

**INDIAN MIGRANT WORKERS IN
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**
**A Study on Employment, Wage and Working
Conditions**

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Introduction

Since the mid 1970's a large number of Indian workers migrated to Gulf Countries in search of jobs. The price hike of oil in 1973 and the consequent earnings of large revenue had accelerated a process of industrialization and social change in the Gulf countries characterized by massive investment in social and economic infrastructure. This had necessitated the services of a large number of foreign workers in the Gulf countries. The major destinations of Indian workers in the Gulf countries were United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Yemen and Iraq. Labour was recruited for work in Gulf strictly on limited contract terms and they were expected to return home at the end of the contract period. Majority of the migrants to the Gulf belonged to the category of unskilled workers, semiskilled or skilled workers in manual or construction related occupations. The number of Indian migrants in the Gulf region increased from 5.31 lakhs in 1979 to 15.05 lakhs in 1983 and to 30 lakhs in 1999. The rate of emigration also increased substantially during the first decade of 21st century. However, the global crisis of 2008 created severe recession in the Gulf countries resulting in substantial fall in demand for migrant workers. According to one estimate, the total stock of Indians in the Gulf was 49 lakhs in 2008.

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries followed a migration policy which was entirely different from early policies. They prohibited settlement type of migration to avoid the social expenditure needed to maintain the dependents of the migrants. On the other hand, the policy has been the promotion of contract migration. These countries impose a number of restrictions on the migrants regarding bringing along their dependents, stay and changing jobs and employers. In the case of majority of low paid categories of semi-skilled and unskilled workers, a major portion of the cost of migration such as for visa, travel, medical checkup, labour card, incidental expenditure etc. was shifted to the migrants. The workers usually got a low wage rate due to lack of minimum wages, the practice of stagnant wage rate and lack of payment of non-wage benefits as per the labour laws and ineffective labour dispute settlement machinery. Thus, these countries got the services of the migrant workers for the development of their economies without extending a fair wage or a wage including non-wage benefits as per international standards.

The migrant workers in GCC countries are basically vulnerable because they are temporary contract workers who are at the mercy of the employers and not protected by any civil or labour laws relating to wages, working conditions and other monetary and non-monetary benefits or protection from the harassment of the employers, particularly in the case of housemaids working in the households. Non-compliance of provisions of the labour contract by the employers in Gulf countries is a common phenomenon. The Gulf countries have not implemented any minimum living wages for the expatriates. Non-payment of salaries and denial of non-wage benefits are common. Workers are forced to work more than eight hours. The unskilled and semi-skilled workers are accommodated in crowded labour camps in small rooms without proper facilities, and in recent years the Gulf countries witnessed strikes and by the workers from South Asia. Female domestic workers like housemaids are ill-treated, harassed, sexually exploited and forced to work long hours as they are not protected by any existing

labour laws. Prohibiting poor migrants from bringing along their families and harassing workers by confiscation of passport by the employers have become common practice. The labour courts are generally inaccessible to the ordinary migrants. Besides this, the GCC countries have been following a deliberate policy of reducing the size of the migrant labour force through a number of measures.

Though a number of studies are available on the trends, patterns, economic and social impacts and return emigration, attempts have not been made to examine the issues of emigrants in the Gulf. In this context, the study attempts to examine the issues of labour, employment, living conditions and the problems of migrants in United Arab Emirates (UAE). The study examines the profile of Indian emigrants, employment, wages and working conditions, and the problem faced by the Indian emigrant workers.

Concepts used

In contract migration, return is an essential part of the migration process. Here, the workers are hired for contractual jobs for a definite time period and are expected to return after the expiry of the period. Usually during the period of stay abroad, they leave their families behind in their home country. In order to support their family, the emigrants send remittances on a regular basis which is spent by the households. The economic impact of this spending is always substantial on the domestic economies of the labour exporting countries.

Emigrants are defined as members of the households who had moved out of Kerala and were living outside India at the time of the survey.

Return emigrants are members of the households who had emigrated out of India but returned to Kerala and were members of the households at the time of the survey.

Total remittances include remittances received directly by the household and also by any institution in Kerala from all parts of the world.

A household remittance is part of remittance received by households from abroad through different channels.

Emigration Check Required category (ECR) Categories of persons whose Passports have been endorsed as “Emigration Check Required” (ECR), is required to obtain emigration clearance from the Protector of Emigrants (POE) office before travelling abroad for taking up an overseas employment.

Emigration Check Not Required Category (ECNR) – Section 22 of the Emigration Act, 1983 provides that no citizen of India shall emigrate unless he obtains emigration clearance from the concerned POE. However, with a view to facilitate the movement of the people, 13 categories of persons have been exempted from this requirement and have been placed under ECNR category.

Source of Data

Both secondary and primary data are used for the study. For collecting primary data, we conducted a sample survey of 200 Indian emigrant workers in UAE using a schedule in 2013. The sample was selected from all major categories of emigrant workers living in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah in UAE.

