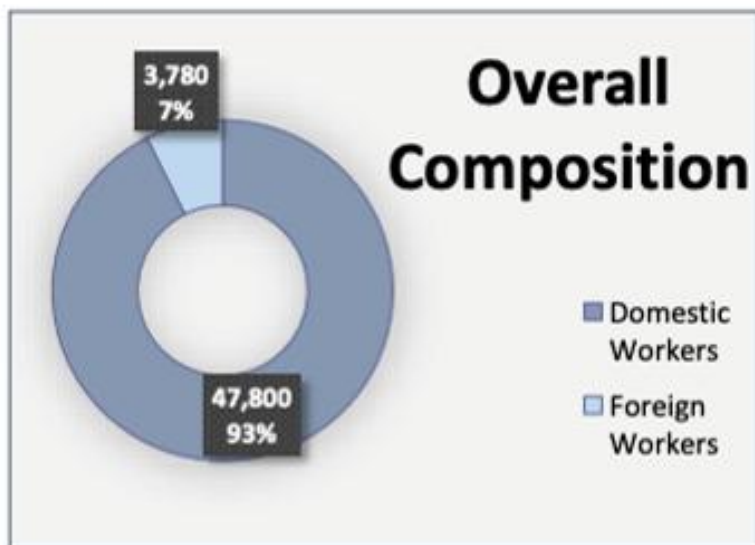
The CPEC possesses the capacity to stimulate economic expansion in the province of Balochistan by attracting foreign direct investments, enhancement of trade connectivity, and elevation of industrialization aligned with SDG 8. The energy and infrastructure initiatives inside the corridor are anticipated to generate employment prospects within the construction and

energy industries. This has the potential to mitigate unemployment rates and enhance the economic circumstances of nearby areas.

According to a report issued by Gwadar Pro, the CPEC is projected to yield significant benefits for Pakistan, with a total of 88 projects contributing to the creation of 2.3 million job possibilities by the year 2030 (The CPEC Portal, 2020). Additionally, the report highlights that the implementation of CPEC has already resulted in the generation of over 155,000 employment opportunities for the local population in Pakistan (Global Times, 2023). Another report indicates the work force employed under CPEC in infrastructural projects in which domestic workers account 93% of the total work force.



Source: cpec.gov.pk



Source: cpec.gov.pk

### **Transformative Transport Infrastructure Projects Within the CPEC Framework**

One of the primary goals of the CPEC is to facilitate the establishment of an extensive infrastructure system comprising roadways, trains, and seaports. This infrastructure development aims to improve connectivity both within the province of Balochistan and between Balochistan and other regions of Pakistan. Additionally, a notable achievement has been made in the infrastructure domain, with the construction of 809 km of highway and the installation of 886 km of transmission lines (Pakistan Today, 2023).

Similarly, the connection initiatives involve the construction of the 19 km four-lane East Bay Expressway in Gwadar. The ongoing infrastructure projects include the Zhob-Quetta, Kuchlak (N-50), Khuzdar-Basima Road (N-30), Hoshab – Awaran Road Section (M-8), Nokundi-Mashkhel Road, Awaran-Khuzdar Road Section (M-8), Up-gradation of D.I. Khan (Yarik) – Zhob, N-50 Phase-I, Mashkhel-Panjgur Road, and Quetta Mass Transit (Jappa, 2022). Developed infrastructure has the potential to boost the transportation of goods and individuals, stimulate commercial activities, and foster investment in geographically distant regions, thereby fostering equitable development and mitigating regional inequalities.

1.	KKH Phase II (Havelian - Thakot Section)	120
2.	Peshawar-Karachi Motorway (Multan-Sukkur Section)	392
3.	Orange Line Metro Train – Lahore	27
4.	Cross Border Optical Fiber Cable (Khunjrab - Rawalpindi)	820
5.	Pilot Project of Digital Terrestrial Multimedia Broadcast (DTMB)	
6.	Hakla - D.I Khan Motorway	297

Source: CPEC Secretariat, Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives

#### **Under Construction Projects**

1.	Zhob - Quetta (Kuchlak) (N-50)	305
2.	Khuzdar-Basima Road (N-30)	106
3.	Hoshab - Awaran Road Section (M-8)	146
4.	KKH Alternate Route Shandur - Chitral Road	153
5.	Nokundi-Mashkhel Road	103

Source: CPEC Secretariat, Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives

#### **In-Pipeline Projects**

1.	Up-gradation and Dualization of ML-1 and establishment of Dry Port near Havelian	1733
2.	Up-gradation of D.I.Khan (Yarik) - Zhob, N-50 Phase-I	235
3.	KKH Alternative Route Gilgit-Shandur Road	213
4.	Realignment of KKH Phase-I Thakot - Raikot Section	250
5.	Peshawar - D.I.Khan Motorway	360
6.	Awaran - Khuzdar Road Section (M-8)	168
7.	Dir Expressway	29.6
8.	DTMB-A (Digitalize the existing three sites of PTV)	

Source: CPEC Secretariat, Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives

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### Long Term Projects

1.	Mirpur-Muzaffarabad-Mansehra Road	200
2.	Karachi Circular Railway	43
3.	Mashkhel - Pangur Road	200
4.	Quetta Mass Transit	
5.	Greater Peshawar Region Mass Transit	

Source: CPEC Secretariat, Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives

### Energy Resources in Balochistan

Balochistan, equipped with abundant natural resources such as coal, gas, and minerals are of vital significance for the economic well-being of Pakistan. Based on an estimation, a significant portion of Pakistan's proved gas reserves, approximately 19 trillion cubic feet (tcf), is situated in the province of Balochistan, out of the country's total estimated reserves of 25.1 tcf (Tribune, 2022). Based on international studies, it has been determined that Balochistan possesses an estimated 6 trillion barrels of oil reserves, which are distributed throughout onshore and offshore areas (Balochistan Voices, 2016). In addition, the province is endowed with the ninth-largest shale gas deposits globally, located along its coastal stretch.

Stated in a detailed investigation conducted by the World Bank, it has been determined that Balochistan exhibits the highest levels of solar radiation in comparison to other regions within Pakistan. This is evident by the yearly solar radiation average reaching approximately 5.9-6.2 kWh/m<sup>2</sup> /day in the

province. About 40 percent of the geographical surface of Balochistan is directly exposed to the sun, with a potential of over 6 kWh/ sqm per day. The province exhibits a yearly average sunlight duration ranging from 8 to 8.5 hours, accompanied by an average daily global insolation of 19 to 20 MJ/m<sup>2</sup>/day. The figures represent some of the greatest levels of solar energy potential found globally. Moreover, Balochistan exhibits a notable prevalence of elevated wind velocities. Pakistan possesses significant potential for wind energy particularly, in the southern parts of Balochistan. The technical capacity for wind power is substantial along the extensive 1,000 km coastline, where wind speeds consistently vary between 7 and 8 m/s. According to estimates, the potential annual capacity for wind energy is 122.6 GW, which surpasses the present power generation level of the country by more than twofold (Board of Investment and Trade, 2021).

