

PAKISTANI GUEST WORKERS IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Ivan Szelenyi

ABSTRACT

Utilizing new survey results and qualitative sociological findings the below paper analyzes the working and living experiences of migrant workers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The paper demonstrates that while Pakistani workers' working and living conditions are much worse than those of Emiratis or white expats, most of them have better earnings than in Pakistan. The research shows that return migrants in Pakistan are upwardly mobile in the social hierarchy of Pakistan. The paper faces two analytical puzzles. The first puzzle is that while direct incomes, job opportunities are better in the UAE than in Pakistan, nevertheless return migrants express dissatisfaction at varying but substantial degrees with their living conditions in the UAE due to hidden, not planned financial, social and emotional costs occurring during their stay. The second puzzle is that, though return migrants usually complain – often bitterly – about their UAE experience, nevertheless many return migrants hope to return to UAE if a new job opportunity is offered to them. Thus using focus groups, individual interviews, quantitative analysis of survey answers and regression models the paper analyzes what individual and/or household level mechanisms and factors play a crucial role in this mass return migration and its perception among migrants themselves?

Keywords: migration, Gulf states, return migration, migration theory, neo-classical economics, new economics of labor migration

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INTRODUCTION

The Gulf monarchies are nations constituted only by natives, descended from people who lived in the national territory already at a predetermined time (usually before the discovery of oil resources). They admit non-nationals only temporarily with no promises, institutions or procedures to ever grant them citizenship and in anticipation that they (and even their children born in the Gulf monarchies) will return to their home country once their services are not needed any longer (Fargues, 2011, pp.273-292; Kapiszewski, 2001; 2006; Migration and the Gulf, 2010).

This paper is a case study from the Gulf, the United Arab Emirates. Next to Qatar the UAE is the most extreme case of nation building based on the social exclusion of guest workers by a shrinking minority. The “nationals” – as the natives are referred to – are a distinct minority, by the 2005 census they represented just over 20% of the population, by the 2011 census just slightly more than 10%¹.

For this study one of the major “sending countries” of migrant workers to the UAE (and to the other Gulf Monarchies) has been selected: Pakistan. While a law prevents the UAE statistical offices to release data on ethnic origins and religions of the population, and even the population number is estimated variously, according to the best estimates – including the recent ones of the World Bank – the population of the UAE is close to 9.3 million² Among them Emiratis represent something like 900,000, and half of the remaining 8 million are south Asians, 2.5 million from India, over 1 million from Pakistan, close to 1 million from Bangladesh³. Since I had an old Pakistani friend, Riaz Hassan, who taught at NYU Abu Dhabi during 2010-11, I decided to focus my study on Pakistanis.

This paper is a chapter from a forthcoming book, tentatively entitled: “Building nations with non-nationals - The exclusionary immigration regimes of the Gulf

¹ Population size and percentage of “nationals” is hotly debated, for a reasonably balanced overview of census results see Dubai FAQs, 2017.

² For 2016 it was 9.269 million. See: World Bank Data - Population, total - World Bank Group, 2017.

³ See World Bank, 2017; CIA, 2017. The CIA seems to overestimate the Emirati population at 15%.
<<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>>

Monarchies with a case study of Pakistani return migrants from and prospective migrants to the United Arab Emirates”⁴.

For this project I formulated two major empirical research questions.

- (1) I compared identity and ethno-sectarian prejudices of prospective and return migrants in order to explore whether time spent in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious/cultural UAE created a more universal identity and less prejudice against “others” among return migrants than what we can observe among prospective migrants. This is a question of some importance since one observes at least an apparent ethno-sectarian peace in the UAE and I wanted to test whether exposure to other ethno-sectarian groups is the reason for this (since they have more contact with them) or is this ethno-sectarian peace merely the result of effective system of surveillance and the imminent threat of deportation of trouble makers. If return migrants have more universalistic identities and more tolerant attitudes towards “other” ethno-sectarian groups than prospective migrants that can be interpreted as a support for “contact hypothesis” (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998; Hewstone, 2003); if we find no difference between the two groups it support the theory that ethno-sectarian peace in the UAE is the result of the tight system of surveillance and threat of deportation. (This is Chapter 3 of the book, Chapter 1 gives an overview of different immigration regimes and identifies the Gulf Monarchies as an “exclusionary regime”, Chapter 2 gives a historical account of guest workers in the UAE.)
- (2) I documented the work and living experiences of migrant workers in the UAE. The research material analysed documented the working and living experiences of migrant workers in the UAE. We found that while Pakistani workers’ working and living conditions are – not surprisingly – much worse than those of Emiratis or white expats, most of them have better earnings than in Pakistan and their living conditions while in the UAE are poor but reasonably tolerable. The research shows that return migrants are upwardly mobile in the social hierarchy of Pakistan. We are faced with two puzzles. The first is that while direct incomes, job opportunities are better in the UAE than in Pakistan, return migrants express dissatisfaction at varying but substantial degrees with their living conditions in the UAE due to hidden, not planned financial, social and emotional costs occurring during their stay. The second puzzle is that though return migrants usually

⁴ I am writing this book in collaboration with Riaz Hassan and Vladislav Maksimov

complain – often bitterly – about their UAE experience, nevertheless many return migrants hope to return to UAE if a new job opportunity is offered to them. Thus the key question is: what individual and/or household level mechanisms and decisions are behind this mass return migration seen by actors as very exploitative? (Chapter 4 in the book reports on these finding, the current paper is an abridged version of nthat chapter. Chapter 5 in the book offers our theoreical and policy conclusions).

Data and Methods

We collected both qualitative and quantitative data. The field work was carried out by the Institute of Social Sciences (ISS) in Lahore (www.isspk.org) under the supervision of Rafiq Jaffer and Razia Jaffer.

During the research process six focus group discussions were carried out each with 6-8 workers (using a purposive sampling method in order to include the diversity of workers: urban/rural, age, trade etc.). Rafiq Jaffer and three senior researchers conducted all six focus group interviews. In addition, 54 individual in-depth face-to-face interviews were also conducted.

During the the execution of the survey we tried to approximate as much as possible a before-after research design and we split our sample equally between prospective and return migrants. We interviewed 250 prospective and 260 return migrants.

We defined prospective migrants as people who were about to leave for the first time for a job in the UAE (people who secured or at least applied for work permit and visa in the UAE). We interviewed return migrants who came back from the UAE in the past five years to settle in Pakistan, but we also interviewed people who were at the time of our research working in the UAE and were back home for shorter or longer family visits (out of the 260 return migrants 53 were such “visitors”).

In our survey we made an effort to get as close to random sampling as possible. But we had to make quite a few compromises. First of all in cities it was impossible to find prospective or return migrants by any random method (with the research budget at our disposal). Lahore has 9 million⁵ inhabitants, but Abbottabad and Rawalpindi are also far too large to go household-by-household and locate migrants. Therefore in these three cities we used basically

⁵ World Population Review, 2017.

snowballing samples (sampling often started in a barbershop: the owner or operator of the shop gave us names and often even arranged interviews with some of their customers. The interviews often took place in the barbershops.

In predominantly rural districts of Swabi and Chakwal and the rural areas of Abbottabad and Rawalpindi we randomly selected villages which were listed as having large numbers of migrants. We identified the first household by a random number and we went household-by-household to find intending and return migrants. We stopped interviewing when we reached the desired sample size.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Beyond other analytical perspectives including cumulative causation, social capital world system theory and following Douglas Massey (Massey et al., 1993; 1998; Constant and Massey, 2002; Massey, 2009) we utilize two theoretical perspectives: neo-classical economics, NE (Todaro, 1976) and the new economics of labor migration, NELM (Stark and Bloom, 1985).

NE (Todaro, 1976; Massey et al., 1993, pp.433-436; de Haas, 2010, pp.230-231) sees migrants as atomistic, utility maximizing individuals. People make individual decisions to move if they anticipate that with the move they will maximize their income.⁶ Migration is related to geographic differences in supply and demand for labor on a macro level. Countries⁷ with large endowment of labor relative to capital tend to have low wages so people tend to migrate from these places to countries with limited endowment of labor relative to capital, hence with higher wages. But the migration of labor is accompanied also by a flow of capital: capital (including human capital) tends to move to countries with low capital endowments and low wages, which will eventually produce an equilibrium of the distribution of capital and labor and the leveling of incomes in the case of a completely free flow of goods and capital and unrestricted flow of people. In this perspective migration leads to optimal allocation of production factors, which benefits both the sending and receiving countries. Since the NE conceptualizes highly skilled labor in terms of human capital, the patterns of migration will be

⁶ Todaro specifically writes about “expected” rather than “actual” income (Todaro, 1980, p.364), hence – to be fair to the Todaro model – it should be noted that the decision to migrate will be made by calculating the odds to get a job and the level of income for the job. Nevertheless it is an individual decision based on rational calculation of the likelihood of long-term earnings.

⁷ Michael P. Todaro (1976) conceptualizes the problem in terms of rural-urban migration, but the same logic applies to international migration.

the opposite for highly skilled and unskilled labor. It is not inconceivable that highly skilled labor will move to countries with low capital (low human capital) endowments, while low skilled workers move in the opposite direction. According to NE return migration should only occur if the migrant's expectations for higher earnings were not met, hence they tend to see return migrants as "failures" after all rational migrants tend to move abroad permanently. Furthermore, social attachment and social commitments at home (e.g. taking care of the elderly) is on the cost side of the equation for NE if it is taken into account. Attachment to people at home raises the costs of remaining abroad and lowers the costs to return home. Remittances are anomalous (Constant and Massey, 2002, p.10), migrants should use earnings to maximize utility in the destination country rather than sending it home⁸.

NELM's (Stark and Bloom, 1985; de Haas, 2010, pp. 242-243; Massey et al., 1993, pp.436-440; Constant and Massey, 2002, pp.10-12) major initial insight is that migration decisions are not being made by isolated individuals but by larger units, usually by the family. According to Stark and Bloom, "a migrant is not necessarily the decision-making entity accountable for his or her migration. Migration decisions are often made jointly by the migrant and by some non-migrants.... Costs and returns are shared...one important component of the direct returns to the non-migrating family from the migration of the family member are his or her remittances" (Stark and Bloom, 1985, p.174; see also Massey et al., 1993, p.436). Hence remittances are not anomalies for NELM, on the contrary the anticipated amount of remittances may be the crucial consideration for the migration decision. Unlike the assumption of the developmentalist view, remittances may not only or even primarily serve investment goals, but could just help the families in the home country to survive, to pay health care or earn them prestige and respect at home in their "reference group." (Stark and Bloom, 1985, p.173). NELM does not see return migrants necessarily as "failures" – migrants may have specific goals in mind when they go abroad to achieve something at home (for instance to find a bride who might not be available without them taking a job abroad, or to start a business which may not provide them with as much income as they could earn in the country of immigration but provides them enough livelihood at home and the kind of prestige or reputation they were yearning for).

⁸ Hein de Haas (2010) however identifies the "developmentalist" version of neo-classical economics (pp.231-232). Remittances are a major source of hard currency. This theory anticipates that guest workers reinvest in enterprises in the country of origin after their "widely expected return", hence it is conceivable to conceptualize within NE. Migrant workers were seen as representing a hope for industrial development of their native land and it was widely thought that large scale emigration can contribute to the best of both worlds: rapid growth in the country of immigration and a rapid growth in the country of origin.