Profile of sample Emigrant workers

This session presents the employment, wages, working conditions and problems of Indian emigrants in UAE. Among the sample emigrants, 171 are males and 29 are females. The districts in Kerala to which majority of the female emigrants belonged are Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Ernakulum, Kollam and Kottayam. Among the sample emigrant workers, the largest number belongs to Malappuram district. The districts ranked second to fourth with respect to number of emigrants are Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam and Kannur. Idukki and Wayanad are the districts from where the migration was at its lowest. A religion wise distribution of sample emigrants is shown in Table 1

Table 1
Religion Wise Distribution of Sample Emigrant Workers in UAE

Sl. No.	Religion	Number			Percentage		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1.	Hindu	78	15	93	45.62	51.72	46.5
2.	Christian	13	8	21	7.60	27.59	10.5
3.	Muslim	80	6	86	46.78	20.69	43.0
4.	Others	0	0	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Total	171	29	200	100.00	100.00	100.00

It is seen from the table that the largest number of sample emigrant workers belongs to the Hindu religion (46.5 percent) Muslims account for 43 percent and Christians 10.5 percent. Among the emigrant workers, 22.5 percent belong to the age group 21 to 30, and 35 percent 31 to 40. The number of emigrants belongs to the age group 41 to 50 account for 28.5 percent. Thus, it can be seen that the young labour force between 21 and 40 account for major share of the sample workers. In contract migration, usually a large section of the migrants are unmarried. But in our sample, we found that 85 percent of the emigrants are married persons (Table 2).

Table 2
Marital Status of Sample Emigrant Workers in UAE

Sl No	Marital status	Number			Percentage		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1.	Single	27	1	28	15.80	3.45	14.00
2.	Married	142	27	169	83.04	93.10	84.50
3.	Divorced / separated	1	0	1	0.58	0.00	0.50
4.	Widowed	1	1	2	0.58	3.45	1.00
	Total	171	29	200	100.00	100.00	100.00

In the case of females, except one, all are married persons. On the other hand, the unmarried single emigrants constituted 14 percent of the total sample emigrants. The survey results of the educational status of sample emigrants are given in Table 3.

Table 3
Educational Status of Sample Emigrant Workers in UAE

Sl no	Status	Number			Percentage		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1.	Below primary	1	0	1	0.58	0.00	0.50
2.	Primary	5	0	5	2.92	0.00	2.50
3.	Upper primary	17	0	17	9.95	0.00	8.50
4.	Secondary	50	2	52	29.25	6.90	26.00
5.	Plus two / PDC	51	1	52	29.82	3.45	26.00
6.	Degree & above	45	26	71	26.32	89.65	35.50
7.	Others	1	0	1	0.58	0.00	0.50
8.	Not reported	1	0	1	0.58	0.00	0.50
	Total	171	29	200	100.00	100.00	100.00

A notable point is that except 11.5 percent, all of them have an education level of secondary and above. More than half of the sample emigrants have either secondary or plus two level of education. Another 35 percent have an education level of degree and above. This indicates that the emigrant workers of Kerala are mostly an educated category. With this educational background, the workers prefer mainly non-manual category of jobs. The discussion we had with construction workers and employers reveal that Keralite workers are withdrawing from construction activities.

Year of arrival of emigrants will give an idea about the duration in which they lived and worked in UAE. The table 4 gives the year of arrival of emigrants in UAE.

Table 4
The Year of Arrival of Emigrants in UAE

Sl.no	Year	Number	Percentage
1.	Prior to 2000	66	33.00
2.	2001	7	3.50
3.	2002	4	2.00
4.	2003	11	5.50
5.	2004	12	6.00
6.	2005	11	5.50
7.	2006	7	3.50
8.	2007	15	7.50
9.	2008	15	7.50
10.	2009	19	9.50
11.	2010	10	5.00
12.	2011	12	6.00
13.	2012	8	4.00
14.	2013	1	0.50
15.	Not Reported	2	1.00
	Total	200	100.00

Of the total sample workers, one-third arrived in UAE prior to the year 2000. Another 40 percent arrived between 2001 and 2008, the year of global economic crisis. Percentage of emigrants who arrived during the post global crisis period is 20. Of the 200 sample emigrant workers, only one percent arrived in UAE during the year 2013.

Duration of employment in UAE will give us an idea about the earnings and savings of emigrant workers. It is reported that 8 percent worked more than 25 years, 5 percent worked for more than 16 years, and 20 percent worked between 11 and 15 years. On the other hand, the workers worked only for a short duration i.e. for 1 to 5 years is 41 percent and for 6 to 10 years is 26 percent. Compared to earlier migrants, the one who migrates to UAE recently work only for a short duration.

Employment, wages and working conditions

Employment

The job to which emigrants are employed, and their wages and working conditions are the crucial factors which determine the overall well-being of the workers. Table 5 presents the occupational distribution of the sample emigrant workers. The study reveals that the largest share of workers (23 percent) worked in production, transport equipment operators and related works. The category comprises tailor, bus driver, carpenter, mason, mechanic, technician, steel fixer, painter, draftsman, foreman, cable jointer, welder, electrician, printer, plumber etc. The service workers from the second

category of emigrant workers (21.5 percent).