### **CPEC's Transformative Energy and Infrastructure Projects**

The CPEC is actively engaged in the domain of infrastructure and energy development, undertaking a bold endeavor to facilitate a range of crucial initiatives with the objective of augmenting Pakistan's power generation capabilities, harnessing renewable energy resources, and expanding connectivity. The aforementioned projects comprise a wide array of activities, comprising coal-fired power plants, wind farms, solar parks, and hydroelectric facilities. These initiatives not only provide a substantial contribution to Pakistan's energy requirements but also drive economic development and enhance the country's industrial and technological framework.

Given below is a comprehensive overview of the notable projects that have been successfully completed.

1. 1320MW Sahiwal Coal-fired Power Plant
  2. 1320MW Coal-fired Power Plant at Port Qasim Karachi
  3. 1320MW China Hub Coal Power Project, Hub Balochistan
  4. 660MW Engro Thar Coal Power Project
  5. 1000MW Quaid-e-Azam Solar Park (Bahawalpur)
  6. 50 MW Hydro China Dawood Wind Farm, Gharo, Thatta
  7. 100MW UEP Wind Farm, Jhampir, Thatta
  8. 50MW Sachal Wind Farm, Jhampir, Thatta
  9. 100MW Three Gorges Second and Third Wind Power Project
  10. Matiari to Lahore ±660 KV HVDC Transmission Line Project
  11. 720MW Karot Hydropower Project, AJK/Punjab
  12. 330MW HUBCO Thar Coal Power Project (Thar Energy)
  13. 1320MW SSRL Thar Coal Block-I 7.8 mtpa & Power Plant (2×660MW) (Shanghai Electric)
  14. 330MW HUBCO Thal Nova Thar Coal Power Project
- The ongoing projects, with a combined capacity of 1184 MW, include:

1. 884MW Suki Kinari Hydropower Project, KP
2. 300MW Coal-Fired Power Project at Gwadar

Meanwhile, there are also 3244 MW projects currently under consideration:

1. 1124MW Kohala Hydropower Project, AJK
2. 700.7MW Azad Pattan Hydropower Project, AJK/Punjab
3. 1320 MW Thar Mine Mouth Oracle Power Plant & surface mine
4. 50MW Cacho Wind Power Project
5. 50MW Western Energy (Pvt.) Ltd. Wind Power Project

**Source: “Energy Projects Under CPEC”, Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives**

In Gwadar, the energy initiatives encompass a 320megawatt China Hub Coal Power Project and a 300megawatt Coal-Fired Power Project. A total of over 6,000 megawatts of electricity has been successfully added into the national grid, marking a significant milestone in the energy sector of Pakistan.

Nevertheless, the CPEC encounters various hurdles and issues. The pathway traverses Balochistan, a province abundant in resources and characterised by a historical backdrop of ethnic grievances and political instability. Its practicality and functionality are hindered by the safety and security concerns primarily due to the terrorist acts to sabotage the project.

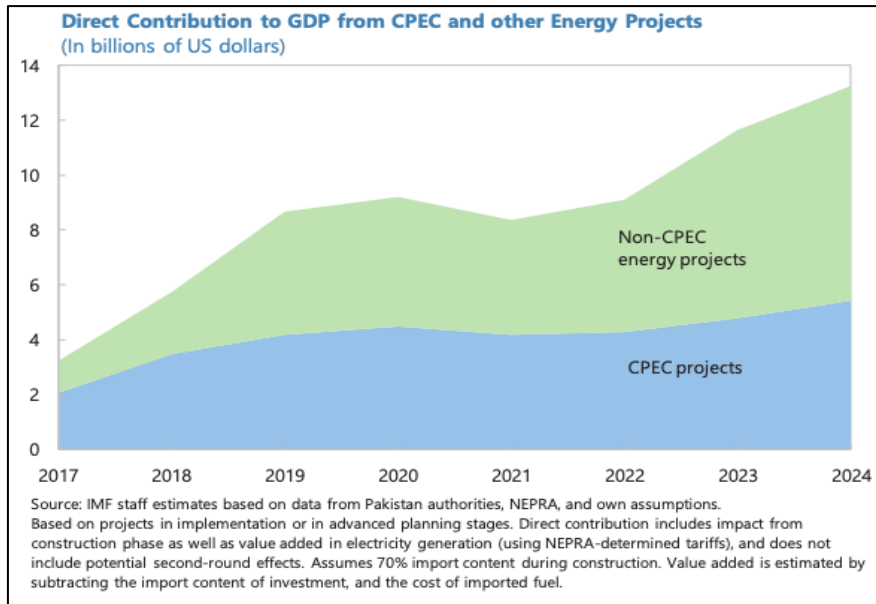
There are also apprehensions regarding the conditions of loans provided to Pakistan by China including concerns about the transparency of financial aspects attached to the project. The issues are genuine as they impact the sustainability of Pakistan’s debt. According to the latest records, the external debt of Pakistan has reached at \$133.5 billion in September 2024. One third of this amount which is more than \$30 billion, is owed to China (Hussain, 2023).

Despite of the apprehensions and concerns, the dedication of both Pakistan and China to achieve substantial and far-reaching outcome associated with CPEC is maintained. The project is aimed at effectively utilising these resources to address Pakistan’s energy requirements and stimulate its economic growth. By using its resources, Balochistan has the potential to significantly contribute to Pakistan’s energy security and economic growth, while promoting inclusive and sustainable development throughout the province aligned with SDG-7. CPEC is also likely to boost GDP through its energy projects.

### **Share in Human Capital Development**

Under the CPEC projects, the development in the education sector and in human capital is expected to elevate in the province of Balochistan. The human security model also ensures human development through focused and

human centered approach by establishing institutes and offering scholarships for the well-being of local communities.



Under CPEC, the implementation of vocational training institutes and skill development programmes have the potential to equip local communities with the essential skills and knowledge required to actively engage in the labour market and capitalise the economic prospects accompanying the CPEC-affiliated projects. The federal government of Pakistan is making investments in these specific sectors to promote the welfare of local communities. Education and professional development are currently receiving significant attention, leading to the reinstatement of various scholarship programmes. These programmes include scholarships specifically designed for the students of Gwadar, the Coastal Regions Higher Education Scholarship Programme, as well as the Master Leading to PhD Scholarships Program (Indigenous and Overseas) for the Students of Balochistan (Planning Commission, 2023). Given below is the snapshot of overall education in the province.

