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## Article

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## MANAGEMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Human resource diversity management (HRDM) practices as a coping mechanism for xenophobia at transnational workplace: A case of a multi-billion-dollar economic corridor

Umer Zaman<sup>1</sup>, Shahid Nawaz<sup>2\*</sup>, Mahwish Anjam<sup>2</sup>, Rana Salman Anwar<sup>3</sup> and Muhammad Shahid Siddique<sup>4</sup>

**Abstract:** China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a multibillion-dollar partnered project is considered as a game-changer, as it combines the strategic interests of China and Pakistan that cannot be compromised. The mega-construction project has recently experienced xenophobic incidents involving Chinese and Pakistani nationals, creating significant harm towards the CPEC progress and success, especially under enormous geopolitical and economic threats. This sketches our motivation for conducting this research that focused on qualitative design based expert interviews of 8 individuals (i.e., both Chinese and Pakistani nationals) directly associated with CPEC. Drawing on a review of mainstream research, the article constructs a framework to explore the demotions of xenophobic behaviors at workplace and to explore the human resource diversity management (HRDM) practices (including intercultural training and development, flexible compensation, international staffing, work-design, and work-life balance) in coping with xenophobia and its sub-dimensions (including discrimination, prejudice, and stereotyping). Experts



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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Umer Zaman is currently working as an Assistant Professor at the Endicott College of International Studies, Woosong University, Daejeon, Republic of Korea. He earned his doctoral degree in management studies. Dr. Zaman has recently published in top-tier SSCI journals, based on his interdisciplinary research interests, including project management, strategic HR, tourism management, CSR and marketing. He has extensive experience working in action-based research projects under various international/ regional organizations and donor agencies including the UNODC (Vienna) and ADB-OECD. Dr. Zaman has chaired various academic research conferences at national and international level. He also served as a reviewer for the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, as well as the South Asian Journal of Management Sciences.

### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Transnational mega-construction projects often fall in the grips of xenophobia, consequently raising a serious concern by various stakeholders, including project sponsors, managers, users, partnering governments, entities and states. Hence, the present study makes one of the initial attempts to explore the multi-national and multi-billion-dollar project of the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), in the context of growing xenophobic sentiments. This interview-based qualitative study design proposes various human resource diversity management (HRDM) practices (e.g., intercultural training and development, flexible compensation, international staffing, work-design, and work-life balance) as effective remedies and mechanism to manage the surge of xenophobia in transnational mega-construction projects. The findings of this study uncover valuable insights for academics, researchers and practitioners to develop strategies aimed at reducing xenophobia in the multi-cultural workplace.

based interview findings confirm the presence of xenophobia in the CPEC. We propose a framework of various HRDM practices in managing the xenophobia at workplace, however, it is still in its infancy stage. Hence, the present study introduces a new operating model for future researchers, academicians, and management practitioners to cope with xenophobia based on the practices and insights that were explored during this research.

**Subjects:** Engineering Project Management; Qualitative Methods; Human Resource Management; Human Resource Development

**Keywords:** Xenophobia; CPEC; human resource diversity management; discrimination; prejudice; stereotyping

## 1. Introduction

China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has attracted approximately USD 62 billion of Chinese investment in Pakistan (Baldwin, 2017; Siddiqui, 2017), which is expected to reach USD 100 billion by 2030 (CPECINFO, 2018). CPEC also offers a strong potential to bring many expatriates and international interests to Pakistan (CPEC, 2018). Owing to its established global importance, many researchers are focusing to explore emerging problems causing complications for CPEC's future and to delve into ways to address them early. CPEC is an integral part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), i.e. a modern twenty-first-century silk route. The projected construction cost of this mega-project of about 46 USD billion extends almost 16 years (2014–2030) depending on its completion and maturity. This mega project can bear fruit only, if eradicating xenophobic attitudes against foreign investors and foreign workers is materialized (Qadir & Manan, 2014), and CPEC is protected from emerging threat of xenophobia (Zaman, 2020).

China and Pakistan's stakes in this project are very high as it promises regional peace and stability (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015). However, as literature confirms, in recent years, migrants have increasingly faced xenophobic attitudes in foreign environments and/or host countries. We have the example of an ethnic Turkish minority, negatively portrayed as a burden on the host German economy (Al Ariss et al., 2013). Other instances indicate that in Greece, due to the negative image of non-natives, foreigners were subjected to occasional attacks in which some Pakistanis were also attacked, and these attacks occurred due to evolving hostility towards non-nationals (ILO, IOM, OHCHR & UNHCR, 2001). Chinese and Pakistani people were threatened and attacked for reasons that could be traced to a migration policy fault and the threat of job loss or resource control (Fayomi et al., 2015). The China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) recently increased the influx of foreign workers from China to Pakistan, leading to xenophobic violent incidents in various CPEC-related projects. Curbing xenophobic motivations require institutional analysis of ground realities; therefore, developing an inclusive and encouraging atmosphere of equity, peace, diversity, and inclusion may be a useful way to resolve “diverse ethnic” workforce concerns (Al Ariss et al., 2013; Kelan & Wratil, 2018).

