Lived Experiences of Indian Migrant Workers Working in Doha, Qatar- A Pilot Study

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Abstract

Background: Migration is increasingly common due to socio-economic and political factors, often leading individuals to relocate to new cultural environments. Indian migrant workers in Doha, Qatar, especially those in the construction sector, face unique challenges that are not fully understood.**Objectives:** This study aims to explore the lived experiences of Indian migrant workers in Doha's construction industry, focusing on their daily challenges, coping mechanisms, and overall well-being.**Methods:** A qualitative phenomenological approach was employed to gather data from Indian migrant workers at Jana's Trading and Contracting Construction Company in La Plage South-05, Pearl Qatar. **Data collection methods**: included in-depth interviews, structured questionnaire to collect the demographic information. Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes and patterns in the data**. Results:**The study revealed several major themes, including Job Insecurity in which subthemes are fear of job loss and stress due to unstable employment.; Financial Strain subthemes law wages and delayed payments; living conditions theme had subthemes as overcrowded housing and lack of privacy and lastly language barrier's theme had subthemes as limited language proficiency and communication difficulties. **Conclusion**: The findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to support the health and well-being of Indian migrant workers in Doha. Enhanced healthcare access and social support systems are critical to improving their overall quality of life.

Keywords: Indian migrant workers; Doha; construction industry; job security; living conditions; social integration; healthcare access

1. **Introduction**

   Migration is the process through which a person relocates either temporarily or permanently, from one cultural environment to another. While the majority of people in the world still reside in their place of birth, more and more individuals are moving to other nations, particularly those in their region. (Bhugra and Becker, 2005).Due to a global increase in social and political instability as well as socio-economic and armed conflicts, the number of refugees, asylum seeker, and migrants over the globe is growing dramatically (Bhugra, 2014)

   Doha attracts many migrant workers from low-income countries; foreign workers made up a little more than two-thirds (67.3%) of the total work force; international migrant workers are at an increased risk of many health issues, including mental health deterioration, necessitating training of health professionals to care for mental health problems of isolated patients, (ILO, 2021). Recent studies have shown alarming prevalence of mental issues, namely depression in migrant health workers in Saudi Arabia, primarily due to the fear of job insecurity; it is imperative that governments maintain a clear policy regarding health and job security for their international laborers, to ensure psychosocial stability and public health (Adhikary , 2018)

   By 2030, it is estimated that one in five people worldwide will be migrants and face stress related psychiatric problems. A census was conducted to determine impact of these factors based on age, gender, and country. The results showed that many Indian workers migrate in search of better living conditions and income but often end up struggling with   psycho-social problems. (Krupinski and Cochrane, 2022)

   Migrants are less familiar in their new environment in which they temporarily live, families are sometimes left behind when migrants are compelled to leave their homes in quest of better employment prospects in many cases, the families back home rely totally or mostly on the money given by the migrant family members who are employed. (Wikipedia, 2022). There are many factors that affect migrant workers they are majorly classified into 5 segments they are economic factors, social factors, environmental factors, policy-related factors and psychological factors (Panda and Mishra, 2018)

   Since the life of migrant workers have a direct impact on their quality of life and self-esteem, a study was conducted to understand their lived experiences using a qualitative phenomenological approach. (Duggal, 2021).

   The researcher in the above research attempts to highlight the issues affecting migrant workers by conducting interviews with them and understand realistic lived experiences creating themes in a view to create a model of representation.

2. **Methods**

   i. **Research design**

   The study employs a qualitative descriptive phenomenological research design to deeply understand the lived experiences, challenges, and adaptive strategies of Indian migrant construction workers in Doha, Qatar. Using purposive sampling, the study selects participants who meet specific inclusion criteria. Data collection involves socio-demographic profiling and in-depth interviews with self-structured open-ended questions. Thematic analysis, following Colizzi's seven-step method, is applied to analyze the transcribed interviews, identifying common themes and validating findings with participants. A pilot study with 20 samples from the Villa section refines the process, ensuring clarity and relevance in exploring the workers' personal narratives

   ii. **Setting and samples**

   The study was conducted in Doha, Qatar, from January to June 2024. The purposive sampling strategy was employed to recruit Indian migrant construction workers. Inclusion criteria included Indian construction workers who provided consent, were present during data collection, and understood Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam and English. Exclusion criteria were non-Indian construction workers. Participants were recruited from a construction company site by approaching eligible workers directly. The sample size consisted of 20 Indian construction workers, selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of their experiences. The justification for this sample size is based on achieving data saturation, where additional interviews no longer yield new information, ensuring a thorough exploration of the research topic.