The service workers category comprises surveyor, hotel supplier, photographer, teacher, storekeeper, cashier, messenger, waiter etc. Administrative and executive category is the third major category which accounts for 12.5 percent of the sample workers. Nearly 12 percent of the sample workers are sales workers such as salesman, sales executive, shop assistant, delivery boy, messenger etc. Clerical and related workers comprising office assistant, office clerk, DTP operator, accountant etc. account for 8.5 percent of the total workers. The other categories of workers include professional and technical, para-medical workers, domestic workers and those who have their own business. Of the 200 emigrant workers, 11 are having their own business such as shops, small restaurants, small business units, grocery, barbershops, tailoring units, studio etc. The small shops and restaurants are run mostly by the emigrants belonging to northern region of Kerala. A detailed job profile of the emigrant workers are given in Table 6

Table 5
Occupational Distribution of Sample Emigrant Workers

Sl. No	Category of job	Number of emigrants			Percentage of emigrants		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1.	Professional / technical & related works	8	1	9	4.70	3.45	4.50
2.	Para medical works	3	3	6	1.75	10.34	3.00
3.	Administrative, executive & managerial works	20	5	25	11.70	17.24	12.50
4.	Clerical & related works	16	1	17	9.35	3.45	8.50
5.	Last grade in office	14	0	14	8.18	0.00	7.00
6.	Sales workers	23	0	23	13.45	0.00	11.50
7.	Service workers	28	15	43	16.37	51.72	21.50
8.	Production & related, transport , operators& related, farmers, fishermen, hunters & related	46	0	46	26.90	0.00	23.0
9.	Domestic workers	3	2	5	1.76	6.90	2.50
10.	Own business	9	2	11	5.26	6.90	5.50
11..	Not reported	1	0	1	0.58	0.00	0.50
	Total	171	29	200	100.00	100.00	100.00

The sample workers are classified into three categories viz. regular employee with monthly salary, casual workers and self-employed engaged in trade, business etc. Table 7 gives the nature of the

job of the emigrant workers. The survey results suggest that 83 percent of the workers are regular employees receiving monthly salary and 6.5 percent are self-employed. The percentage of casual workers comes to for 2.5 percent. Thus the emigrant workers in UAE are mostly regular employed workers or self-employed.

The category of employers gives an idea about the ownership pattern of companies, business units, shop and other establishments. Table 8 shows the category of employer. A significant finding of the study is that 39 percent of the sample workers are employed in commercial, business or other establishments owned by Indians and Keralites. Another 22.5 percent of the workers are employed in institutions owned by UAE nationals. The percentage of workers employed by foreign companies is 16 and by public sector is 12. Thus, one major factor which contributed to emigration from Kerala is the availability of jobs in the commercial and other business units owned by Indians and Keralites. The business units run by Indian or Keralites prefer native workers.

Table 6

Category of Jobs

Sl. No	Category of job	Job profile	Number of emigrants	Percentage of emigrants
1.	Professional / technical & related works	Doctors, engineers, chefs	9	4.50
2.	Para medical works	Nurse, lab technician, x-ray tech	6	3.00
3.	Administrative, executive & managerial works	Office secretary, supervisor, operation manager, asst. Manager, h.r. Manager, hotel manager, m.d.,p.r.o.,	25	12.50
4.	Clerical & related works	Office assistant, accountant, document controller, d.t.p. Operator, office clerk	17	8.50
5.	Last grade in office	Cleaner, sweeper, office boy, watchman, helper	14	7.00
6.	Sales workers	Salesman, paint sales, sales executive, shop assistant, delivery boy, merchandiser	23	11.50
7.	Service workers	Quantity surveyor, hotel supplier, photographer, teacher, store keeper, safety officer, cashier, massager, waiter	43	21.50
8.	Production & related, transport , operators& related, farmers, fishermen, hunters & related	Tailor, bus driver, carpenter, mason, mechanic, senior technician, steel fixer, painter, draftsman, foreman, cable jointer, labour, x- ray welder, electrician, printing asst, plumber, boat maker	46	23.0
9.	Domestic workers	Cook, house maid, servants	5	2.50
10.	Own business	Shop owner, restaurant owner, business	11	5.50
11.	Not reported		1	0.50
	Total		200	100.00

Table 7

Nature of Job

Sl. No	Nature of job	Number of emigrants			Percentage of emigrants		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1.	Regular job with Monthly salary	141	25	166	82.46	86.20	83.00
2.	Casual workers	4	1	5	2.33	3.45	2.5
3.	Self employed	10	3	13	5.85	10.35	6.50
4.	Not reported	16	0	16	9.36	0	8.0
	Total	171	29	200	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table 8

Category of Employer

Sl. No	Category of employer	Number of emigrants			Percentage of emigrants		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1.	Govt. / public sector	23	1	24	13.45	3.45	12.00
2.	Foreign company	32	0	32	18.72	0.00	16.00
3.	Uae citizens	41	4	45	23.97	13.80	22.50
4.	Indian / keralite	59	19	78	34.50	65.50	39.00
5.	Others	12	1	13	7.02	3.45	6.50
6.	Not reported	4	4	8	2.34	13.80	4.00
	Total	171	29	200	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table 9