Confronting xenophobic challenges, Pakistan faces several grave complications such as lack of skilled workforce, inadequate level of education among common people, joblessness, and militancy which makes the CPEC's execution with current HRD scenario a challenge for both nations (Asrar-ul-Haq, 2015). Therefore, one of the primary research questions of this study is as follows: RQ1) What are the views of China–Pakistan nationals' about exitance of xenophobic behavior at workplace? Seeking an answer to this complex question is not easy, but it is important to explore under what circumstances xenophobic emotions emerge. For example, in one European survey, more than 70% of 15–20-year-old non-nationals, born or raised in the same country, faced discriminatory practices in jobs (EUMC, 1999). Henceforth, in order to understand why and from where the xenophobic behaviors originate at the workplace, the second research question of the study used is as follows: RQ 2) what are the dimensions of China–Pakistan nationals' xenophobic

behavior at the workplace? This is observed that discrimination towards non-natives, migrants, expatriates, and refugees is usually triggered by hate and xenophobia (Abidi, 2013). Some researchers portray the rationale for xenophobic attitude as a consequence of resource depletion, cultural differences, or untrained behavior (Hlayiseka, 2015). To narrow down the China–Pakistan Economic corridor as a case study to evaluate the antecedents of xenophobic behavior, the use of sub-questions allowed this study to explore the research agenda in depth. Here the sub-questions related to incidents of xenophobic behavior are RQ2 a) Do China–Pakistan nationals judge each other based on stereotypes at the workplace? RQ2 b) Do China–Pakistan nationals show discriminatory behavior towards each other at the workplace? RQ 2 c) Are China–Pakistan nationals prejudiced towards each other at the workplace?

With an ever-increasing number of foreigners moving to Pakistan, especially for economic reasons, precautionary steps are needed to limit the risks of thriving xenophobic conditions that may harm the CPEC mega project. One such choice is human diversity management (HRDM) practices. This research also focuses on exploring various human resource practices, which are considered fruitful in managing the xenophobia at the workplace; therefore, the third research question of the study is as follows; RQ3) what are the antecedents or approaches of human resource diversity management which can reduce the xenophobic behavior? Human resource diversity management is a vast area comprising multiple practices; therefore, in order to narrow down the research, based on literature review, various antecedents were identified. The practices, such as intercultural-training and development, flexible compensation, international staffing, work-design and work-life balance, have been established as strategies in various studies to cope with xenophobia and its sub-dimensions: discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping (Adler, 1981; Akhtar et al., 2014; Cheema et al., 2013; Emadzadeh et al., 2012; Jara & Peberdy, 2009). Therefore, a sub-question was used as follows. RQ3a) Do Intercultural-Training and Development, flexible compensation, international staffing, work design and work-life balance helps to manage the xenophobic behavior at workplace?

## 2. Theoretical foundations and research framework

### 2.1. Xenophobia

Globalization and worldwide proliferation have not only permitted global economic integration but have also facilitated a massive exchange of labor force across the globe, leading to potential reasons of xenophobia. The conceptual explanation of xenophobia defines it as emotional anxiety and hatred for the strangers and unknown things/persons or from those who are different in some manners. Xenophobia is a Greek word, which is derived from combining two words Xenos (stranger or foreigner) and Phobos (Fear) (Rzepnikowska, 2018; Shisana, 2008). The word xenophobia is used for explaining the presence of hate among natives and foreigners interacting in a country. Xenophobia has been identified by Katz and Khan (1978), as “a fear of strangers”, and a xenophobic affected person holds a kind of behavioral attitude in which he/she resists any person or group of persons due to differences indulging in stereotyping, discrimination, prejudice, or violent behavior (Bordalo et al., 2016; Brown, 1995; Devine, 1989; Dovidio et al., 2010; Harris, 2001). These differences might be based on gender, color, religion, culture, nationality, or opinions (WCAR, 2001). Besides, reservations of natives on political policies of a state towards them and foreigners may also become a reason for xenophobia (Kaysen, 1996). Xenophobia exists among people due to the matter of nationality difference and person identity difference (CIA,). From a sociology perspective, xenophobia is defined as a behavioral orientation of aggression for non-nationals in a host environment (Boehnke, 2001). From a human resource and workplace perspective, xenophobia has also been studied in relation with hiring and recruitment practices where at the time of interview the discriminatory bias can be exercised while taking decisions because of the presence of xenophobic behaviors towards the applicant’s nationality (Sachdev, 2020).

Xenophobia has not yet been expressed in the form of physical violence to a large degree in the workplace in the CPEC project. This study, therefore, conceptualizes xenophobia as its three sub-

dimensions namely, discrimination, stereotyping, and prejudice, which are presently only being expressed in non-violent ways. Detailed analysis and explanation of these follow in the discussion below. Global law defines *discrimination* as, creation of resistance or facing resistance, based on a change in gender, ethnic group, regional identity, and cultural difference which may happen at the workplace in tasks or anywhere (United Nations, 1969). Discrimination may lead to intolerance and violent behavior just because of differences, which might be due to migration, language barriers, personality clashes, or religious views (UNHCR,). Discriminating behavior may also evolve into hostile tendencies that happen due to hate, and in a globalized integrated space, it potentially affects the international environment (Pillay, 2012).

Stereotyping can cause people to behave negatively toward foreigners. Chinese and Pakistanis faced xenophobia just because of the stereotyping mindset of the natives in several instances in South Africa, (Hlayiseka, 2015). Similarly, Fluckiger (2006), argues that media also plays a crucial role in shaping stereotype perception through propagating negativity in their reports and locals are convinced to losing their resources to a foreign competing workforce which may lead to developing violent conditions even reaching to an extent of physical harm in some cases (Baldwin, 2017). Sometimes, natives neglect the highly skilled knowledge of foreign workforce just because of stereotypes (MMP & CoRMSA, ; Muchiri, 2016), and because of this shortsightedness, potential hostile conditions remain at workplaces (Human Rights First, 2008). Fine and Bird (2006) have linked *prejudice* with xenophobia. Both prejudice and xenophobia have a commonality of disliking others and sabotage rights for the non-natives to raise biased and unjustifiable violent thoughts and discriminating behavior (Mogekwu, 2005). Such insidious thoughts conceivably lead to stereotype behavior on the bases of racial discrimination (MMP, 2003). Mutually, prejudice and xenophobia foster negative feelings towards outsiders (Bridges, 2012; Levin & Levin, 1982).