   iii. **Measurement and data collection**

   The instrument used for data collection in this study comprised a socio-demographic profile questionnaire and self-structured open-ended questions for in-depth interviews, both developed by the researchers. The socio-demographic questionnaire, including items on age, marital status, education level, religion, trade, years of experience, duration of stay in Doha, and monthly salary, was reviewed by experts for content validity, while reliability testing was deemed unnecessary for the factual data collected. The open-ended questions, designed to explore workers' experiences, challenges, and adaptive strategies, were also validated by qualitative research experts and piloted to ensure clarity and relevance. Data collection involved administering the socio-demographic questionnaire first, followed by in-depth interviews conducted in person by the researchers in a private setting, with interviews recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. The questions were translated into Hindi, Tamil,

and Malayalam using a forward and backward translation process to maintain validity and reliability. Research assistants, when involved, were trained in qualitative data collection techniques and familiarized with the study's objectives and instruments. This comprehensive approach ensured accurate, reliable, and valid data, providing a robust basis for understanding the lived experiences of Indian migrant construction workers in Doha

iv. Data analysis;

The data analysis for this study employed thematic analysis using Colaizzi's seven-step method, a well-established technique for phenomenological research. This method involves familiarizing oneself with the data by reading all transcripts, identifying significant statements, interpreting their meanings, clustering these meanings into themes, developing an exhaustive description of the phenomenon, distilling this into a fundamental structure, and conducting member checking with participants to validate the findings. This approach ensured a thorough and rigorous analysis, providing a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of Indian migrant construction workers in Doha (Colaizzi, 1978; QSR International, 2020)

v. Trustworthiness/rigor

In ensuring the trustworthiness and rigor of the qualitative data in this study, several strategies were implemented across key dimensions: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was maintained through prolonged engagement with participants during in-depth interviews, allowing for a deep understanding of their experiences. Triangulation of data sources, including socio-demographic profiles and open-ended interviews, further enhanced credibility by corroborating findings from different perspectives. To ensure transferability, detailed descriptions of the study context, participants, and methodology were provided to allow readers to judge the applicability of findings to similar settings. Dependability was established through rigorous data collection and analysis processes, including using a structured approach (Colaizzi's method) for thematic analysis and maintaining an audit trail to document decision-making throughout the research. Confirmability was upheld by maintaining neutrality and minimizing researcher bias through reflexivity and peer debriefing, where findings and interpretations were reviewed and validated by colleagues familiar with qualitative research methods. These strategies collectively ensured the robustness and reliability of the qualitative data, supporting a comprehensive exploration of the lived experiences of Indian migrant construction workers in Doha.

vi. Ethical considerations.

Ethical considerations in this study focused on several key issues to ensure participant welfare and compliance with ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from

all participants prior to their involvement in the study. Researchers explained the purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits of participation in detail, using translated materials in Hindi, Tamil, and Malayalam as necessary to ensure understanding among participants. Consent forms were provided in participants' preferred languages, and participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. Confidentiality was strictly maintained throughout the study process, with anonymized data.

Furthermore, ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Janas Trading and contracting company La plage south Doha, Qatar, and the study protocol adhered to the committee's guidelines and standards for research involving human subjects. The approval reference number for this study is JCC-J05-WOQ-A-0352. This ethical oversight ensured that the study was conducted in an ethically sound manner, respecting the rights, dignity, and well-being of the Indian migrant construction workers participating in the research

3. **4. Results**

No.	THEMES	SUBTHEMES
	Insecurity	• Fear of Job Loss • Stress due to unstable employment.
Interpretation: Most workers expressed a persistent worry about job loss, contributing to high stress levels and the inability to make long-term plans		
	ancial Strain	• Low wages • Delayed payments
Interpretation: Workers reported significant financial strain due to inadequate wages and unpredictable payment schedules, leading to difficulties in meeting basic needs and planning for the future		
	ving conditions	• Overcrowded housing • Lack of Privacy
Interpretation: Overcrowded and shared living spaces were common, causing discomfort, stress, and a lack of personal privacy		
	nguage barriers	• Limited language proficiency • Communication difficulties
Interpretation: Language barriers were a major challenge, leading to miscommunication, social isolation, and difficulty in daily work interactions		

