

Original Article

# Caste, Class, and the Lives of Indian Migrant Workers in Dubai

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**Abstract** - This research paper investigates how different factors, such as caste, gender, and socioeconomic status, shape the experiences of Indian migrant workers in Dubai, UAE. The UAE is a highly acclimated destination for Indian migrants, with the UAE hosting around 4.36 million Indian migrants alone. A significant number of these immigrants are employed in the informal sector. Even though previous research has intensively studied caste and its effect on international migration within India, there is limited research that explores whether these inequalities are brought internationally. This research paper addresses this gap by examining how caste and intersectionality influence Indian migrants' lives in Dubai, considering their opportunities, working conditions, and social experiences. This study employs a qualitative approach. There are semi-structured interviews conducted with five Indian migrants employed within various professional fields, such as the restaurant industry, construction, etc., with document analysis of migration reports, legislative framework, and other academic literature. Narrative analysis and thematic coding were utilized to identify any recurring themes within participants' interviews. This study's findings illuminate that economic, wage ceilings, and limited economic opportunities serve as push factors causing Indian migrants to leave India. However, women participants also cited a lack of gender safety and social restrictions as the primary reasons behind their migrations. When comparing the two places to work, participants consistently said Dubai offers higher wages, greater workplace respect, and improved relations than India. Moreover, this research also presented that caste and intersectionality inequalities continue to shape migrants' experiences internationally through occupational clusters and social prejudices present. Overall, this research continues to add to the vast debates about migration and systemic inequality, demonstrating how social hierarchies are reproduced in global labour systems.

**Keywords** - Caste, Immigration, Migrant workers, Dubai, Marginalisation, Intersectionality.

## 1. Introduction

International migration from India has existed from the colonial period, with the British abolishing slavery, which led to a higher demand for cheap labour (Hui & Kambhampati, 2024). International migration from India has intensified rapidly under globalization. The total estimated population of Indian migrants living in the UAE is 4.36 million as of 2024 (Embassy, 2024). The UAE hired 96,401 Indian workers in the first half of 2025. This makes up Indian migrants, the largest population of expats in the UAE, accumulating to 35% (The Embassy of India, 2025). So, why are there so many Indian migrants in the UAE? One of the key driving forces for migration in India is the caste system, in combination with other factors such as wages, opportunities, and regional development. The caste system in India is a traditional social hierarchy, stemming from Ancient India, that has historically divided people into fixed social groups based on birth,

occupation, and ritual status. The caste system in India is dynamic; it shapes the lives of many modern Indians (Vartak, 2021), especially of those of marginalised castes such as Dalits, as they often still face precarity, abuse, and wage disparity. The wage disparity of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has remained the same from the post-colonial period (Soundararajan et al., 2023). Migration and caste are interconnected, with many low-wage, blue-collar workers and laborers in the informal industries being of marginalised castes or tribes within India itself. This is due to the decades of exploitation, leading to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes having to turn towards informal work to survive. Migration and caste are therefore linked as the marginalised castes have to migrate outside of their villages to find more lucrative work in other regions through the help of middlemen, where they often face physical abuse and neglect (Acharya, 2020).



Even though the caste system seems irrelevant in modern times, considering its abolishment under the Constitution on January 26, 1950, caste still remains as one of the significant factors in India determining a modern Indian citizen's life. For instance, dominant castes are more likely to own land within Sikhs, 59% of people belonging to the dominant caste hold land compared to the 8% of Dalit caste households. Furthermore, caste also determines women's autonomy, with women belonging to the dominant caste of Brahmin being less likely to work outside of the home, whilst Dalit caste women have a greater mobility but have a high exposure to sexual violence (Tong, 2022). Thereby, caste remains a relevant factor shaping modern Indian society, making caste also a relevant factor when researching migration. Whilst there are many studies about internal migration and caste in India, the caste system's influence on international/external migration is often overlooked. Therefore, this research paper focuses on the role of the caste system in the international migration of blue-collar Indian workers. This research paper is focused on the United Arab Emirates, as the UAE remains a lucrative destination for Indian migrants, with the UAE lagging just behind the United States of America in terms of Indian descendants that call it home. This research paper zooms in on the northern emirate of Dubai, as the emirate has a 92% expatriate population, with Indian migrants accounting for 37.96% of the Dubai expatriate population, making the city significantly relevant when studying international Indian migrants due to the city's high concentration.