## **2.2. Coping xenophobia through human resource diversity management (HRDM) practices**

To address the issue of xenophobia, improved workplace communication methods with a diverse cultural group, cultural understanding of pluralistic norms through orientation methods, and management of diverse HR practices are essential to evolving harmony. Similarly, HRM diversity management practices can be a successful choice but the current market competition where demographic characteristics are not the same due to globalized workforce, diversity management is a challenging strategic task for managers (Abramovic, 2016; Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013; Dennissen et al., 2018; Mor Barak, 2015; Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Roberson, 2006; Sabharwal, 2014; Shen et al., 2009). Accommodating issues of diversity, the concept of EEO (equal employment opportunity) for employees is introduced in diversity management practices (Shen et al., 2009). This study focuses on diversity management practices that include intercultural-training and development, flexible compensation, international staffing, work-design, and work-life balance. These practices have been known through different studies to have been helpful to a greater extent in reducing xenophobia at workplace.

### **2.2.1. Intercultural-training and development**

The literature suggests that Intercultural-training and development is one of the key HRDM practices that can help reduce xenophobia in the workplace. Sensitization training regarding negative influence and impressions of xenophobia on community and state may help residents to behave prudently. Training to employees of the host organization regarding expatriate's culture can result in an inclusive yet congenial working condition at host society. To adopt in cross-cultural geographic settings, expatriates are required to understand conflict management orientations to better equip with skills to unravel with the possible crisis. In a research conducted by Yu and Nikiporets-Takigawa (2019) on the readiness formation of students getting institutionalized in Russian higher education system identifies various intercultural behaviors including xenophobia; the research suggests using some common development program for highlighting the benefits of integration of people using intercultural interaction, and communication thus suggestive of intercultural training and development for handling xenophobic behaviors. Likewise, a study by Murray (1986) shows that a lack of dealing and cultural adjustment skills is strongly associated with the



failure of employees because they face issues due to their inability to deal with the problems of survival against these attacking situations.

#### 2.2.2. Flexible compensation

*Flexible compensation* i.e. the choice of making specified combinations of benefits at one's own will provides an incentive to employees for moving in a more productive way to make personal and organization progress concurrently (Akhtar et al., 2014). As inflation and cost of living starts rising in the community, the competition of survival also starts rising (Robins, 2009). Unemployment and compensation competition are considered elementary in leading to the young generation's xenophobia. Therefore, the majority of the population consider these circumstances as signs of stereotyping and prejudicial actions (Borrmann, 2016). Compensation flexibility is paramount to employees' motivation and efficiency of working. For instance, a study on Pakistani commercial bank at Karachi shows that employee motivation is reduced if they feel deprived of motivating factors like compensation, business rewards, or other types of rewards, as these incentives provide confidence to build a great attitude for his motivation to achieve his personal and organizational goals (Cheema et al., 2013).

#### 2.2.3. International staffing

Similarly, *international staffing* is recognized as a healthy exercise to acclimatize the transnational workspace (Altman & Baruch, 2012). "Staffing is how firms recruit and select applicants with higher quality KSAOs and generic human capital" (Guion, 2011; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). A foreign worker's willingness to join a firm on a low compensation rate is the main cause and charm for organizations to hire them. The influx of migrant workers has boosted the number of foreign workers in the transnational market space. Political leadership in host societies has remained inefficient to draw certain meaningful migration or work policies because of which there exist tensions between domestic and foreign workers (Misago et al., 2009; Robins, 2009). In the staffing process, the communicational ability of foreign employees can play a vital role in their successful recruitment. Likewise, continuous motivation and their marital life is also an important factor (Borrmann, 2016).

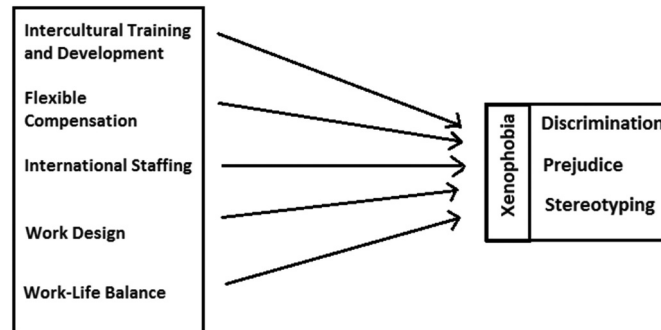
#### 2.2.4. Work-design

According to several past studies, focusing on foreign workers' failures, the structure of work-design in an organization may push foreign workers in cultural shock due to their less understanding of local dynamics, further leading to problems for them to survive in society (Eisenberger et al., 1990; Punnett, 1997; Sims & Schraeder, 2004). The absence of a domestic policy-consensus about a foreign workforce is always a risk for a non-native worker and the host organizations. Trust is a key element of success in the workplace, which is not easy to build. It is observed that sometimes due to xenophobic attitudes, the reliability of information gets challenged resulting in misunderstandings among native and non-native workers (Jara & Perbedy, 2009). It is therefore imperative that work-design should be clear and focused on the assessment issues of an employee to support better opportunities fairly (Adler, 1981).