Furthermore, while NE is mainly a theory about the working of labor markets, for NELM the labor market is not the only and probably not even the main consideration for migration decisions. NELM assumes that the decision to migrate or not will not depend only on maximizing expected incomes, but also on minimizing risks associated with various market failures. In developed countries risks to household incomes are minimized by private insurances or government programs (welfare systems). In developing countries – so do Massey and his collaborators claim (Massey et al., 1993, p.436) – these are largely non-existent or at least not available to poor households. The same goes for capital markets, or credit. Poor families may not have collaterals to obtain credit (or credits may not be available in poor countries) to improve the productivity of their assets. Income from migrant labor can cover health care costs, expenditures on education and the care for the elderly. Income from migrant labor can be a source for investment, but again not necessarily as the developmentalist view would anticipate it, namely not because this maximizes incomes for the person who migrates, but primarily because it assures capital for the family which stays at home. Families and not individuals are the appropriate units of analysis for NELM.

To put it very simply: NE model is driven by the desire to maximize individual incomes (to get higher incomes in the immigration country – after deduction of remittances and other costs - than they would get in the home country; NELM is driven by home family needs and strategy, the migrant will move if this way the migrant can improve the well-being of the home family. In NE the migration decision is by the individual, in NELM the decision is made by the family (with or without consultation of the individual) and in this framework some of the “costs” of this move on an individual level are suppressed, not taken into account explicitly for the sake of accomplishing the family goals and the improvement of the status of the family in the community of origin. This can be crucial and this is what we can learn from sociological and economic studies of “family economy”, most importantly from Chayanov being a classic in this field, clearly showed that when own costs (like labour costs of family members) are not taken into account then these economies operate on a mechanism of “self-exploitation” and has a “strange” attitude toward the market and the immediate cash they earn via the economic activity (Chayanov 1986). We are aware of the fact that in our case not peasant economies are the objects of observation, but often self-employed people who work for wages in a foreign country, and who also use mechanisms of family economy. We argue nonetheless that when families are the key units of migrant labour decisions then they often disregard certain elements of individual costs of being away, travel and unpaid social contributions and thus they behave “strangely” for the sake of pooling

income to promote various family strategies, family wellbeing.⁹ This we can also translate to the ways of these migrants subordinate their own interests to family interests. In addition to this, NE primarily explains migrants who tend to become permanent settlers in the destination country (return migrants being just failures), while NELM is mainly a tool to understand temporary migrants, return migrants, guest workers or “transnationals.”

The problem of return migration Within the immigration literature the study of return migration is challenging, data on return migrants are typically not collected. Portes’ concept of transnationals for instance does not assume that they will necessarily return to the home country, but he also defines transnational entrepreneurs, or wage laborers who do not maximize labor market outcomes but maintain close ties with families and other networks in the home country. They maximize remittances (or their transnational, global businesses) and do not have to go through the often painful process of “acculturation” (Portes, Haller, and Guarnizo, 2001, p.6) since permanent settlement is virtually impossible. In the UAE and Gulf monarchies in general this is an almost “laboratory situation” to test whether NE is sufficient to understand return migrants or whether NELM offers insights absent in NE in the case of migration regimes based on exclusion.

There are also substantial differences in the scholarly literature on what proportion of immigrants eventually return. Even less is known about what the composition of return migrants is in comparison with those who settle permanently, and what are the motives of emigration (Constant and Massey, 2002, pp.7-8). For instance, Jasso and Rosenzweig (1982) estimated using cohort data that within the first 10 years after immigration cumulative emigration (among legal immigrants!) ranged from 30 to 50% (data from Social Security Administration and Census Bureau vary but fit within this range). There is no agreement in the scholarly literature about the social composition of return migrants from the US. Some found that skilled immigrants had a higher probability to return (Jasso and Rosenzweig, 1988), others found no educational effect or negative selectivity (Massey et al., 1987, p.305), or even found that people of lower education were more likely to return.

Since permanent settlement in the UAE/Gulf monarchies is impossible, returning home or going to a third country is expected. What needs an explanation is how the initial decision to migrate was made. Are there

⁹ On the basis of narratives see that migrants very often understand and justify migration in terms family well-being instead of individual considerations Kovács-Melegh 2001, among domestic servants see Gábel-Melegh 2017

any differences in who is staying for how long? Were the pre-migration expectations met during the time migrants spent in the UAE, and what are the consequences if they were not met? How much remittances did guest workers send home, for what purposes? Were remittances seen by them as a burden or the purpose of their stay? Who among return migrants would like to find a job again in the UAE?

It is rather difficult to adjudicate between the two competing theories, as Massey acknowledged. The lower the home income and higher the destination country income promises to be, it is more likely that people will decide initially to migrate. Guest workers who after one or more spells in the UAE went home are also more likely to try to return to the UAE if they expect a higher income there than what they earn at home. This is of course consistent with NE theory. NELM theory will be supported to the extent the initial decision to migrate was made by the family rather than the migrants themselves. Guest workers who during their stay in the UAE could send home remittances which exceeded the subsistence needs of their families accumulated enough assets to achieve their family aims, and they may decide to stay at home even if incomes in Pakistan are lower than the income they could earn in the UAE.

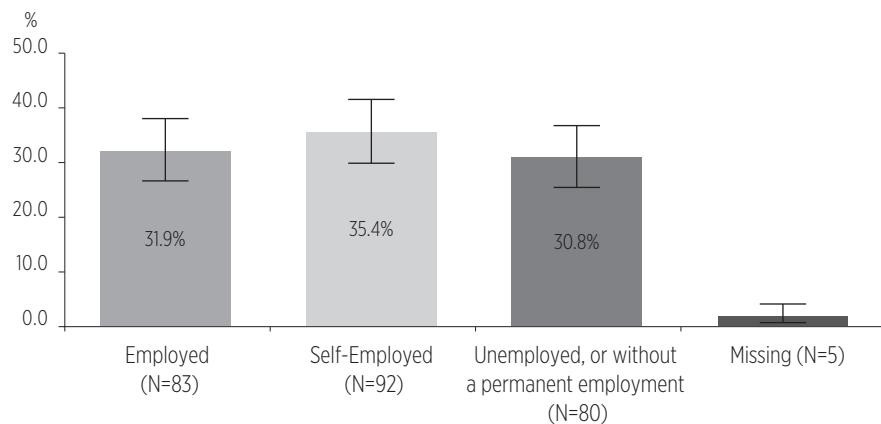
In order to weigh the relative explanatory power of competing theories this paper is divided into three sections:

- (1) the recruitment process:support for NELM if initial migration theory is made by family as far as initial decision is concerned): H1
- (2) working and living conditions while in the UAE:support for NELM if incomes in UAE were high enough to improve the long term living conditions of families at home and counterbalance costs on a family level. Also we support NELM if some of the individual costs are “forgotten” for the sake of the well-being of the family: H2
- (3) experiences in Pakistan after return and desire to find a job again in the UAE: NELM theory is supported as long as return migrants do not consider a new job in the UAE if at home the family can earn high enough incomes to cover family needs, though those incomes are lower than what they could additionally earn in the UAE. NE theory will be supported if aspiration to return is driven by the difference in home country and destination country income after deducting all possible costs (people make “balance sheets” on an individual level), return migrants want to return to the UAE if their net income in Pakistan is lower than what they earned in the UAE: H3

THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Before making the initial decision to look for a job in the UAE about a third of our respondents (32%) did not have any job (*Figure 1*). A quarter of them (25%) did not answer the income satisfaction question, so probably did not have a regular job, and more than half (54%) who had regular income found it to be insufficient (*Figure 2*).

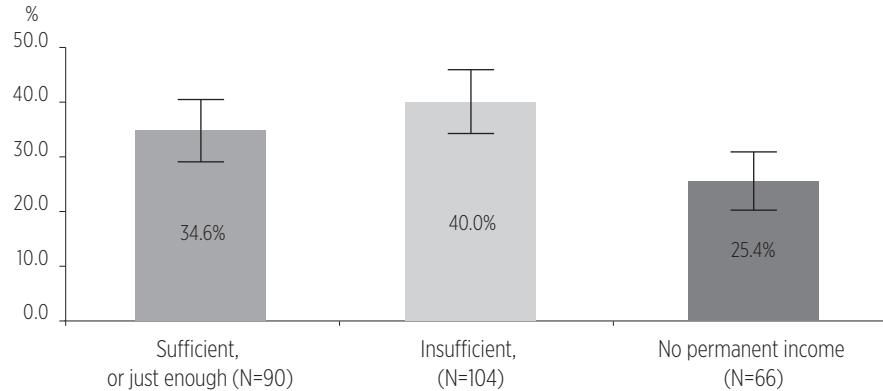
Figure 1: Employment status before leaving for UAE



Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

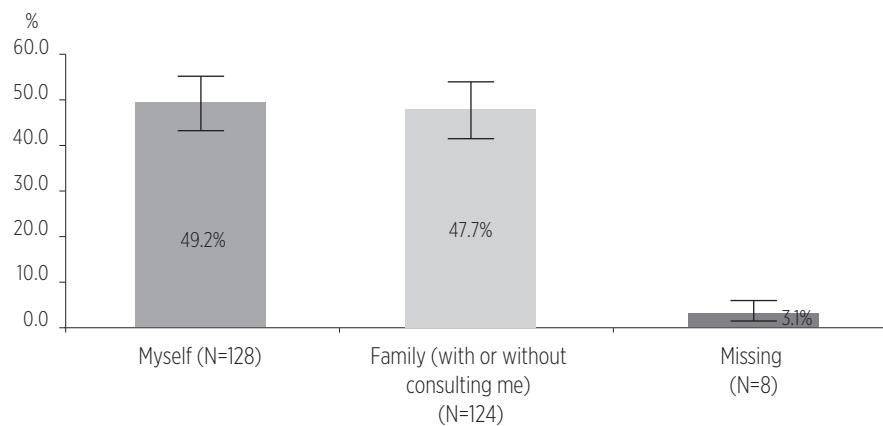
At the first glance the high proportion of “self-employed” (35%) is striking in *Figure 1*, though as *Figure 2* demonstrates these self-employed by all likelihood are in very marginal “businesses” (small peasants, street vendors, scavengers etc.) and they might not earn incomes to provide a decent living standard for their families. Furthermore, the 35% self-employed is small by Pakistani standards. Around 60% of Pakistani men are self-employed (the proportion of self-employed is even higher, closer to 80% among women)¹⁰. Hence self-employment actually decreases the likelihood that one takes the chance to look for and obtain a job in the Gulf monarchies.

¹⁰ <https://www.indexmundi.com/facts/pakistan/self-employed#SL.EMPSELF.E.ZS> [accessed 7 October 2016].

Figure 2: How sufficient was your income before you decided to move to the?

Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

Hence the absence of jobs or the lack or insufficiency of income was a good enough reason to consider migration. Figures 1 and 2 are consistent with both NE and NELM theories. Who made the initial decision to move? When in the survey we asked respondents this question, 49% said it was their individual decision but 48% said their family wanted them to take a job in the Emirates, and many told us they were not even consulted. Figure 3 though supports NELM theory and is consistent with H1. The difference is of course not significant (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Who took the decision to take a job in the UAE?

Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

In a focus group in Chakwal (a township between Islamabad and Lahore) some respondents were actually quite bitter about the pressure from their families to go and work hard in the UAE. One said: "We are not relative of anyone, only our money is relative of all." Another respondent from the same focus group added: "Our families consider us a machine. Our social status is that we will be working continuously. We have no life, no status, just earn money." A respondent in a focus group in Rawalpindi (a town located between Islamabad and Lahore) echoed similar sentiments: "Even the family started to worship money. Dirhams took the place of a person." These comments are also in line with the idea of a collective family economy which suppresses individual needs and calculations.

Family was also important for motivating and financially facilitating a move to the UAE. During the study we take UAE Dirham as somewhere around a quarter USD, thus four Dirham is one USD while 60-65 Indian Rupee add up to one USD. In the text we refer to currencies given by interviewees.

Tariq Islam¹¹, a married 46-year-old tailor in Lahore city wanted to build a house but could not afford it on his income in Lahore. His mother sold her golden bangles so he could pay the 3,000 dirhams for visa and travel. He found a job in a tailoring shop in Dubai. He worked 10 hours a day and earned a respectable income of 1,500 dirhams, but he could earn 2-3,000 dirhams during Eid. He sent 500 dirhams to his family every month, built the house, and whenever he visited home he spent all of his other savings on gifts. On such visits the family treated him as a guest. In his words: "The family treated me as if I was a newlywed bride". But when he returned after 14 years in Dubai he was devastated. During his absence his wife had an affair with another man. He asked his wife to apologize and was ready to forgive her but she refused. They divorced and she married the other man. He is now sorry he built the house rather than investing his savings to set up his own tailoring shop. With his divorce 14 years of hard work was lost. He may have to return to the UAE and start saving again, this time for a business back in Lahore.

Amjad Aziz, a young man in his late twenties from Abbottabad offered us a happier story. He dropped out from a BBA course from the University of Abbottabad and started to work as a laundry-man in a local hotel. His income was miserable, was paid 216 Rupees a day and his family was in poverty (he is still unmarried). His brother however got a good job in a good hotel in Abu Dhabi and helped Amjad to also get a visa and a job in the same hotel. He spent 120,000 rupees in various fees paid by his own savings and his family's contribution, but the job he got in Abu Dhabi paid well, 1,000 dirhams a month,

¹¹ All names are altered so the anonymity of respondents is preserved.

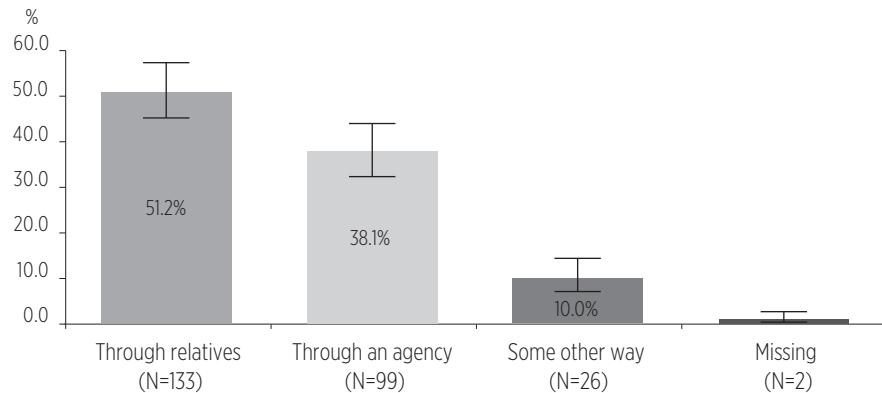
and working over-time he could earn 1.25-1.5 times the normal wage. Both his brother and Amjad could send “good money” back home and they succeeded in getting the family out of poverty by the time they returned to Pakistan.

But the family not only plays an important role to persuade people to take jobs in the Gulf, they also put pressure on them to stay there – no matter how miserably they feel – until they send back enough remittances so they could show off with their acquired “wealth”, which goes directly against NE hypotheses. A return migrant in a focus group in Swabi (Northwest from Islamabad) complained: “Once a person reaches there, then he cannot go back, because his parents, relatives and others would say he had failed, he is good for nothing. Therefore I stayed there to save face.”

Not that it takes too much to be a “success” back home. NELM and H3 gets strong support from a focus group interview in Peshawar (all the way to the Northwest, near the Afghan border): “Half a salary at home is better than a full one away from home.” And indeed, in an in depth interview a Swabi resident told us: “When I walked around in white cloth in the village, people envied me.” Another return migrant also from Swabi in a focus group echoed the same sentiment: “When I saw people from UAE in good dress, I also wanted to be like them and this desire took me there.”

Family/kinship was also a major mechanism to find a job. 51% in the survey told us they found a job with the help of relatives, only 38% relied exclusively on agents. The rest just applied for a visa or were directly approached by a company. Visa through relatives is mainly a visa provided by an employer (it may be the relative himself or the employer of the relative).

Figure 4: How were you recruited for your job in the UAE?



Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

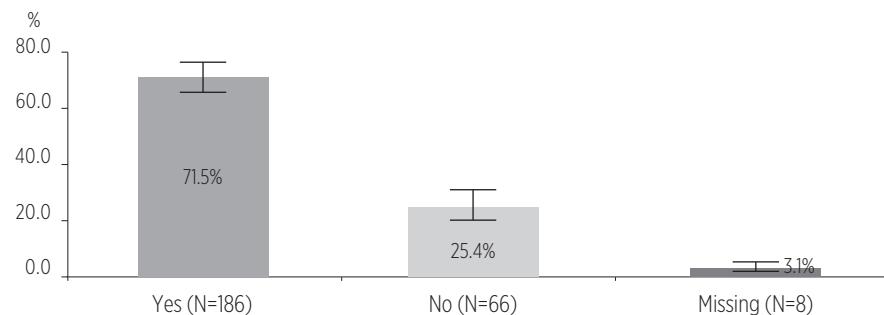
Jobs solicited by a family member can be a mixed blessing.

Yaseen Javed, a 32-year-old air conditioning technician and driver from Peshawar (a town in the Northwest, near the Afghan border, not far from Kabul) who worked in his father's shop got into a lot of trouble as the shop went into great loss and they were indebted. Nevertheless his brother who was already in Dubai helped him to get a sponsor and a visa as a driver and he could return the money his brother loaned him for visa, travel and sponsorship. Since his sponsor was his brother's friend he was also treated well, he was for instance allowed to go home every six months though by contract he was only entitled to a one-month leave once every other year.

Kinship was also vitally important for their lives in the UAE, 72% of the respondents had relatives in the Emirates.

Yaseen Javed also reported he spent most of his free time with his brother, cousins and friends. Sometimes he even took loans from them which he later returned. "Time passes because of socialization, otherwise it would be very difficult to pass time", he told us.

Figure 5: Did you have relatives in the UAE?



Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

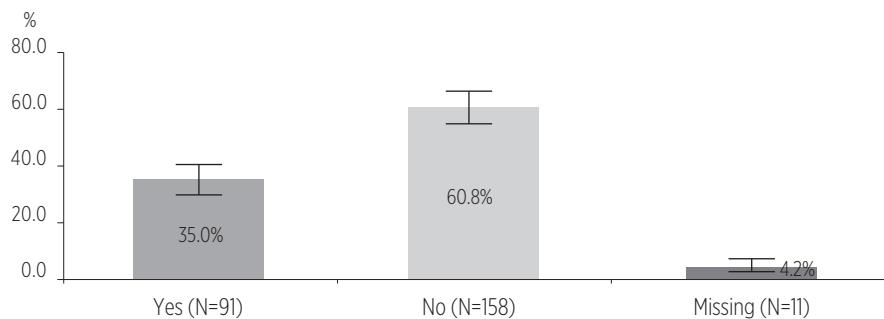
Saeed Arif from Swabi city who lived in Dubai for 16 years was even luckier. He left "compelled by financial problems of his family and personal desire for greener pastures" and he got a good job as a driver. His long stay abroad was punctuated by eight visits back home (almost every second year) and after his fourth year he got married. Given his good income he could get a permit to bring his wife to Dubai and could rent his own place for his family. So he is one of the few Pakistani workers who can afford to live with their wife and children in the UAE. He also has an extensive network of friends, all of them compatriots

and Muslims: he is “happy with friends”, he even learned the local language and he claimed he became acquainted even with some natives [I suppose he meant Emiratis, though as we will see later that is likely to be rather unusual given the differences in social standing].

The very high percentage of relatives living in the UAE (72%) seems to indicate that the movement of guest workers to the Gulf monarchies is “chain migration” and that there is cumulative causation meaning previous migration leads to further migration (Massey et al., 1998). People learn about the nature of jobs in the UAE through relatives who already work in the Emirates and often act as intermediaries between sponsors and prospective migrants.

Surprisingly, only 35% told us they had to pay for the sponsorship (*Figure 6*). Among those who paid for sponsorship only 25% paid agents, 46% had to pay the employers, and 19% paid relatives (*Figure 7*), hence the role of agencies may not be that important or these payments are not revealed. On the one hand it looks like employers often directly approach people who are recommended to them by their employees, rather than use agencies to find workers.

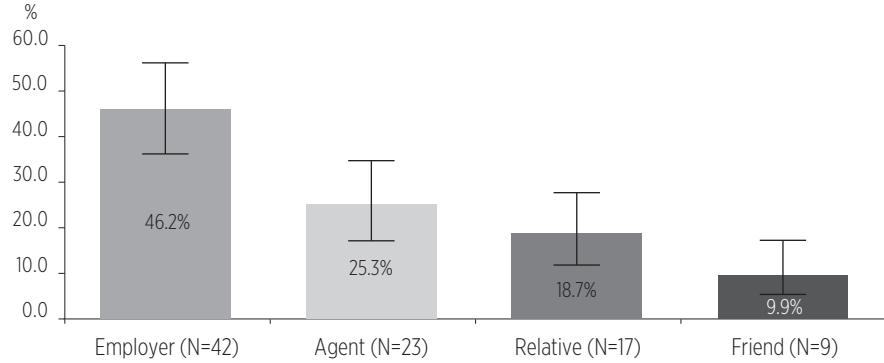
Figure 6: Did you have to pay to get sponsorship?



Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

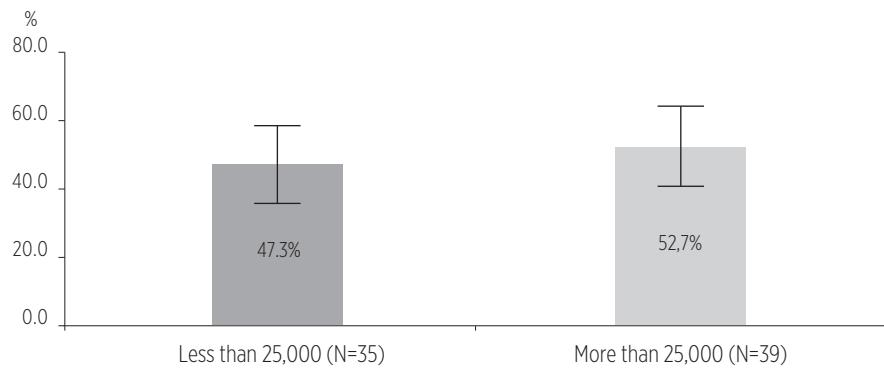
On the other hand payments for visa and sponsorship may also be a sensitive issue. Such payments are probably illegal, and they are only revealed in the in-depth interviews. Almost all of our respondents in the interviews reported substantial fees paid for such purposes¹².