Institutions / Categories	Number	Enrollment	Teaching Staf
<b>Primary schools</b>	<b>12,541</b>	<b>453,436</b>	<b>17,987</b>
Male	8,470	239,496	10,280
Female	3,076	166,758	5,224
Co-education	678	-	-
Private	317	47,182	2,483
<b>Middle schools</b>	<b>1,969</b>	<b>267,307</b>	<b>14,124</b>
Male	868	93,684	5,989
Female	710	88,072	3,970
Co-education	-	-	-
Private	391	85,551	4,165
<b>High schools</b>	<b>1,644</b>	<b>584,255</b>	<b>32,003</b>
Male	738	219,153	13,697
Female	456	164,205	9,728
Co-education	-	-	-
Private	450	200,897	8,578
<b>Inter colleges</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>16,578</b>	<b>1,031</b>
Male	56	11,564	662
Female	32	5,014	369
<b>Degree colleges</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>55,115</b>	<b>1,983</b>
Male	30	38,043	1,378
Female	17	17,072	605
<b>Post Graduate Colleges</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>17,870</b>	<b>557</b>
Male	3	14,380	415
Female	1	3,490	142
<b>Residential colleges</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2,035</b>	<b>145</b>
Male	5	2,035	145
Female	-	-	-
<b>Cadet colleges</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3,430</b>	<b>236</b>
Male	9	2,978	206
Female	2	452	30
<b>Professional colleges</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>4,548</b>	<b>1,713</b>
<b>Universities</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>39,169</b>	<b>2,303</b>

Source:- Education Department/Organizations

Under CPEC, special attention has been given to the allocation of financial resources to facilitate the establishment or expansion of universities across various regions in Balochistan. Examples include the establishing of Bolan University of Health Sciences in Quetta, the founding of a sub-campus of BUITEMS in Qilla-Saifullah, the inauguration of an NUST Campus in Quetta, the laying foundation of Mir Chakar Khan Rind university in Sibi, the making of a University College in Dera Murad Jamali, the upgrading of SBK University, and the establishing the University of Gwadar. In addition, it is worth noting that Women's University campuses are also being established in the regions of Pishin and Khuzdar. Consequently, there has been a decrease in

the count of eligible households in Gwadar from 8000 to fewer than 1500 who are awaiting registration with the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) (CPEC Secretariat, n.d.).

### **Regional Connectivity and CPEC**

The geographical positioning of Balochistan, serving as a gateway to both the Middle Eastern and the Central Asian Region, amplifies its capacity to function as a prominent regional center for economic activities. The CPEC has the potential to act as a facilitator for the promotion of regional economic integration, hence enhancing trade and investment activities among Pakistan, China, and the bordering states. The integration of Balochistan has the potential to enhance economic diversification and foster inclusive growth, while establishing its significance within the broader regional economic framework (Afzal, 2022).

The potential transformation of the coastal town of Gwadar into a dynamic regional commerce hub is closely tied to the construction of Gwadar Port. This development encompasses the establishment of a seaport, airport, significant road networks coupled with a trade zone. These infrastructural advancements hold the promise of promoting economic growth, and facilitating international trade for the province of Balochistan (Ebrahim, 2021).

The inclusive growth of Balochistan is contingent upon the efficient planning, transparent governance, and proactive measures used to ensure the equitable distribution of economic advantages stemming from the CPEC. Through the identification and resolution of these obstacles, the CPEC has the potential to act as a catalyst for comprehensive economic expansion, advancement in human well-being, and the overall prosperity of the Balochistan region.

### **Challenges Related to Inclusive Development**

The province of Balochistan manifests a wide spectrum of diversity, encompassing both well-established urban areas and geographically isolated regions. This diversity presents a range of challenges and opportunities within the context of the CPEC. The possible focus on urban centers may exacerbate regional disparities, underscoring the importance of targeted investments in underdeveloped regions to foster inclusive economic growth.

There are apprehensions over the potential dominance of non-local trained labour in the workforce as a result of the CPEC, which may impede the employment opportunities for local individuals. Mitigation is the provision of training and development opportunities to empower local individuals with the necessary skills.

The infrastructure projects associated with the CPEC may potentially

require land acquisition, which could lead to the displacing of local people. The use of transparent terrestrial acquisition processes and equitable resettlement strategies is crucial in order to protect the rights of local communities.

Besides, the mitigation of environmental impacts, such as deforestation, necessitates the implementation of robust safeguards and the adoption of sustainable practice to avoid adverse consequences. The preservation of cultural assets necessitates active involvement and participation from the community in decision-making processes.

Additionally, the foreign loans acquired by the CPEC have raised concerns regarding the sustainability of debt. It is imperative to prioritise transparent financing practices and exercise fiscal discipline to address these concerns. It is, therefore, essential to enhance local governance, promote equitable access to decision making process and opportunities for the marginalised communities to mitigate the challenges.

### **A Holistic Approach to Inclusive Development and Human Security**

The development and security in Balochistan require a comprehensive and inclusive approach within the framework of CPEC and human security model. Equitable distribution of benefits can be guaranteed by incorporating the principles of inclusivity into the planning, implementation, and oversight of CPEC. The essential element include:

- To engage local stakeholders and marginalised communities in planning process to address the needs effectively.
- To invest in the infrastructural development to connect the marginalised communities for better education, healthcare and employment opportunities.
- To offer vocational and technical training under the CPEC projects well aligned with industrial needs to enhance job prospects.
- To encourage women participation for economic development through specific initiatives.
- To promote eco-friendly practices in order to safeguard livelihoods and natural resources for sustainable environment.
- Promote human rights and enhance governance to safeguard local rights.
- To implement strong tracking system to assess the impact of the projects and making necessary adjustments according to the ground realities.
- To promote transparency in governance, also to resolve conflicts if they occur to improve the unity among the local community.

By applying the indicators of human security model, the province can harvest maximum benefits transformative and sustainable growth, equitable

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development, and improved human well-being from the CPEC.

### **Sustainable Development and Balochistan's Future: Assessing the Long-term Sustainability of CPEC Projects**

Enduring sustainability of CPEC projects ask for a dedicated adherence to the principles of sustainable development which benefit the present and future cohorts upholding the ecological and sociological coherence of the province. Environmental conservation, preserving the natural resources of Balochistan and protection of biodiversity, and social sustainability are the key to long term resilience of the province and to ensure sustainable development.

The social sustainability in the province can be achieved through addressing the challenge of social inequality by providing enhanced educational opportunities, improved healthcare services and preserving cultural heritage. For sustained economic growth the province requires to foster economic variety, cultivate a skilled workforce, engage the private sector, and maintain transparent governance.

### **Conclusion**

The CPEC, in a nutshell, is a project that holds the potential to significantly impact socio-economic environment of the region, promote inclusiveness and safeguard human well-being. It has the capacity to boost economy, enhance infrastructure and strengthen regional connectivity being an integral component of BRI. Hence it demands to adopt a holistic and inclusive approach of human security to effectively address the challenges and vulnerabilities of the society.

The blend of historical legacy, population composition and geo-political environment of the province require a circumspect approach for its development. The uncertain and turbulent situation in the neighbourhood add into the challenges of the province including the conflicts and Middle East and Afghanistan which demand strategic diplomacy to tackle the challenges.

The functionality of the CPEC necessitates the careful approach towards environmental conservation, social sustainability and active involvement of the local community to address human security concerns i.e., poverty, education, healthcare, and resource access that holds immense significance for the future trajectory of Balochistan and for sustainable development. By applying the human security model and adopting a holistic approach towards addressing the challenges, desired outcome can be achieved.