The study focused on the lived experiences of Indian migrant workers at Jana's Construction Company La Plage-South-05 Pearl-Qatar, identifying key themes and subthemes related to their work and living conditions. The major findings are summarized below

Table: 1 Themes& Sub themes

The socio-demographic data of Indian migrant workers (N=20) reveals several key insights. The majority (65%) of the workers were aged between 31-45 years. In terms of marital status, most (75%) were married. Regarding education, a significant portion (90%) had completed secondary education. The predominant religion among the workers was Islam, followed by 65% of the participants. In terms of trade, the majority (35%) were employed as helpers. When considering work experience, 30% of the workers either had no experience or had over 10 years of experience. The duration of stay in Doha varied, with the majority (35%) having stayed for less than one year. Lastly, the majority (70%) of the workers earned a monthly salary ranging between QAR 1000-2000.

The study highlights significant challenges faced by Indian migrant workers in terms of job insecurity, financial strain, poor living conditions, and language barriers. These findings underline the need for improved policies and support systems to enhance the well-being of migrant workers in Qatar.

Figure-1: Colum bar diagram showing distribution of study participants by age

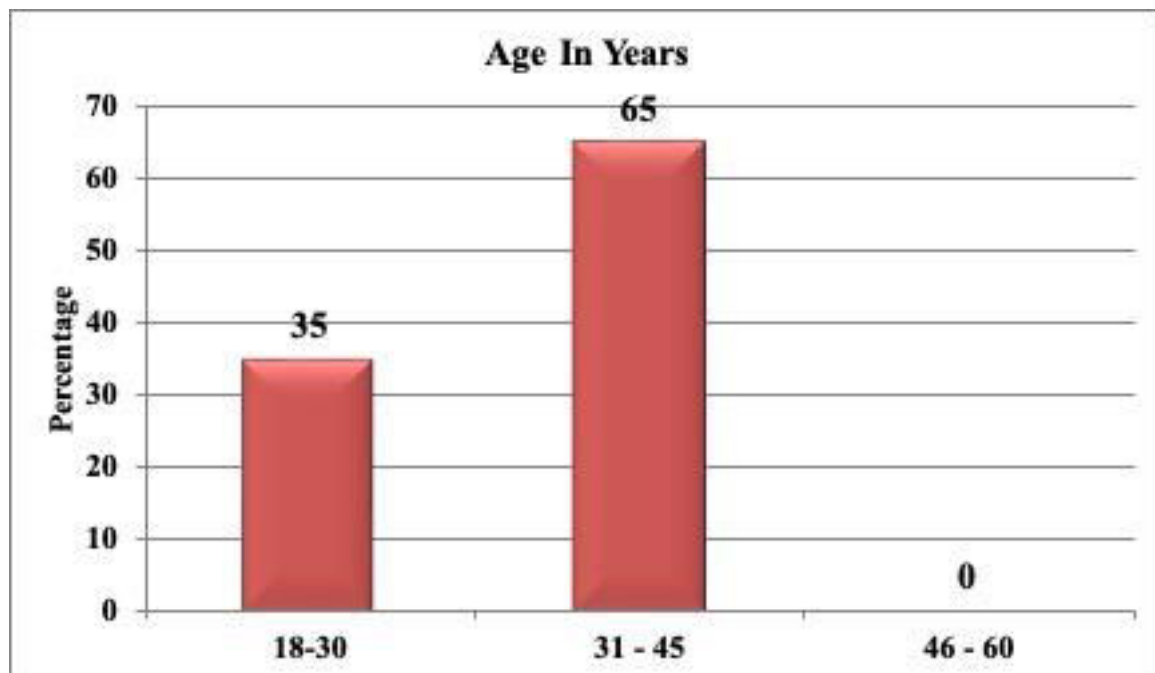**Figure no 1**: shows that Indian migrant workers those who participated in this study majority of the workers n=13(65%) were aged 31 – 45 years and none were found to be aged between 46-60 years; n=7 (35%) were aged between 18- 30 years,

Figure -2: Colum diagram showing distribution of study participants by marital status

Figure no 2: shows that participant Indian migrant workers , majority n=15(75%) were married and n=5 (25%) were single; no samples were divorced, separated, and widower.

