

Enhancing Remittance Potential through Targeted Skill Development for Bangladeshi Migrant Workers in GCC Countries

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Abstract

Labor migration from Bangladesh, largely to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, plays a pivotal role in the national economy through remittance inflows. Nonetheless, the concentration of Bangladeshi workers in low skill occupations limit their earning potentials which reduce positive impact of remittance on national growth. This study ascertained the skills sought after in the GCC countries, skill gaps among Bangladeshi workers, and priority skills development areas for increased wage and remittance inflows. Using a mixed-methods exploratory sequential design, the study combined qualitative insights from eight Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with a structured survey of 300 Bangladeshi migrants employed in the service sector of GCC countries. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data identified key skill deficiencies among Bangladeshi workers and employers' expectations, while quantitative analysis through correlation and multiple regression identified direct and indirect effects of various skills on wage outcomes. Technical training and work experience have been identified as the strongest predictors of wages, while language proficiency, ICT literacy, legal awareness, and soft skills play an enabling role by facilitating access to higher paying jobs. This study showed empirical evidence to the application of human capital theory in international labor migration, offering policy-relevant recommendations for aligning Bangladesh's skill development infrastructure with labor market demands in destination countries. It highlights need for focused training programs to facilitate migrant workers' employability, wage outcomes, and the broader economic impact of remittances.

Keywords: Labor Migration, Skill Development, Remittances, Wages, GCC Countries, Human Capital Theory, Migration Policy

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1. Introduction

Labor migration plays a decisive role in the global economy, impacting both sending and receiving countries. For Bangladesh, migration to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries is essential for poverty alleviation, improving household wellbeing, and supporting national economic development through remittance inflows. In 2023 alone, Bangladesh deployed over 1.3 million workers abroad while remittance inflows reached an all-time high of 27 billion USD (Mirdha & Hasan, 2024). Despite substantial financial contributions made by migrants, many encounter barriers to secure higher paying jobs due to skill deficits, preventive their earning potentials and the broader economic benefits of migration.

Although previous studies examined labor migration dynamics and remittance outcomes, there remains a gap in understanding the specific skill gaps among Bangladeshi migrant workers in the GCC countries. These gaps, primarily in technical know-how and soft skills limit workers' opportunities for higher wages and secure employments. Research indicates that insufficient vocational training and poor language proficiency considerably limit workers access to better-paying jobs in the GCC labor markets (ILO, 2021). Recent studies emphasize the need for soft skills such as language proficiency, communication skills, and cultural awareness for easy access to higher paying jobs and improving job opportunities (ILO, 2022).

This study seeks to bridge the gaps by discovering skills sought after by the employers, identifying skill gaps among Bangladeshi workers, and prioritizing areas for skill development. Using a mixed method technique, this study gathers insights from eight key informants and 300 migrant workers, thus provide a comprehensive perspective on the skill-related challenges faced by the workers in the GCC service sector.

The uniqueness of this study lies in its comprehensive approach, examining how specific hard and soft skills influence wage progression. The study uses regression analysis to measure the impact of skills on wage outcomes and offers plausible recommendations for focused skill development interventions. Grounded on Human Capital Theory, this research demonstrates how investments in skill development can improve individual employability and broader economic outcomes for Bangladesh.

1.1 Background of the Study

Migration has been a key element of Bangladesh's development, with remittance inflows playing a critical role in national economic stability. In FY 2024–25, remittance inflows were estimated at over USD 30.04 billion, accounting for almost 6% of Bangladesh's GDP (Korobi, 2025). However, constraints like fraudulent acts by the recruiters, unsafe working conditions in the destinations, and labor rights violations continue to exist, severely affecting low-skilled workers in high-risk occupations (ILO, 2022). A major constraint to maximizing the economic benefits of remittances is the skill composition of Bangladesh's migrant workforce. Many workers do not possess internationally recognized certifications, language proficiency, and transferable skills, which limit their wage progression and carrier mobility. In comparison with countries like Philippines, India, and Sri Lanka, Bangladeshi workers often struggle to compete in the GCC labor markets due to essential skill deficits.

The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE) and the National Skills Development Authority (NSDA) have introduced policy measures to tackle these issues, however, the alignment between training initiatives and the GCC labor market needs is still insignificant (City & Guilds & IOM, 2017; Siddiqui & Farabi, 2021). This study focuses on examining the link between skill development and wage outcomes for Bangladeshi migrant workers in the GCC countries, particularly within the service sector.

