



## Labour migration from Shekhawati Region of Rajasthan to the Gulf countries: Factors and challenges

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### Abstract

This paper examines the dynamics of labor migration from the Shekhawati region of Rajasthan to Gulf countries, focusing on its cyclical nature and the challenges faced by migrants at various stages. Unlike other forms of migration, Gulf migration is characterized by short-term contracts, restricted family movement, and mandatory return upon visa expiration. The study identifies critical push factors, including unemployment and low wages, and pull factors such as better job opportunities and higher incomes in Gulf nations. It highlights the exploitation faced by semi-skilled and unskilled migrants during the migration process, mediated by intermediaries, and the challenges encountered both at the destination and upon returning home. These include lack of job opportunities, insufficient capital to start new ventures, and inability to utilize Gulf work experience locally. By analyzing data from returning migrants, the paper provides insights into the socio-economic impact of Gulf migration on the Shekhawati region and its labor force.

**Keywords:** Labor migration, gulf countries, Shekhawati region, push-pull factors, migrant exploitation

### Introduction

The historical analysis of Indian migrants' worldwide movement demonstrates its heterogeneous character. On the one hand, it is evident that Indian migrants have been moving around the world for a long time. This category also includes labor migration during the colonial era under various streams. In actuality, migrants became permanent residents of their target countries, despite the fact that many streams, such as Kangani and Maistry, claimed that they would return to their home countries after a certain amount of time (Sahoo, 2011; Cohen, 2006) [2, 14]. Likewise, a sizable percentage of skilled migrants also made their permanent home overseas following independence (Kaur, 2000; Sharma, 2008) [6, 16]. Following independence, this pattern was also seen among semi-skilled and unskilled migrants around the world, especially in the Gulf (Kollappallil, 2014; Mishra, 2017) [8, 12]. These migration trends demonstrate not only how migration is evolving but also the socio-economic elements that shaped both short-term and long-term overseas residency, particularly after independence (Koser, 2007; Das, 2009) [3, 9].

Nevertheless, all of these streams are essentially distinct from the movement of Indian laborers to Gulf nations. Cyclical migration is the term used to describe the movement of Indian migrants to Gulf nations. This is due to a particular circumstance that is seen when migration to Gulf nations occurs: Indian workers are given limited-stay visas, usually allowing them to remain for only two to five years under specific circumstances. They must return to their country of origin when their visa expires. They need to get a new visa for the upcoming term, which again permits a stay of no more than three to five years, if they want to return to the Gulf countries for work. These workers are typically not allowed to bring their family along on these temporary migrations. The percentage of skilled workers, semi-skilled workers, and unskilled laborers moving to Gulf countries from Rajasthan's Shekhawati Region has been rising recently. Some loosening of these conditions is noted

in the case of skilled workers (Rizvi, 2004; Mattoo, 2012) [11, 13].

While the number of migrants from the study region to Gulf countries has not increased significantly over the past 50 years, other variables have mainly stayed the same. Semi-skilled and unskilled workers make up the majority of the movement from Rajasthan, including the study area, to Gulf countries. This migration pattern is completely cyclical. The numerous causes of Gulf migration and the difficulties posed by it are discussed in this essay. Based on field research, it draws attention to the elements that influence migration cycles as well as the difficulties that migrants encounter during the migration process.

### Initiation of Respondents' Migration to Gulf Countries

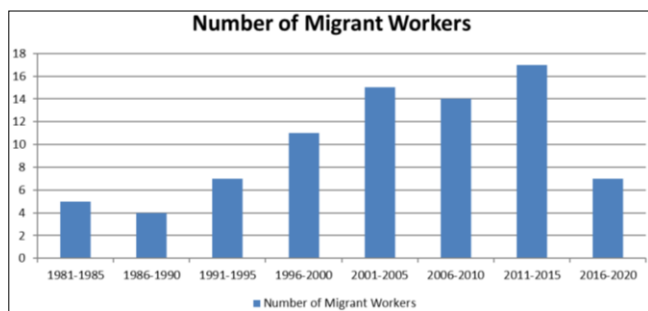
Respondents who had finished their migration cycles to Gulf nations were chosen as study participants, and data regarding when they first started migrating to these countries was gathered. The respondents stated that migration to Gulf nations started in 1981. The majority of respondents began their migration between 1991 and 2015, as the table illustrates. This is to be expected as those who had started their journey during this time had completed multiple migration cycles and made the decision to remain in their country of origin permanently by the time of this poll.