The aim of this research paper is to investigate the role of the hierarchical caste system in international migration among the working-class labourers of Indian descent in Dubai. The research will analyze how caste backgrounds affect what opportunities the migrants get internationally, and their socioeconomic status in Dubai, aiming to understand some of the reasons that prompted the migrants to move to Dubai, their life in Dubai, and whether their identity or background, such as caste, affected their working conditions in Dubai. Beyond this, the research paper also looks into the differentiated gendered experiences and struggles of the migrant Indian workers. Furthermore, this research paper examines whether the caste system and social hierarchies persist outside India, highlighting that migration is not an escape from systemic social injustices. This paper is situated within the broader global debate on migration and systemic inequality.

## 2. Literature Review

The term 'Dalit' means oppressed or broken; the term is often used to refer to the group of people who have been classified as 'untouchable' in the Hindu caste system. Their status of 'untouchability' comes from the sacred Hindu text 'Manusmriti,' which contains the philosophy of the caste

forbidding them from joining in the religious and social parts of society, delegating the Dalits to undesirable tasks such as animal slaughter. In legal terms, 'Dalits' are one of the Dalit castes in the Indian Constitution (Groups, 2024). As a result, Dalit labourers have been historically exploited and are often trapped in a debt cycle by the dominant castes. The dominant caste belongs to the upper echelon of the caste system and has more economic and political power in a region (Martin, 2024). Dalit labourers often undergo rural-to-urban migration to escape paying off their debts, known as 'debt migration' (Acharya, 2020). But migration does not necessarily lead to them paying off their debts or to improving their basic standard of living, as the caste hierarchies travel with them, transforming caste into a dynamic force as the same inequalities are reproduced in new locations. This is because even outside of India, caste is still treated as a significant factor; this can be seen in the Ministry of External Affairs' emigrate system data, which revealed a high concentration of Indian migrants who move abroad, mainly to escape the rise of automation, all of whom belong to specific artisan backgrounds (External Affairs, 2026). The inequalities are reproduced by caste networks. Within caste networks, the caste determines opportunities, so migrants enter different parts of the labour market, leading to certain jobs becoming caste-clustered, such as watchmen being undertaken by the Dalit castes. As a result, people from the same caste also tend to reside in the same areas as their caste groups, leading to caste-based neighborhoods recreating caste-based identities even in urban areas. Migrants in urban areas tend to depend on caste-based networks to find jobs and regulate their lives based on caste norms, practicing endogamy (marrying within one's own caste), thus recreating the same inequalities (Vartak, 2021).

Similarly, Muslims undergo exploitation and discrimination as a religious minority. Muslims in India tend to experience double marginalisation, facing religious persecution and economic exclusion, such as wage disparity and not being given economic opportunities. For instance, it has been reported by an advocacy outlet that Muslim employees face 69% discrimination in hiring, which has risen from 59%, and as a result, urban Muslims might earn 49% less compared to their Hindu counterparts (Ali & Obaida, 2025). These societal restrictions based on the identity of these two groups restrict their socioeconomic mobility. This results in religious migrations of Muslims out of India. Religious migration involves people moving out due to religious factors, such as persecution, discrimination, or pilgrimage (Encyclopedia, 2026). For instance, India is the second most common origin country for Muslim migrants, accounting for 6 million migrants, even though India's Muslim population only accounts for 15%, yet an estimated 30% of all Indian-born migrants are Muslim. They mainly move into countries that are both predominantly Muslim and wealthy, in search of better

opportunities, such as the UAE, which accounts for 1.8 million Muslim migrants, or Saudi Arabia, which accounts for 1.3 million (Kramer & Tong, 2024).