#### 2.2.5. work-life balance

Working in a locality, where the crime rate is high also creates hindrances for anyone to opt for a job career, and even if one may consider working in such a condition then managing a work-life balance becomes difficult. In many cases, lack of social cohesion at the intra-societal level bewildered a foreigner to understand local culture quickly and made him face challenges in settling down his life in that locality (Jara & Perbedy, 2009). A research conducted by Gewinner (2020) on German academic system highlights the high performance expectation pressures and difference of cultural understanding about family life balance of migrant employees bring them under stress who already are at a disadvantageous position as compared to the native employees. A harmonious social life is equally important for the physical and mental health of employees. This is one of the reasons, good working conditions are valued since they provide an opportunity for

**Figure 1. hr dm practices as a coping mechanism for xeno-phobia at workplace.**



establishing a work–life balance and reducing turnover. The provision of work–life balance as the organizational policy is an important productivity antecedent that persuades the workers to perform better by ensuring their confidence in organizational policies (Emadzadeh et al., 2012) **Figure 1.**

### 3. Methods

This study aims to explore the forms/dimensions of xenophobic behaviours at workplace and to develop a framework by investigating and exploring the HRDM practices; like intercultural training and development, flexible compensation, international staffing, work-design and work-life balance in managing the xenophobia and its sub-dimensions: discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping. The participants from both Pakistan and China working on CPEC related projects were selected and interviewed to establish the presence of xenophobia and explore the HRDM practices that might help cope with it. From the two types of response collection techniques for investigation proposed by Guba (1985), the interview technique was selected for investigation. Methods for investigation and data collection were done through purposive, convenience and snowball sampling method. To obtain a valuable response in qualitative studies it is crucial to identify or trace a knowledgeable participant. Further, the participants should fulfil certain criteria relevant to the study to participate in the research. Therefore, to meet our research goal, criterion sampling was selected among types of purposive sampling techniques (Patton, 2002).

In the initial phase, researchers had to form contacts using existing contacts/resources through stakeholders or responsible organizations for investigation (Okumus et al., 2007). For this study, researchers identified people who could help in connection buildings with participants and contacted them for identifying knowledgeable employees on the working area of China–Pakistan economic corridor. Groenewald (2004), indicated that this is a method of expanding the sample by asking one informant or participant to recommend others for interviewing. In the process of the interview, participants were asked to provide references to other members who could contribute to the study. According to Patton (2002), criteria for sampling were also identified. A criterion is set to match the participant’s attributes with criteria for significant response collection. Participants had to fulfil the following criteria: a) Employed on CPEC projects, b) Have official contact with minimum one national of another country (China or Pakistan) at workplace, c) Have to maintain contact on the job at least once a week, d) Have been working together for at least 1 year.

The elaborating criteria were used to identify those who have the know-how of each other (opposite nationals: China–Pakistan) and can give a valuable response (Crawford, 2004). By establishing criteria, the investigator became capable of the selection of enthusiastic and passionate workers, who were willing for participation. Getting members in access and response generation became easy through the purposeful criterion sampling approach (Berg & Lune, 2011). According to Morse (2000), the sample size should be equal to the number of factors. The sample size was chosen according to the time frame for field research (Baker, 2012). All interviews were conducted at the locations suggested by the interviewee (e.g., meeting hall on sites and offices of interviewees). A total of eight participants were included in the sample size, in which four were Pakistani



national and the other four were Chinese national. These selected interviewees were chosen after a series of unstructured interviews and discussions with management officials of the CPEC project. All participants were male due to the working conditions of CPEC. The reason for the selection of two different nationals was to investigate the behaviors, affiliations, and thoughts of these nationals due to dissimilarities in their cultures. The final sample comprised those who were presently employed for at least 1 year and had a contact pattern of minimum once in a week (see Table 1).

### 3.1. Data collection

An unstructured interview guide was developed to discuss sensitive dimensions of working conditions and to explore the experiences of workers contesting in a transnational context (Burgess, 1984; Fife, 2005; Patton, 2002). However, to seek a deeper understanding of participants' experiences, in-depth interviews were taken using Goldberg's (1993) guideline of the theory of five-factor personality traits. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews from Chinese and Pakistani nationals working for CPEC projects. However, a review of the literature was the core source of secondary data to draw a roadmap for research design. All interviews were conducted during summer 2018. Some interviews were recorded on transcripts as verbatim. The decision to use verbatim was due to the prohibition of electronic devices on some of the sites, however, the photographs of the interview sections were also collected. Transcribing, coding and analysis of data was carried out at a later stage.

It was important to use a list of questions and aide to stay relevant to the topic and research theme, although the interviews were mainly conducted through unstructured questions. This process is also suggested in many research guidelines as well (Briggs, 2000; McCann & Clark, 2005; Minichiello et al., 1990). Moreover, aide memoires are guides for topics, to be asked for a response, and to avoid asking direct questions (Burgess, 1984). To explore the xenophobic conditions, this study engaged with a systematic ladder, questions were asked about the presence of xenophobic behavior at workplace through the help of *discrimination* scale guidelines provided by Williams et al. (1972), *stereotyping* guidelines adapted from Stephan et al. (1999), and exploring attitudes of *prejudice* through scale guidelines adapted from Stephan et al. (1993). Ensued by, the next stage was to appraise whether human resource practices could overcome xenophobic tendencies and discriminatory behaviors or not.