¹² It is also interesting that we got very different responses to this question from prospective migrants. Only 22% of them claimed they did not pay at all for sponsorship. They also paid mainly agencies (57%) and only 7% the employers. 77% reported expenses of over 100,000 rupees. The discrepancy in reporting expenses to get the job among return and prospective migrants is puzzling, it may have something to do with changing ways of getting a job and increased costs.

Figure 7: To whom did you have to pay get sponsorship?

Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

From the in-depth interviews our impression is that some people not only do not report they had to pay for acquiring a job in the UAE, but they grossly underreport how much they paid to their kafeel (sponsor), relatives or recruiting agencies. Many end up deep in debt, it takes them a year or more to repay the money, and when they need to renew their visa some kafeel ask them for another payment. This is in itself a clear sign that there are problems concerning the individual rationality of migration in the region.

Figure 8: How much did you have to pay to get sponsorship? (in rupee, US\$=100 rupee)

Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

Mohammad Shahid, a 44-year-old driver from Peshawar for instance told us that his sponsor arranged for him a “free” visa but charged him 5,000 dirhams (close to 150,000 rupees) to cover his visa and travel expenses. This “loan” was deducted from his salary over the first two years (he earned 35 dirhams during a 12–15-hour long working day, hence about 1,000 dirhams a month). When his visa had to be renewed (one usually needs a new visa every third year) his sponsor charged him another 5,000 dirhams. Despite this he was happy with his sponsor, and even with this deduction he managed to save money to send remittances home.

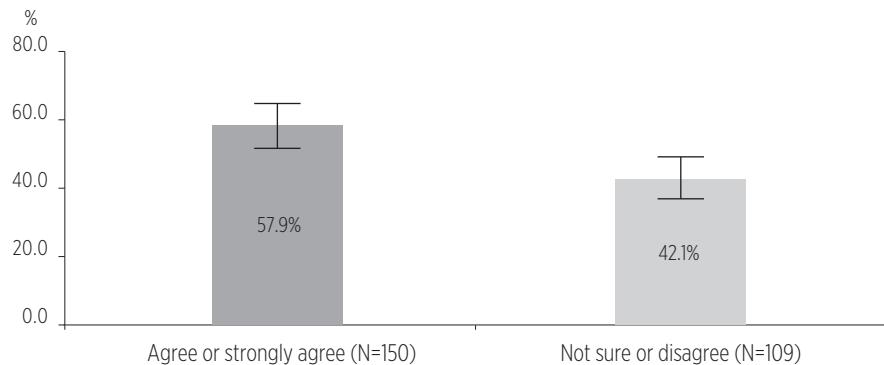
Ahmad Khan, a 25-year-old car painter from Swabi had to take out a loan from his relatives and sister to cover visa and travel expenses. That amounted to 120,000 rupees. He spent two and a half years in Dubai and first he had to repay his loan, but eventually he managed to save some money. He told us that as he returned his social status in Swabi improved and he even managed to get married.

Among the 54 people with whom we conducted in-depth interviews we could find only one person (Imran Hussain, a 25-year-old from Chakwal who had basic training in computer science) whose family paid only 16,000 rupees, but this was for a visitor’s visa. He landed a job during his visit in Dubai with the help of his brother. Imran did not tell us whether he had to pay anything to get the job, work permit or change in visa status. While not all of our in-depth interviewees confided in us the costs of getting their jobs, it typically ranged between 100,000–200,000 rupees, the money typically borrowed from family or from the sale of assets and paid to employers or relatives, which might also explain why these people can be subordinated to their families even in a longer run.

WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Not only the actual wage and working conditions, but the perception of working conditions can be also rather important factors in understanding the migration process. Much to our surprise one of the participants in a focus group in Rawalpindi told us: “About 90% of them [Emiratis] considered workers to be slaves. We did not talk much with them due to language barrier.”

We decided to put this as a question in the survey and in the survey on a Likert scale 58% said they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “Workers were treated like slaves” (*Figure 9*).

Figure 9: Workers are generally treated as slaves

Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

Another respondent in a personal in-depth interview in Chakwal expressed similar sentiments: “Only one out of a thousand [Emiratis] was affectionate and treated workers as humans.”

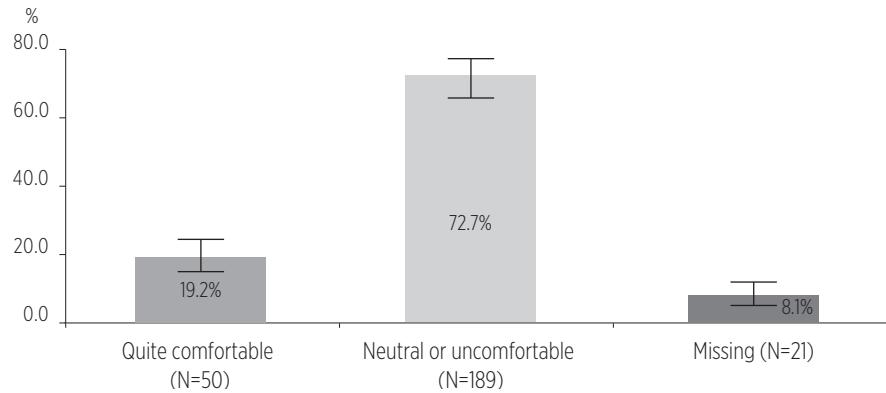
Mohammad Amin, a 28-year-old motor mechanic from Peshawar who worked in Dubai and Sharjah for five years felt his “workplace was like a jail where he was imprisoned.”

A member of a focus group in Chakwal put it this way: “Sponsors are not sympathetic to workers. Their ultimate goal is to take work from them... You are useless for them when you get old.”

Zahid, a 27-year-old auto mechanic from Abbottabad formulated his overall experience poetically when he told us: “I would keep looking at the desert and desired to go home, and my friends used to say: What is the use of youth. Where have we spent our youth, and the family does not care.”

As far as working conditions is considered the conflict is usually not with Emiratis, but mainly with supervisors, especially with Pakistani supervisors.

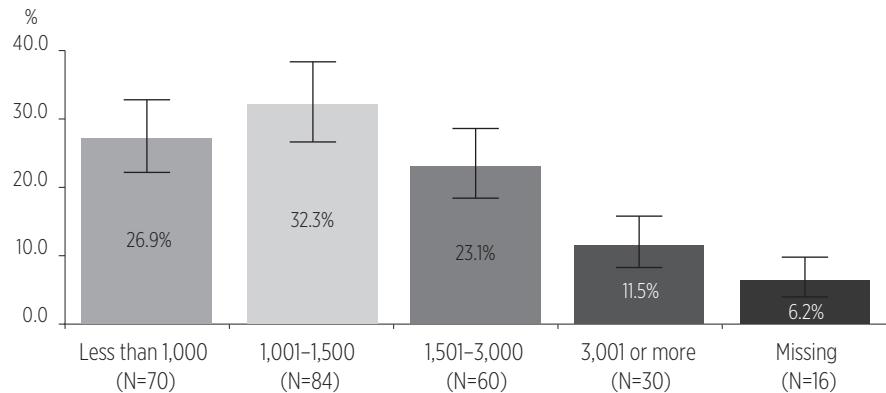
The UAE is one of the beloved, if not the most beloved, countries (though the reason for this is rather instrumental: they like it since there are jobs in the UAE). Emirati sponsors or owners were also rather distant from guest workers. 37% of return migrants told us they never met Emiratis at their workplace, and 77% never met an Emirati socially. When our respondents were asked whether they felt comfortable when interacting with Emiratis, only 19% said they were “quite comfortable” (*Figure 10*). The social distance between Emiratis and blue-collar guest workers is tremendous, and most of our respondents in the in-depth interviews expressed respect towards the host nation.

Figure 10: How comfortable were you when interacting with Emiratis?

Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

Now let's turn our attention to incomes.

Return migrants earned a reasonable salary. The mean salary in the UAE was just below 1,500 dirhams a month (*Figure 11*). But upon their return to Pakistan those who have regular income at all earn on average below 15,000 rupees, which is about a third of the income they have earned in the UAE. And this is likely to be higher than the income they had before they left. We do not have survey data on earnings in Pakistan before return migrants left for the first time to the UAE, but in a few cases in in-depth interviews our respondents volunteered information on this.

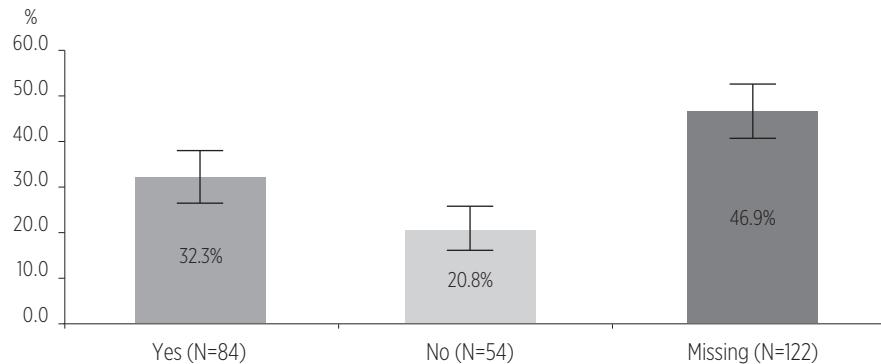
Figure 11: What was your monthly income? (in Dirhams, US\$1=3.67 Dirham)

Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

Mohammad Qasim, the 42-year-old carpenter from Lahore earned back in Pakistan 110 rupees a day, thus about 3,000 rupees a month. His income in Dubai was a modest 1,000 dirhams, which nevertheless is ten times more. From other interviews it looks reasonable to assume that a decent income in Pakistan used to be between 100-200 rupees a day.

Even the worst income in the UAE looks adequate if one compares it with earning in Pakistan before or after taking a job in the UAE which supports both NE and NELM. Nevertheless, some 40% of our respondents complained that they got a lower wage than what they were promised (*Figure 12*)¹³, and only 46% of them were fully satisfied with their paycheck (*Figure 13*).

Figure 12: Did you get the salary you were promised before you went to UAE?



Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

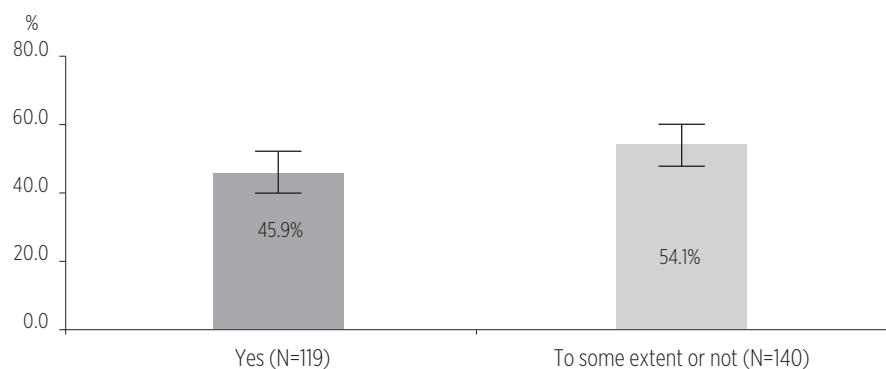
One of these disappointed return migrants was 30-year-old Amin Masood, a driver from Rawalpindi who worked for three and a half years in Fujairah. One of his cousins arranged a driver's visa for him and he had to spend altogether 300,000 rupees on fees and costs. He was promised a 10-hour workday and a wage of 3,000 dirhams. Upon arrival he found out he has to work for 15-18 hours and the compensation was only 2,200 dirhams. On top of this he was not paid as much as he worked. He protested against his "betrayal" but he was threatened that he would be sent back, which he could not afford with the heavy debt on his shoulders. Eventually he was forced out of his job and he went to the labor court demanding to be paid for the last three months. At that time his employer produced a contract which set his wage at 700 dirhams a month, and that was what he was paid before

¹³ This looks like a sensitive question, almost half of our respondents did not answer it.

leaving the UAE. (Prospective migrants do not always read carefully their contracts – the papers can also be in Arabic that few Pakistanis understand. In some in-depth interviews our respondents told us the employers kept a contract with a lower salary figure than what they paid them, just in case they leave and request unpaid salaries.) This in itself shows that while wage expectations are clearly important, the costs and the burdens are not carefully thought over.

