

Labour Migration to the Gulf countries: Indian Prospective

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Abstract

Migration is movement of individual of a group of people for many reasons either within the country or outside. There are certain factors which leading to such from one to another often referred to as pull factors and push factors.

Push Factors:

Push factors are those factors which force someone to leave a particular area leaving it partially populated. Among the major push factored are lack of education in an area, lack of infrastructure, poor health facilities, disguised unemployment, harsh climate and political instability.

Pull Factors:

Pull factors are those factors which attract some individual or a group to move and settle in it. Some of the major pull factors are better employment opportunity, better education facility, and access to the basic facilities of life, a stable and peaceful environment among the others. The present paper attempts to explain the pattern and trend of migration of Indian people to gulf countries.

Keywords: Migration, Employment, Remittances, Emigration, Immigration, Emigration

1. Introduction

Migration is not a new phenomenon. It is a process which is going on for the centuries on the account of many reasons. Historically speaking people have always preferred to move to the areas which provide them with suitable environment in terms of better facility for livelihood, peace and social security etc. As for as India is concerned it has overtaken china becoming most populated country of the world and occupying just 2% of the world land. Economically speaking it is a developing country. Therefore, finding employment and sustaining life is a big challenge for people. Consequently, people don't get all the want at the place of their origin and they have to migrate to find means for their livelihood either within the country or outside.

Definition of Migration:

The UN Migration Agency defines migration as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a state away from his/her habitual place of residence.

National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) has defined migrants as "an individual who changed their usual place of residence or changed their last place of residence.

According to Knowled (1994), migration patterns are closely associated with economic fluctuation, national and international events, nature of physical environment, social-organization geographical and political condition of the country or society.

Prabhu (2012): Migration can also be considered as labour based migration when there is no job in the villages and land based migration when land productivity differs.

Types of migration: There are different criteria to classify the migration highlighted as under;

Based on choice:

Voluntary Migration: Migration can be considered as voluntary when the decision to move is taken by a person/community by him/them to avail some job opportunity without any threat or pressure.

Types of voluntary migration include transnational migration, transhumance, internal migration, chain and step migration, guest workers, and rural to urban migration.

Involuntary Migration: Involuntary migration is defined as the forced movement of people from their habitual place. It may be because of violence, some natural calamity or extreme climate.

Based on boundaries:

National migration: National migration is defined as the migration which takes place within the political boundaries of the country from one region/state to another. It is further sub-classified from the prospective of region as follows:

- A. Rural-rural migration stream
- B. Rural-urban migration stream
- C. Urban-urban migration stream
- D. Urban-rural migration stream.

International Migration: It is a migration in which people move not within the countries but beyond the political boundaries. They go abroad for different purposes like education, business etc.

Based on duration:

Based on duration migration can be classified as short-term and long-term migration.

Short-term Migration; A person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least three months but less than a year (12 months) except in cases where the movement to that country is for purposes of recreation, holiday, visits to friends or relatives, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage (EMN-European Migration Network).

Long-term Migration: When a person moves from one country to another at least for the period of 12 month it is called as long-term migration.

Causes of migration:

Environmental cause: it includes better climate, calamities and natural disaster etc.

Social cause: people also move from one place to another for attaining better social life.

Political cause: sometimes people prefer to leave their original place and move somewhere else to escape from political unrest.

Cultural factor: cultural factor also plays a big role in migration. People often move to the area where their culture and religious rituals match.

Economic factor: This is one of the important factors of migration. When people don't find sufficient means to support their life in the inhibited area they migrate to other areas for earning purposes.

2 Methodology:

The given study is majorly based on secondary data gathered from the literature comprising of sources such as ministry of external affairs (GOI), ILO (Indian Labour Organisation), IOM (International Organisation of Migration) and United Nations reports on the workers migration.

Objectives:

To study the trends of Indian migrants to the gulf countries.

To study impact of remittances sent by them on local economy.