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## Power Transition in New Great Game: Strategic Options for Pakistan

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### ABSTRACT

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Power transition in international politics is an ever-evolving approach owing to the rise and fall of the superpowers and great powers. Historically, the quest for more territories and resources has led to conflicts and wars between powerful empires and states, resulting in colonization, imperialism, and power transition. The first half of the 20th century witnessed long-running conflicts and wars among the great powers concerning power transition, which caused unheard-of violence and destruction in the history of humankind. However, in the second half of the foregoing century, the competing superpowers never resorted to direct confrontation during the Cold War but rather engaged in proxy conflicts and shadow wars by using proxy forces. The rise of China, the resurgence of Russia, and the emergence of transnational non-state actors in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century have ushered in the debate of power transition in international politics yet again. The 21<sup>st</sup> century power politics, based on geo-economics and the quest for energy resources and trade corridors, has been dubbed the New Great Game. Unlike the Cold War, the U.S. and China, the

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key players of the New Great Game, have avoided proxy confrontation by preferring competition and engagement. Pakistan, the closest U.S. ally during the Cold War and War on Terror, and now the closest ally of China in the emerging great-power competition, has fewer strategic options for maneuvering than ever before. This paper critically analyzes the future power transition in regional and far-regional geopolitics vis-à-vis the strategic options available to Pakistan's policymakers and decision-makers.

**Keywords:** Power Transition, New Great Game, International Politics, Thucydides Trap, U.S. Domination, Rising China, Resurgent Russia.

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## Introduction

International politics has been dynamic since the establishment of *poleis* (city-states) in ancient Greece in 750 BC. Athens and Sparta, the most powerful city-states at the time, fought as allies in the Greco-Persian Wars (499-449 BC), but after defeating the Persians in 480-479 BC, they engaged in a power struggle to dominate each other. The balance of power established between the two powerful city-states resulted in a security dilemma, what is now called the "Thucydides Trap" as accentuated in power transition, which contends that equity of power between the powerful rival states increases the likelihood of conflicts and wars. Prior to the U.S. rise in the second half of the 20th century as the world's superpower, Great Britain, with its allies, maintained power status quo by sustaining the German rise and challenge during World War I (WW-I) and World War II (WW-II). Later, the British power declined and was replaced by the U.S., which was unsuccessfully challenged by the Soviet Russia in the Cold War. With the ending of the Cold War and subsequent fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the U.S. became the superpower until the rise of China and resurgence of Russia as rival powers in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The New Great Game is a geo-economic competition among the superpower and great powers for broader geopolitical and geo-economic agendas. The 21st century power politics has been phrased as the New Great Game, which is basically geo-economic competition. The term geo-economics was coined by the U.S. strategist Edward Luttwak in

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1990, which is the continuation of geopolitics in the era of globalization by using economic instruments to serve the core national interests.

Pakistan is expected to avail some unprecedented economic opportunities from the 21st century great power' competition by virtue of its geo-strategic location at a tri-junction to connect the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia. However, Pakistan is in a complex security dilemma in-between economic opportunities and security challenges since the Chinese presence in the strategic port of Gwadar is causing much discomfort among many regional actors, including the U.S., which struggles to contain the Sino-Russian strategic alliance and their inflating sway in Central Asia, the Middle East, and South Asia. The 9/11 attacks in the U.S. and thereafter the US-led NATO offensive against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan resulted in a worsening security situation in Pakistan's bordering provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Balochistan. The religious militancy in KPK and sub-nationalist insurgency in Balochistan in the early 2000s seemed to be the inflictions of the smoldering New Great Game in the region, which started with the arrival of the U.S.-led NATO troops in Afghanistan and the expression of Chinese interests to build Pakistan's deep seaport at Gwadar near the Strait of Hormuz in the Indian Ocean. In recent times, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) attacks on military bases in Gwadar and Turbat in Pakistan's southwest, coupled with suicide bomb attacks on security forces in North Waziristan and Chinese engineers working on the Dasu Dam located in Kohistan, KPK, in Pakistan's northeast, are redolent reminders of Pakistan's strategic vulnerabilities in the ongoing great-power politics in the tumultuous region. The strategic options for Pakistan in the complex security quagmire are quite limited, which is why Pakistan faces extreme political polarization and instability, incensed sub-nationalism, raging religious violence and intolerance, and alarming economic downturn.

### **Power Transition Theory**

Power Transition is a theoretical concept in international politics articulated by Abramo Kenneth Organski in *World Politics* that outlines the recurring nature of wars to deal with the notion of power in international politics. The Power Transition theory was further extended in *The War Ledger* (1980), which Organski co-authored with Jacek Kugler to take an analytical account of cyclic wars associated with the power transition at regional and global levels. Organski adopts a scientific approach to study and analyze

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nations, *nationalism*, national growth, national goals, national power, balance of power and terror, power transition, diplomacy, collective security, and international organizations who believes that population, political efficiency, and economic development are the major determinants of national power and a shift in these areas would lead to changes in the distribution of power (Organski, 1968, p. 338). According to Organski, wars in global politics occur when a great power in a secondary position challenges the dominant nation for the control of world order. Organski has classified the nations into four categories with regard to degree of power, satisfaction, and dissatisfaction in international politics. The powerful and satisfied is the dominant nation, and with allied satisfied great powers, it controls the world order. The powerful and dissatisfied powers are a collection of potential rivals and challengers to dominate the nation. The dissatisfied powers, led by the potential challengers, are unwilling to accept a subordinate position and attempt to revise the existing international order. The weak but satisfied and dissatisfied powers are smaller nations called “middle powers and small powers,” which are either allied with the dominant power or potential challenger (Organski, 1968, pp. 364-369).

Dissatisfaction is the key driver of conflicts and war in the power transition paradigm. A dissatisfied great power with other dissatisfied states can challenge the dominant power, leading to war, but if the overtaking power is satisfied, then the transition would be peaceful. The domestic economic growth has been identified as the primary aspect of the national power in a hierarchical international order. “The cornerstone of the power transition theory is that *parity* is the necessary condition for major wars” (Kugler and Lemke, 1996, p. 4). The concept of parity is actually the balance of power, which the realists prioritized to be imperative for global peaceful order in an anarchic and chaotic world, but the Power Transition theory discredits parity as a destabilizing factor for international peace and security. Prior to WWI, Great Britain was the most powerful country in terms of economic and technological innovation due to the immense economic growth by dint of the Industrial Revolution (1750-1850). Germany was the world’s second most industrialized country after the U.S., which enhanced the German status from a middle power to a great power. The rapid industrialization and urbanization, along with Clausewitzian militarism, were the main motivations of the German *Weltpolitik*.

The WW-I erupted between the British-led and German-led blocs after the dominant power (Britain) refused to engage and accommodate the rising dissatisfied challenger (Germany). Great Britain, with its satisfied allies, won both Great Wars, but it lost more than 40 percent of its wealth, plunging Britain into the deepest recession in history. Britain lost its position as a preponderant power, subsequently replaced by the U.S., which had already emerged as the world's largest economy by the start of the 20th century. Since both the U.S. and Great Britain had remained in a staunch alliance throughout the 20th century and felt one another as benign powers, therefore, after the end of WW-II, the power transition from Great Britain to the U.S. was peaceful. After the end of World War II, the dominant power, the U.S., was challenged by the revisionist Soviet Union with its communist ideology; however, the U.S. was remarkably successful in containing and defeating the Soviet Union by the end of the 1980s, leaving the U.S. as the sole superpower in the unipolar world order until the dawn of the 21st century. Since early 2000s, China's rise is widely debated as the next superpower vis-à-vis the decline of U.S. hegemony. The Chinese rise is forecasted to be violent, either by challenging the existing hegemon or by inviting counterbalancing effects based on power transition or balance of power (Yang, 2013, p. 35). China has become the most potential competitor or challenger to the U.S. and the U.S. is working on different strategies to counter the threat of rising China.

