

Common Personal Issues Encountered by Construction Labourers in UAE. The Impact of It On the Work Life Balance of the Labourer and Productivity of the Labour Supply Company.

Jayaprakash Vengail¹, Dr. M. Jeyaramya²

¹PhD-Research Scholar,

Bharath Institute of Higher Education and Research(BIHER), Chennai, India.

²Assistant Professor (Supervisor),

Bharath Institute of Higher Education and Research(BIHER), Chennai, India

1. Introduction

Building work plays a central role in shaping the economy of the United Arab Emirates. Behind every road, bridge, or tower stands the effort of manual workers. Projects on a massive scale depend largely on people who move here from places like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal. A large share of those building cities comes from these regions. Even so, their vital efforts go hand-in-hand with deep struggles outside the job site. Difficult living conditions, separation from family, and limited access to services weigh heavily. These pressures shape daily life - and spill into performance on site. When personal hardship grows, energy at work fades. Firms supplying manpower feel shifts in output and cost. Worker strain echoes through business outcomes, quietly altering results.

2. Personal Challenges of Construction Workers in UAE

2.1 Financial Stress and Low Wages

Despite working long hours, many construction workers in the UAE take home modest wages that struggle to match local expenses, particularly those in MEP roles, cleaning, driving, or facility upkeep. Earnings for many South Asian labourers range from AED 1,300 to 2,500 per month, sometimes supplemented by meals or housing provided by employers.

In urban centres such as Dubai, the strain shows clearly due to steep living costs. Despite new workplace rules rolled out by UAE authorities, money-related stress still affects many foreign workers deeply. Because these employees often transfer large shares of their pay abroad to help relatives, little stays behind for personal use.

Financial pressures may include:

- Debt incurred from recruitment agencies before migration
- Money borrowed from banks outside the country counts as foreign debt
- Irregular or delayed wage payments
- Living here means spending more on rent. Bills add up quickly too
- Family dependency in home country

Despite sending money home, earnings remain small. Worry over money tends to trigger unease, pulling focus while tasks are underway. Research shows employees under such pressure can waste multiple working hours weekly, their minds caught on private monetary issues. A key reason behind this strain lies in the lack of a standardised baseline income for foreign labourers across UAE territories. Pay levels instead emerge from negotiated job agreements, not legal benchmarks set by law. Timely salary disbursement now happens more reliably since authorities rolled out the Wage Protection System.

2.2 Poor Living Conditions

Far from city hubs, construction workers typically live in crowded labour camps. Small rooms pack several people together, despite rules meant to prevent such density. Although municipal standards apply, spaces sometimes exceed safe limits anyway. Health takes a hit under these circumstances - so does daily performance. Life becomes harder when basic space and comfort disappear.

Common problems include:

- Lack of privacy
- Overcrowded accommodation
- Insufficient number of toilets and bathrooms
- Poor sanitation and hygiene
- Facing limited access to meals or lacking proper means to prepare them
- Limited recreational facilities
- Safety concerns in accommodation facilities

Despite crowded living conditions, employees often face declining mental and physical states - a situation that quietly undermines their daily productivity. Because of such pressures, new rules have emerged across the UAE, shaped by both national policy and local oversight. Standards now stem largely from actions taken by MOHRE alongside Dubai Municipality, aiming to set basic safety nets for housing and care. These measures respond directly to poor living environments, pushing for stability instead of neglect. Workers' health no longer sits on the sidelines; it forms part of broader workplace expectations.

2.3 Family Separation and Emotional Stress

Alone, most construction labourers move far from home to support relatives financially. Distance stretches between them and loved ones - spouses, kids, parents - over months or years. Emotions weigh more heavily when contact stays limited across borders. Earning more does little to ease inner strain caused by missing key moments. Life improves on paper yet feels emptier without familiar voices nearby. Work continues, but focus sometimes slips under silent pressure. Mental load builds quietly, shaping days in ways numbers cannot show.