**Table 1:** Initiation of Labour Migration to Gulf Countries (1980 to 2020)

Year	Number of Migrant Workers	Percentage
1981-1985	5	6.2
1986-1990	4	5.0
1991-1995	7	8.8
1996-2000	11	13.8
2001-2005	15	18.8
2006-2010	14	17.5
2011-2015	17	21.2
2016-2020	7	8.8
Total	80	100

The beginning tendencies of migration cycles to Gulf nations over the course of four decades (1980–2020) are highlighted in the table. Only 6.2% of workers started migrating between 1981 and 1985, and 5.0% between 1986 and 1990, indicating that migration was comparatively low during the 1980s. This suggests that migration to the Gulf was still in its infancy and was probably hampered by a lack of infrastructure, opportunities, or knowledge. With 8.8% of workers starting to migrate between 1991 and 1995 and 13.8% between 1996 and 2000, the 1990s witnessed a steady rise, establishing Gulf migration as a significant economic tactic bolstered by expanding job possibilities and enhanced migration networks.

The greatest rates of migration commencement were noted between 2001 and 2015, when migration peaked. 18.8% of workers started to migrate between 2001 and 2005, 17.5% between 2006 and 2010, and 21.2% between 2011 and 2015. This is a result of both the strong networks that facilitate migration and the ongoing need for labor in Gulf nations. But between 2016 and 2020, there was a notable drop, with only 8.8% of workers starting to migrate. According to informal conversations with respondents, a large number of recent migrants felt that moving to the Gulf was not as financially rewarding as they had anticipated, and this trend was influenced by personal struggles and health issues.



Those who traveled prior to 2000 tended to follow cyclical migration patterns, with many participating in multiple migration cycles. Those who migrated after 2000, on the other hand, tended to settle in their native country permanently after completing only one or two cycles. The majority of the early migrants, who are now elderly, have returned to their own countries and are working in a variety of local jobs. Overall, the evidence points to a change in the patterns of migration, with more recent trends favoring short-term migration and previous periods being marked by long-term cyclical migration. This change is a result of shifting personal, social, and economic factors that affect migration to Gulf nations.

**Main Factors Responsible for Labour Migration from Shekhawati Region to Gulf Countries**

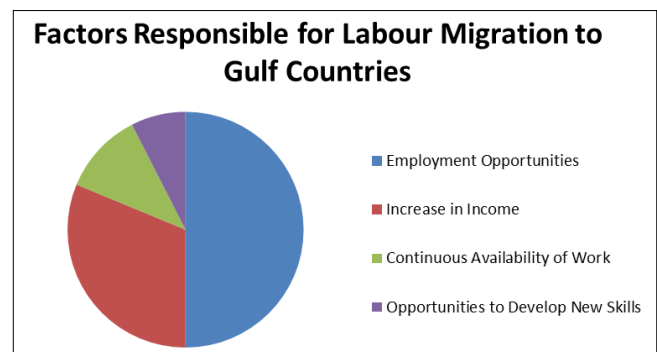
Numerous factors that are relevant to both the origin and destination locales can affect migration between two sites. Only after assessing the cumulative impact of these contributing elements is the decision to relocate certain. There are a number of push factors in the places of origin that can motivate migrants to leave their country of origin. These elements include poor wages, a lack of employment opportunities, unemployment, and a lack of job opportunities (Sassen, 1998; Massey *al.*, 1993) [10, 15]. The availability of jobs, chances for ongoing employment,

higher pay rates, better working conditions for migrants than in their home countries, chances for skill development, a higher standard of living in relation to different aspects, wider access, and awareness of opportunities in the outside world are some of the pull factors at the destination locations, on the other hand (Castles & Miller, 2009; de Haas, 2010) [1, 4].

The following were identified as the principal drivers of migration in the initial survey of return migrants who had finished their movement cycles:

**Table 2: Factors Responsible for Labour Migration to Gulf Countries**

Responsible Factor for Migration	Number of Migrants	Percentage
Employment Opportunities	40	50
Increase in Income	25	31.25
Continuous Availability of Work	9	11.25
Opportunities to Develop New Skills	6	7.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>



The analysis of the social and economic features of the research region makes it abundantly evident that two of the main drivers of migration are unemployment and a lack of employment possibilities. Because of this, unskilled and semi-skilled workers are willing to migrate, even to far-off places. Conversely, employment prospects, ongoing job availability, and higher pay rates are pull factors at the destination. These elements draw laborers from a variety of highly populated developing and underdeveloped areas worldwide.