### **New Great Game**

The genesis of the New Great Game is traced back to Afghanistan and Central Asia in the 1990s, where, in the post-Cold War era, the multinational oil companies competed for the exploration and transportation of hydrocarbon resources. The term New Great Game, coined by seasoned Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid, explains the conceptualization of geopolitical and geo-economic competition among several regional and far-regional powers (Rashid, 2009, p. 2009). The New Great Game was further popularized by Ahmed Rashid in his book *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (2000). When different ethnic and religious groups were engaged in fighting to control over Afghanistan in the early 1990s, the Bridas Corporation, an Argentinian oil and gas company, tried to persuade Turkmen President Niyazov to move forward its 875-mile-long gas pipeline plan from the Yashlar gas field in Turkmenistan to Pakistan and then to India via Afghanistan. A U.S. oil company, Union Oil Company of California (Unocal),

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competed with Bridas Corporation to explore hydrocarbon resources of Central Asia. The U.S. Department of Energy report, released only a few days before the 9/11 attacks, cited Afghanistan's significance from its geographical position as a potential transit route for oil and natural gas exports from Central Asia to the Arabian Sea (Kleveman, 2003, pp. 226-227). During this competition between Unocal and Bridas, the U.S. diplomatic support to Unocal continued until the emergence of Al-Qaeda as a security threat to the U.S. in the contested resource-rich region.

Today, the great power game is being played in a wide and large region with different players, powers, and strategies. The New Great Game has stretched from the eastern Mediterranean Sea to the Western Pacific Ocean as well as the nations between the Far East, Central Asia, and the Middle East. The power contest in Asia is principally between the U.S. and China, and to a marginal extent, between the U.S. and Russia, where India, Pakistan, Iran, and others are in subsidiary roles (Akram, 2016). Unlike the Great Game and Cold War, the landscape of the New Great Game is more economic, trade-oriented, and commercial to get control of huge hydrocarbon reservoirs of Central Asia and the Middle East and vital maritime and land trade routes of the Indian Ocean and Asia-Pacific region. Prior to all these regional and international developments, China penetrated Central Asian consumer and energy markets besides agreeing to build a deep sea port at Gwadar in Pakistan's extreme southwest coastal region near the entrance of the Persian Gulf. Pakistan asked China to help build the Gwadar port despite the fact that the U.S. was not in favor of the port ("China may help build Gwadar port project", 2001). The political as well as economic fallout of the 9/11 attacks and the U.S. immediate retaliation against the Taliban government in Afghanistan starting from 7th October 2001 raised many questions on the fate of Gwadar port ("Gwadar port to open business opportunities", 2002). Unexpectedly, China nudged into action, and its Vice-Premier Wu Bangguo came to Pakistan in March 2002 to lay the foundation of Gwadar seaport with an initial assistance of USD 198 million. And thus, China got a strategic pearl in Pakistani waters (Cowasjee, 2005). As the US and NATO troops took the control of Afghanistan and China undertook the construction of the Gwadar deep sea port, the two provinces of Pakistan, KPK and Balochistan, bordering Afghanistan and Iran, descended into religious extremism and sub-nationalist unrest, respectively. Over and above the discovery of a secret nuclear program in neighboring Iran in 2002,

the U.S. attack on Iraq in 2003, and global outcry over suspected nuclear proliferation by Pakistani nuclear scientists in 2004, further complicated the regional security dynamics for Pakistan. The protracted sub-nationalist insurgency in the natural resource-rich province of Balochistan and religious militancy in KPK are the key security challenges for Pakistan for the reasons that violence and anti-state activities have aggravated over the years. It is not necessary that the power transfer between the potential challenger and status quo power result in confrontation, but the proxy conflicts and wars in their respective allied countries could clearly reminisce the growing power struggle. Many analysts believe that the on-and-off wave of ethnic and religious insurgencies in Balochistan and KPK provinces is a sequel to the brewing power transition of the satisfied and dissatisfied powers.

### **Power Transition in New Great Game**

Initially, the New Great Game was linked with the great powers' quest to fill the power vacuum in hydrocarbon-rich Central Asia after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, following the end of the Cold War. However, the dynamics of the New Great Game have changed with the geopolitical shifts in the global politics, turning into a great power competition, particularly in Asia, involving the U.S., China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Japan, Iran, and other middle and small powers. Today's Great Game is global, more complex, and much more dangerous (Bittner, 2018). The new power contest in Asia is now mainly between the U.S. and China, which more precisely revolves around China's One Belt, One Road (OBOR) Initiative and U.S. Pivot to Asia, U.S. Strategic Reengagement in the Middle East, America First National Security Strategy, and India's Act East Policy. China's unexpected economic rise has created the "China Threat" theory among U.S. academia and policymakers. Douglas Lemke and Ronald L. Tammen profess that if China continues to grow, it will surpass the U.S. as the world's dominant power sometime before the middle of this century (Lemke and Tammen, 2003, p. 270). A.F.K. Organski concludes his theory of power transition over China by predicting that the U.S. will continue to hold its dominance in the contemporary world order, but China will sooner or later equal the U.S. in power (Organski, 1968, pp. 483-88). Three "non-stops"—first, China's economic and military growth; second, the U.S. determination to contain China; and third, China's resolve to achieve modernization—are quite distinguished features of the ongoing

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strategic and economic power struggle at the regional and global scales (Zhao, 2025).

In addition to this, Graham Allison's theory of the Thucydides Trap is being widely debated in the contemporary international politics vis-à-vis a future conflict between the U.S. and China. According to Allison, the rising power's entitlement and demand for greater say and sway, and the fear and insecurity to defend the status quo of the established power, make the war inevitable. "China and the U.S. are heading towards a war neither wants. The reason is Thucydides' Trap: When a rising power threatens to displace a ruling one, the most likely outcome is war.... These conditions have occurred sixteen times over the past five hundred years. Twelve ended violently" (Allison, 2017. P. 70). President Xi Jinping himself said.... 'There is no such thing as the so-called Thucydides' Trap in the world. But should major countries time and again make these mistakes of strategic miscalculation, they might create such traps for themselves" (Allison, 2015). The Thucydides' Trap is a dangerous phenomenon when a rising power threatens to displace an established power.

The French general and revolutionary leader Napoleon Bonaparte had rightly characterized the geostrategic significance of China by stating that "Let China sleep, for when she wakes up, she will shake the world." The post-Mao China led by Deng Xiaoping was soon to become the factory of the world (Lao, 2011, p. 44). In 1980, China's economy was less than that of the Netherlands, and its GDP was less than USD 300 billion. By 2023, it was recorded to be USD 17.71 trillion in terms of nominal GDP, making it the world's second largest economy. In terms of GDP Power Purchasing Parity, the Chinese economy is believed to be USD 27.02 trillion, making it the world's largest economy ("China's GDP expands 5.2 pct in 2023, surpassing annual target", 2024). In the 1980s, China's trade with the outside world was less than USD 40 billion, and it has amounted to USD 5.87 trillion in 2023, increasing one hundredfold ("China's foreign trade grows 0.02% in 2023....", 2024). China has been accused of unfair trade practices, technology theft, targeted traffic, military buildup, militarization of the South China Sea islands, and debt diplomacy (Akram, 2018). The looming trade war, illicit sales to Iran, escalation over Taiwan, the Malacca Dilemma, the China threat theory, the Korean conflict, and espionage are warning signs of real rivalry between the two powers, which could incite strategic miscalculation since the two

countries are at a strategic crossroads. China is playing a geopolitical and geo-economic game through the OBOR in the region with an approach of soft-balancing, while the U.S. is counter-playing a short game with a hard-balancing approach. The OBOR has checkmated the U.S. Silk Road, which aspires to connect the Eurasian region via Turkey, Azerbaijan, CARs, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and up to the Far East and Southeast Asia.