The guide for *human resource practices* was adapted from several earlier research works. Hence, the *Intercultural-training and development* and *flexible compensation* tool are adapted from Gisela et al. (2012); whereas the understanding of *work-life balance* was adapted from the

**Table 1. Demographics of respondents**

S.No	Respondents	Country	Working Time period on CPEC	Gender	Place of Interview
1.	(Respondent-1)	China	16 months	Male	Uch Sharif
2.	(Respondent-2)	China	16 months	Male	Sukkur
3.	(Respondent-3)	China	13 months	Male	Islamabad
4.	(Respondent-4)	China	Near about 2 years	Male	Quetta
5.	(Respondent-5)	Pakistan	18 months	Male	Multan
6.	(Respondent-6)	Pakistan	13 months	Male	Islamabad
7.	(Respondent-7)	Pakistan	1 year	Male	Sukkur
8.	(Respondent-8)	Pakistan	15 months	Male	Quetta

work of Brough et al. (2009). Work of Morgeson and Humphrey (2006) provided the base for framing the *work- design understanding*, and *international staffing*. The average time for each interview was around 30 minutes. Some of the questions asked included: do you know what discrimination is? Or xenophobia? why it occurs? And under what conditions these discriminatory behaviors can be tamed? It was taken care of that participating workers from China were familiar with the English language. Similarly, Pakistani workers were also good at English. However, for better understanding, questions were asked in the Urdu language from Pakistani workers and translated back into English for response analysis. For the Chinese respondents, the questions were asked only in English.

### 3.2. Data analysis

The process of data analysis was started after the completion of the first interview, as the researchers start noting the interviewee's expressions and responses, to get command of knowledge on the interview process (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). This process also helps in identifying the limits of data movement. The data analysis stage starts with the data compiling phase (Yin, 2011). This study chose two-level coding systems for the analysis stage. It begins from open coding and ends on counting on the axial level. The first one, open coding is frequently referred to as disassembling (Yin, 2011). Because of the data division process in small pieces of rough information, it is known as an open coding system (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Secondly, the interview notes and transcribed data consulted repeatedly to develop a normative and cultural understanding of workers' social background, which enabled this study to analyze the concepts more objectively. Research data processed from the initial phase of discussion was also consulted to the interview guide for staying focused. Those terms, which were repetitive in the interview, were excluded and some statements were included for the need basis. For the Validity and reliability of the study, a robust procedure was adopted from the work of Huberman and Miles (2002), whereby guidelines validity and reliability maximization techniques were utilized. To maximize its validity and reliability five consistent modes of validity, which were guided by researchers for qualitative studies, were used. Guides were "descriptive validity, interpretive validity, theoretical validity, generalizability, and evaluative validity" (Huberman & Miles, 2002).

## 4. Findings and discussion

Analysis of the research response is presented under two sections; one is based on antecedents of HRDM techniques (i.e. intercultural-training and development, flexible compensation, international staffing, work-design and work-life balance), while the second one describes attributes of xenophobia (i.e. prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination). The study explains the proposed model under the analysis section based on the responses.

### 4.1. Antecedents of HRDM techniques

In this section of the analysis, sample detail is provided in tabular form and detailed information is also given in below tables. Firstly, those antecedents are mentioned which were chosen after a detailed review of the literature. In Table 2, responses of foreigners are depicted, followed by table no. 3 where the response of local participants' response is stated.

Responses regarding these five antecedents from both countries' nationals are recorded separately for analyzing behavior differences about antecedents and attributes. Response regarding these five antecedents is explained above separately but the response of both countries' nationals, suggests some other antecedents, which can minimize attributes of xenophobic behavior. Some other antecedents, which are suggested by respondents, are (1. Effective performance management system, 2. Flexible work hours, 3. Innovation, 4. Image Building, 5. Organizational support, 6. Leadership, 7. Equal Employment opportunity). Suggestions are defined in Table 4Table 3.

Mentioned in Table 4 were some antecedents, which were suggested by respondents during interviews in general language. The researchers suggested management terms for the

**Table 2. Foreigners' responses to antecedents of the HRDM practices**

<b>Antecedents</b>	<b>Non-Native Participants Sample Quotes</b>
Intercultural-Training and Development	"Yes, the training about each other's norms, beliefs, ethics and most importantly work styles can build long term relations and effectiveness at the workplace" (Respondent 1)
Flexible compensation	"We are facing deserving reward from work; our rewards and work both are comparable" (Respondent 2) "there is a difference present in our wage system; between foreigners and those who are local fellow workers" (Respondent 3)
International Staffing	"For surviving in competition, international standard staffing is crucial for firms and we were hired on the basis of series of standards" (Respondent 4)
Work-Design	"Structure of work is pretty good, due to leadership of a well-mannered force, and no issue stands for a long time" (Respondent 1)
work-life Balance	"Most of the times, issues arise in this context when communication channels stop work on different sites" (Respondent 3) "For moving around site areas in free time, requires a formal informing process and security needs" (Respondent 4)