The study’s respondents’ primary reasons for migrating to Gulf nations are highlighted in the table. With 50% of the migrants (40 respondents) stating that employment prospects are their main motivator, this element is the most important one. This emphasizes how crucial job availability is as a draw for people looking for financial security. With 31.25% of the migrants (25 respondents) citing the greater earning potential in Gulf nations as a primary reason for their relocation, income growth ranks as the second most significant factor. This suggests that a significant motive is the financial advantages of receiving higher pay. Furthermore, 9 migrants, or 11.25% of the respondents, cited ongoing employment availability as a critical component, highlighting the significance of long-term employment and job stability in luring migrants. Finally, six migrants, or 7.5% of the respondents, mentioned opportunity to learn new skills as a contributing factor; nevertheless, this was not as important as the other reasons. Overall, the data shows that the main reasons these workers migrate to the Gulf countries are economic factors like

employment security, salary growth, and job availability. Understanding whether there has been a protracted stay at home between different migration stages is crucial because the fundamental backdrop of this study is the experiences of return migrants. It is crucial to find out what the respondents' professional activities were throughout their extended stay in their country of origin during their cyclical migratory phases.

**Challenges Faced by Migrants**

Gaining a thorough grasp of the many obstacles related to migration to Gulf nations is crucial after examining the factors influencing migration at different levels in the first portion of this Paper. The importance of migration is highlighted by the long-lasting effects of favorable conditions encouraging migration. However, the different difficulties that the migrants encounter show the other side of this migratory process. The migration process can be made more convenient and advantageous for migrants by assessing these difficulties and reducing their adverse effects as much as possible.

The process of moving to a Gulf country is difficult, and the primary causes of its complexity are the migrants' ignorance, lack of education, and lack of experience with the migration processes. Migration from the study region to Gulf countries offers strong chances for intermediaries

because of their low level of awareness. From getting passports to finishing the full migration procedure, migrants—especially unskilled and semi-skilled workers—rely on these middlemen for everything. These middlemen take advantage of migrants at different levels and function similarly to human trafficking. The distinction is that these workers go back to their home country once the migration process is over. This migratory population is not the only one who experiences domestic exploitation; they also encounter many difficulties in their new countries, where unskilled and semi-skilled laborers are still exploited in a variety of ways (Khan, 2012; Eelens & Afsar, 2015) [5, 7].

Thus, it becomes essential to comprehend the difficulties encountered by migrants at different levels in a methodical and sequential way. It will be impossible to create a plan to make the migration process easy, transparent, and exploitative without this systematic assessment. Based on the experiences of return migrants, this paper aims to methodically comprehend the many obstacles associated with migration to Gulf nations at various levels. According to their importance, this study aims to characterize the general difficulties encountered by migrants at different points of their journey. The information gathered is arranged, and an attempt is made to compile the difficulties that migrants have mentioned.

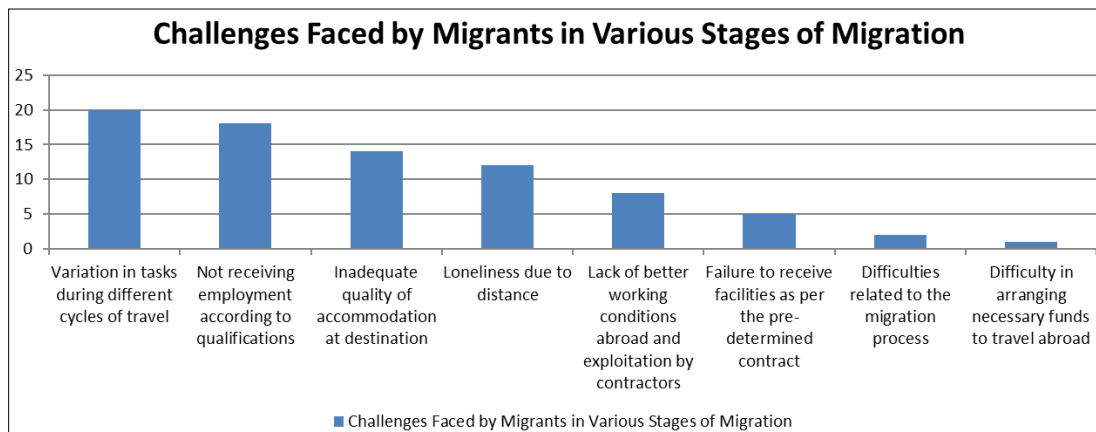
**Table 3: Challenges Faced by Migrants in Various Stages of Migration**