Looking at why blue-collar families sometimes split apart, deeper social pressures often play a role. Economic strain shapes living situations more than personal choices do. Work conditions far from home tend to stretch relationships thin. Unequal access to stable jobs pushes some members to move away. Wages too low to support relocation make staying together harder. Geographic mobility becomes unavoidable under financial pressure. Housing costs in job-rich areas block family unity. Limited transportation options increase physical distance between loved ones. Shift work with irregular hours weakens daily connection. The weight of these realities builds slowly, yet splits grow fast.

a) Economic Necessity

When people move abroad for work, family needs usually drive the decision. Because wages earned overseas tend to cover major costs back home, these payments become essential for schooling, shelter, and regular spending. Sometimes, entire households rely on that money just to get by.

B) Visa and Sponsorship Limits

Most low-wage earners find it impossible to relocate with relatives, since earnings fall short of immigration income thresholds. What keeps households apart often ties back to paycheck size, failing to meet legal standards. Earning too few blocks on the path to bringing loved ones abroad, even when desire runs high. Rules demand a certain financial floor, one beyond typical paychecks in basic job roles.

c) High Cost of Living

Living expenses in Dubai tend to be steep. High housing prices, education fees, medical costs, and family visa charges often prevent lower-income employees from bringing loved ones.

d) Contract Work Rules

Each year, some manual labourers commit to jobs lasting two or three years. While under contract, returning home might happen just once annually - or even less - because of high transportation fees and scarce time off.

Major psychological challenges include:

- Loneliness and social isolation
- Anxiety regarding family responsibilities
- Always Worried About Family
- Lack of emotional support

·Depression due to the separation from dears and nears

When feelings run high, drive often slips away - work then feels less meaningful. A person might start questioning their role, especially if emotions cloud daily tasks.

2.4 Long hours of hard work

Despite long shifts, construction labourers face tough conditions on site. Under UAE Labour Law, most private-sector roles allow eight hours daily, totaling forty-eight hours weekly, though bosses might request extra effort - up to two more hours - if needed. After five straight hours on duty, a pause becomes mandatory. Often, tasks demand intense physical output under scorching sun, especially when Dubai's summer pushes past 40°C outdoors. To reduce health risks, authorities block outdoor activity from 12:30 until 3 each afternoon from June through September. Even within adjusted schedules, strain remains high throughout much of the year.

Working late often goes hand in hand with tough job site realities - dust fills the air, loud sounds never fade, while risky setups stay common. Far from where they labour, a large number reside together in crowded housing units, making travel time stretch on without being recorded as actual work hours.

Usually seen under circumstances like these:

- 10–12-hour work shifts
- Heavy physical labour
- Heat exposure rises sharply in summer periods
- Inadequate mid-day break and rest time facilities
- Physically demanding tasks (lifting, scaffolding, concrete work)
- Fatigue and dehydration

2.5 health and safety concerns

Few jobs carry dangers like building sites do. Yet in recent years, new rules have reshaped how work proceeds across the UAE - laws now guide everything from equipment checks to daily site routines. Worker well-being sits at the centre of these updates, quietly shifting expectations on construction grounds. Safety no longer follows after accidents; it shapes planning before ground is broken.

Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021 places responsibility on employers to ensure worker well-being through proper safeguards. Safety risks at work must be addressed, since protection is not optional under current rules. Compliance means adhering closely to guidelines issued by the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization. Hazards ought to be managed before incidents occur, given how clear the law stands. Meeting these conditions forms part of standard employer duties today.

During the summer months, Dubai enforces a mandatory pause on outdoor labour when sun exposure peaks. From June 15 through September 15, no one can work outside in full daylight between 12:30 and 3 p.m. Avoiding intense afternoon heat reduces risks like overheating or losing too much fluid. Because high temperatures pose serious threats, breaks in sheltered zones are enforced. Hydration access must be

guaranteed at job sites throughout active periods. Medical support and covered resting spots form part of standard site requirements. Safety hinges on timing adjustments alongside basic care infrastructure.