Despite such disappointments almost half of our respondents (46%) were satisfied with their wage. Those who were without regular income back home, or who increased their salaries five-tenfold and thus sent back enough remittances to meet the needs of their family or even accumulate some capital to build a house or start a business upon return were satisfied with their earnings – a finding which supports NELM theory and is in particular consistent with H2.

Figure 13: Were you satisfied with your wage?



Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

The Kafala system¹⁴ restricts the choice of employers after a worker has arrived to the UAE and would like to change jobs. While the regulations were softened, nevertheless the workers still depend a great deal on their sponsors. Hence only 25% of our respondents changed their employer. Only one of our 54 in-depth interviewees (Adil Butt – I told his bitter story with his brother-in-law earlier) reported a change of employer. He reported it, since it must have been

¹⁴ The Kafala, or sponsorship system effective in all Gulf Cooperation Countries requires workers to have a sponsor (usually their employer). While the system varies somewhat from country to country, if workers want to change employers they usually need the permission of their kafeel. Such a permission may also be needed if they want to leave the country, and if the kafeel withdraws sponsorship the workers usually have to leave.

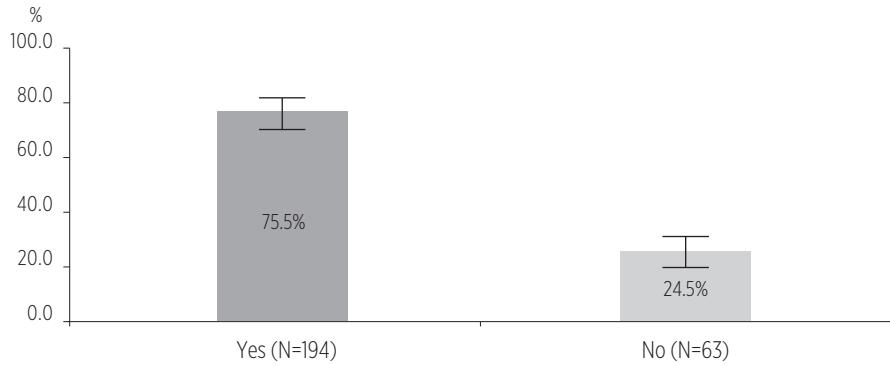
troublesome to move away from an employer who was a friend of his intensively disliked brother-in-law and who treated him badly. Probably many others worked for various employers. If their initial sponsor gives its permission that could be painless. It is also important to note that guest worker migration to the Gulf monarchies is often a cyclical phenomenon: after one contract expires they may return to Pakistan, spend there a couple of months or even years and go back if they hear about a new job opening that will probably come from another sponsor. So I assume that in *Figure 13* respondents interpreted our question as whether they changed sponsors during their last spell in the UAE. We unfortunately were not careful enough when we phrased this question, though it is likely it was understood just for the last spell or at least during one of the spells. Changing sponsors during a contract is a big deal and while it is likely if one has to break his stay in the UAE since the employer momentarily doesn't need his services, one may or may not return to the same employer again for another spell.

The Kafala system is particularly harsh on female domestic workers, which shows that there are important gender aspects in migrating into UAE. These workers are sometimes even sexually abused or ill-treated in other ways according to reports by Human Rights Watch¹⁵. Many of the domestic workers are from the Philippines, and at least in principle none come from Pakistan where the law forbids women to take maid's jobs in the UAE. The Embassy of the Philippines operated a safe house for Filipino maids who escaped their sponsor but did not have their exit visa, their passport or money to return home. One of our students at NYUAD volunteered in this safe house, but as she began to turn her volunteer services into research the Embassy told her not to come back again. This tells a lot about the difficulties people who want to do research on guest workers in the UAE face.

One effective, though by now in the UAE illegal way to monitor the movement of the workers of the kafeel is to take their passport away. While current laws forbid the confiscation of passports¹⁶ by employers, many still do so, often telling workers they want to "keep the passport in a safe place". In fact a shocking 82% of the respondents in the survey told us that their sponsor took their passport, and 26% reported this was the reason why they could not leave. Many of our interviewees in the in-depth interviews also complained about this.

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch, 2014. *United Arab Emirates: Trapped, Exploited, Abused. Migrant Domestic workers Get Scant Protection.* [online] 22 October. Available at: <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/10/22/united-arab-emirates-trapped-exploited-abused>> [Accessed on 7 October 2016].

¹⁶ The UAE has many reasonably liberal labor laws, for instance requiring employers to give domestic workers a day off every week, putting limits on hours worked a day, setting the rules how much they have to pay for overtime, but compliance with these laws is far from perfect. Keeping the passports of workers – according to our data – is just one of such instances of systematic non-compliance.

Figure 14: Did you work for the same sponsor throughout your stay?

Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

One example is Refiq Ali, a 36-year-old laborer from Swabi who spent seven and a half years in Abu Dhabi. He initially worked for 12 hours a day and with such wages he managed to send back regularly whatever little he could. But the business for the company did not go too well, so his working hours were reduced to eight and with a smaller salary he could not continue to send home the money his family needed. He wanted to look for another employer but his kafeel kept his passport and other documents so he could not leave.

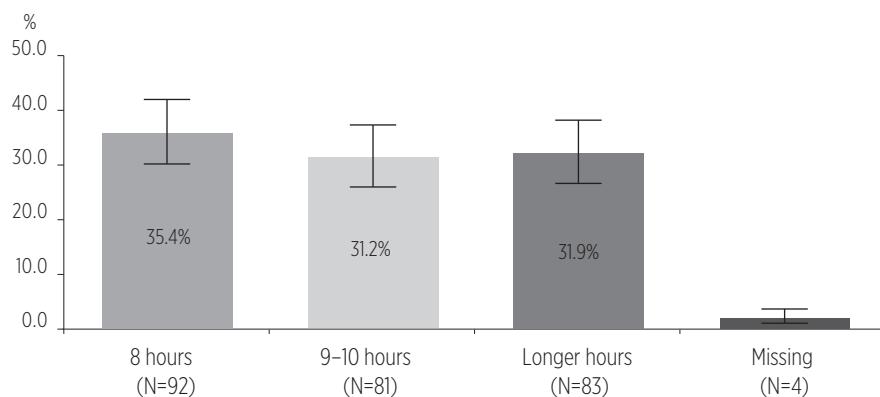
Saleh Hussain, the 35-year-old driver from Lahore was not that happy with his job: he did not get overtime pay and his two-month leave was also without pay even though he got an award as “the best driver” (some companies offer paid home leaves every other year, some even every year). He wanted to leave, but he could not take another job since the sponsor kept his passport. Saleh complained that if a person had an emergency, without a passport he could not travel to Pakistan even if he could have covered the travel expenses.

Amjad Aziz, the laundry man from Abbottabad who worked in an Abu Dhabi hotel also told us that the company kept his passport. But he did not complain. He received 30 days of leave (for the first year the company did not pay his airfare, but after 2 years they covered his travel expenses) and he could go home during his leave time.

Long working hours is one of the reasons for dissatisfaction with life and work in the UAE (see *Table 1* below). Only one third of respondents worked a daily eight-hour shift, one third of them worked more than 10 hours a day (*Figure 15*). Some – in particular taxi drivers – could not take even one day off a week.

As I learned from many taxi drivers the cars are typically owned by Emiratis and they collect half of all the fares. So in order to survive and be able to send home sufficient remittances they exploit themselves, working excessively long hours every day of the week. And most taxi drivers I talked to regard themselves privileged. Some told me they can earn up to 3,000 dirhams a month by self-exploitation, but they are pleased since they can support their families left behind in Pakistan.

Figure 15: How many hours did you work per day?

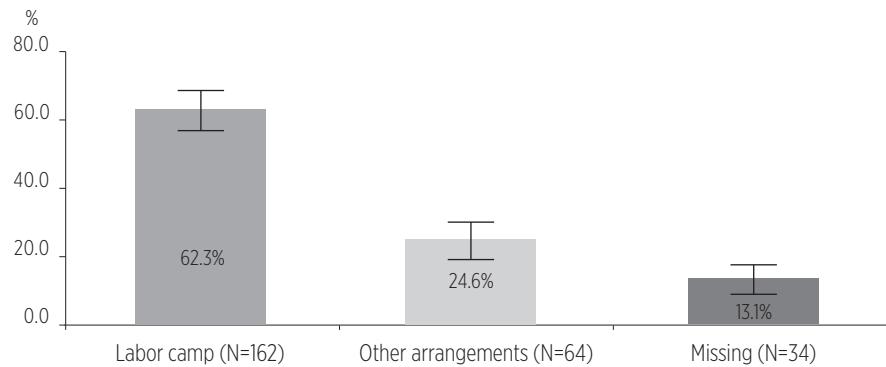


Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

A good example for such a taxi driver among our in-depth interviewees is Saleh who worked 12 hours a day (probably every day of the week). And indeed he did reasonably well, he earned 2,000-2,500 dirhams a month. He returned from Dubai to Lahore after five-six years, before his visa expired since he saved enough money and could start a business with an American.

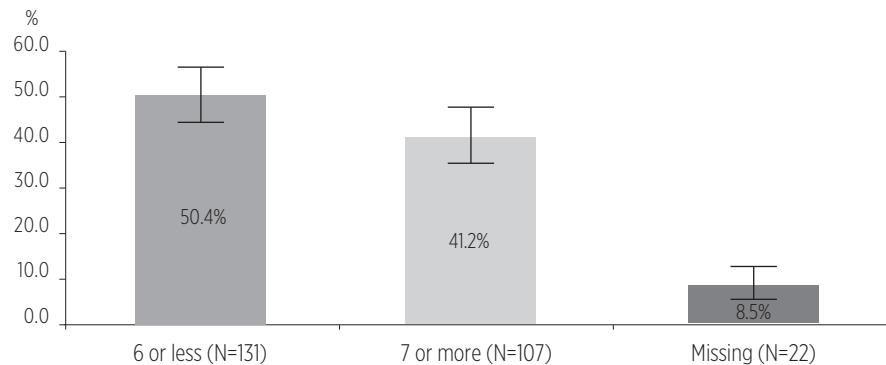
Accommodation is also a key problem for migrant workers. There are a few lucky ones who could rent a flat. Naeem Gul, a 44-year-old spray painter of vehicles from Abbottabad also got relatively lucky early on. When he arrived in Sharjah he shared an air-conditioned room with just four people from Pakistan, Iran and Bengal, and they could even cook their own meals. But the garage caught fire and the owner shifted them to a labor camp.