**Table 3. Natives' responses to the antecedents of the HRDM Practices**

<b>Antecedents</b>	<b>Native Participants Sample Quotes</b>
Intercultural-Training and Development	"When you have a plan to work on a long-term basis with foreigners, then you have to follow the rules of international standards. But in this project, many of our colleagues are those who are working for a number of years with government projects and they are not fit for international project environment". (Respondent 5)
Flexible compensation	"Compensation which we are getting here for hours worked is more than what we were getting on other projects. And our compensation includes some other allowances and benefits such as, risk allowance". (Respondent 5) "On the same project for same working hours, compensation difference between Chinese and us is not a good gesture". (Respondent 6)
International Staffing	"We were informed that we are going to be hired for an international project, but to our surprise, the management was trying to focus more on language skills and foreigner's acceptance rather than focusing on technical proficiencies". (Respondent 7)
Work-Design	"Work-design is excellent, and the job has no difficulty in it" (Respondent 7) "Chain of command sometimes confuse us about work, when we have to report to two different nations' supervisors, but most of the time decision from them comes same so there is no issue in it". (Respondent 6)
work-life Balance	"Life is good here, and no problems occur, but the continuous movement to different sites for project completion raise issues of time management sometimes. But overall, it is enjoyable". (Respondent 8)

**Table 4. New antecedents explored from interviews/responses of both nationals**

<b>Antecedents</b>	<b>Participants Sample Quotes</b>
<i>Performance Management System</i>	"Deduction in rewards should be on performance-based system rather than on random rules. Promotion opportunity on those positions where only foreigners are working may also be allowed to nationals of Pakistan." (Respondent 6)
<i>Flexible Work Hours</i>	"Many times, we found difficulty for offering prayers during work hours. If flexibility will be allowed in working hours, then it will maximize respect" (Respondent 5)
<i>Equal Employment Opportunity</i>	"Hiring without quota system is real way of merit, (Quota means hiring on key and normal position with predefined proportions)". "This mixed hiring will allow for understanding and respect for each other". (Respondent 8)
<i>Image Building</i>	"There is a need of a campaign to create awareness among local nationals that foreigners are not reason for unemployment issue and also we are not burdened on their economy". (Respondent 4)
<i>Organizational Support</i>	"It is inappropriate for employees of an organization to disrespect their employees by not calling them in meetings and by not supporting their ideas. This thing creates negative feelings about foreigners" (Respondent 7).
<i>Leadership</i>	"Mixed style of leadership is required for job completion on international projects, but sometimes supervisor become harsh." (Respondent 6)
<i>Task Innovation</i>	"Some tasks can be done through different ways, which are time-saving, but it is not allowed to do them." (Respondent 3)

**Table 5. New antecedents of HR practices explored concerning xenophobia and literature support for it"**

<b>Antecedents</b>	<b>Definitions</b>	<b>References</b>
<i>Performance Management System</i>	A cycling process based on the stages of identification, measuring and development of performance measures for the betterment of employee and organization.	(Erdogan, 2002; Cawley et al., 1998; London & Smither, 2002; Peters, 1987)
<i>Flexible Work Hours</i>	Allowing or empowering workers to set time for task completion.	(DeRoure, 1995; McNall et al., 2010; Jones & Jones, 2011)
<i>Equal Employment Opportunity</i>	Process of hiring, which is not discriminatory and is properly communicated.	(Tomei, 2003; Raghavi & Nishnava, 2013; Orife & Manmohan, 2001; Aleksandra et al., 2015)
<i>Image Building</i>	Creation of positive or negative thoughts in the minds of the public.	(Jackson, 2004; Lopez, 2002; Nan, 2001)
<i>Organizational Support</i>	Backing up employees in creativity and empowering them to do tasks.	(Chow & Hong, 2006; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002)
<i>Leadership</i>	"Leadership is a social influence process in which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of subordinates in an effort to reach organization goals."	(Omolayo, 2007; Long & Mao, 2008)
<i>Task Innovation</i>	"Creativity is perceived to be a possible source of competitive advantage to their organizations."	(Amabile, 1998; McLean, 2005)

antecedents based on their responses. The suggested antecedents are defined through literature support in Table 5. The literature support is provided for creating a better understanding. As mentioned earlier, the phase of analysis was started from the very first interview, but the complete analysis of all the interviews provided a vivid and clear map for discussion. The need for intercultural-training and development system was pointed out by respondents and this is also supported by the work of Medgyes (1992), since it is observed that issues like language barriers and position differences may occur in an international working environment on job places. These issues can be minimized if not eliminated by effectively harnessing the power of intercultural-trainings and development. The compensation issue was not serious in job place because of flexibility and local workers were aware of the reasons for wage differences. In support of the fact, this is also known that workers move on international assignments for many reasons and wage increase is one of them (Harris, 2001). It was found that workers showed concern about the staffing process as not being so transparent. However, for competing and working in mixed nations projects, organizations must work accordingly (Borrmann, 2016). The work of Rees et al. (2007), can provide some indicators and direction in this concern. Getting effective and timely results, organizations need to focus on work-design acutely (Eisenberger et al., 1990; Punnett, 1997; Sims & Schraeder, 2004). Adding to the validity of the argument, work-design was very good on sites as per respondents' observations. Working in an area where security concerns are high for workers, is not only challenging but also disturbs the balance in work-life. Non-native workers specifically indicated the same issue by arguing that while moving around, they need NOC and proper security.