Workers need protection from job site dangers, so companies supply gear like helmets, goggles, and steel-toed footwear. Protection does not stop at clothing - safety checks happen often to catch problems before harm occurs. Vests that make people visible in low light belong in factories just as much as on rooftops. Someone always watches for risks, records near-misses, and tracks what went wrong. These steps help lower injury numbers across tough work environments.

Occasionally, routine check-ups form part of broader efforts to safeguard worker well-being. Coverage through medical insurance supports timely care when needed. First-aid stations, placed at key worksite locations, offer immediate assistance during incidents. Where staff counts run high, firms are required by law to hire a certified safety coordinator. This individual keeps track of on-site conditions while verifying that company actions follow established employment rules.

Before beginning tasks, employees need clear knowledge of safety rules. Risk identification comes first, followed by proper instruction on protective measures. Understanding protocols is necessary, so guidance sessions happen before job start dates. Workers gain awareness through these educational efforts, which support a safer environment overall.

Despite every rule designed to protect them, employees still run into dangers like these:

- Falls from heights
- Equipment-related injuries
- Heat stroke and exhaustion
- Lack of adequate medical care

Falling hurt on the job often brings money troubles along with emotional strain for workers and those who depend on them.

2.6 Cultural and Social Adjustment Challenges

Workers in the UAE come from many different cultures and speak various languages. Arriving in the United Arab Emirates, construction labourers - mainly migrants from nations like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal - typically face major difficulties adapting socially and culturally. Despite expectations, life changes quickly upon arrival.

Starting fresh in another country often means facing unfamiliar customs, tongues, and ways of living - adjustments that complicate daily routines and job settings. Workers who relocate might encounter various hurdles, such as:

- Language barriers
- Cultural differences
- Limited social integration with the local community
- Family separation

Workplace challenges can create distance among team members, while also slowing how quickly information flows across departments.

3. Work-Life Balance Effects for Construction Workers

Juggling job duties and private life proves tough for many, especially those building structures across the UAE. Construction crews face relentless schedules that drain both body and time. Because shifts stretch far into the day, little remains for family or recovery. Heavy lifting, constant motion, and pressure to finish fast chip away at personal hours. Energy fades under such strain, making downtime rare. What stays behind after work ends? Often just exhaustion.

1. Limited leisure and recreational opportunities
2. Long working hours and physically exhausting work
3. Restricted mobility and social interaction
4. Stress from financial obligations and family responsibilities

Commuting duration, alongside where people live, affects how well they manage their job and personal life.

Despite being far from home, many construction workers in Dubai face gruelling shifts that shrink their free time. Lengthy schedules pile up alongside tough physical demands on-site. Away from loved ones, they cope with routines, leaving little room for rest or recovery. Heavy workloads often override any chance for personal moments during the week. These overlapping pressures take a steady toll on daily well-being.

A shift toward better living conditions, paired with access to leisure activities, shapes a clearer path to stronger morale among labourers. When rest periods are respected, people tend to stay sharper through their shifts. Connection to loved ones during contracts lifts spirits more than expected. Without space to recharge, exhaustion creeps in - often followed by disengagement. Shorter schedules, when managed well, slow that slide. Emotional strain builds quietly if days stretch too long without relief. Satisfaction at work links closely to moments outside it.

4. How Labour Supply Firms Affect Work Output

Workers' private struggles impact how well staffing firms function across the UAE. Migrant individuals, common in building trades and manual jobs, frequently deal with money worries, being far from loved ones, illness, or poor housing. When such hardships arise, energy levels drop, emotional balance shifts, and drive to perform fades on site.

Far from home, workers face deep emotional strain when separated from loved ones over long stretches of time. Years apart from partners and kids weigh heavily on mental well-being. Loneliness creeps in, along with a strong pull toward familiar places. Morale dips under such pressure. When spirits fall, so does the quality of daily effort.

Poor health among employees often leads to more sick days, reduced efficiency, and a higher chance of on-site injuries. Meanwhile, cramped living quarters, substandard housing, or a lack of leisure options may harm psychological well-being and disrupt proper rest.