Nature of Work Place

Sl no	Nature of work place	Number of emigrants			Percentage of emigrants		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1.	Office	56	5	61	32.75	17.24	30.50
2.	Shop	42	3	45	24.56	10.35	22.50
3.	Construction site	27	0	27	15.80	0.00	13.50
4.	Hospital	1	4	5	0.58	13.80	2.50
5.	House	3	2	5	1.75	6.89	2.50
6.	Factory / workshop	16	0	16	9.35	0.00	8.0
7.	Farm	1	0	1	0.58	0.00	0.50
8.	Others	23	13	36	13.45	44.82	18.00
9.	Not reported	2	2	4	1.18	6.90	2.00
	Total	171	29	200	100.00	100.00	100.00

The place of work of the emigrant comprises offices, shops, construction sites, hospitals, houses, factories, workshops and farms. Table 9 gives the nature of work place of the sample emigrants. The study revealed that the largest share of sample workers worked in offices (30.5 percent). The second category worked in shops and other trading establishments. The third category is in construction sites accounting for 13 percent of the workers. The place of work of the fourth category is factory and workshop. A small share of the workers worked in hospitals and houses. Thus the jobs in which the Keralite workers are engaged in the Gulf belong to white collar categories. Due to better educational qualification, majority of workers from Kerala are able to find jobs in non-manual, white collar categories.

As per UAE labour laws, the workers are entitled for a paid holiday every week. Usually, an emigrant worker can work up to 26 days per month. But the data on the number of days employed reveal that all the workers do not get job for all the 26 days. Table 10 gives the average number of employment per month for the emigrant workers. It is found that 5 percent of the workers worked below 20 days per month. Another 23.5 percent worked for 20 to 24 days per month. It is reported that 54 percent worked for 25 to 30 days per month. This suggests that the sample workers are getting fairly good number of working days per month. A male/female breakup of the workers shows that males worked for more days compared to females.

Table 10

Average Number of Days Employed Per Month							
Sl. No	Number of days Employed during previous month	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1.	Below 20	11	4	15	6.42	13.8	7.5
2.	21-24	30	12	42	17.55	41.38	21
3.	25-30	112	13	125	65.48	44.82	62.5
4.	31	3	0	3	1.75	0.00	1.50
5.	Not reported	15	0	15	8.80	0.00	7.50
	Total	171	29	200	100.00	100.00	100.00

Wages

Discussions with the emigrant workers, employers and migrant associations reveal that wages remained stagnant since the Global Economic Crisis of 2008. Based on the data collected from the survey, we grouped the workers and others engaged in business into five categories. Table 11 gives the wage structure of Indian emigrant workers in UAE in 2013. The first category consists of those Indian emigrants getting a monthly wage below 600 UAE Dirham. It is reported that the category consists of

unskilled construction workers, household workers in the household sector and other low-paid category of workers. They can be considered as the lowest earning category of emigrants. The second category is those getting a monthly wage ranging between 600 to 1200 Dirham. The emigrant workers in the category include house maids, house servants, cooks, construction workers, cleaners, sweepers, office boys, watchmen, waiters in small tea shops, business etc. Nearly half of the total sample workers belonged to these two categories.

The third category is the emigrants getting a monthly wage of 1201 to 4000 Dirham. Skilled labour category such as tailor, welder, steel fixer, draftsman, mason, cashier and teacher in schools come under this category. The fourth category comprises persons with higher skills such as foreman, draftsman, heavy vehicle operators, store keeper, junior level managers, sales executives, accountants, technicians etc. This group of workers gets a monthly wage ranging between 4001 to 10000 Dirham. The fifth category is the high wage group getting a monthly income of more than 10000 Dirham. Doctors, Engineers, IT Professionals, top executives and businessmen having medium to large business and other investors belong to this group. A review of the five categories shows that the first two belong to the low categories of jobs with low monthly wages. Nearly half of the total migrants can be classified under this category. The third and fourth categories are the middle income groups who can earn some savings after meeting their consumption and other items of expenditure. On the other hand, the fifth group may be considered as a high income group, enjoying higher levels of living and having substantial savings.

Table 11

Wage Structure of Indian Emigrant Workers In UAE In 2013

Sl. No	Monthly wage In dirham	Category of indian workers
1.	Below 600	Unskilled Construction Worker, Household worker, Cleaner etc.
2.	601 – 1200	House maid, Servant, Cook, Construction labourer, cleaner, Sweeper, Office boy, Watchman, Waiter in small tea shops, Salesman in small shops, delivery boy etc.
3.	1201 – 4000	Tailor, Welder, Steel Fixer, Draftsman, Mason, shier, Teacher, Salesman, Watchman, Clerk, Office assistant, Electrician etc.
4.	4001 – 10,000	Foreman, Draftsman, Heavy Vehicle Driver, Store Keeper, Cashier, Manager, Sales Executive, Accountant, Marketing Manager, Lab Technician, Plant Operator, Small businessman and traders.
5.	Above 10,000	Doctor, Engineer, IT Professional, Bank Manager, Professional, Top Executive, Businessman, Investor.