The performance management system was an element, which was presented by interviewees and it has literature support in improving organizational performance and for increasing organizational climate conduciveness (Erdogan, 2002; London & Smither, 2002). Flexible work hours were highlighted as a motivator by the respondents since it could mean a better work-life balance (DeRoure, 1995; Jones & Jones, 2011). Natives argued that the employment opportunities are limited, and some key positions are only reserved for non-natives, which is against the basic rights of employees and the norms of equal employment opportunity (Aleksandra et al., 2015; Orife & Manmohan, 2001). Non-natives highlighted that positive image building in minds of locals is vital to overcome misconceptions and stereotyping. Image building removes misunderstandings and provides a way for affection and love creation (Lopez, 2002; Nan, 2001). According to respondents, in terms of organizational support and leadership, if an organization encourages and can allow workers to apply innovation, it builds confidence and trust among the employer and the employee which is beneficial in long term (Amabile, 1998; McLean, 2005). However, they also mentioned that sometimes leadership issues occur, but these are trivial in nature.

#### **4.2. Dimensions of xenophobia**

Interviewees' responses on attributes/sub-dimensions of xenophobia are presented in this section. Sample quotes about attributes of xenophobia, from nationals of both countries China and Pakistan, are mentioned in Table 6. The detailed discussion is also presented below the table in which conclusion and support for variables is presented.

The mentioned attributes of Xenophobia in Table 6 were detailed in literature and based on the support of previous investigations (Adler, 1981; Akhtar et al., 2014; Cheema et al., 2013; Emadzadeh et al., 2012; Jara & Perbedy, 2009).

However, in interviews, the researcher observed two sub-dimensions for one "Discrimination" attribute of xenophobia mentioned in Table 7. These two sub-dimensions were 1- Physical Feature Discrimination, and 2- Religious Discrimination. The concept and literature support for these two variables is described in Table 8.

Sub-dimensions of xenophobia, *Physical Feature Discrimination and Religious Discrimination*, as identified through the interviews of the respondents, are discussed in detail in this section. The

**Table 6. Responses to sub-dimensions of xenophobia**

Attributes	Participants Sample Quotes
<i>Prejudice</i>	<p>"I think negativity in thoughts of foreigners for us is not present here. They are here for work and they are working." (Respondent 8)</p> <p>"Never anyone expressed directly to us, but sometimes we feel that locals consider our presence negatively on some issues like benefits and security (they call it 'protocol') provided to us" (Respondent 1)</p> <p>"This is not always the case with natives, some of those who exhibit so are usually not from the big cities" (Respondent 3)</p>
<i>Stereotyping</i>	<p>"Element of hate on the job is normal in the sense of competition in any organization, but we never feel that we are treated as an alien here" (Respondent 2)</p> <p>"They show respect every time for us. Sometimes their laughs make us curious, but this is due to the language barrier in my opinion" (Respondent 5)</p>
<i>Discrimination</i>	<p>"No form of discrimination is good. People that are not competent enough should be brought up to speed by the competent ones, not discriminated against" (Respondent 4)</p> <p>"Sometimes it could be difficult to be accepted as good enough to do the job, but with time, they see me learned and eligible". (Respondent 7)</p>

**Table 7. New dimensions of xenophobia explored during interviews**

Attributes	Definitions
<i>Physical Feature Discrimination</i>	"Sometimes, I get treated with less respect based on skin color, eyes and height issue, but that is not what everyone does, some accept me the way I am and give me all the respect I deserve" (Respondent 3)
<i>Religious Discrimination</i>	"Some of them are really hard worker and very dedicated, but sometimes they forget about our religious concerns and forget to allow us time for prayers". (Respondent 5)

**Table 8. New attributes of xenophobia explored and literature support for it**

Attributes	Definitions	References
<i>Physical Feature Discrimination</i>	Treating someone with either more or less respect on the basis of his/her physical appearance, outlook, accent etc.	(Averett & Korenman, 1996; Hamermesh & Biddle, 1994; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1996)
<i>Religious Discrimination</i>	Thinking, pretending, or acting negatively for someone's moral and religious belief.	(Acik, 2008; Erdemir et al., 2013)

responses of interviewees show that discrimination element is present in the workplace between workers. United Nations (1969), guidelines were matched with response recorded, to analyze which type of discrimination is present if at all it exists. Physical feature discrimination is observed as a sub variable of discrimination in interviews. This element leads to stereotyping and needs to be addressed on priority (Mahajan, 2007). Besides, it was found that religious discrimination was also present for those who wanted flexible work hours to perform their religious activities (Erdemir et al., 2013). The findings in the context are important and alarming since this element was not considered important before doing interviews, but responses made it important.

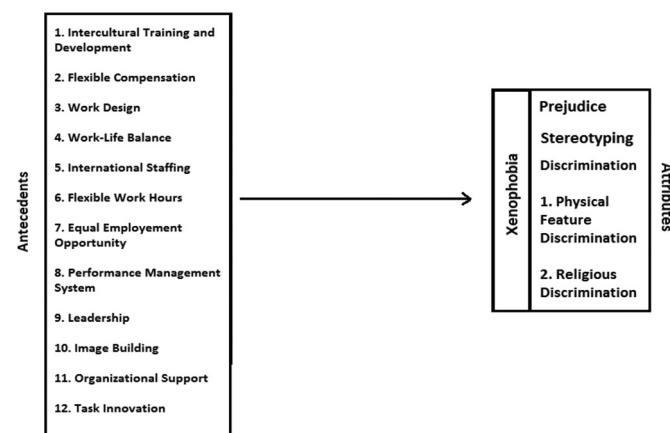


Presence of some form of stereotyping, at a minimum level, is indicated in observed sub-dimensions of xenophobia which has been highlighted through the responses generated by interviews. The work of Hlayiseka (2015), also tells that Chinese and Pakistani people have a stereotype mindset. Outcomes are visualized and anticipated instead of observing the actual outcome, occasionally making a perfect example of stereotyping. This not only shows concern for each other but also indicates the element of prejudice (MMP, 2003). The final model after the investigation of the literature review and qualitative study is presented in Research Model Figure 2. The detailed model includes antecedents which are techniques or tools of human resource management and the attributes of xenophobia with sub-dimensions.