When people struggle personally or socially, attention slips, stamina drops, and one's drive fades. As a result, staffing firms see output fall because more staff stay home, errors rise, deadlines stretch, and job exits climb. Worker care matters - paying wages without delay, ensuring site safety, offering decent housing - all help keep teams steady, performance strong.

Labour supply firms face impacts that clearly influence their output levels

4.1 Reduced Worker Efficiency

Workers experiencing stress or poor health may show:

- Slower work pace
- Reduced concentration
- . Mistakes grew more frequent during building activities

Frequent delays disrupt schedules while weakening structural standards.

4.2 Higher Absenteeism

Besides health troubles or emotional strain, life disruptions like urgent home situations might pull employees away from work. When absences grow frequent, outcomes shift noticeably. One result follows another - productivity dips, team loads tilt, daily operations stutter. Pressure builds without clear paths forward. Work piles where presence thins. Momentum fades when roles sit empty too long

- Delayed project completion
- Increased labour costs
- Workforce management difficulties

4.3 Increased Labour Turnover

Because workers often switch jobs looking for higher pay or safer sites, keeping crews stable becomes tough on building projects. When staff leave regularly, teams lose experience fast. Projects slow down without familiar faces leading tasks. Training new hires eats into time meant for progress. Mistakes creep in when untested pairs handle complex steps. Costs climb as overtime covers empty shifts. Safety risks grow if newcomers lack site-specific knowledge. Morale dips among those left juggling extra duties

- Additional recruitment costs
- . Worker preparation costs during onboarding
- Loss of experienced manpower

4.4 Safety Incidents and Workplace Accidents

Few realise how tiredness, pressure, or drifting focus raise the chance of mishaps at work. When safety breaks down, employees face injury - yet staffing agencies often shoulder penalties and costs too.

5. Strategies to Handle These Problems

To improve worker well-being and productivity, labour supply companies can adopt several strategies:

5.1 Upgrade accommodation standards beyond minimum compliance

One square meter less than required? Not allowed - each worker must have a minimum of three square meters of space per person. Light matters: rooms need natural or strong artificial lighting throughout. Cooling systems run constantly, because heat builds up fast indoors. Fresh airflow stays active, never blocked off. Some firms now shape living areas to support emotional balance, not just physical needs. Shared zones encourage talking, moving, sitting together by design. Certifications like LEED guide upgrades toward cleaner materials and lower energy use. Workers get asked about changes - toilets, beds, storage - and their answers lead to adjustments. Decisions shift slowly when feedback becomes part of daily oversight.

Staff turnover drops by 23% when employers provide suitable housing, according to findings from Dubai Business. Fewer on-site problems occur - up to 31% less - with better living conditions arranged. Evidence shows care in lodging links directly to smoother operations. Not surprisingly, companies prioritizing decent accommodation see steadier teams. What workers experience off duty clearly affects their performance during work hours.

5.2 Timely, Fair, Transparent Wage Payments

The system kicks off with a mandate: wages must reach workers completely, promptly, backed by Ministerial Resolution 346 from 2022. While enforcement exists, room opens when labour firms choose clarity over mere rules. Do payments land accurately? Good. Better still, if every fee, cut, or charge shows up plainly. Digital statements help - not as extras, but tools enabling checks against what was promised versus received. Trust builds quietly, through visible numbers rather than assurances. What gets measured, seen, and understood sticks.

5.3 Health and Safety Measures and Protocols.

Summer after 2015 brought strict rules from the UAE Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization - construction sites must pause work at peak daylight hours. Because temperatures rise, staffing agencies now face pressure to apply these pauses without exception. Alongside breaks, water access becomes essential; rest zones under cover help too. Supervisors trained to spot heat-related health issues add another layer of protection. As weather extremes grow more common, preparation matters even more. Safety overall gains strength when multiple safeguards come together - not just policies on paper

- Proper safety equipment
- Regular health checkups

·Heat stress prevention measures

5.4 Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Most workers in the UAE - about 85% - want better support for their mental well-being, according to data from Bupa Global. This shift suggests mental wellness is now seen as essential, rather than an added benefit. What once seemed optional has moved into the centre of workplace concerns. Employers are beginning to treat emotional and psychological health with greater seriousness.