* 1 UAE DIRHAM = Rs. 14.50 at the time of the survey

Lack of prompt payment of salary to emigrant workers is a problem faced by the emigrants in UAE. Seventeen percent of the sample workers reported that they have to get arrear salary from the employers (Table 12). Of the total workers, 74 percent reported that they are getting salaries regularly.

Table 12

Number of Emigrant Workers to Get Arrear Salary

Sl. No	Number reported	Number of emigrants			Percentage of emigrants		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1.	To get arrear salary	32	3	35	18.71	10.34	17.50
2.	Not to get arrear salary	124	24	148	72.51	82.76	74.00
3.	Not reported	15	2	17	8.78	6.90	8.50
	Total	171	29	200	100.00	100.00	100.00

Hours of work

According to labour laws in UAE, a worker has to work for 8 hours per day. However, employees are permitted to work overtime and are eligible to get overtime wages. In the case of persons who run their own shops and other business, they work for more than 8 hours. Table 13 gives the number of hours worked per day by the workers. It is reported that 13.5 percent of workers work 8 hours per day. The general practice in UAE is to work more than 8 hours by accepting overtime wages. It is reported that 14 percent of the workers work 9 hours and 23 percent 10 hours per day. The study found that 18 percent of the emigrant workers work 12 hours per day. The data collected on the hours of work per day reveal that majority of the workers are working between 9 to 13 hours per day.

Table 13

Number of Hours Worked Per Day

Sl. No	Hours	Number of emigrants			Percentage of emigrants		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1.	6	2	12	14	1.17	41.37	7.00
2.	7	8	0	8	4.68	0.00	4.00
3.	8	25	2	27	14.62	6.90	13.50
4.	9	28	0	28	16.37	0.00	14.00
5.	10	40	6	46	23.40	20.70	23.00
6.	11	3	0	3	1.75	0.00	1.50
7.	12	31	5	36	18.12	17.24	18.00
8.	Above 12 Hours	18	1	19	10.52	3.45	9.50
9.	Not Reported	16	3	19	9.37	10.34	9.50
	Total	171	29	200	100.00	100.00	100.00

Non-wage Benefits

In contract migration, all conditions relating to employment, hours of work, wages, non-wage benefits, accommodation and air ticket for return etc. are stipulated in the terms of contract. According to the UAE immigration rules, it is the responsibility of employers to meet all costs connected with recruitment and expenses connected with the onward and return journey of the recruitee. The worker is entitled to free air ticket for return home after the expiry of the contract period. No fees are to be levied for visa either. The only cost the emigrant is expected to bear is expense for medical checkup. Though these rules are in force, the employers and the recruiting agents try to exploit workers in several ways. Most of the workers who face problems in the UAE for living and working and for return home pertain to terms of contract and their implementation. Usually, workers who have proper visas and work contracts specifying the working conditions, do not face serious problems. On the other hand, workers who migrate without proper visas for work and work contracts face severe problems.

The employers who issue work visas and bring workers without adequate work also create serious hardships to the workers. The workers who are eventually forced to work with other employers become illegal workers. Though the workers are entitled to get the non-wage benefits such as food, accommodation, transport to work place, medical benefit, air return ticket to return home, majority of the emigrants are not getting these benefits. Table 14 presents the number of sample emigrants getting the non-wage benefits. In a sample of 200 workers, 54 percent reported that they are not getting any free or subsidized food. Nearly 40 percent of the workers reported that they are not provided either free accommodation or accommodation allowances. Forty three percent of the workers have to meet the transportation cost for going from residence to work place. Twenty seven percent of the workers are not provided with subsidized medical facilities or allowance. Though it is the responsibility to provide air ticket for the return on vacation, 51 percent are not getting free ticket. These evidences suggest that the

employers in the UAE are following a practice of not giving the non-wage benefits eligible to the emigrant workers as per labour laws.

Table 14

Number of Workers Getting Non–Wage Benefits

Sl. No	Category	Number			Percentage		
		Getting benefit			Getting benefit		
		Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
1.	Food	92	108	200	46.00	54.00	100.00
2.	Accommodation	121	79	200	60.50	39.50	100.00
3.	Transportation to workplace	113	87	200	56.50	43.50	100.00
4.	Medical benefit	145	55	200	72.50	27.50	100.00
5.	Air ticket / fare to return	97	103	200	48.50	51.50	100.00

Expenditure, Savings and Remittances

In this section, we examine the expenditure, savings and remittances of the sample emigrant workers. As the pattern of expenditure is different among migrants living alone and those living with family, we have examined the expenditure of these two categories. Table 15 gives the distribution of workers living alone and with family. Of the total sample emigrants, 59.5 percent are living alone, 26.5 percent are living with family and 14 percent not reported about their status.

Table 15

Number Living With Family

Sl No	Category	Number of emigrants			Percentage of emigrants		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1.	Living alone	139	8	147	81.30	27.60	73.50
2.	With family	32	21	53	18.70	72.40	26.50
	Total	171	29	200	100.00	100.00	100.00

Emigrants living alone

Compared to the emigrant workers living with family, the expenditure will be lower in the case of emigrants living alone. A good number of single emigrants are living in worker camps and they are

provided with free or subsidized food and accommodation. The single migrants also live in shared accommodation in flats and other buildings.