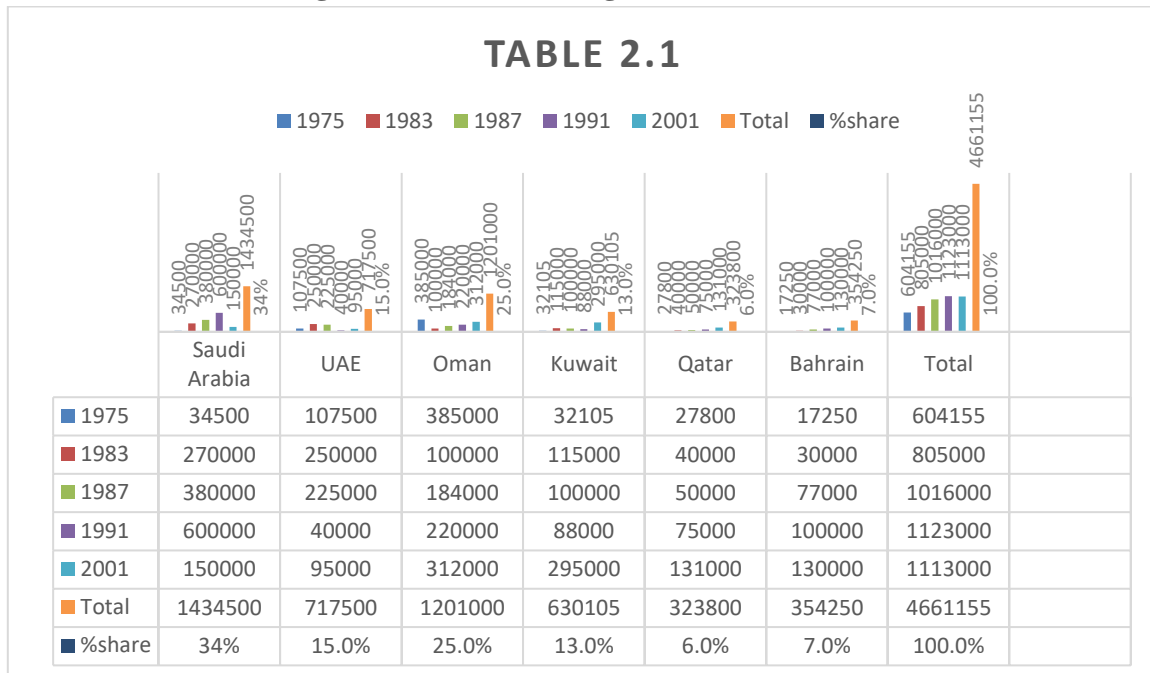
To study the cause of increase in out migration.

India has been enjoying cordial relations with gulf countries for centuries since ancient time. India and the Middle East also share deep civilisational connections, cultural exchange and historical linkages. Every region in the Middle East appreciates India's democracy, ancient civilisation and strategic partnership. Indian sub-continent had strong ties with gulf countries even during colonial period.

Migration after independence: The post-independence era has witnessed two aspects of migration from India. Firstly, professional skilled persons who migrated to industrially advanced nations such as U.S.A, Canada and U.K but in a very small proportion. Secondly, there is a category of skilled and semi-skilled labour who migrated to Persian Gulf countries. It was in 1970s that migration took place to the Persian Gulf countries on a large scale. There are two major factors attracting a huge number of migrants to the Gulf countries.