1.2 Problem Statement

Bangladeshi migrant workers play a crucial role in generating remittance, contributing significantly to the nation's economy. However, concentration of low-skilled workers in the GCC countries limit their wages and career advancement, thereby preventive the developmental impact of migration. Although millions of Bangladeshi workers are employed in the GCC service sector, their economic contributions are often constrained by skill deficits, preventing them from accessing higher-paying jobs and secure employment opportunities. Despite significance of migration for Bangladesh's economy, there is limited research on how specific skill gaps such as technical hand on and soft skills affect wage outcomes and remittance inflows. Therefore, this study aims to examine skill gaps, identify competencies sought after by the employers, and ascertain how skill development can enhance the economic outcomes of migrant workers.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

Enhancing the skills of migrant workers of Bangladesh is essential to remain relevant in the global labor market. With more than 16 million Bangladeshis abroad and considerable remittance inflows, strengthening workers capabilities is the key for maximizing the economic benefits from migration (BMET, 2024). Though current training initiatives emphasize on technical and vocational education, but there is an inconsistency between the skills being taught and the actual skill needs by the employers in the GCC countries (Siddiqui & Farabi, 2021). This study addresses these inconsistencies by providing evidence-based insights into the relationship between skills and wage outcomes for Bangladeshi migrant workers. By pinpointing key skill gaps that impact wage and remittance flows, the study provides actionable recommendations to better align Bangladesh's skill training infrastructures with the evolving demands of the GCC labor market.

1.4 Research Objectives

1.4.1 General Objective.

To ascertain skills sought after by employers and skill gaps among Bangladeshi workers with a view to ascertaining priority skill development areas for increased wage and enhanced remittance inflows.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives.

Specific objectives of the research are as follows:

- To identify key skills sought after by employers and existing skill gaps among Bangladeshi migrant workers in the GCC service sector.
- To examine the impact of hard and soft skills on wage outcomes of Bangladeshi migrant workers in the GCC countries.

1.5 Research Questions

1.5.1 Main Research Question.

How do specific skill gaps impact wage outcomes and what are the priority skill development areas for increased wage and remittance inflows?

1.5.2 Sub-Research Questions.

Sub-research questions are appended below:

- What skills are mostly sought after by the employers in the GCC countries and what are the key skill gaps among Bangladeshi workers?
- How do specific skills impact wage outcomes of Bangladeshi workers in the GCC service sector?

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study examines skills requirement and skill deficits among Bangladeshi migrant workers employed in six GCC countries: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates. These countries are chosen as the focus areas of the research, as they host majority of Bangladeshi workers and the largest source of remittance accounting over 60% foreign currency for Bangladesh (BMET, 2025; Bangladesh Bank, 2025). Service sector being the largest employment sector globally and in the GCC countries, the sector has been chosen as focus area of the study. Skilled workers earn more wages than unskilled; therefore, the study has been concentrated on skilled workers. Besides, semi-skilled workers can transit to skilled workforce after undertaking skill training and upskilling initiatives, therefore, the study also included semi-skilled workers for the study.

2. Literature Review

Labor migration, specially from developing countries like Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and the Philippines to the GCC countries has been a focus of extensive research. Scholars have extensively examined the economic impacts of migration through remittances and socio-economic integration of migrant workers. Nevertheless, recent literatures have increasingly focused toward understanding the skill deficits that limit the earning potential of migrant workers and the broader economic returns from migration.

Most recent studies acknowledged critical skill deficits, such as poor language proficiency, lack of hands-on experience, and lack of soft skills among Bangladeshi migrant workers in the GCC (Ali, Uddin, & Kamrujjaman, 2015; Siddique, 2021). Studies emphasized importance of vocational and technical training and pre-departure skill training to enhance migrant workers' employability and improved wages. For example, studies by Chowdhury (2022) and Robinson (2021) identified deficiencies in both soft skills such as communication,

adaptability, and cultural awareness and hard skills such as technical competencies and ICT skills, which hinder the integration of Bangladeshi workers into higher-paying jobs and secure work environment.

The Human Capital Theory (HCT) (Becker, 1964) highlighted the role of education, training, and experience in enhancing individual productivity and earning potentials. More recent uses of Human Capital Theory highlights that skill acquisition enhances employability and wage outcomes in foreign labor markets (Khatun et al., 2022; Siddiqui & Farabi, 2021). Nevertheless, most of these studies lack empirical evidence as to how specific skills influence wage levels and remittance inflows from the GCC countries in respect of Bangladeshi workers. These gaps create an opportunity for this study to provide valuable insights by connecting specific skill domains: hard and soft skills to wage outcomes.

This study also builds on the work of Becker (1960) and Spence (1981) by investigating how investments in specific hard and soft skills contribute to productivity and wage outcomes of Bangladeshi migrant workers. For instance, Hossain (2022) emphasized the increasing demand of the digital literacy and ICT skills in the GCC labor market, particularly in the context of Industry 4.0 and technological transformation across sectors such as ICT, hospitality, and healthcare. This is consistent with the findings of this study, which highlights the need for strengthening technical training program and language literacy among migrants to meet the emerging demands of employers in the GCC countries.

Moreover, the link between soft skills and wage outcomes has received increasing attention. Recent studies including Buffett (2022) underscores the growing importance of communication skills, teamwork, and emotional intelligence in securing higher paying jobs and secure employment opportunities in the GCC. The result of this study strengthens this pattern, showing that while technical training and work experience are the main determinants of wage outcomes, soft skills particularly communication skills and adaptability serve as enabling factors that facilitate workplace integration and career progression.