Migration, as a long-standing and multifaceted feature of human civilization, is a practice that many Dalit members engage in, even though they understand the risks, such as exploitation, injury, and even death (Hui & Kambhampati, 2024). This may be due to the socioeconomic advantages migration offers to some Dalit caste members. Dalits usually have low social capital and less financial buffers compared to their dominant caste counterparts, as they have been historically exploited, which makes migration one of the few ways they earn a higher income, even if the work is precarious (Soundararajan et al., 2023). This leads to migration becoming a survival mechanism for Dalit caste members, becoming their only chance for upward mobility and escape from poverty and discrimination (Vartak, 2021). Furthermore, many Dalit caste members are in immense debt, due to them asking for advances or loans to achieve a basic standard of living, thus they have to undergo migration for economic opportunities (Acharya, 2020). Moreover, migration offers some form of autonomy for migrants, as migration allows them to move to a place where they can pass off as another identity; this can be accomplished through a change in last names, since a last name is one of the key determinants that can be used to figure out a person's caste in India (Sandeep et al., 2024). Beyond this, migration also offers caste anonymity as migrants move into areas where the locals are unfamiliar with the caste system, limiting the possibility of caste-based discrimination, allowing for the phenomenon of “passing” to occur, which means concealing one's identity to gain privileges (Childs, 2023). Additionally, migration offers autonomy and less strict social control compared to the migrants' hometowns. This is especially the case for Dalit caste women, who face multilayered discrimination for belonging to a Dalit caste and their gender. Even though many marginalized caste women have been forced to work in the informal economy due to numerous socioeconomic factors, migrating to an urban area has given them relational autonomy as they are able to choose between working in construction or hawking (Raphael, 2024). Thus making migration still desirable for the Indian working class. Beyond India's borders, low-wage-earning Indian migrants still suffer from discrimination. This creates different experiences of precarity for Indian migrants across global regions, with them occupying the same hierarchies as those in India, shaped by the stacking of their different identities, such as caste, religion, gender, and legal status, whilst also occupying hierarchies shaped by nationalities. For instance, within North America and Europe, the reproduction of caste is evident, as it's upheld by the Indian diaspora through endogamy, workplace networks, and professional gatekeeping (Badrinathan et al., 2025). A similar case is presented within the Middle East, specifically the India–Gulf migration

corridor, which included countries such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. This recreates a similar hierarchy system due to temporary migration and the kafala system. The kafala system is a sponsorship system used by Arab Gulf states, which ties a migrant's status to a specific employer (Robinson, 2022). Indian migrants from Dalit castes and minority religions enter the same low-wage industries as they would in India, like construction, domestic, and service sectors, making this a continuation of structural discrimination. Sponsorship arrangements play a major role in marginalization as they restrict mobility, where the workers reside, and deny them their workers' rights, leading to exploitation of the workers by making them vulnerable to wage theft, making them work in hazardous conditions, and humiliation. Even though a person belonging to a Dalit caste, or a dominant caste, or is a Muslim worker, is technically all Indian in the Gulf, they are all treated differently due to the intersectionality of their identities, such as their caste, religious background, and educational status.

Intersectionality is when different axes, such as caste, race, gender, and socioeconomic background, are layered over each other to form a layered experience. A recent work by University of Amsterdam researcher Mira Burmeister-Rudolph conceptualises this as a “transnational social contract”, with dominant caste Indian migrants controlling the access the low-waged Indian migrants have to government protections and welfare funds, whilst the dominant caste occupy high-level positions. This case study highlights how the hierarchical system is reproduced, highlighting how prejudice and discrimination don't disappear with migration but are reworked in different contexts (Burmeister-Rudolph, 2023).

This research paper contributes to the general literature on migration and caste by using empirical data, which highlights the day-to-day life of a low-waged, marginalised caste Indian migrant in the Gulf States, whilst highlighting how ancient systems are reproduced and upheld in the modern world. Moreover, it's important to note that there is a lack of academic literature on what it means to be a caste body outside of India as a blue-collar worker. Furthermore, this paper focuses specifically on the Middle East, a region that has been overlooked in academic research regarding caste, even though it has 9.09 million Indian migrants, with 3.43 million in Dubai alone. Therefore, the research fills in the gaps of research by collecting empirical data from the workers in the Middle East, specifically in Dubai, UAE. Additionally, the paper aims to explore the intersectionality of the identities of workers, which is the combination of different social categories (United Way NCA, 2026). This paper aims to fill in the gap in political literature by illustrating the effect of intersectionality on the workers' status in societies. Lastly, the paper encourages reformation in welfare systems protecting low-waged Indian migrants at the grassroots level in India, by setting up social

security nets for marginalised castes to protect them from exploitation.