Table 16
Total Monthly Savings of Persons Living Alone

Sl. No	Monthly savings In dirhams	Number Of emigrants	Percentage Of emigrants
1.	Up to 500	29	19.73
2.	501-1000	15	10.20
3.	1001-1500	18	12.24
4.	1501-2000	11	7.50
5.	2001-2500	3	2.04
6.	2501-3000	1	0.68
7.	3001-3500	3	2.04
8.	3501-4000	1	0.68
9.	Above 4000	7	4.76
10.	Not Reported	59	40.14
	Total	147	100.01

We have also collected data about the monthly savings of persons living alone. Table 16 presents the monthly saving reported by sample emigrant workers. Twenty percent reported that they have a monthly saving of less than 500 Dirham per month. Another 10 percent reported a monthly saving between 501 and 1000 and 12 percent 1001 and 1500 Dirham. In this category of emigrant workers only, a few have a higher level of savings. Of the total sample emigrants living alone, only 5 percent have a savings of more than 4000 Dirham. Majority of the emigrants belong to semi-skilled or unskilled categories earning only a small saving compared to others having skilled or professional employment.

In contract migration, the major objective is to earn as much as possible in the foreign country and send their savings to the household in the native place. Remittances are sent for meeting domestic consumption, health, education purchase of consumer goods and other items. The savings earned in the foreign country is also used for investment in capital assets like land, buildings, vehicles, gold, etc. In the survey, data were collected on the monthly remittances of the emigrants living alone in UAE.

It is reported that nearly one-fourth of the emigrants are sending an amount between 501 and 1000 Dirham to their households per month. Another ten percent send an amount ranging between 1001 and 1500 Dirham and 12 percent between 1501 and 2000 Dirham. On the other hand, those who send more than 4000 Dirham are few in number (10 percent).

Emigrants living with family

The emigrants living with family in UAE is a category having better jobs and higher wages compared to emigrants living alone. Emigrants with a monthly income of 4000 Dirham are allowed to bring their

family consisting of spouse, children, parents etc. For those living with family, high rate of rent for accommodation is a major item of expenditure. It is reported that 10 percent of the emigrants living with family had monthly expenditure below 2000 UAE Dirham. Another 11 percent had a monthly expenditure ranging between 2001 and 3000 Dirham and 13 percent between 5001 and 6000 Dirham. On the other hand, a small share of emigrants living with family incurred expenditure above 10,000 Dirham per month (3.8 Percent).

The expenditure pattern suggests that a good part of the income is spent by the households to meet their consumption and related expenditure in UAE. Though the emigrants living with family has a higher level of income, their savings is small. A study of their savings indicates that 19 percent had a savings less than 1000 Dirham (Table 17). Another 18 percent of the emigrants have a savings ranging between 1001 and 2000 Dirham. Only 4 percent of the emigrants living with family have a saving more than 5000 Dirham.

Table 17
Total Monthly Savings of Emigrants Living With Family

Sl. No	Monthly savings In dirhams	Number of Emigrants	Percentage of Emigrants
1.	Up to 500	3	5.66
2.	501-1000	7	13.21
3.	1001-1500	5	9.43
4.	1501-2000	4	7.55
5.	2001-2500	3	5.66
6.	2501-3000	5	9.43
7.	3001-3500	3	5.66
8.	3501-4000	3	5.66
9.	4001-4500	0	0
10.	4501-5000	2	3.77
11	Above 5000	2	3.77
22.	Not Reported	16	30.20
	Total	53	100.00

The emigrants living with family also send their earnings to their households in the native place. It is reported that 11 percent send an amount below 500 Dirham and 24 percent an amount ranging between 501 and 1000 Dirham. On the other hand, nearly 10 percent send an amount of above 4000 Dirham to their families in the native place. The table also indicates that the amount of remittance by the emigrant living with family is higher compared to the emigrants living alone.

The emigrant's mode of remittance of money is money transfer through transfer agencies and Banks. More than half of the remittance is done through money transfer agencies having branches in Kerala. Another 36 percent of the emigrant transfer the money through bank transfer. The sending of money through friends and other means are very rare. Due to prompt and quick transfer of money, emigrants prefer money transfer through agencies and banks. The money received as remittances by the households in India are exempted from the payment of income tax. These also encourage the transfer of money through institutions.

Immigration policy in the UAE

The UAE has been following policies to restrict and regulate the migration of foreign workers since 2001. In UAE, the central criterion on which the entire immigration, labour and economic policies are formulated was based on "Demographic Imbalance theory". The UAE government feels that owing to the large and increasing proportion of expatriate workers, the role and importance of the UAE nationals are getting marginalized in the economy and society creating a very dangerous situation. The general feeling is that the UAE is in danger losing its identity because most of the important activities are in the hands of foreigners. The core of the immigration policy has, therefore, been to set right the demographic imbalance through appropriate policy measures. The Labour 2000 Report of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs contains the immigration policy approach.