In our survey 62% of Pakistani guest workers told us they lived in labor camps which are typically located at the outskirts of cities and gated communities (*Figure 16*). Visitors are allowed to enter only by permission. Some of the labor camps are well equipped (some even have swimming pools), but rooms are usually overcrowded.

Figure 16: What kind of housing did you have in United Arab Emirates?

Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

I could never get a permission to visit a labor camp though I asked an NYUAD compliance officer to allow me to join her when she visits the camp of workers constructing the new campus of NYUAD. She refused. We did have a student who managed to get access to a camp. He volunteered for a clergyman who was arranging to send gift-packages to the camps to deliver those. I learned a lot from him about life in the camps (he was especially interested in sex-life in the camps), but he became very concerned about his own security. Threats came not from workers but the police, and he received repeated warnings from NYUAD administration to avoid politically sensitive topics, so he abandoned his initial project to write his senior thesis on labor camps.

Figure 17: With how many people did you share your living space?

Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

Overcrowded housing (especially in the labor camps) is one of the major downsides of working in the UAE. 41% of the respondents in our survey told us (*Figure 17*) they had to share a room with seven or more people and my impression from the in-depth interviews is that the survey may paint a rosier picture than it is on the ground (see later *Table 1*).

Yaseen Javed, the 32-year-old air conditioning technician and driver from Peshawar who became a driver in Dubai for instance shared an air-conditioned 10 by 12-feet room with 10-16 people, sleeping on the floor on a foam mattress.

Ifran Adeel, the security guard from Rawalpindi initially got very good accommodations in a bank where he worked and could live alone. But during the last four months of his two-year stay he had to share a room in a company-run labor camp with 27 other workers. They were Indians, Pakistanis, Nepalese, Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans and Egyptians. Three of them were Muslims; others were either Hindus or Christians. They had a very old AC which did not work properly (temperatures can go up to 120 Fahrenheit in the UAE).

The bottom line is: for South Asian guest workers life in the UAE was a long-term, painful separation from wives and children and their family, it was an experience of young males living together in crowded conditions.

Any of our interviewees in in-depth interviews expressed sorrow to live away from their families. We already learned the tragic story of Tariq Islam from Lahore, whose marriage broke up due to his long stay in the UAE. As many as 31% of our survey told us they knew of cases when wives left guest workers while they worked in UAE. Many of the interviewees complained that separation from the family has negative consequences for family relations and negative impacts on their children. Among the 260 return migrants 197 (76%) told us “the greatest loss they suffered by going abroad” had something to do with their family life. They missed their family (36%) or their family missed them, their relationship with their wives deteriorated and it had a negative effect on the children. These emotional and/or moral “costs” of the lack of family and sexual life are often suppressed when the migrant labour is thought over.

Shahid Awan, a 40-year-old grinder operator from Rawalpindi who worked for nine years in Dubai and earned only 1,200 dirhams (from which the company deducted various fees) could not send enough remittances back home and his family in Pakistan lived hand to mouth. Nevertheless after four years in Dubai he married, but “of course” could not afford to have his wife with him. He would have loved to have his family with him. In order to stay in touch with them he first wrote letters once or twice a month, and later on used the phone to call them twice a month.

Some tried to reduce such damage by trying to visit home as often as they could, but in our survey 23% reported they could never go home, only 31% could go back once a year (usually just for one month). Another 34% visited once in every two years, and some 12% even less frequently.

But now let's return where Irfan Adeel finished his interview. To live in such overwhelmingly young and male Pakistani enclaves means substantial sexual deprivation. Of course very few of our interviewees confessed to be engaged in hetero- or homosexual relations.

Islam strictly forbids pre- and extramarital sex, and it is especially harsh about homosexuality. Ifran was one of the rare exceptions to "confess", but Saleh Hussain, the 35-year-old married man from Lahore who already told us he was fortunate enough to share a two-bedroom flat with five other people admitted he was "sinful". Having a private flat might have been seductive for such "crimes", and as the interviewee said, "I am a sinful person. God forgive me and place me in heaven. If I feel like it, I say my prayers".

But most of our respondents in our survey and many in in-depth interviewees told us they knew about men visiting "clubs" (in the UAE this often stands for brothels), and many even knew about acquaintances who were engaged in homosexual relations.

In the survey when respondents were asked whether the statement that "most workers go to clubs for sex" is correct, only 6% disagreed, 17% were unsure, 77% agreed. Many also knew about homosexuality. When we posed the question "Some of the people I knew were homosexuals" only 25% disagreed, 33% were unsure, and 42% agreed¹⁷.

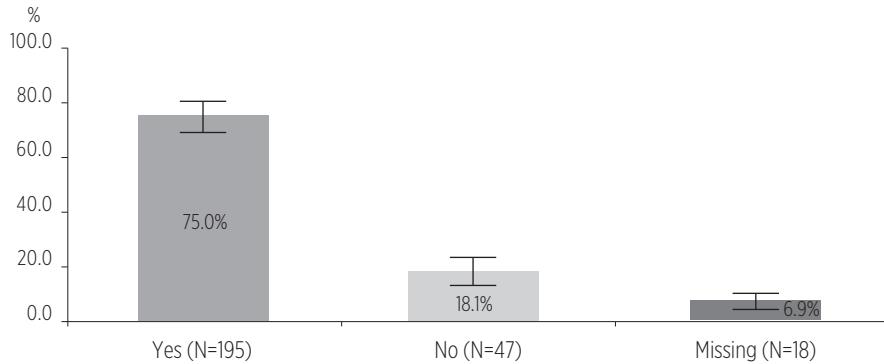
NELM's key hypothesis is that migration is driven by the need of families left back home. Our survey data offer solid support to this theory. The overwhelming majority of our respondents did not spend all of their earnings, 81% reported they save money (*Figure 19*). Their annual saving is an extraordinary amount, on average near to 10,000 dirhams (*Figure 20*) from an average annual income well below 20,000 dirhams.

Answers to questions whether guest workers could save any money, send home enough remittances to invest and prepare for their return home, or if remittances were merely enough to help the family survive are crucial to adjudicate between NE and NELM theories. As I pointed our earlier guest workers in the Gulf monarchies

¹⁷ Since in case of prostitutes our question asked whether most workers visit clubs the widespread use of such facilities is rather pervasive. More difficult to interpret is the question about homosexuality since in that case we only ask whether they know some people who are engaged in gay practices. It may not mean that this is a common practice.

could virtually never settle down in the host countries and gain citizenship. This is not an ideal case to test the two theories, but nevertheless NE theory would be supported if guest workers' main aim would be to improve their own welfare, increase consumption, and if they save to do it for their individual benefits.

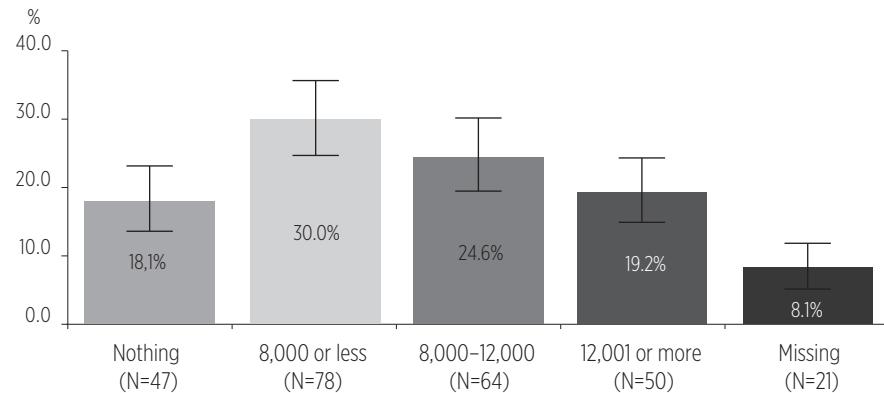
Figure 18: Were you able to save any money from your income in UAE?



Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

According to *Figure 19*, 75% of the guest workers did save some of their earnings. This is at least an indication that workers with often very low incomes and high expenses (especially housing costs that are occasionally up to 30% of their incomes) tended to save, rather than maximize consumption.

Figure 19: How much could you save in typical year? (in Dirham)

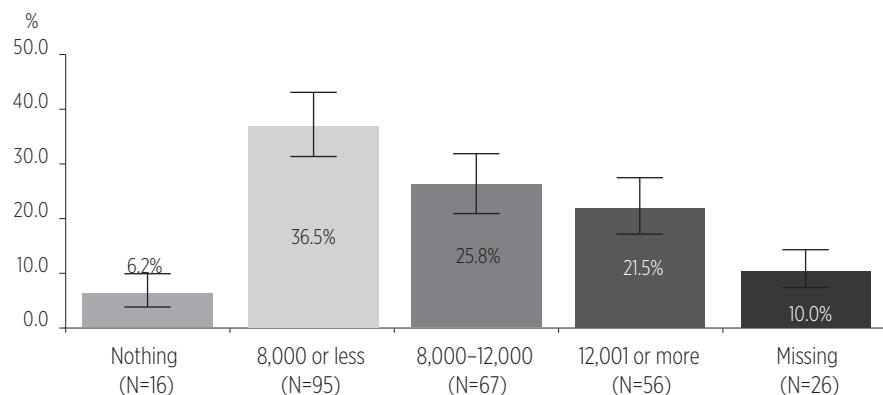


Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

And their savings are substantial. While 18% told us they could not save any money, among those who saved 27% reported to have saved over 12,000 dirhams in a typical year, average savings being somewhere in the ranged of 9,000 dirhams. With an average monthly income under 1,500 dirhams this implies they saved approximately 50% of their earnings.

From *Figure 20* we also learn that basically all the savings (being alrge proportion of the salaries) were sent home as remittances. The distribution of how much people could save and how much money they sent back home is virtually identical. Savings for personal aims is practically non-existent, hence offering strong support for NELM theory and that these migrants workers think in terms of a rather compact family economy.

Figure 20: How much money did you remit annually to your family in Pakistan?



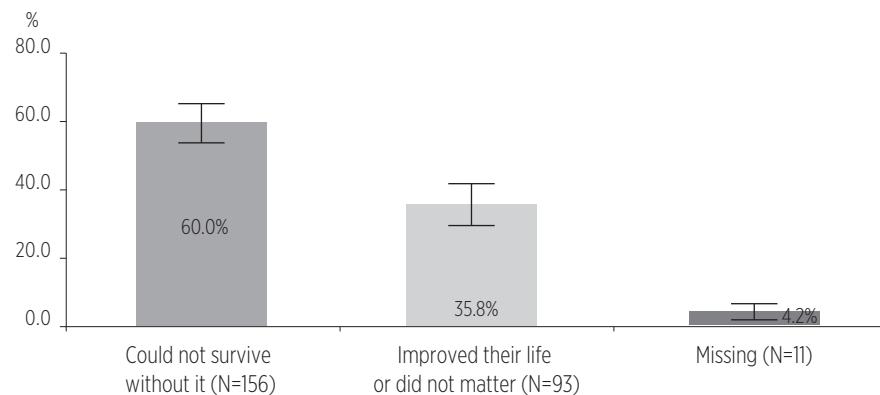
Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

Nasir Sultan, a 24-year-old auto electrician from Chakwal who got a job in Sharjah in an air-conditioning company – just “as a laborer” as he called his position in the UAE –,worked 10-12 hours a day and earned only 5 dirhams an hour. He told us he “lived hand to mouth” and was often unable to remit. His problem was that “people in Pakistan expect an emigrant worker to become rich and to make an impression on friends and relatives beyond one’s capacity”.