### 3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design, which is based on a phenomenological approach, which is further embedded within an intersectional framework. By using the phenomenological grounding, the study explores how social realities are shaped by lived experiences and meaning, and how they are interpreted. Within this research, workers' narratives are used to explain migration and domestic labour, relying on workers' testimonies and socio-cultural contexts. Furthermore, using intersectional feminist theory, highly researched by Kimberlé Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins (Collins et al., 2021), which basically states how different things layer on top of each other, such as caste, gender, and migration status, intersecting to create layered inequalities.

Using this framework, the study deciphers caste hierarchies and gendered labour expectations and how they affect the experiences of Indian migrants abroad. Moreover, the research is focused on Dubai within the United Arab Emirates. The main participants of the research paper are Indian migrants who are currently working blue-collar jobs such as construction. The reason Dubai is chosen over all the other Gulf states is that Dubai is one of the key destinations for Indian migrants, especially Indian domestic workers who work in private households. This is due to a multitude of reasons,

such as recruitment systems, sponsorship laws (the kafala system), and employer control. It's important to note that it's also the researcher's country of residence. Considering the researcher's proximity to the participants, this allows the researcher to share the same broader social context as the participants, whilst also aiding with participant proximity. At the same time, reflective analysis was utilized to avoid any potential bias. The study focuses on 5 Indian migrants. This is because the small sample size provides depth instead of statistical representation, allowing the author to understand the participants' experiences deeply. Furthermore, due to the phenomenological orientation of this study, qualitative research of this kind prioritizes the information provided by the participants. Moreover, reflects practical constraints described in the Limitations section, including a compressed data-collection window and the geopolitical situation in the UAE during the research period. The study focuses on currently employed workers in Dubai's blue-collar industries who are between 20 and 40 years old, from diverse regional experiences, with the hope of studying the effect of socioeconomic backgrounds in India on the migrant's lived experiences. Participants were eligible if they were 18+, were working in a blue-collar industry. Their experiences with migration might vary depending on recruitment pathways, employment status, and the duration of their stay abroad. To recruit participants, the study has followed purposive sampling. Access to some of the participants was also sought through a snowballing strategy and the author's own personal connections.

| Participants  | Industry                  | Religion          | Gender | Point of Origin             |
|---------------|---------------------------|-------------------|--------|-----------------------------|
| Participant A | Interior and Construction | Islam             | Male   | Lucknow                     |
| Participant B | Carpenter                 | Hindu             | Male   | Kerala                      |
| Participant C | Driver                    | Hindu             | Male   | A small town near Hyderabad |
| Participant D | Hospitality (FNB)         | Islam             | Female | Gujrat and Mumbai           |
| Participant E | Waitress                  | Christian Baptist | Female | Manipur                     |

Fig. 1 Participant Demographic Table

The research is conducted using semi-structured interviews with document analysis. One of the primary tools was a semi-structured interview guide consisting of around 10 questions. The interview transcripts were analysed multiple times by the author, and thematic coding, such as wage ceiling, safety, etc., was created manually from recurring participant language. Then they were grouped into broader themes like economic push factors, gendered safety and discrimination. The analysis was done using manual thematic coding using MS Excel. This means examining how individuals tell their migration stories, focusing on themes of dignity, exploitation, mobility, and migration. The small sample meant the saturation was discussed thoroughly and cautiously with recurring themes across multiple participants. The data was presented on Microsoft Excel. Furthermore, as a solo researcher conducted the coding, and re-reading the transcripts were used to check

the consistency of the code application. Then the data generated from the interviews was supplemented with secondary sources. For instance, reports from international organizations such as the International Labour Organization and the International Organization of Migration, human rights organizations, academic journal articles, and migration policy documents are also included.

Moreover, analyzing investigative media reports that contain testimonies of migrant domestic workers is also part of the analysis. These sources are important as they are able to provide narrative and contextual insights about the working conditions, structural inequities, and recruitment systems that affect Indian migrants in the Gulf states. This data was collected over a period of 3–4 weeks, which is a short period of time.