Major Challenges	Number of Migrants	Percentage
Variation in tasks during different cycles of travel	20	25
Not receiving employment according to qualifications	18	22.5
Inadequate quality of accommodation at destination	14	17.5
Loneliness due to distance	12	15
Lack of better working conditions abroad and exploitation by contractors	8	10
Failure to receive facilities as per the pre-determined contract	5	6.25
Difficulties related to the migration process	2	2.5
Difficulty in arranging necessary funds to travel abroad	1	1.25
Total	80	100

The table that lists the main obstacles that migrants encounter offers important insight into the complex nature of migration by highlighting both practical and psychological difficulties.

According to 25% of migrants, the most major problem is the variety in tasks over different trip cycles. This highlights a serious issue with job security and continuity in addition to a lack of consistency in job functions. A sense of

instability may result from migrants frequently switching between tasks that do not match their abilities or expectations. The goal of migration for many workers, which is frequently to obtain stable job and improve their financial circumstances, is undermined by this contradiction. The difficulty can be a sign of a larger problem with the hiring process, when positions are given to employees based more on availability than on their skills or qualifications.



This problem is closely followed by the mismatch between job prospects and qualifications, which affect 22.5% of migrants. This indicates a serious inefficiency in the global labor economy. In addition to causing discontent, the issue of underemployment is made worse when workers are not placed in suitable positions. Migrants frequently experience a systemic disrespect for their education and skills, especially when it comes to semi-skilled and unskilled labor, which may lead to long-term professional stagnation. In addition to causing emotional discontent, this mismatch also results in a decrease in productivity since employees aren't giving their best efforts. The poor living conditions that frequently accompany migration are highlighted by the 17.5% of migrants who reported inadequate accommodation and the 15% who expressed loneliness brought on by distance. A fundamental infringement of migrant rights, inadequate housing demonstrates a lack of concern for workers' welfare. Furthermore, the psychological and emotional difficulties brought on by being away from loved ones and comfortable surroundings highlight the mental toll of migration, which is usually disregarded while discussing policy. Additionally, loneliness can worsen pre-existing health and stress conditions, which might impair employees' capacity to do their jobs well.

10% of respondents mentioned the absence of improved working conditions overseas and contractor exploitation, which highlights how vulnerable migrant workers are to mistreatment and abuse in foreign settings. Due to their lack of options, reliance on these positions, or insufficient knowledge of labor laws, contractors—who frequently serve as middlemen—may take advantage of workers. Serious moral questions are brought up by this exploitation, which also emphasizes the necessity of more robust legislative safeguards and monitoring of the immigration process. Furthermore, the inability to obtain facilities in accordance with the pre-established contract (6.25%) and the challenges encountered throughout the migration process (2.5%) point to deficiencies in the dependability and transparency of migration protocols. Employee disillusionment and a sense of betrayal may result from a conflict between what is promised and what is delivered, which can weaken systemic confidence. Furthermore, the migration process is made too difficult for migrants by bureaucratic and procedural obstacles. Lastly, the least stated obstacle is the difficulty in arranging adequate cash (1.25%), suggesting that, in comparison to other systemic and exploitative challenges that migrants encounter, financial barriers may not be as severe for the majority of them. But for some people, especially those from low-income families, it remains a significant consideration.

**Problems Faced During Migration Planning**

This section aims to draw attention to the problems that migrants face when they are first making plans to migrate. It aims to comprehend the particular difficulties that migrants face when making initial migration-related decisions and throughout the planning phase.

Finding the proportion of migrants who truly experience obstacles or problems at this point is the first step. By doing this, the study hopes to give a clear picture of the nature and frequency of these issues, providing insight into the challenges faced even before the migration trip starts.