Mohammad Qadir, the 42-year-old carpenter from Lahore is a good example of how important it is in the decision to take a job in the UAE to support the family. Qadir was actually happy with his income in Lahore, nevertheless he went to Dubai (and spent there several spells, altogether some 13 years) just because

he wanted to help his parents and contribute towards the marriage of his four sisters. During our fieldwork in 2013 he was only on a visit to Lahore, he was not married yet but planned to marry when he “can stand on his own feet”. As soon as that happens he will move back to Pakistan.

Figure 21: Was your family dependent on the money you sent?

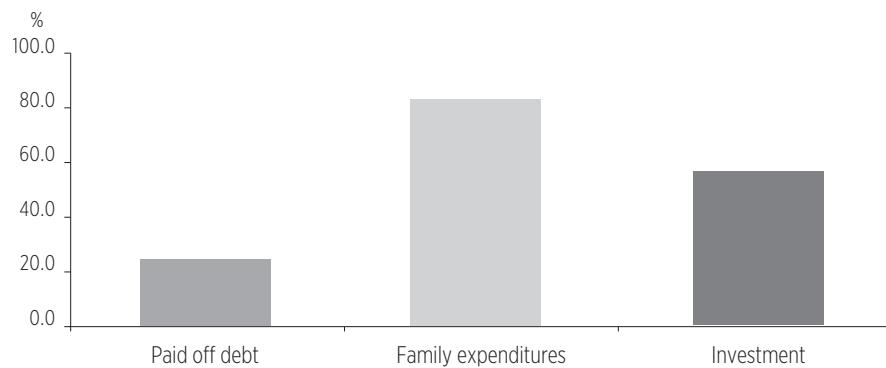


Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

Naeem Gul, the spray painter from Abbottabad who worked in Sharjah is an interesting case. He reported that his social status increased a great deal while in the UAE. Indeed, after two years in Sharjah he managed to get married. (This seems to be rather typical: once they get a UAE job, Pakistani men suddenly become attractive to brides so fathers with daughters start exploring whether they would be ready to marry their child. A son-in-law with a UAE job is an attractive proposition). In Sharjah he had a reasonable job, salary, living and working conditions and he could send money back home regularly not only to support his wife and children but eventually to manage to build a home from his savings. 62% of respondents said this, and 83% of them reported that the remittances were (at least in part) to cover day-to-day family expenditures. Nevertheless more than half could use some of the remittances to invest – many of our in-depth interviewees told us those investments went into building homes or setting up businesses.

I already cited the interview with Tariq Islam twice, he is the 46-year-old tailor from Lahore city who worked 10 hours a day in a tailoring shop in Dubai and earned a respectable income of 1,500 from which he sent 500 dirhams every month to his family to build a home.

Figure 22: How was the money you spent mainly used?



Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

Nevertheless, from *Figures 21* and *22* it looks likely that the decision to migrate for our guest workers was motivated by the brutal fact that their family could hardly survive without remittances, thus there are wage and income pooling economic units.

FACTORS OF SATISFACTION AMONG GUEST WORKERS

We designed a regression model to test the relative explanatory power of various factors likely to affect the satisfaction of guest workers in the UAE. We used the question “Were you treated like a slave?” to measure this satisfaction. The findings are very clear: the main problems are long working hours and miserable living conditions.

Table 1: Regression model no. 1 on factors of satisfaction among guest workers

	Dependent variable:			
	Treated like a slave? (1-5) OLS (1)	Treated like a slave? (Agree/ Strongly Agree=1) Logistic (2)	Treated like a slave? (1-5) OLS (3)	Treated like a slave? (Agree/ Strongly Agree=1) Logistic (4)
Work hours (9 to 10)	0.724*** p = 0.001	0.966*** p = 0.005	0.745*** p = 0.002	1.145*** p = 0.005
Work hours (11 to 12)	0.538** p = 0.030	0.521 p = 0.177	0.687*** p = 0.010	0.934** p = 0.044
Work hours (>12)	0.598* p = 0.059	0.635 p = 0.214	0.565 p = 0.115	0.411 p = 0.509
Quality of accommodation (Fair)	0.640*** p = 0.001	1.033*** p = 0.0005	0.657*** p = 0.002	1.313*** p = 0.0004
Quality of accommodation (Bad)	1.733*** p = 0.002	16.754 p = 0.985	1.702*** p = 0.003	17.186 p = 0.983
Time in UAE (in years)			0.005 p = 0.747	0.026 p = 0.402
Education (1-5 yrs)			0.740 p = 0.155	1.294 p = 0.211
Education (6-10 yrs)			-0.071 p = 0.813	-0.124 p = 0.802
Education (11-14 yrs)			0.291 p = 0.416	0.766 p = 0.223
Education (14> yrs)			-0.136 p = 0.839	0.197 p = 0.857

PAKISTANI GUEST WORKERS IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Dependent variable:				
	Treated like a slave? (1-5) <i>OLS (1)</i>	Treated like a slave? (Agree/ Strongly Agree=1) <i>Logistic (2)</i>	Treated like a slave? (1-5) <i>OLS (3)</i>	Treated like a slave? (Agree/ Strongly Agree=1) <i>Logistic (4)</i>
Income in UAE (500-1000 AED)			-0.649 p = 0.192	-2.213* p = 0.072
Income in UAE (1000-1500 AED)			-0.519 p = 0.295	-1.733 p = 0.152
Income in UAE (1500-2000 AED)			-0.024 p = 0.965	-0.750 p = 0.554
Income in UAE (2000-3000 AED)			0.241 p = 0.670	-0.441 p = 0.736
Income in UAE (3000-4000 AED)			-0.022 p = 0.973	-0.346 p = 0.814
Income in UAE (4000> AED)			0.043 p = 0.944	-1.334 p = 0.318
Constant	2.696*** p = 0.000	-0.642*** p = 0.009	2.944*** p = 0.00001	0.431 p = 0.743
Observations	243	244	220	221
R ²	0.143		0.234	
Adjusted R ²	0.125		0.174	
Log Likelihood		-148.528		-118.146
Akaike Inf. Crit.		309.056		270.291
Residual Std. Error	1.356 (df = 237)		1.327 (df = 203)	
F Statistic	7.906*** (df = 5; 237)		3.876*** (df = 16; 203)	

Notes: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Source: Survey of Pakistani return immigrants (ISS) (own calculations)

From *Table 1* it is quite obvious people would have preferred to work eight hours a day and have better accommodations, sharing rooms with fewer people. UAE incomes, the time spent there or the education of the respondent does not explain why so many agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that “they were treated like slaves”. For policy makers in the UAE this can be seen as a rather encouraging message, probably a lot could be done to increase workers’ satisfaction just by reducing working hours and overcrowding in labor camps.

Just one word of warning: there is a trade-off between working hours and incomes. You may remember Rafiq Ali, the 36-year-old laborer from Swabi who spent seven and a half years in Abu Dhabi. He initially worked for 12 hours a day but when his working hours were reduced to eight and he got a smaller salary he could not continue to send home the money his family needed so he wanted to look for another employer. So at least some guest workers do not mind even “slave” labor as long as they earn enough to meet the expectations of their families back in Pakistan. One more piece of evidence to support NELM hypotheses.

EXPERIENCES IN PAKISTAN AFTER RETURN AND DESIRE TO FIND A JOB AGAIN IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

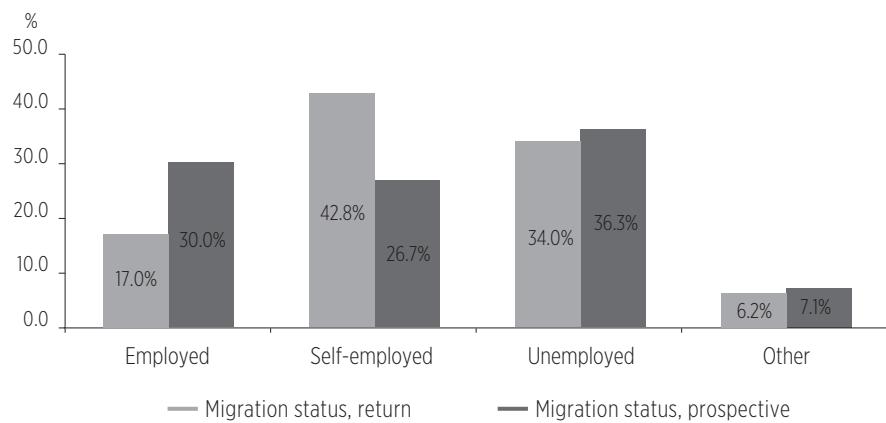
The majority of return migrants (65%) reported to us that their family is now financially better off than they were 10 years ago (the same figure is only 46% for prospective migrants, hence this can be read as an indicator that most return migrants see the time they spent away was not wasted but helped their family). Only 10% complained that their family situation got worse (that figure is 21% among prospective migrants). They were also proud that their status was enhanced among friends and relatives in Pakistan due to the job they had in the UAE: 57% felt this way.

The living standards of return migrants do not seem to be too high. While 91% have running water, 79% have modern toilets in their house. 83% have a refrigerator and 50% own a motorcycle. These figures are almost identical among prospective migrants. So why do they think their living standards improved as a result of them taking jobs in the UAE? This we see in *Figure 23*.

We should remember that there is a selection bias. There are more Pathans and fewer urban residents among the return migrants, while among prospective migrants there are more urban Punjabi. Hence while the current living standards of return and prospective migrants appear to be the same, the return migrants before their UAE jobs – being more likely to be Pathans and rural – indeed might have had poorer living conditions than they have upon their return.

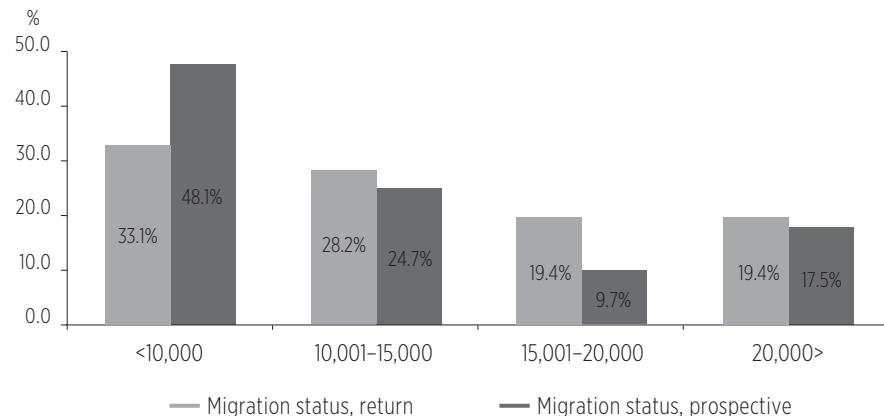
The employment status of return and prospective migrants also looks rather similar but there appears to be two major differences: there are fewer employees and many more self-employed among the return migrants.

Figure 23: Employment status among return and prospective migrants



Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

The higher percentage of self-employed among the return migrants makes a lot of sense, after all as we have seen in *Figure 21* guest workers sent back substantial funds annually to their families: on average about 10,000 dirhams that roughly equals 280,000 rupees, a little fortune in Pakistan (more than the annual average income of return migrants in Pakistan). We also saw in *Figure 22* that about 57% of the guest workers did use some of these remittances for investment, some going into building a house and a fair deal going into establishing a business (mostly shops). But the similar level of unemployment is again surprising.