The sampling universe comprised Indian migrants, who are a vulnerable and marginalised population. This can be due to their migration status, how much they depend on their employer, and the limited legal protections provided to private households. Due to this, the study prioritizes ethical sensitivity and minimizes the risk associated with participation. Furthermore, the research also followed the legal sanctions around data collection in the UAE. The research included ethical considerations such as informed consent done through verbal consent before the interviews, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any stage. This study was done through a high school research programme without a institutional ethics board instead a qualitaive researcher mentor who was a decade long experience working with marginalised social groups provided ethical oversight was provided by a research mentor. The study followed the ethical principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality outlined below. The data collection process did not force participants to disclose any identifying details; instead, interviews focused on general experiences of the

workers. Wherever secondary sources are used, they are cited responsibly by avoiding the sensationalization of workers' experiences. The research has strictly maintained confidentiality by removing names, locations, or any details from the interview transcripts that might give away personal information. The data extracted was stored safely, being used only for research purposes as a way to guarantee that the participants' privacy and dignity are respected throughout the study.

#### 4. Discussion

Within this study, 5 participants with different professions within the fields of construction, domestic work, and hospitality were interviewed regarding their lives in Dubai as Indian migrants. This aligns with secondary data as it identifies the key occupations in which the informal immigrant workforce is involved. This is highlighted in the pie chart below (Jureidini, 2025).

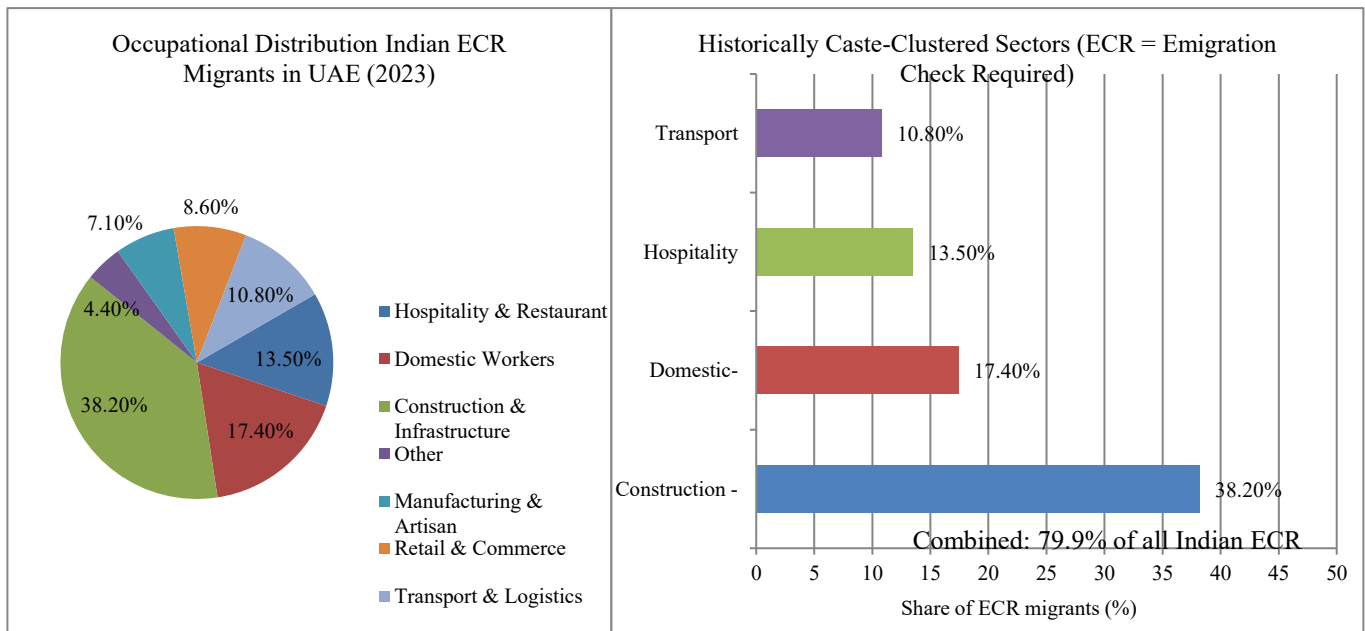


Fig. 2 MEA eMigrate ECR data (2023): ILO Asia-Arab States Corridor Report (Jureidini, 2025)

This section is focused on the factors that pushed participants to migrate from India to Dubai. A common thread among all the participants was that economic opportunities were a primary factor. For example, this was repeated as a key reason by Participant A, who remarked, “Dubai, I came because the opportunities here are better and the salary is better.” Another key reason that was frequently mentioned by the participants was professional development. As Participant D remarked, “So I was thinking of going to Dubai and learn this.” Thus, push factors for all the participants were usually financially related, with a wage ceiling present in India also being a significant factor. This was highlighted by Participant