Figure -3: :Pyramid diagram showing distribution of study participants by education
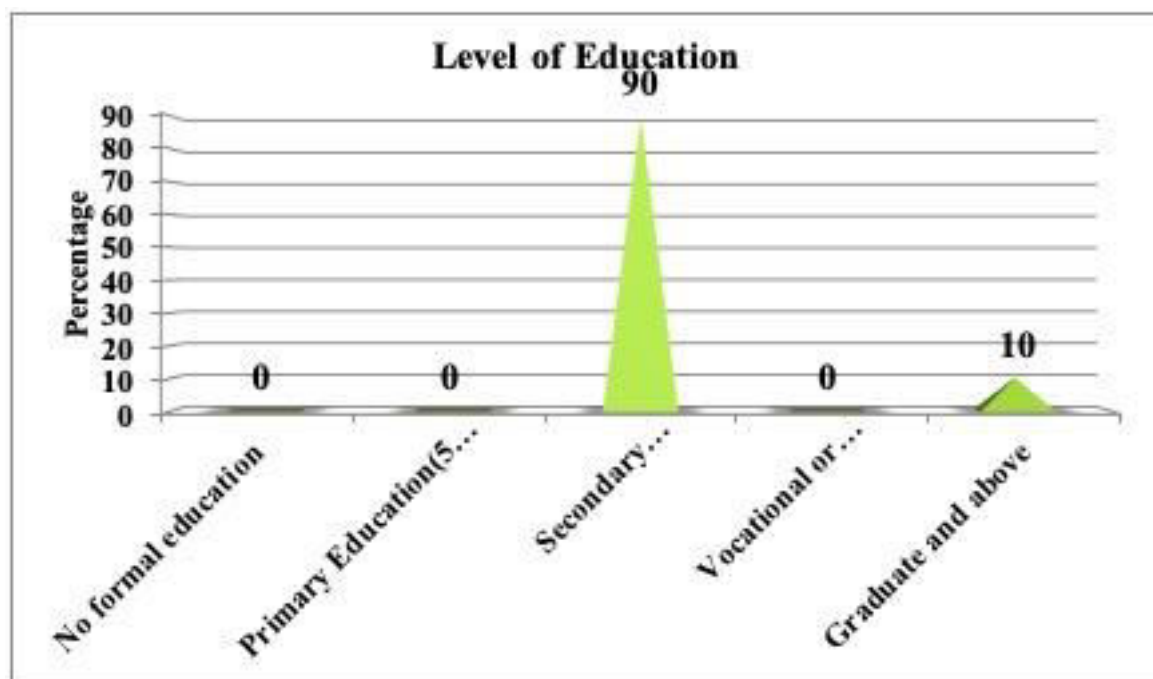
Figure no 3: shows that participant Indian migrant workers, majority n=18(90%) were Secondary education(10th or 12th).n=2 (10%) were graduate and above, no samples were No formal education, Primary Education(5 or 6) and Vocational or Technical Education.