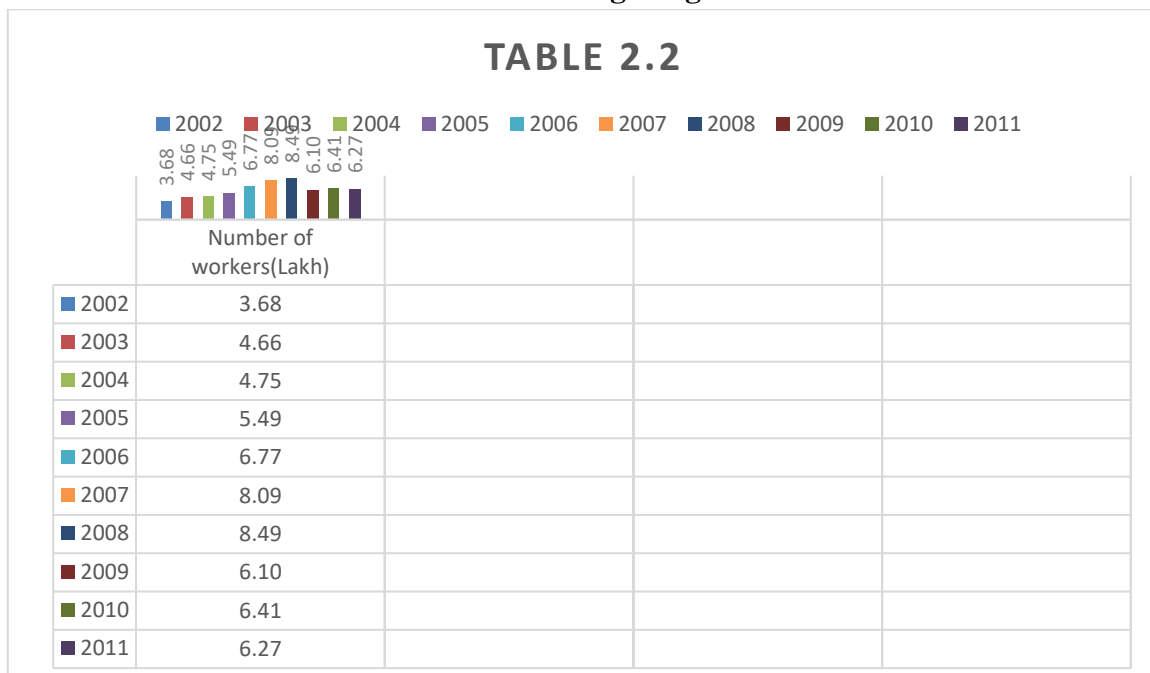
- 1. Hike in oil prices during 1970s:** during 1970s the consumption of oil in the form of gasoline was increasing but production of oil was declining leading to dependence on oil from abroad especially Saudi Arabia. America decided to support Israel in Arab-Israel war believing that Saudi Arabia would not restrict the supply of oil to America for supporting his rivalry (Israel) in the war. But this perception was demolished when an embargo was imposed by organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (APECs). This led to increase in oil prices. Oil industry started developing in the region leading to growing demand for foreign workers. Because of expanding economic activities demand grew not only for skilled labours but also for semi-skilled and unskilled labours. Status of Indian labour: Indians had been working there as clerical and technical professional since 1930 with the discovery of oil in the region but the number was very small. Situation got changed between 1948 to 1970s as the number of Indian labours increased from 1400 to 40,000 (Bind 2016:11)
- 2. Construction work in the region:** Since the mid-1970s, there was a sudden rise in the flow of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers to the Gulf countries due to the emergence of large scale construction works in the region. In the flow of labours, India has been enjoying a prominent position to become the largest single expatriate community in all the GCC countries. Earlier Pakistan was ahead of India in respect of percentage (58.1%) and India 39.1%. But in 1976 India overtook not only Pakistan but also other Asian countries of the region. Trends in the migration to gulf countries from 1975-2001, 2002-2011 and 2013-2017 are shown in the subsequent tables given below:

Table 2.1 Indian migrant workers in the gulf countries between 1975 and 2001.