E: “So, you know, there is a very salary thing kind of problem.” Another finding was that workers cited that they were able to go home easily and take vacations. Participant B said: “I go on a yearly vacation for like 1 month to two months.” This demonstrates the healthy workplace dynamic in Dubai, further increasing workers' salaries in Dubai compared to the same jobs in India, which aligns with secondary data showing that workers in Dubai saw a 2x increase in their monthly incomes compared to the same blue-collar occupations in India (Jureidini, 2025). This comparison can be highlighted in the bar chart below.

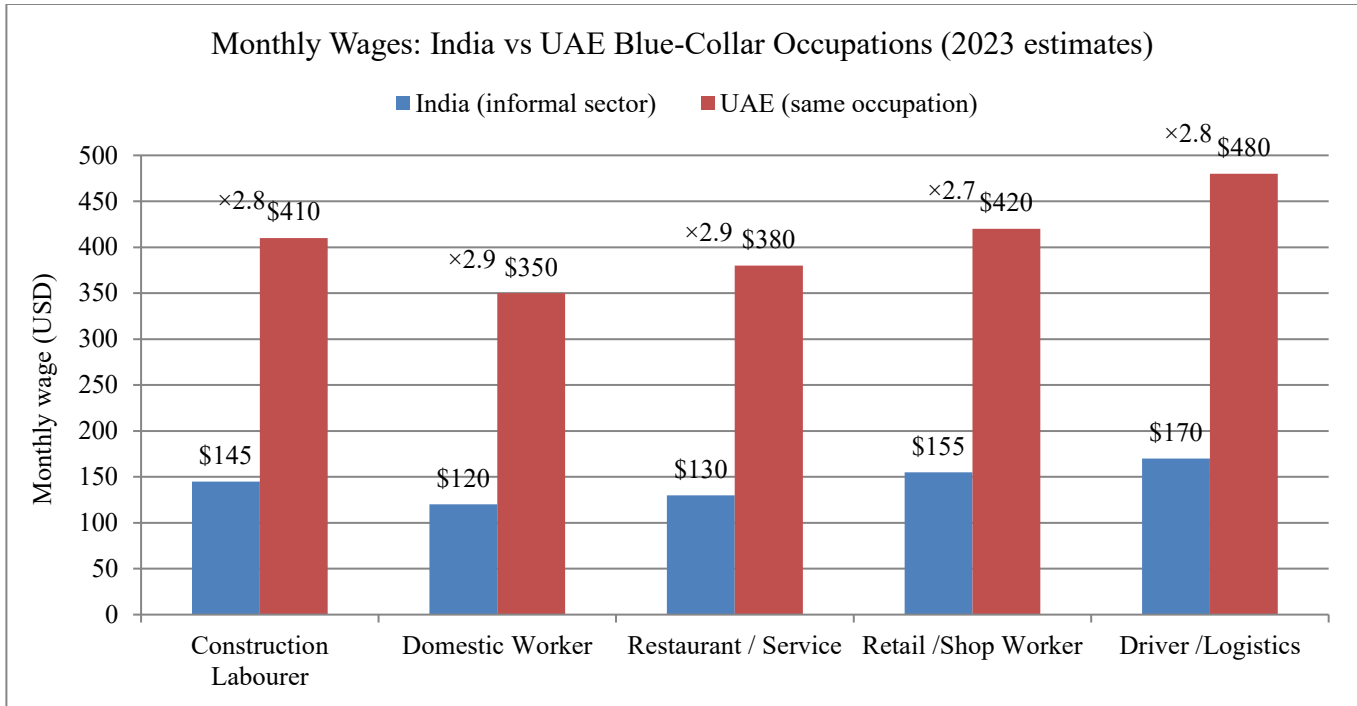


Fig. 3 ILO Global Wage Report 2022/2023; ILO Asia-Arab States Corridor Report (Jureidini, 2025); ILO WageIndicator Database

However, it's important to note that participants D and E, who both identify as women, also cited the absence of safety in India and less societal pressures as major reasons pushing them towards the UAE. For example, Participant D commented, "Yes, so I'm very scared, even though when I go vacation last month, I go vacation, and also, I didn't stay in Delhi longer." This finding aligns with the secondary data, as government data suggests that men account for 68.7% of the population in Dubai, thus presenting the stark gender divide within India and Indian migrants, as participants A, B, and C, who identify as male (Dubai, 2026). The men are more focused on financial stability, considering they are the breadwinners in their families due to their gender. On the other hand, Participants D and E are more focused on gendered marginalization issues as women face more societal pressures.