The report specifies three major problems viz. demographic imbalance, increasing number of foreign workers and dependents of unskilled workers, mainly Asians. The policy suggestions put forward were reduction of the demographic imbalance, controlling of the inflow of unskilled labourers and introduction of modern technology to replace the unskilled workers. The other major policies pursued are emiratization i.e., giving priority for UAE nationals in job placements, ban on visas for certain category of unskilled workers, privatization of public utilities and imposition of restrictions on issue of work visas.

The UAE government has been following a policy of emiratization i.e., giving priority to their citizens in job placements and reduces unemployment among UAE nationals. With this objective, the UAE government has been following a policy to replace foreign labour with nationals in public sector, during the last one and a half decade. Some of the important public sector undertakings have already taken measures to emiratise their work force. The UAE nationals working in private sector companies are ensured the same social security benefits as are available to workers in the government sector companies. The private companies and institutions were asked to give a quota for native workers as well as to

provide priority to native workers. The survey finding suggests that the private as well as public sector institutions give priority to UAE nationals in job placements.

Of the total workers in our sample, nearly half (48.5 percent) reported that the employers in private institution, are giving priority to native workers. Wage difference exists among the wages of native and foreign workers in private sector establishments. For the same job, the native worker is paid a wage double or triple of the wage of a foreigner. This is a policy pursued to provide more employment opportunities to the UAE nationals both in public and private sectors. It is reported by 69.5 percent of the sample emigrant workers that there exists wage difference between native and foreign workers.

A serious problem faced by the emigrants in UAE is the custody of passports. The usual practice is to collect the passport by employers at the time of joining the duty. The passport will be returned to the foreign worker at the time of his return. By this practice, the employer has absolute control over all movements of emigrants under him. In many cases, the employer refuses to release the passport to the workers on the ground of minor labour problems or disputes relating to payment of wages. Of the total workers, the passports of 73 percent of them are kept by the employers. Only 21 percent of them keep the passport with themselves. The refusal to release the passport to the worker is one of the major problems faced by the emigrant workers in UAE.

The UAE government has been following a policy to restrict the arrival of the family members of the emigrants. The UAE government feels that large share of foreign population will distort the demographic balance in the country. Government wants to reduce the arrival of manual and unskilled categories of workers as well as their family members. A higher income limit is fixed in the case of migrants who wish to bring their wives and children. The income limit is being frequently raised to prevent the arrival of family members. A common practice followed in UAE is sharing a flat by more than one family. Recently, the UAE government prohibited this practice of sharing a single flat by more than one family. There has been a continuous increase in the rent of flats making it unaffordable to a large number of workers. Rejection of visa application for family members, making delay in issue of visas or raising unnecessary objections are the other practices used to limit the issue of family visas. In our survey, we have asked the sample workers about the restrictions in bringing family members. Forty percent of the sample emigrants reported that restrictions are imposed by the UAE government on bringing family members.

Global Economic crisis of 2008 and its Impact

The global economic crisis of 2008 is considered as one of the worst global crises since the world depression of the 1930's. The crisis has resulted in substantial fall in economic activities and loss of employment in UAE. The category of workers who are severely affected due to the crisis are the foreign emigrant workers, who are temporary contract workers in these countries. Large numbers of foreign migrant workers working in the UAE were forced to return to their native countries. The global crisis also made substantial changes in the migration policy, wages and working conditions and demand for migration workers. The decline in employment opportunities, fall in wages and reduction in non-wage

benefits have resulted in substantial reduction of the income of the emigrant workers who remained in UAE after the global crisis. In our study, we have collected data about the impact of global economic crisis in the employment situation in UAE.

Table 18

Decline in Employment Since Global Crisis of 2008

Sl. No	Number Reported	Number of Emigrants	Percentage of Emigrants
1.	Yes	102	51.00
2.	No	59	29.50
3.	Not reported	39	19.50
	Total	200	100.00

Table 18 presents the results of the survey on the impact in the employment front. Fifty one percent of the sample emigrant workers reported that there has been a fall in employment since the global crisis of 2008.

It is reported that the production and transport related workers registered the largest decline. The categories of workers under this head are tailor, bus driver, carpenter, mason, draftsman, foreman, cable fixer, welder, electrician, painter and plumber. The second category which registered the highest fall in employment is of clerical and related workers. Professional and technical workers, paramedical workers and sales workers are ranked as third, fourth and fifth. With regard to fall in employment, persons doing their own business and domestic workers are ranked as the last category. Thus, the results suggest a fall in all categories of jobs. However, the sample emigrants reported that the UAE economy survived the 2008 crisis and reached a stable position in 2013.

Problems of the emigrants

Stagnation of wage and high inflation

The most serious problem reported by all categories of emigrant workers was the stagnation of wages since 2008 and continuous increase in inflation (Table 19).

Table 19

Problems Faced by Emigrants

Sl. No	Problems	Rank
1.	Stagnation of wage rate and high inflation	1
2.	Anxiety about job safety	2
3.	Anxiety about their family	3
4.	Feeling loneliness	4
5.	Bad climate	5

Due to the global economic crisis of 2008, UAE economy faced a serious recession leading to steep fall in production, employment and wage rates. Due to recession, the employers followed a policy of cut in wages. Though there has been an improvement in the overall economic scenario, the wages remained unchanged. It is reported by the emigrants that the wages remained at the 2008 level. On the other hand, there has been a continuous increase in general price level resulting in steep increase in the cost of living. This has created heavy pressure on the categories of workers especially those in the middle or lower levels. It also resulted in the depletion of savings of all categories of workers.