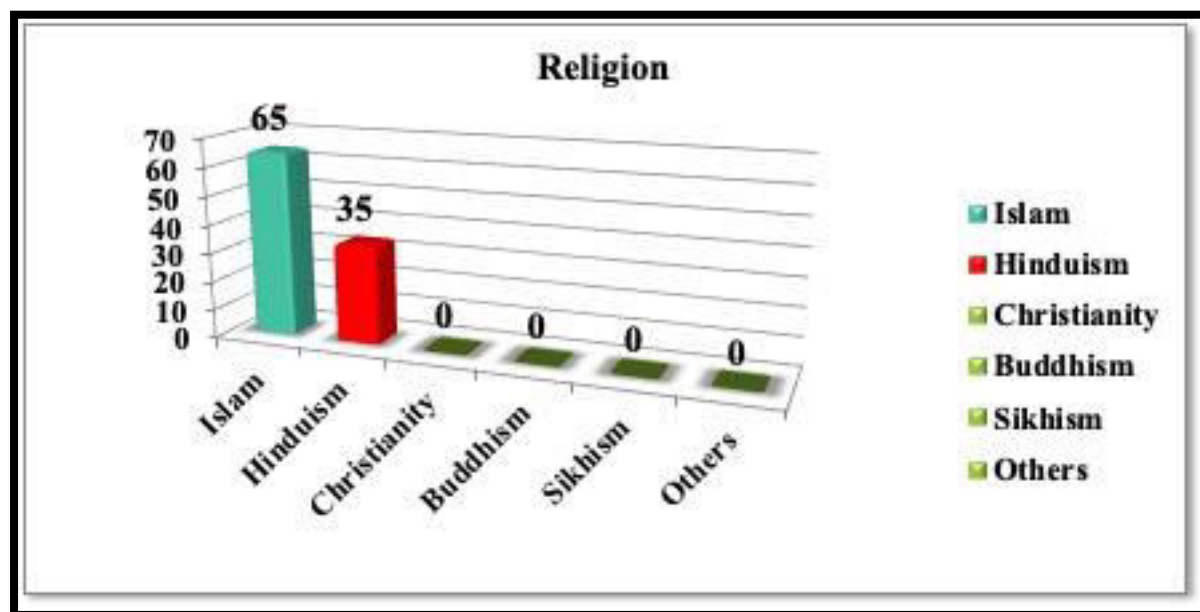**Figure -4**Bar diagram showing distribution of study participants by religion

Figure no 4: shows that participant Indian migrant workers, majority n=13(65%) were follower of Islam, n=7 (35%) were followers of Hinduism, and none of the samples were Christianity, Buddhism and Sikhism religious category.

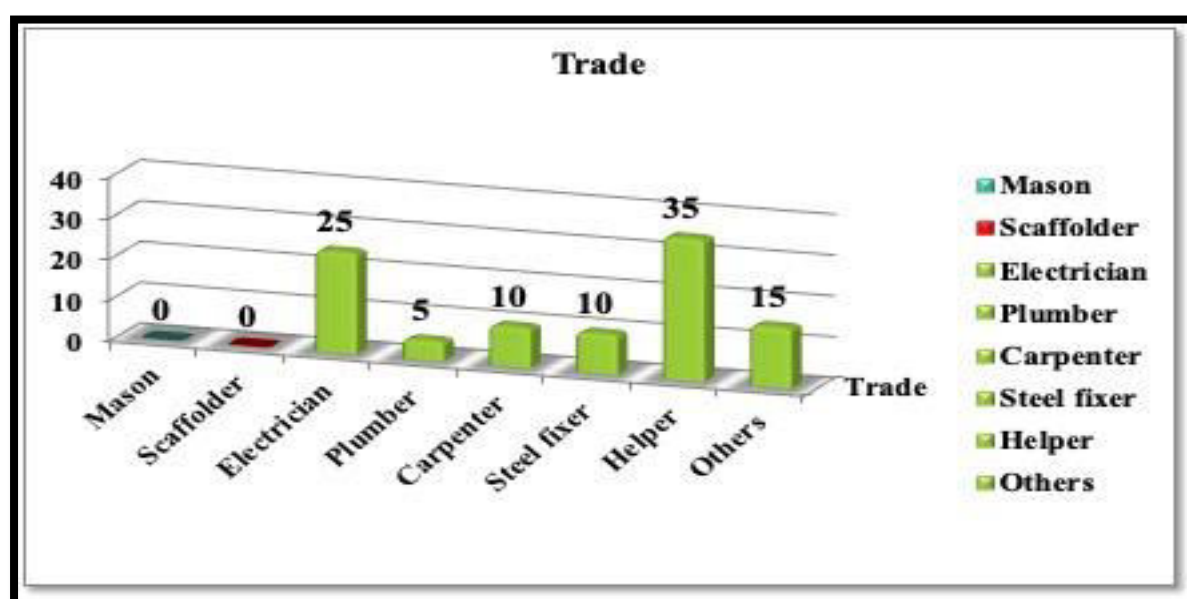Figure -5 Bar diagram showing distribution of study participants by trade.