Figure 24: Monthly income in rupees

Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

There are disturbingly few valid responses to the income question (see *Figure 24*), but the trend appears to be clear: prospective migrants earn substantially less than return migrants. Half of them earn 10,000 or less in rupees, while among return migrants only one third has such a low income, their average income is just below 15,000. As we pointed out in *Figure 11* that is about a third of what they earned in the UAE – arguably the strongest evidence against NE theory.

But is it? About half of those who came back “permanently”¹⁸ to Pakistan told us they would return to the UAE if they find an appropriate job. (see *Figure 25*) Only about a third of our respondents gave a definitive “no” answer to the question whether they would want to go back again to the UAE. When asked why, the answer was almost always: “to improve financial conditions”.

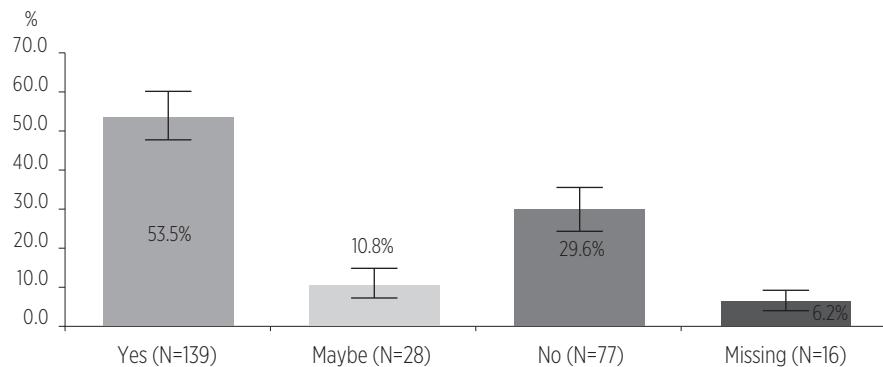
So obviously the main reason for the desire to search for a new job in the UAE is the miserable living conditions, difficulties to get a decent job back in Pakistan and to raise meaningful sums of cash. Even if people managed to send home remittances and invested it in their business their business might not have worked so they would be forced back to “slavery” in one of the Gulf monarchies.

A good example of this is the very interesting case of Zahid, the taxi driver from Lahore. As we noted before he saved enough money to start a business with an American in Lahore, hence he went home full of optimism before his

¹⁸ Since labor migration to the Gulf monarchies is a cyclical phenomenon, people take up jobs in the UAE or elsewhere in the Gulf in multiple spells, it is hard to say what is “permanent”. We interpret here as permanently returned migrants those who do not have a job in the UAE at the time of our survey.

visa expired. This appears to be evidence to support NELM theory. Well, it does only to some extent. For his newly established company the shipment came late, he could not sell the product (he did not share with us information what that business was) so he lost all of his money. During the interview he told us he renewed his passport, his visa is still valid so he is looking for a good job in the UAE to go back for another cycle.

Figure 25: Would you like to return to UAE for work?



Source: Survey of Pakistani return migrants (ISS) (own calculations).

Here are some cases of guest workers who would like to return to the UAE. Muhammad Muneer, a laborer from Chakwal who worked in Dubai for two years complained that he earned little (less than promised, just 700 dirhams) and also complained that men's absence from home "disturbs families, children are affected psychologically". He could not save any money or send remittances back to his family. He eventually lost even this poor job but given the conditions in Chakwal and his family's need for support he would like to return to Dubai.

Nasir Sultan, the 24-year-old auto electrician from Chakwal also wants to take another job in Sharjah. As I cited him saying before, he earned a poor income with long hours of work and found that "a laborer's life is really though there", but his life is equally miserable in Chakwal so he would return to the UAE as soon as he finds a job in a better company than he had worked for.

Naeem Gul, the spray painter from Abbottabad returned home after 12 years in Sharjah and while he achieved his initial family aims (got married and bought a house) he nevertheless wants to get a new job in the UAE since his improved social status requires him to meet the expectations of his friends and relatives so he needs more income that he can get only in the Gulf.

But many of our in-depth interviewees want to stay in Pakistan or return as soon as possible. Here are some of the telling cases.

Umar, a 50-year-old welder from Abbottabad was luckier. He spent six years in Dubai. His economic conditions “improved tremendously” in the UAE due to good income and savings. He sent money to his family regularly, “gained respect” in his home town, and people who ignored him in the past now respected him a lot. He earned enough money and returned to Pakistan in 2005. He felt that his absence was affecting his family. They were lonely and insisted on his return (he was married before he first went to Dubai). After coming back he started his own workshop. He does not want to go again, as he was fed up and wanted to live with his family. Azeem Rehman, whose story will be told in the next pages, has a very similar story. Both Azeem and Umar are skilled people, they earned enough in the Gulf to return home and live a decent family life, respected by their community. I do not have data on their earnings in Pakistan, but given the low level of incomes generally in this country I can guess with some confidence that their salaries in the UAE were higher. Being home with one’s family in decent living conditions and being respected by the community is good enough to justify return migration even if it means giving up a higher income.

Umar Khattab, the 40-year-old driver from Lahore is one of the few of our in-depth interviewees who definitely said he does not want to go to the UAE again, though his story is not one of great success. His income in Dubai was meager. He considers himself poor. He could not send enough to his family and found it difficult to make ends meet, as did his family in Pakistan. He returned home in 2006, when a friend bought a van and offered him a partnership. For lack of earning, contentment and respect he never wants to go back to the UAE, and he is proud to be a Pakistani.

It is interesting how the question of “respect” keeps coming up, its lack is one reason for disappointment in the UAE and an important factor which explains why people yearn to go home (and stay).

Zafar Haider, the 50-year-old salesman-cum-driver from Chakwal is also a very interesting case in this respect. He was interviewed while on a short visit to home before he went back to Dubai. As mentioned earlier he earns an unusually high income (3,500 dirhams a month) and he informed us that Dubai changed his socioeconomic status. “The change is obvious, there is a marked increase in our income, our diet has improved, so has our living. People respect us.” So

why does he keep going back to Dubai? The improved social status has its price. To meet the expectations of his kins and neighbors he has to maintain the “pretense” of high status so he also borrowed a lot of money. This is what keeps him in Dubai even after 12 years.

We developed a regression model to test which factors are the most likely to explain the decision to return to the UAE. (see *Table 2*)

Table 2: Regression model no. 2 on factors of satisfaction among guest workers

Dependent variable:				
Wants to Return to UAE? (=1)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Current income z Score	-1.542*** p = 0.0003	-1.517*** p = 0.0004	-1.542*** p = 0.0003	-1.370*** p = 0.002
Income in UAE z Score	-0.535* p = 0.083	-0.524* p = 0.088	-0.535* p = 0.083	-0.405 p = 0.209
Decision made by (Alone=1/ Family=0)		-0.246 p = 0.585		-0.359 p = 0.435
Money improved life substantially				-0.856 p = 0.252
Money did not matter much				-0.386 p = 0.526
Constant	-1.150*** p = 0.0001	-0.994** p = 0.014	-1.150*** p = 0.0001	-0.647 p = 0.144
Observations	115	115	115	108
Log Likelihood	-60.538	-60.389	-60.538	-58.326
Akaike Inf. Crit.	127.075	128.777	127.075	128.651

Notes: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

The data speak loud and clear: the single most important factor that drives people back to Gulf monarchy jobs is low income in Pakistan. This can be interpreted as strong support for NE theory. But let's not rush to conclusions. Interestingly, those who earned a low income in the UAE in Panel 1-3 of *Table 2* are also more inclined to seek jobs again in Dubai or Abu Dhabi. The coefficient is only marginally significant, but given the small number of cases in our survey this counter-intuitive finding (which contradicts NE hypothesis) deserves attention. It is also notable that in Panel 4 when we control whether the life of their families improved substantially the low UAE income loses its significance and while improved family conditions is not significant the coefficient is negative and its size is quite large (-0.856, with a lousy P=0.252). In *Table 2* in Panel 4 the coefficient for the variable whether the decision was made by the individual is not significant but it is negative, hence it points in the direction NELM theory expects (if the family made the initial decision the respondent is less likely to intend to return to the UAE).

We read the model as one offering a weak support for NELM theory: low income earners who went back after a number of years in the UAE to Pakistan will seek new UAE employment again if they were not successful in attaining a good job in Pakistan. Why? I speculate because with low UAE income they could not send enough remittances home so they could not start a successful business (many became unemployed). If they had good incomes in the UAE they were more likely to improve the living conditions and their own income chances in Pakistan, hence they prefer to stay at home. We experimented with a model which included whether they sent remittances home and whether some of the remittances went into investments. Both coefficients were positive (but not significant): that actually is a weak support for NE theory.

One good example is our in-depth interview with 65-year-old Azeem Rehman from Abbottabad. Azeem was one of the best qualified persons among our in-depth interviewees. He was a welder and car mechanic and was eventually promoted in Dubai (where he lived between 1993 and 2003) into the position of a foreman. While he had to work 12 hours a day, with overtime he earned 2,200 dirhams a month. He was "happy with his income". When asked whether he would consider going back for another spell of work to the UAE he said he would not since he "had enough, and in Pakistan could work with respect and dignity". A good case to show high salary is enough to make the UAE job attractive, but if one finds a job back home which provides livelihood for his family people may not want to go. Living with "respect and dignity" at home is crucial in the decision to stay at home.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we find some consistent support for NELM theory.

While NE theory is correct, higher incomes in the destination country is a major driving force for the initial migration decision, nevertheless half of the respondents in the survey told us that the decision was not made by themselves individually, but rather by their family (or jointly between the individual and the family). There is a great deal of qualitative evidence from focus group and in-depth interviews that guest workers took jobs in the UAE because there was a need for higher incomes in their families that were left behind, and some were even rather bitter to be used as money makers by their kin. Also there are findings from the qualitative and survey part which shows that the actions of the migrants are integrated into the sending family economy. The paper above presented rather massive evidence that when directly asked respondents also reported a number of "costs" which they nonetheless suppressed for the sake of the financial, economic and social advancement of the family at home. Sending families clearly shaped the migration process and decided even against the will of the migrants if needed. This offers support to H1.

We also found substantial dissatisfaction with working and living conditions in the UAE, but that is mainly caused by poor housing and excessive working hours. But even long working hours and disappointment with wages lower than what was promised before migration were accepted as long as the guest workers could send home enough remittances to help their family survive and in some cases to invest into building a house or starting a business. The main aim of guest workers was not maximal income, but to be able to send home the maximum amount in remittances. The ability to remit made guest workers accept living and working conditions that many of them regarded "slave-like". This offers support to H2.

Finally we also found that return migrants who rejected the possibility to take another job in the UAE did so while accepting substantially lower incomes than what they had in the UAE, since they preferred to live with their families, live and work in respect and dignity they often missed in the UAE.

Those return migrants who are planning to find a new job in the Gulf do so primarily because they could not find a job or sufficient income to support their families in Pakistan, but in in-depth interviews some told us they want to come "home" as soon as those needs are met. This supports H3.

As it is so often the case in empirical research the glass is half full and half empty. We did not "verify" NELM theory, but our data are more consistent with hypotheses derived from this theory than from NE.

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