Anxiety of emigrants

Anxiety about the job security is another major problem of the emigrants. Due to the global crisis of 2008, many lost jobs and were forced to return to native countries. Many emigrants were forced to return due to expiry of contract, compulsory repatriation, low salary, non-payment of salary and other labour related problems. In this context, the emigrant workers are constantly afraid of their job security. The emigrant workers who left behind their family in native place are worried about the well beings of family members. Of the sample emigrants, nearly 60 percent are single emigrants living alone in UAE. The long separation from the family and isolated life in the Gulf creates stress and anxiety in the emigrants who live in UAE as well as in their family members back home. It is reported that the absence of parents or head of the household had adversely affected the education of their children. Feeling loneliness is also a problem faced by the single emigrant workers in UAE.

Exploitation of labour supply companies

A recent development in the labour market in UAE is the spurt in labour supply companies recruiting casual workers from India and other Asian countries and supplying the labour to employers in UAE on daily or periodical basis. Though the labour companies charge market wage rate from the employers, the actual wages paid to the worker is very low. In many instances, the actual wages paid to the worker is half the amount collected from the company. Another practice is to sublet its own workers of a company to other companies for short periods or for completing a project. If sufficient work is not available, companies use to make arrangements with other companies, and the surplus labourers are sent to them. Here also, the worker gets a wage much less than what is received from the employers. Thus, labour supply companies resort to the exploitation of workers by taking a good share of wages as commission. It is reported that there has been a steady increase in the number of labour supply companies in Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

Restrictions in sharing flats

More than one family living in a single flat is the practice followed in UAE during the last three decades. Large number of emigrant families live in UAE on rent sharing basis. Recently, the UAE government introduced a new restriction with regard to the number of families to live in a flat.

According to new regulation, a rented flat should be occupied by one family only. This new regulation has created acute hardships to thousands of families living in flats on cost-sharing basis. Majority of the emigrant families live in UAE cannot afford to pay the full rent of a flat. Besides this, there has been a steep increase in the rent rate of flats. As the family will have to incur expenditure for meeting food and other items of consumption, transport etc., they cannot afford the increase in the cost of rent. This has created a critical situation for families who live in flats on rent sharing basis.

Problems relating to work contract

The workers in UAE are recruited based on two types of contracts viz. unlimited and limited. In unlimited labour contract, the emigrant workers could give up work whenever he wanted without the permission of employer. But in limited contract, an emigrant will have to work at least two years under a single sponsor. An emigrant cannot move to another sponsor during the two years term. In UAE except a few, the entire emigrant workers work on limited contract basis. In many instances, due to lack of work, the sponsors allow the workers to work with other employers on informal basis. This practice is not allowed as per labour laws of UAE and the person caught in this regard will be treated as an illegal worker. The illegal workers will be put in jail or repatriated to the home country. Many innocent emigrant workers became illegal workers due to the unhealthy practice of the sponsors.

Inaccessible Labour Courts

The institution which addresses the issue relating to labour disputes is Labour Courts in UAE. It is reported that courts are giving fair judgments. But, for ordinary emigrants, the courts are inaccessible institutions due to language problem, cost of hiring an advocate, delay in getting judgment etc. Though court give a judgment favouring emigrant workers, it is difficult to implement it due to non-co-operation of sponsors. In the case of implementation, the police and labour officials usually take a favourable approach to the sponsor. Hence, implementation of the judgment is also a difficult affair for an ordinary emigrant worker.

Conclusion

The above analysis may be concluded with the following observations. The largest share of Indian emigrant workers are engaged in production and transport related occupations in UAE. Service and sales are the other major occupations that provide the largest employment. Though there are wide variations in the monthly wages received, majority get a wage ranging from 600 to 1200 UAE Dirham. Nearly 83 percent of the workers are employed in regular jobs with monthly salary. Though the working hour is 8 hours per day, majority works 9 to 12 hours per day. As per UAE labour laws, the migrant workers are entitled to get non-wage benefits such as free or subsidized food, accommodation, free transport to workplace, medical benefit and free air ticket to return home on vacation. But the study reveals that majority of the emigrant workers are not getting these benefits. The stagnation of wages since 2008 on the one side and the steep increase in cost of living on the other side has reduced the savings of migrants substantially. The survey results suggest that half of the Indian migrants have a savings less than 1000

Dirham per month. The Global Crisis of 2008 and the consequent acute recession have resulted in substantial reduction in the employment opportunities of migrants in UAE. However the UAE economy has been reviving itself from the crisis. Major problems faced by the emigrant workers in UAE are stagnation of wage rate, high inflation, anxiety about job security, anxiety about the family in the home country, custody of passport by the employer, exploitation of workers by labour supply companies, restriction in bringing family members on resident visa, restriction in sharing the flats by more than one family, the restriction imposed on the mobility of workers from one employer to another and inaccessible labour courts.

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