So far, the U.S. decision-makers are not clear how to deal with the nature of China's rise. Initially, the Bush administration declared China as a strategic competitor. The U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) of 2006 urged for a closer strategic partnership with Russia and appreciated China for integrating itself into the global system. President Obama preferred to engage China rather than fully contain and confront it. The NSS of 2010 reaffirmed the pursuit of positive, constructive, and comprehensive relationships and welcomed China to take on a responsible leadership role along with the U.S. to address the 21st-century challenges in the international community. The NSS of 2015 strongly appreciates the scope of the U.S. cooperation with China as unprecedented to tackle the global issues, including nuclear proliferation and climate change. The Trump NSS announced in December 2017 took a more provocative stance against China and Russia and declared them rivals and revisionist powers. It pinpointed China as the principal economic and security threat to America. In NSS 2022, President Joe Biden promised to win the competition of the 21st century but without clarity.

Washington is more likely to manage the risky competition to go out of control, but the President Xi era will continue to be difficult and dangerous (Cooper, 2023). However, President Xi Jinping has taken a harder stance against the U.S. by saying that "Western countries led by the United States have implemented all-around containment, encirclement, and suppression of China" ("China's Leader, With Rare Bluntness...", 2023). The Sino-Russian burgeoning partnership and personal relationship of long-serving President Xi and President Putin have further intensified the China Threat Theory among the U.S. and Western policymakers. Since 2012, President Xi and President Putin have met over 40 times ("Putin to travel to China in May for Talk with Xi...", 2023).

Former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger observed that most of the Americans look at China through the Soviet lens, whom they think would undermine the U.S. prominence, while from the Chinese side, the American

promotion of democracy and human rights is interpreted as designed to dwarf China's rise (Kissinger, 2014, pp. 228-229). He had always urged the U.S. policymakers to halt China from forging an alliance with Russia. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is driven by Chinese interests in economic, financial, diplomatic, geopolitical, and security areas (Wolf, 2019, p. 7). Through the OBOR, China is shaking and making the ongoing century. Through the BRI, President Xi Jinping envisages a more cooperative world order and does not resort to geopolitical maneuvering ("Full text of Xi Jinping's speech...", 2017). Another reason for the emerging security dilemma for the U.S. is the continued rise of China's defense budget. Between 1992 and 2008, China's GDP grew at an average rate of 9.6 percent, but at the same time its defense expenditures increased at an average rate of 12.9 percent per year (Shearman, 2014, p. 14). China has increased its defense budget by 7.2 percent in 2024, reaching USD 304 billion. Which would come to USD 439 billion if adjusted for power purchasing parity. Nonetheless, it is much less than the USD 911 billion U.S. defense budget proposed for 2024 (Nouwens and McGerty, 2024).

China had been involved in military engagements against the U.S.-led international coalition in the Korean War (1950-52), India in 1962, and the Soviet Union in 1969, but after its admittance into the UN in 1971, China has behaved as a very responsible and constructive stakeholder thus far in return for benefiting from the stabilized international order. China had shown restraint despite would-be hotspots like the Taiwan Strait crisis in 1995-96, the U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999, the spy plane incident in 2001, the inclusion of China along with six other countries as a target of the U.S. first-strike nuclear attack in the Pentagon's Nuclear Posture Review in 2002, the U.S. declaration of China as a strategic competitor, and reports of repeated violations of China's exclusive economic zones in the South China Sea. It has resolved 17 out of 23 territorial disputes peacefully, mostly with concessions. China also contributes more troops to UN peacekeeping missions worldwide (Perlez, 2015). China has cooperated with the UN and U.S. over North Korea's nuclear program and partially imposed limited sanctions on North Korea after UN sanctions by reducing its oil exports. China's OBOR, based on win-win cooperation and a positive sum game, is completely different from Germany's *Weltpolitik*, which makes China more a status quo power than a revisionist power seeking to alter the international order.

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As compared to Cold War rivals—the U.S. and Soviet Russia—the New Great Game competitors—the U.S. and China—are more connected economically and share international financial and security responsibilities. China’s strategy is based on cooperative relations with the U.S. to avoid any Cold War-like military alliance targeting it, maintain a regional zone of peace by resetting ties with immediate and extended neighbors for its sustained economic development, diversifying its access to energy sources, and expanding its trade through the OBOR on mutual collaboration. China would refrain from destabilizing the system, which benefits its continued economic growth and may even be able to achieve hegemony without having to incur the costs of war. China heavily depends on foreign trade, especially with the European and North American countries. In 2015, the Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed a new model of great power relations known as “no conflict and no confrontation: mutual respect and win-win cooperation” (Li, 2016). Thus, China has stopped exporting its political ideology and system. China’s Confucian Pacifism may be an alternative to that of Western liberalism.

The power transition theory between China and the U.S. illustrates an interesting and paradoxical picture of the regional and extra-regional dynamics. The U.S. and China are status quo and competing powers, respectively. At the international level, China is a dissatisfied power, and it has challenged the U.S. on the economic front through maximization of its trade and investment worldwide. However, the U.S. is a satisfied power, but it is coping with China’s increasing foreign trade and FDI through an explicit trade war. Since 2001, China’s economy has grown more than five-fold; it is now the second largest world economy after the U.S. Nonetheless, at the regional level, China appears to be a satisfied power, while the U.S. seems to be a dissatisfied power. The power transition theory vis-à-vis the New Great Game at the regional level elucidates that China is the dominant power encompassing East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and, to a lesser extent, Central Asia. In East Asia, China is the dominant power with reclusive North Korea as a satisfied regional middle power, but the U.S. is a dissatisfied great power, Japan is a dissatisfied middle power, and South Korea is a dissatisfied small power. In Southeast Asia, China has emerged to be the dominant power too, since it has deepened its economic relations with the ASEAN states despite looming differences over the disputed South China Sea. China enjoys vibrant economic relations with almost all Southeast Asian neighbors,

including the Philippines, a U.S. ally. In South Asia, India has increasingly become a dissatisfied great power owing to the burgeoning strategic partnership between Pakistan and China, which are considered to be satisfied middle powers and satisfied dominant powers, respectively, while a dissatisfied U.S. is attempting to counterbalance the satisfied dominant power China through its strategic partnership with India.