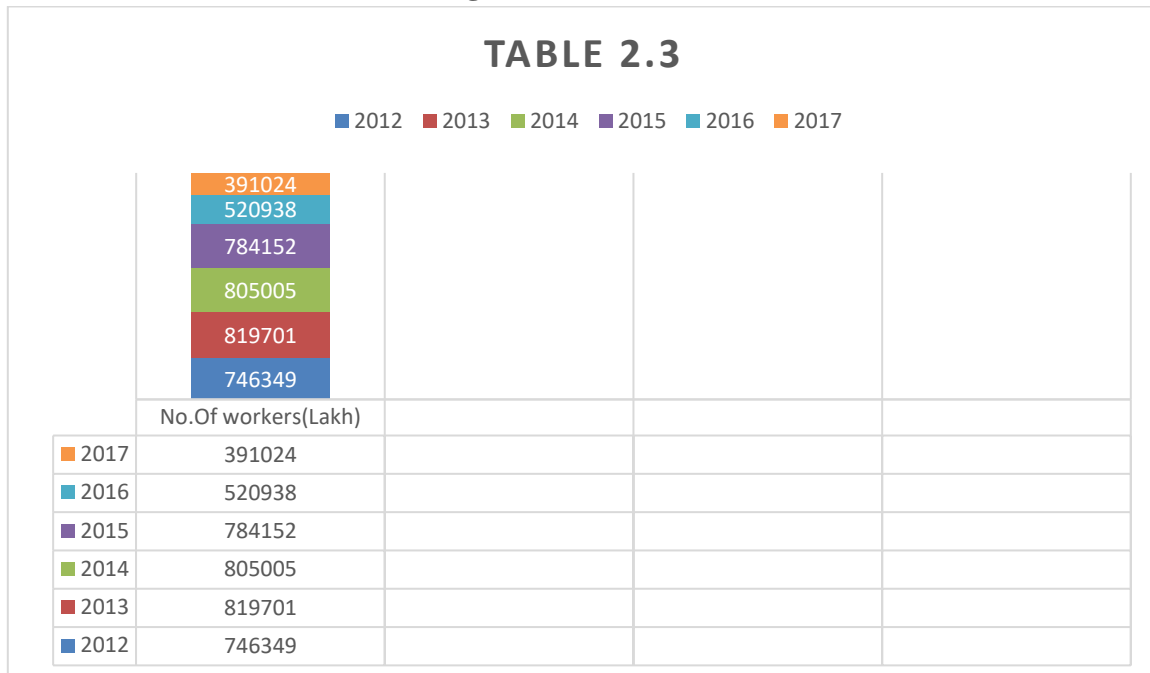
Source: Rahman (1999), and Rajan (2004).

Table 2.2 Number of Indians receiving emigration clearance 2002-2011



Source: Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (2012-13)

Table 2.3 number of emigration clearance between 2012 and 2017.



Source: Data released by Ministry Of External Affairs. GOI (2011-17)

Importance of remittances sent to the home country

Remittances are money or a kind of transfer sent by the migrants back to their home countries. Remittances serve as foreign reserve for any country. Foreign reserves have a key role in modern globalized economy having implication for country’s BOP. Gulf countries are huge absorbents of Indian labours. Among Gulf countries Saudi Arabia has a major share in sending remittances 5.1% followed by Kuwait 2.4%, Oman 1.6% and Qatar 1.5% respectively.

Inducing factors behind migration: To get an insight about growing interest of Indians to migrate Gulf countries, a total of 60 respondents were selected from three countries 20 each. These countries are Saudi Arabia, Dubai and Kuwait. 15 people (25%) said that they are not skilled enough to compete for job in India and remaining 45 (75%) said that it is more value of currency in the given region as compared to currency of the home country. It not just enhances their earning but also boosts their savings and thereby sustaining their lives.

Conclusion:

Summing up, it can be said that, Gulf region provides huge market for all categories of Indian labours- skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled. Remittances sent back to India by these migrants not only provide financial support to the families of these migrants but also have implications for India’s foreign reserves and Balance of Payment. India has a huge population with most of people living below poverty line who cannot take education properly and therefore cannot get government job. Also it is not possible for India to provide government job to all. Therefore to reduce such burden of unemployment government of India must maintain cordial relations with these countries and must play its role in settling unrest emerging from time to time.

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