The previous paragraph discussed the importance of economic opportunities that were provided for the participants. Its relevance is related to the participants having better working conditions and freedom, a narrative which is repeated by almost all the participants, with many remarking they felt more valued and appreciated as workers in Dubai compared to India. For instance, Participant E commented, "What I learned in the UAE was very, really appreciate our work. And, you know, if you're working hard over here, so, you know, they really support you." For participants A, B, and C, the move allowed them to save better as their salaries were much higher in Dubai, which Participant C highlighted: "Yes, abroad you get a higher salary." Additionally, for Participant C, the move was to ensure there was consistent work which utilized his

skills fully as a carpenter, as that was not possible in India due to the rise of automation, risking his family business of carpentry. This presents his caste background becoming an obstacle when striving for financial stability, as he introduced himself as a "traditional carpenter," highlighting his caste identity as a primary identifier and then narrating his struggles to find work owing to his involvement in the traditional carpenter work. The UAE has financial stability mechanisms in place to support its workers. For instance, the UAE government implemented Ministerial Resolution No. 675 of 2022 to combat the wage ceiling and wage delays, protecting workers' rights, as they added domestic workers into the Wage Protection System, which mandates that workers be paid within 10 days of the due date (Governments, 2026). In contrast to India, over 90% of the workforce is in the informal sector, with the lack of a national minimum wage that covers domestic and artisanal work (like carpentry) not protected by any laws or regulations (Organization, 2026).

Moreover, Dubai provided the workers with significantly better workplace relations, improving the overall working conditions. For instance, Participant A commented that, "Over there, we barely talked to the bosses, but here I can discuss everything with the boss." This alludes to the contrast between the UAE and India, with professional hierarchies being almost non-existent in the UAE compared to their prevalence in India. This testimony was repeated by both Participants D and E. For example, Participant D pointed out in her interview, "even the cleaners, they respect each other. Every job, people respect each other. This is what I like." This statement underscores the

persistence of caste hierarchies in India and how those ideals are transported abroad by Indian migrants. Participant D's observation about even the cleaner (janitor) getting respect highlights the absence of caste structures in Dubai, whilst also highlighting prejudices present within the migrants themselves. This is because the participant is shocked by the cleaners getting fair treatment in Dubai, considering that in India, such occupations are historically held by Dalits, who are positioned at the bottom of the caste hierarchy. There are some laws in the UAE that support this, like the Domestic Workers Law (Federal Law No. 10 of 2017), which formalized roles present in the workplace. Whilst hierarchies still exist, the government's legal requirement for a standardized contract creates occupational respect (Government, 2026).

Even though there is a bit of reference to an intersectional identity of the participants in the first section, with some of their push factors being different, this section will go into more detail about the intersectionality present. Although economic opportunities remain the primary contender behind the participants' move, societal restrictions also significantly determined the women participants' moves, as they both shared the sentiment of being judged more harshly by society in India and having almost no freedom or independence due to an absence of safety. This was commented on by Participant E, in which she says, "You know, the society will judge you for, you know, there are so many restrictions, and there is no independence, eating, kind of." This was further amplified by Participant E not having a support system in India, which she cited was due to the lack of institutional support, making her more vulnerable.

Furthermore, beyond gendered identity, religious and ethnic identity were also key reasons that made the participants more vulnerable in India. Participant D, who hailed from the Northeast of India, an underrepresented area of India, spoke about racist prejudice and discrimination she faced in India, highlighting her instance of passing through Delhi, in which she was discriminated against by a North Indian taxi driver who tried to undermine her due to her not speaking Hindi. She also spoke about the economic exploitation her other Northeastern friends experienced in Delhi during COVID, highlighted here: "So the thing is, they say, go back to Chinese, and at that time, they don't get paid from work as well." This displays her intersectional identity, as she remarked about her status as a woman and a Northeastern Indian, comparing herself to her North Indian Hindu friend, as she felt more unsafe than her friend in Delhi. Even though they are the same gender, their different ethnic and religious identities lead to her facing more discrimination.