Moreover, at the sub-regional level in Asia, dissatisfied India is struggling to encircle the satisfied Pakistan by extending its strategic partnership with Iran and Afghanistan. In the Middle East, the U.S. is the satisfied power, while China and Russia are dissatisfied powers, which is why dissatisfied China and Russia are struggling to counter the U.S. through their strategic partnership with the region's Muslim countries. In Central Asia, both China and Russia are satisfied powers, while the U.S. and India are dissatisfied powers. China is more interested in tapping rich natural resources of Central Asia, where its former Communist partner, Russia, has been struggling to maintain its sphere of influence. The Russian sphere of influence has been quite marginalized by the U.S.-backed NATO expansion towards its historic borders in the Eurasian region. In Europe, the U.S. is a satisfied power, while Russia is a dissatisfied power; that's why the latter has attacked Ukraine, a U.S. strategic ally, to revive its military influence in Europe.

The U.S. and other Chinese rivals have identified the Chinese energy-security vulnerability since China is extremely dependent on its 60 to 80 percent oil imports from the Middle East and Africa through the contested and risky sea lanes of the Indian Ocean. The core elements of the U.S. Counter-China strategy circulated among the Chinese leadership in 2014 as a "five-point consensus" to isolate China, to contain China, to diminish China, to divide China internally, and to sabotage China's leadership (Rudd, 2015, p. 14). The power transition is a reality and occurs periodically throughout history, but the national power of China to achieve superpower status is very premature, as a world power must be able to exert its influence throughout the globe, which China is yet to acquire. Nevertheless, if China continues to grow at the same speed, it is more likely to challenge the U.S. as the world's largest economy before long.

### **Strategic Options for Pakistan**

Pakistan's unique geopolitical position bridging South Asia, Central Asia, and West Asia in a complex regional strategic situation has presaged

multifaceted security challenges that are extremely detrimental to its national security. Both China and the U.S. have been Pakistan's most important economic partners and strategic allies. The U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent war against terrorism dragged Pakistan into the vortex of religious militancy and ethnic sub-nationalism. The presence of the Al-Qaeda Network, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), and other Baloch insurgent groups, Tehrik-i-Taliban Afghanistan, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Daesh (Islamic State) Khorasan, and several sectarian groups on Pakistan's territory have resulted in the rise of religious militancy in the KPK and ethnic insurgency in Balochistan. Moreover, the sanctioned-laden neighboring Iran isolated Taliban-ruled Afghanistan after the abrupt U.S. exit, spiraling covert and overt conflicts in the Middle East, rising India, upsetting the strategic stability in South Asia, and unrelenting Saudi-Iran bloc politics coupled with political instability and economic crisis have left fewer strategic options for Pakistan than ever.

The hawks in the U.S. continue to push for an offensive strategy to disturb China's OBOR initiative, especially in the peripheries, and the best target could be the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the jewel in the crown of the OBOR, connecting China's Silk Road Economic Belt with the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road through Gwadar Port on the northern edge of the Strait of Hormuz in the North Arabian Sea. The U.S. has also endorsed Indian concerns over CPEC, which it believes passes through the contested territory of Kashmir in Gilgit-Baltistan. James Mattis, former U.S. Defense Secretary, while appearing before the Congress, opposed China's OBOR as a geo-economic initiative, and in Pakistan, it passes through disputed territory ("CPEC passes through disputed territory: US", 2017). In South Asia, the U.S. and India are bidding to contain China, while China and Pakistan are working jointly to restrict the Indo-U.S. attempts of domination in their geographic space (Burki, 2012). The U.S. has taken a toughened line in great power competition with regard to China. The Chinese politico-economic influence is growing in Pakistan and elsewhere in Asia. The U.S. wants to remain politically relevant in Asia (Markey, 2020).

Pakistan is suspicious of a tacit triangular support from its neighboring countries of India, Afghanistan and Iran for sponsoring different religious and ethnic militants. Pakistan blames Taliban-controlled Afghanistan for providing sanctuaries to the TTP and liberty of action for cross-border

terrorism inside Pakistan. The TTP is responsible for repeated terrorist attacks inside Pakistan. Iran allegedly provides direct access to India to support the Baloch insurgents there. The Baloch insurgents have been targeting the Chinese nationals and workers in Balochistan from 2004 till to-date (“Bombs Kills 3 And Injures 11 in Pakistan”, 2003). Pakistan blames India for supporting to the Baloch militants and submitted dossier of ‘irrefutable proofs’ of Indian sponsorship of terrorism in Pakistan to the UN and other international forums. Pakistan high officials always allege India for attempting to build a consortium of terrorist groups including TTP and Baloch militant organizations BLA, BLAF and BRA (“Specific proof of Indian terrorism in Pakistan unveiled”, 2020).

In April 2019, Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi directly named neighboring Iran for cross-border attack with reference killing of Pakistan’s navy personnel travelling on Makran Coastal Highway in Gwadar district (“Pakistan blames Iran-based separatists for attack”, 2019). Likewise, many politicians and policy-makers in Pakistan believe that the U.S. also tacitly supports the Baloch sub-nationalists despite the fact that the U.S. has officially designated the BLA as a terrorist organization in 2019, which mostly targets the Chinese interests in Balochistan and Karachi, the commercial capital of Pakistan. There are 13 banned outfits linked to ethnic insurgency in Balochistan, and the U.S. has only listed the BLA as a terrorist organization since 2019, which was banned in Pakistan back in 2006 (Rehman, 2019). The Baloch insurgents attack on the Chinese nationals and companies working on different projects in Balochistan.

Iran has somehow strained relations with Pakistan because of latter’s tilt towards Saudi Arabia, Iran arch-rival in Middle Eastern Sunni-Shitte rift, and Pakistan’s alleged support to Baloch Sunni militant groups Jundallah and its Jaish-ul-Adl, which are involved in suicide bombings and other subversive militancy in Iran’s Sistan-Baluchestan province. Both Pakistan and Iran accuse each other for harboring and using militant groups against one another. In early 2024, Iran and Pakistan carried out tit-for-tat drone strikes on each other’s Baloch-dominated territories and claimed to have killed several militants belonging to Jaish al-Adl and BLA and BLF (“Iran admits carrying out deadly strike on Pakistan territory”, 2024). The sub-regional security matrix among India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran revolves around the realpolitik axiom of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend,” emulating the

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Mandala theory of foreign policy outlined by Kautilya in *Arthashastra* that views the immediate neighbors as enemies, but any state on the other side of the neighboring state is likely to be an ally.

Owing to overlapping security concerns, Chinese interests are frequently under attack in the region. In recent times, China seems to be using its global clout to protect its vital national interest. China has pushed Saudi Arabia and Iran to restore their yearlong tense relations, and a Chinese-brokered deal between them was signed for normalization of their strained ties in April 2023 (“Rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia hold first high-level talks...”, 2023). Similarly, China is also strengthening its diplomatic ties with the Taliban government in Afghanistan. China was the first country to formally accept the Taliban ambassador to Beijing, and China was also the first country to appoint an ambassador to Kabul under Taliban rule. China also invited a Taliban delegation to its global Belt and Road Forum held in October 2022 (“Afghan Taliban Say China Becomes First Nation to Accept Their Ambassador”, 2024). China’s engagements in Afghanistan manifest that it is quite ready to play a greater role in the regional stability for the sake of its geo-economic interests. China also eyes the multi-billion untapped mineral resources and rare earths of Afghanistan, which laps the world’s second-largest copper deposits.