Figure no 5: shows that participant trade majority n=7(35%) were helpers, n=5 (25%) were Electrician, n=1(5%) was plumber n=2(10%) were carpenter, n=2(10%) were steel fixer n=7(35%) were helpers n=3(15%) were others like Lifting supervisor, Flagman, Cleaner and none of the samples were scaffolder and mason category .

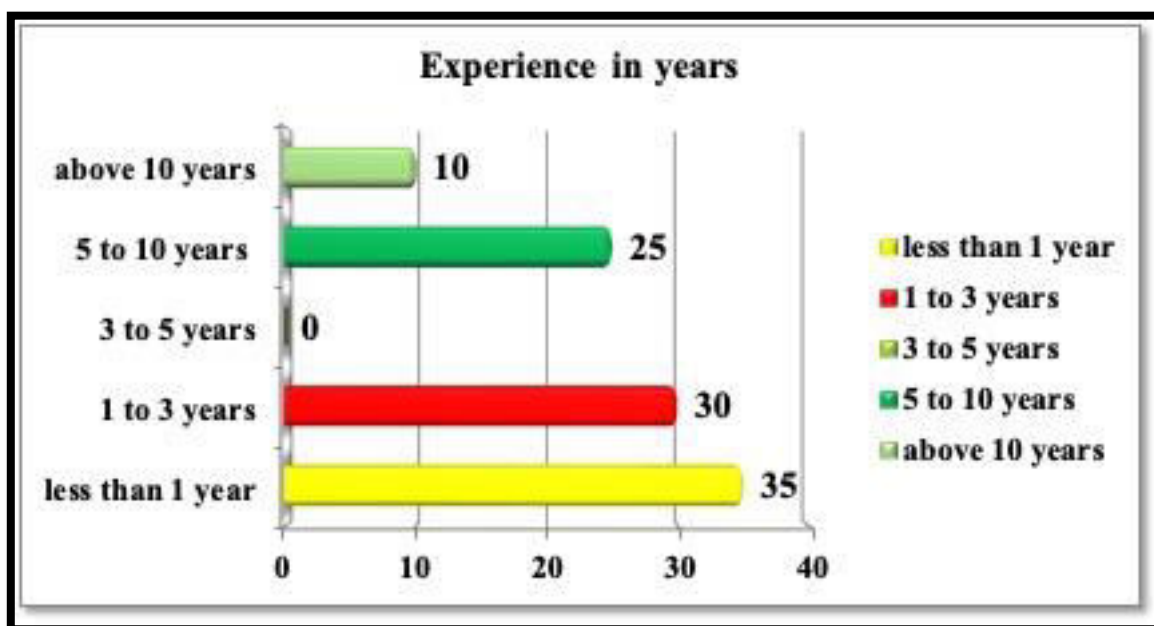**Figure no 6:** Distribution of study participants according to duration of stay in Doha in years.

Figure no 6: shows that participants duration of stay in Doha in years , majority n=7(35%) were duration less than 1 year, n=6(30%) were duration 1-3 year's, n=5(25%) were duration 5-10 years, n=2(10%) were duration above 10 years and none of them are under the category of 3-5 years.

4. Discussion

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of Indian migrant workers in Jana's Construction Company, La Plage-South-05 Pearl-Qatar, focusing on job insecurity, financial strain, living conditions, and language barriers. The results provide significant insights into the challenges faced by these workers and how these challenges impact their daily lives. The primary objective was to identify and understand the major themes affecting the well-being of Indian migrant workers. The findings highlight job insecurity, financial strain, living conditions, and language barriers as the main themes, each with specific sub-themes that further elucidate the workers' experiences

The study revealed several critical challenges faced by Indian migrant workers in Jana's Construction Company, La Plage-South-05 Pearl-Qatar, particularly in the areas

of job insecurity, financial strain, living conditions, and language barriers. Workers frequently expressed a persistent fear of losing their jobs, creating a constant state of anxiety. The unstable nature of their employment exacerbates their stress levels, significantly impacting their mental health and overall well-being. Financially, the majority of workers earn low wages (QAR 1000-2000), which is insufficient to meet their basic needs and support their families. Additionally, delayed payments add to their financial instability, causing further stress and difficulties in managing their finances. The living conditions for many workers are overcrowded, leading to discomfort and a lack of personal space, and the lack of privacy negatively affects their mental health, as they cannot have private conversations or personal time. Language barriers also pose a significant challenge; limited proficiency in Arabic and English hampers their ability to understand instructions and communicate effectively, leading to misunderstandings, frustration, and isolation, which in turn affect their integration and performanceatwork.