**Table 4:** Challenges Faced During Migration Planning

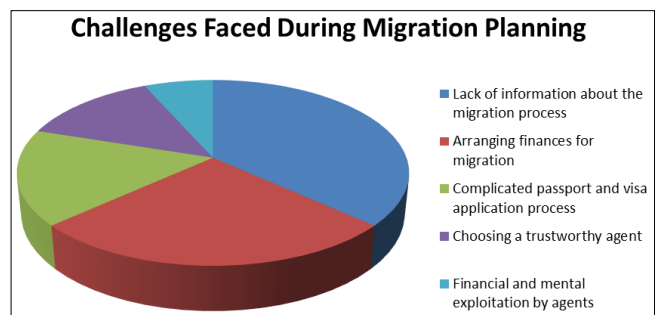
Encountered Problems During Migration Planning	Number of Migrants	Percentage (%)
Yes	30	37.5
No	50	62.5
Total	80	100

According to the table, 37.5% of migrants experienced difficulties when they were planning their journey, suggesting that a sizable percentage ran into problems at the outset. Nonetheless, 62.5% of migrants said they had no serious problems, indicating that most of them had no trouble organizing their migration. This information emphasizes the necessity of identifying certain obstacles at the planning stage of migration and offering tailored assistance to overcome them, guaranteeing a more seamless transition for all migrants.

**Table 5:** Challenges Faced During Migration Planning

Challenges Faced During Migration Planning	Number of Migrants
Lack of information about the migration process	11
Arranging finances for migration	8
Complicated passport and visa application process	5
Choosing a trustworthy agent	4
Financial and mental exploitation by agents	2
Total	30

The difficulties that migrants meet even before setting out on their journey are shown in the table, which also emphasizes the difficulties they face throughout the planning stage of migration. With 36.7% of migrants reporting this difficulty, the most commonly mentioned problem is the lack of knowledge about the migration procedure. This suggests a serious lack of expertise, which leaves migrants unprepared and susceptible to abuse or mistakes throughout the procedure. According to 26.7% of migrants, arranging cash for migration is another significant obstacle. This emphasizes the financial burden of migrating, particularly for those from less affluent origins who frequently find it difficult to raise the necessary finances.



Another major obstacle is the intricacy of the passport and visa application procedure; 16.7% of migrants report having trouble navigating the paperwork and bureaucratic obstacles. Furthermore, 13.3% of migrants have trouble selecting a reliable agent, indicating their susceptibility to dishonest middlemen who could take advantage of their ignorance. These results demonstrate the complexity of the difficulties faced while planning a relocation and advocate for better information availability, financial assistance

programs, and efficient administrative procedures to promote a more seamless migration experience.

### Conclusion

The problems experienced throughout the preparation, migration, and post-migration phases of the migration process have been the main emphasis of this Paper's examination of the many hurdles faced by migrants from the Shekhawati area. The information shows a complicated network of problems that affect these migrants' lives both in their new nations and when they return to their home areas. A sizable fraction of migrants had difficulties during the preparation stage, including negotiating the intricate passport and visa application procedures, setting up money, and lacking knowledge about the migration process. These challenges draw attention to the dearth of information and assistance accessible to migrants prior to their travel, which can cause uncertainty and financial hardship. Many migrants claimed to have experienced exploitation, unfavorable working conditions, and unfulfilled expectations about pay and job positions after arriving at their destination. According to the research, a sizable portion of migrants had work settings that did not correspond with the pre-migration agreements, which caused them to feel betrayed and unhappy. The difficulties they encountered overseas were further exacerbated by reports of problems with personal freedom and late payments. Returnees faced a variety of challenges upon reintegrating into their native communities after migrating. The most urgent issues were the dearth of work possibilities, the absence of funds to launch new businesses, and the incapacity to use the knowledge and expertise acquired elsewhere in the local setting.

In summary, the Shekhawati region's workers face several difficulties during the whole migration process, from preparation and departure to reintegration after returning. These concerns are a reflection of the larger structural challenges that migrant workers face, such as exploitation, a lack of assistance, and a lack of prospects for long-term economic reintegration. Comprehensive policy interventions at the local and national levels would be necessary to address these issues in order to enhance working conditions overseas, offer better guidance during the migration process, and guarantee better reintegration procedures upon return.

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