China is growing its diplomatic and economic links with the Taliban government in Afghanistan and exchanging ambassadors without official recognition is the way forward, which could be a good omen for Pakistan to mend the fences with the Afghan Taliban over several contentious issues, including TTP and intermittent border clashes across the Durand Line. China could also be helpful to resolve the recurrent cross-border militancy between Pakistan and Iran. Pakistan must take baby steps forward to break the Indian influence over its immediate neighbors. Keeping its political instability and economic woes in mind, Pakistan should use its strategic ties with China and religious and cultural ties with Iran and Afghanistan to resolve the quarrelsome issues at the sub-regional and extra-regional levels for a win-win situation and longstanding peace and stability in the entire region. The neighboring countries of Afghanistan and Iran should also shun their zero-sum game approach and extend their cooperation for regional peace building. A sub-regional organization of contiguous neighbors—China, Pakistan,

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Afghanistan, and Iran—under the Chinese pivot is possible for long-term regional economic and security cooperation.

### **Assessment, Discussion, and Results**

The rise and fall of the great powers or power transition is a natural phenomenon in the revanchist international politics as what goes up must come down. Nature despises a vacuum; likewise, history despises hegemony in international politics. The historical cycle of power transition continues with the steady rise of China and the gradual economic decline of the U.S. Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has fought seven wars; the First Gulf War (1991), Serbia over Bosnia (1995), Serbia over Kosovo (1999), Afghanistan (2001-2021), Iraq (2003 to date, still fighting Islamic State), Libya (2011-2019), and Syria (2014-present). Besides, the U.S. is actively backing Ukraine against the Russian-waged war and Israel against Iran and its non-state-actor allies ( Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthi rebels, and Kataib Hezbollah). As a consequence, the U.S. economy has badly suffered owing to the huge costs of the wars and conflicts. Between 2001 and 2016, the different wars and conflicts have cost USD 3.68 trillion to the U.S. economy, and with interest, it could rise to USD 7.9 trillion by 2053 (Crawford, 2016, pp. 3-4).

China's unprecedented growth in the past three and a half decades has grabbed and glued the attention of many analysts to prophesize the danger of a clash of rising China with the U.S., the superpower and hegemonic power. China's economic standing is towering, but its military clout is far behind that of the U.S. and Russia; however, its potential is obvious. China has risen peacefully since the onset of the 21st century, which is why the chances of direct conflict with the dominant power is less likely since it has been adjusted in the global power structure, and China and the U.S. are trapped in a cooperative web of multilateralism. Neither China nor the U.S. can afford to disturb the contemporary world order.

In the prevailing chaotic situation, a “uni-multipolar” international system as predicted by Samuel P. Huntington in 1999 could better maintain international peace and security, as a pre-eminent power cannot solely resolve the international issues and requires the participation of other powers in the post-unipolar order. The Bucknell University professor Zhiqun Zhu, author of *US-China Relations in the 21st Century: Power Transition and Peace* has analyzed a possible power transition between China and the U.S. by hypothesizing that if the government, top leaders and the public in both the

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dominant power and the challenging power have a positive evaluation of the bilateral relationship then the power transition will end in peace provided that the rising power is incorporated in the international system by the dominant power; the rising power respects the vital interests of the dominant power and vice versa; and a more strong relationship between rising and dominant powers' leaders and societies, less chances of war (Zhu, 2006, p. 23). The foregoing observation apparently fits the U.S. and China's ongoing competition in the New Great Game.

However, the bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral strategic relations of different regional and far-regional satisfied and dissatisfied actors have brought in multi-pronged security challenges in Pakistan. Soon after its independence from the British Empire, Pakistan was caught off guard by the onset of the Cold War, in which it had to choose between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. During the Cold War, Pakistan was at the forefront in the war against Soviet Communism in Afghanistan. The U.S. abandoned Pakistan and Afghanistan following the end of the Cold War. In post-9/11, Pakistan had to again choose between strategic lines drawn by the world superpower, either with the U.S. or against it. The great power competition has inflicted a huge human and material cost on Pakistan. It claims to have lost 70,000 lives and suffered more than USD 150 billion in economic losses in siding with the U.S. as a frontline state in the war on terror during the past 20 years. The U.S. provided around USD 20 billion to Pakistan as economic aid for fighting the war against terrorism, but it has paid a huge price by facing ethnic sub-nationalism in Balochistan and religious militancy in KPK since 2003. Pakistan has launched counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations by giving provincial autonomy to smaller provinces, expanding security infrastructure, integrating FATA into KPK, erecting border fencing along Afghanistan and Iran borders, and installing the latest border-controlling information technologies, yet there is no end to terrorist attacks. Pakistan has become the geostrategic and geo-economic partner of China's BRI, and despite the huge Chinese FDI of over USD 70 billion, Pakistan's economy is plummeting, and the political polarization and instability is quite ripe. Its bilateral relations with the U.S. and other great powers like the UK are entangled with mistrust and doubts. The regional security matrix is extremely alarming as India is rising with the world's fastest-growing economy, and Pakistan's bilateral relations with Afghanistan and Iran are at the lowest ebb.

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## Conclusion

China is promoting its economic interests through its Belt and Road Initiative in every nook and cranny. Pakistan, as a neighboring country, is vital for China in terms of geopolitical and geo-economic considerations; however, Pakistan's regional relevancy seems to have minimized for Washington and Europe after the U.S. and NATO exit from Afghanistan. The mistrust of war-on-terror-time still haunts Pakistan's relations with the U.S. and the West. The Biden administration has been reluctant to engage Islamabad on various regional issues, particularly following Pakistan's decision to remain neutral in the Russia-Ukraine war and *the Ciphergate* saga resulting from the ouster of the Imran Khan government in April 2022, in which a senior official of the U.S. Foreign Office was alleged by former Prime Minister Imran Khan to have been involved in the ouster of his government through a no-confidence motion of Parliament. Since good relationships with the U.S. and other major powers have been the cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy, Pakistan should continue to maintain a balanced approach to revive its frozen bilateral relations with the U.S., which is still the world's most powerful military and economic power.

Despite the growing Indo-US bilateral relations in the Asia-Pacific region, Pakistan needs the U.S. in the regional and far-regional arenas to engage India over the Kashmir issue, and the other mammoth regional problems cannot be resolved without the U.S. intervention or involvement. The U.S. financial aid and diplomatic support are proudly instrumental to resuscitating Pakistan's fragile economy and tackling pressing challenges such as climate change, flood recovery, regional security, political polarization and instability, civil-military relations, and negotiation with Bretton Woods Institutions. Moreover, Pakistan should take concrete measures to bridge the growing trust deficit with China, particularly the growing uncertainty over CPEC projects. The incumbent multi-party coalition government has a huge responsibility on its shoulders to drive Pakistan out of the deep political polarization, provincialism, and plunging economic debacle. Pakistan's ruling elite has no other choice but to adopt a pragmatic approach to the escalating political, economic, and security crises in the country. Last but not least, the new coalition government in Islamabad should adopt a comprehensive policy for conflict resolution and transformation to deal with the religious militants and sub-nationalist insurgents in the KPK and Balochistan, respectively.

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