The results of this study are consistent with findings from other investigations. Adhikary et al. (2018) and Duggal et al. (2021) both report similar challenges faced by migrant workers, such as job insecurity, financial strain, and poor living conditions. However, there are differences in the extent of these issues based on geographical and contextual factors. For instance, the specific impact of language barriers might vary depending on the predominant languagesspokenindifferentregions.

5. Implication and limitations

The study has significant implications for nursing practices and policies. For nursing practices, the findings highlight the need for mental health support services to address the high levels of anxiety and stress related to job insecurity and financial strain. The site Nurses should be trained to recognize these signs and provide appropriate counselling services. Health education programs focusing on hygiene, mental well-being, and coping strategies for stress should be implemented, given the impact of living conditions on health. To overcome communication barriers, healthcare providers should employ translators or offer language classes to help workers improve their proficiency in Arabic and English. Regular health check-ups and screenings are essential to identify and address health issues early, especially those exacerbated by poor living conditions and work-related stress

For policies, there should be enforced regulations to ensure that migrant workers have access to better living conditions with adequate personal space and privacy. Policies must ensure timely and fair wages to alleviate financial strain, with strict enforcement and penalties for delayed payments. Implementing measures that provide greater job security, such as contracts protecting workers from unjust termination and offering benefits like health insurance, can reduce anxiety and stress. Additionally, establishing support services within the workplace, such as counselling, financial advice, and

health services, can address the holistic needs of migrant workers, improving their overall well-being and productivity.

However, the study has several limitations. The relatively small sample size (N=20) may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of migrant workers in Qatar. The focus on workers from a single construction company in a specific location may not capture the experiences of migrant workers in different sectors or regions. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias, as participants might underreport or overreport their experiences due to fear of repercussions or social desirability bias. Additionally, cultural differences may affect the interpretation of questions and responses, potentially impacting the accuracy of the data collected. Addressing these limitations in future research will lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by migrant workers and more effective nursing practices and policies.

6. Conclusion

This study advances the understanding of the socio-demographic characteristics, job insecurity, financial strain, living conditions, and language barriers faced by Indian migrant workers in Qatar. By highlighting the predominant age range, marital status, education level, religious affiliation, trade, experience, duration of stay, and monthly salary, the study provides a comprehensive demographic profile that can inform targeted interventions. The results underscore the significant impact of job insecurity and financial strain on mental health, emphasizing the need for mental health support services and timely wage payments. The adverse living conditions and language barriers identified necessitate policy changes to improve housing standards and communication support.

The findings justify the implementation of mental health support services, health education programs, regular health check-ups, and language classes within nursing practices. These measures can address the holistic needs of migrant workers, improving their well-being and productivity. Policy recommendations include enforcing better living conditions, ensuring timely and fair wages, and providing greater job security through protective contracts and benefits like health insurance.

This study's limitations, including its small sample size, specific focus, and reliance on self-reported data, highlight the need for broader and longitudinal studies to capture diverse experiences and changes over time. Future research should expand to different sectors and regions, employ larger sample sizes, and use mixed methods to enhance data accuracy and reliability

In conclusion, the study provides a clear scientific justification for the need to address the challenges faced by migrant workers, with significant implications for nursing practices and policies. By implementing the recommended measures, the

well-being and productivity of migrant workers can be substantially improved, contributing to better health outcomes and a more stable workforce. Future research should continue to explore these issues to further refine and extend these findings, ensuring ongoing improvements in the support and care provided to migrant workers.

Acknowledgments

Author contribution

Author 1: Conceptualized the study, designed the research methodology, and supervised the project, Conducted the data collection and performed the initial analysis. Contributed to the literature review and assisted in the interpretation of the findings

Author 2: Drafted the manuscript, including the discussion and conclusion sections.

Author 3: Reviewed and edited the manuscript for intellectual content and clarity

Conflict of interest

No conflict of interest among authors.

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