The process of model investigation results starts from combining answers for the first research question (RQ1): What are the views of China–Pakistan nationals’ about exitance of xenophobic behavior at the workplace? The overall analysis is indicating some factors, which show xenophobic behavior presence on CPEC workplace. This answer supports the main theme of the research, which was derived from literature and incidents that were happening in Pakistan with other countries’ nationality holders. However, an encouraging fact which has been identified, is that people are not completely xenophobic, and xenophobia is in the starting phase. RQ 2: this research questions along with its sub-questions RQ 2a, RQ2b and RQ2c focused on identifying the forms/dimensions of xenophobic behaviors. The interviews with respondents not only covered the literature suggested three dimensions of xenophobia, but also there were some additional dimensions highlighted. According to the responses of the interviewees, xenophobia is in the initial stage which can be reduced and minimized by appropriate strategies. Another significant matter, which was noted down, was the presence of discrimination. Physical feature discrimination and religious discrimination were found at workplace, which are the source of creating xenophobic tendencies vis-à-vis conditions for stereotyping others.

After identification of xenophobic behavior, the next step was to find approaches to reduce xenophobia mentioned in the research question no three (RQ3 and RQ 3a): Which antecedents or approaches of human resource management can reduce xenophobic behavior? Some of the approaches, which were available in studied literature were shaped to check impact. The interviewees did not only indicate selected approaches to be relevant, but they also helped identify other approaches, which were indicated by them in responses. Initially, this study employed five approaches to deal with the xenophobic conditions, which included *international staffing, flexible compensation, intercultural-training and development, work-life balance, and work-design*. However, after conducting in-depth interviews, the response of participants helped in expanding the list to a total of twelve. The other seven approaches included were *flexible*

**Figure 2. Extensive model of HR Practices a coping mechanism for xenophobia at workplace.**



*work hours, task innovation, equal employment opportunity, image building, performance management system, organizational support and leadership.* Moreover, It is found that identified approaches did help in reducing xenophobic behavior. To elaborate these, it is agreed that international staffing standards can raise project efficiency and learning environment and competition can be changed into healthy collaboration. Task innovation can polish the creativity of employees and relations at work. Effective performance management was indicated to provide fair chances to those who deserve key positions and also helps in the training needs assessment. While intercultural-training and development were appreciated by most of the participants as it could systematically enhance job knowledge for all. Flexible work hours and work-life balance are suggested variables originally identified by foreign respondents, with a belief it will assist on work sites due to outside communication problems and personal issues. Equal employment opportunity was indicated by local nationals, and they want its implementation on an equal basis to work with motivation. Similarly, image building, work-design, leadership, and organizational support along with flexible compensation can create an atmosphere of trust and confidence leading to the better working environment for the successful execution of a multinational project like CPEC.

## 5. Conclusion and recommendations

Scholars have identified that during last few decades xenophobia has become an important global concern owing to fast-paced development and globalization (Peterie & Neil, 2020). The study's findings make significant contributions to the ongoing discussion on xenophobia and observe that xenophobia towards Chinese workers and vice versa, employed in different projects of CPEC is extant, but it is currently in the earlier stages and not much widespread. This study is of great benefit to the practitioners in curbing xenophobia since it provides evidence on the subject and also the possible solutions that carry credence. Due to time constraint and the strategic nature of the CPEC project, this study only confined to 8 respondents. However, it is recommended that a number of respondents may be increased in future studies and the proposed framework should be tested quantitatively. Further, the analysis of interviews revealed that the main types of discrimination (i.e. sub-dimension of xenophobia), were either on the basis of physical features/appearance and/or religious basis, making a substantial contribution to the body of knowledge. In addition, it is suggested that different HRDM strategies may be employed to ensure the meaningful reduction or management of xenophobic behavior. The authors, through the literature review, initially identified "five" strategies, which were international staffing, flexible compensation, intercultural-training and development, work-life balance and work-design. During the course of this study and particularly through the interview process the approaches were extended to "twelve". The newly added seven approaches included flexible work hours, task innovation, equal employment opportunity, image building, performance management system, organizational support and leadership. The final research question of the study seeks to explore whether these approaches can reduce xenophobic behavior. The respondents felt that xenophobic behavior can be reduced by the strategies identified in the study. As the CPEC project in Pakistan is still underway, this research work and model helps to re-define the reasons for xenophobia and its sub-dimensions and formulate measures that can help improve behavior for future gains. The study highlights a new avenue for researchers in HR by exploring a newly established concept of xenophobia at workplace which becomes highly relevant in a diversity-based global workforce era. This research is unique in identifying the relationship between xenophobic behavior and human resource management practices and will help academicians and HR practitioners and researchers to build a case for managing diversity effectively. However, this research is an exploratory study to identify the proposed HRM mechanism for managing the xenophobia using one project which is CPEC Pakistan, to further extend the concept, the proposed framework should be researched in multiple organizational settings with different nationalities involved. Similarly, because of the qualitative nature (interview-based) mythological design, a limited number of respondents were involved, the study can further be strengthened by using a larger number of respondents and a different research methodology. Additionally, Future researchers

can use the proposed model to empirically test and to establish the generalizability of the findings and measures proposed in this study.

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