Workers moving for jobs often face loneliness, making shared spaces important. Because communication gaps affect understanding, help in familiar languages matters greatly. Support from coworkers can ease stress more than expected. Cultural awareness within care programs improves outcomes quietly but consistently. Feeling seen in daily struggles makes a difference that many overlook.

5.5 Fair Work Schedules

Following rules on how long people work each day begins with clear schedules. When shifts end, time off must meet legal minimums - this part matters just as much. Yearly breaks are required, not optional, so planning them early keeps things lawful. Meeting these standards holds employers accountable without needing reminders.

5.6 Leverage Technology for Workforce Management

Technology offers new ways to handle hiring through online tools that simplify finding workers. A different approach comes from software automating daily staffing tasks across teams. Some firms rely on numbers and patterns instead of guesswork when choosing candidates. Firms in the UAE providing labour might shift toward these digital methods gradually. Tools like smart scheduling appear helpful for tracking employee hours accurately. Decisions get shaped by real information rather than assumptions alone. One path forward includes adopting systems that reduce manual paperwork significantly

·Track worker attendance, fatigue, and productivity patterns

·Automate payroll and visa renewals to reduce errors

Making worker contracts available through mobile tools helps people understand what they're entitled to. Accessible digital platforms let staff reach support when issues arise. Information delivered this way stays clear and immediate. Digital pathways open doors to fair treatment at work. Workers find it easier to act when guidance is just a tap away

5.7 Stronger Grievance Systems and Worker Input

Getting help with job-related issues is possible through MoHRE's call centre, telephone number 80084, which does not charge callers. Should a claim fall below AED 100,000, court costs will not apply under UAE government rules.

A different route than compliance? Internal systems that protect anonymity when staff speak up. Surveys about well-being appear often, written in workers' first tongues. Responses lead to moves seen by all - proof things change. Trust grows only if silence breaks somewhere safe.

6. Conclusion

Labourers building structures across the UAE hold roles vital to development, though their circumstances remain fragile despite massive urban growth. Evidence shows money worries, poor housing, long periods apart from loved ones, dangers tied to physical work, and extreme shifts affect these workers regularly. These issues do not occur by chance or stand alone; instead, they stem from broader patterns embedded in how projects operate. Linked together, such pressures wear down mental health and disrupt any sense of stability between job demands and private life. This group enables much of what rises skyline by skyline, yet faces layered hardships that persist beneath visible progress.

A single worker's struggle ripples outward, affecting more than just one person. Financial pressure, physical fatigue, and emotional distance from loved ones weaken performance at work. Performance dips when energy runs low, attendance slips, and people leave jobs faster. These patterns create real costs, not just paperwork headaches. Labour firms absorb losses through delays, higher spending, damaged trust. Projects stall, budgets stretch, credibility fades over time.

Clearly then, how construction workers feel directly shapes both their output and long-term project success. Firms supplying these workers across the UAE need more than just rule-following - they require forward-thinking approaches focused on people. Housing should offer real comfort, not bare survival. Pay details ought to be visible; wages must arrive without delay. Support for emotional strain needs to exist within reach. Workers also deserve actual ways to speak up when things go wrong - ways that lead somewhere. The heart of progress lies here.

Few realize how deeply respect shapes results on a worksite - yet worker wellbeing quietly fuels efficiency, strength through challenges, even market edge. When people matter beyond their tasks, output grows sturdier, systems adapt faster, progress feels less fragile. Consider Dubai's skyline: those towers rise because hands show up daily - but they endure because fairness lifts effort beyond mere survival. Investment in workers becomes investment in national capability, silent but structural. True advancement arrives not just through steel and glass, but through consistent regard for who fastens each bolt.