Hence, some of the key findings that emerged from this research are the lack of financial stability and gendered safety. The participants' worries about their financial stability due to

a lack of economic opportunities, low wages, and a wage ceiling being present pushed them to migrate to Dubai. Furthermore, the lack of gendered safety and violence was also a key theme that prompted the women participants to move. This research highlighted the stark gendered divide behind the decision by the participants to move, presenting the intersectionalities of some participants. Additionally, the research underscored the lack of professional hierarchies in Dubai compared to India. Moreover, it's important to note that whilst the kafala system is mentioned extensively in the literature review, it's never mentioned explicitly by any of the participants, highlighting the gap between the theoretical frame and the empirical findings.

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1. Limitations

The research conducted here is subject to multiple limitations, which affect the generalizability of the findings and validity. For instance, this research relied on a relatively small sample size of only 5 participants. This is a significant limitation as this means the research might not accurately represent the broader population of Indian migrants in the UAE. Additionally, the research's dependence on qualitative methods of data collection, such as interviews, raises the possibility of a response bias being present, as participants might fabricate their statements or withhold information due to social restrictions or sensitivity related to the surrounding topics. In addition, time constraints also restricted the quality and depth of the data collection, as it reduced the chance to conduct broader sampling or a longer investigation. Additionally, the geopolitical situation in the UAE was a major limitation, because this made it difficult to get interviews from Indian migrants, as many flew back to India for safety, whilst also affecting the reluctance of some participants to join due to the censorship laws and media regulation present in Dubai regarding the ongoing situation. Furthermore, the small sample size restricts the ability to put these findings in a broader theoretical framework. Consequently, the research provides valuable findings regarding professional hierarchies and migrants' lives in Dubai, and it should be interpreted with caution due to these limitations.

### 5.2. Reflexivity of the Researcher

The research heavily depends on primary data to address the research objectives, utilizing secondary data to support the findings of the primary data. This allows the research to be focused, as the primary data collected through interviews directly engage with the research objectives, providing firsthand accounts from migrants in the UAE that answer those questions. This creates a nuanced qualitative approach that explores identities and social hierarchies being perceived in an international context, addressing the research objectives and questions. The primary data is valuable when exploring such

sensitive topics, as it provides the lived experiences and perceptions of Indian migrants, which can not be easily obtained through secondary resources. The secondary data gathered from various respected organizations mitigates that risk as it provides evidence that supports the primary data and a broader contextual insight, which allows for the generalization of patterns and themes. It's important to note that the secondary data may not be relevant to the research objectives. The triangulation of qualitative primary data and quantitative secondary data provides valuable insights that answer the research objectives, enabling a comprehensive analysis and improving the validity of the research.

### 5.3. Future Findings

This research can be developed further in the future through several ways, which will enhance the depth, scope, and analytical rigor of the research. For example, one improvement would be to significantly expand the sample size of the participants so it would include a range of participants with different socioeconomic backgrounds, regions, and occupations, providing a diverse insight, thus improving the generalisability of the research. In addition, the research paper could be improved by switching to a longitudinal approach. This would allow for a deeper insight, leading to the analysis of how caste might evolve over time. Furthermore, another way the research could be improved is by conducting comparative studies between different Indian migrant communities within different Gulf countries instead of just the UAE. This would offer a more expansive perspective on caste, identity, and hierarchies. These developments would transform the research into a more multi-dimensional understanding of caste and social hierarchies in a more globalized context.

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## Conflicts of Interest

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## Appendix A: Interview Guide

1. Where in India are you from?
2. Which social or religious group do you consider yourself to be a part of?
3. How long have you been in the UAE?
4. What industry do you work in?
5. Why did you migrate to the UAE? What were the reasons that pushed you here?
6. How did you migrate to the UAE? What systems helped you?
7. Which country has provided you a better standard of living - India or the UAE?
8. How is the working dynamic at your job?
9. How are your relationships with your workers and employers?
10. Is there anything you experience in the UAE that is markedly different from what you experience in India?
11. Are there any challenges which you face at your job here?
12. Will you ever want to return? If so, why?

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