Besides, the study of migrants' rights and legal literacy has been increasingly linked to workers' vulnerability and risk of exploitation. Recent works, including Etzold & Mallick (2015), accentuate the need for legal literacy to ensure that workers understand their rights and protect them from exploitation. This study responds to these concerns by stressing inclusion of labor law education in pre-

departure training programs. Such training can empower migrant workers to appreciate labor contracts well, alleviate exploitative practices, and diminish vulnerability to unsafe working conditions.

This research also substantiates to the existing body of literature that discovers migration policies and their impact on labor market integration. Scholars such as Siddiqui (2016) and Zohir et al. (2019) have pointed out that the inconsistency between domestic vocational training programs in Bangladesh and the skill requirements of GCC employers' limits workers' entry to higher-paying jobs, thus reduce remittance inflows. By matching skill development program with the requirements of the GCC labor markets, this study emphasizes on creating market-driven training programs to help bridge the skill gaps with a view to increasing wage outcomes and ensuring secure work environment.

Finally, the literature suggests that while the importance of skill development for migrant workers is well-recognized, there is still limited empirical evidence on how specific skills: both hard and soft skills influence wage outcomes and remittances inflows in the GCC context. This study aims to address these gaps by providing quantitative data on the association between skill acquisition and wage outcomes, alongside qualitative insights into the specific skill requirements of GCC employers. By combining both methods, this research offers a comprehensive understanding of how vocational education and training, work experience, language proficiency, and legal literacy can augment the economic returns of Bangladeshi migrant workers in the GCC and eventually increase remittance inflows to Bangladesh.

2.1 Research Gap

Though there is a considerable quantity of research on migration and the skill development requirements for migrant workers, notable gaps persist in the literature. For instance, many researchers examined about the macroeconomic benefits of remittances (Siddiqui, 2005), there is lack of empirical evidence that links specific skills with wage outcomes and remittance inflows in the framework of Bangladeshi migrant workers in the GCC countries.

While Human Capital Theory has been applied to the general labor migration literature, there is a lack of studies that explicitly weigh the impact of hands-on technical knowledge, work experience, language aptitude, and ICT skills, etcetera

on wage outcomes of Bangladeshi migrants in the GCC countries, particularly within the domain of Industry 4.0.

A good number of researches acknowledged the role of soft skills such as communication, adaptability, and teamwork, etcetera in improving employability, wage, and career progression; unfortunately, scanty number of research have quantitatively weighed the association between soft skills and wage outcomes in the context of Bangladesh.

A handful number of researches on migration policy focus on the alignment between domestic training and the needs of the GCC labor market, but many overlooked how migrant workers' knowledge on legal affairs contribute to enhanced wage outcomes by minimizing exploitation and improving negotiation power.

In the light of the above, this study intent to fill above mentioned deficits by providing quantitative evidence on the association between targeted hard and soft skills and wage outcomes, and by providing qualitative insights from relevant stake holders' perspectives on the skills sought after by the employers that directly influence wage levels and job security.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded on Human Capital Theory (HCT), which hypothesizes education, experience, training, and skills as investments that augment individual productivity and economic yields (Becker, 1964; Ross, 2024). Human capital is transferable across professions and locations, making it relevant for global labor migration. The acquisition of hard skills such as technical, vocational, and ICT competencies and soft skills such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, and professionalism increase workers' access to higher-paying jobs, increase productivity, and remittance potential. HCT underscores lifelong learning and competency-based development as crucial for upholding competitiveness in dynamic labor markets. It provides a robust framework to examine how skill acquisition shapes labor market dynamics for Bangladeshi migrant workers deployed in the GCC countries (BMET, 2025; Khatun et al., 2022).

Michael Spence's Signaling Theory (Spence, 1981) matches HCT by explaining how education, skills, and experience serve as visible indicators of a worker's perceived productivity potentials. Naturally, no human can quantify productivity

of an individual before employment, thus, employers need to rely on certain signals such as educational attainment, work experience, language proficiency, ICT competence, and soft skills, etcetera. Therefore, prospective candidates invest in the above-mentioned areas to enhance their employability and wage potentials. Eventually, targeted investment in both hard and soft skills shall rise their signaling capacities, growing employment prospects and earning potentials in the GCC labor markets (Khatun et al., 2022; Siddiqui & Farabi, 2021).

2.3 Conceptual Framework

This study examines the association between the skills and their economic outcomes with special emphasis on wage earnings and remittances inflows from GCC countries. It is grounded in the concept that skills both hard and soft skills play a crucial role in determining employment success. Hard skills such as education, technical competencies, experience, proficiency on ICT, physical fitness, and legal awareness enable workers perform efficiently, by meeting employers' expectations. Similarly, soft skills such as professionalism, communication skill, teamwork, adaptability, cultural awareness, and punctuality stimulus to workplace behavior, integration, and career advancement in multicultural settings. This research hypothesizes, enhancing individual skills advance job performance and productivity, which in turn leads to higher wages and greater job security. Higher wages generate greater remittance inflows, thus amplify the economic benefits for both migrant workers and national economy. Broadly, the research framework underlines the pivotal role of targeted skills development for improving employability, productivity, higher wages, and increased remittance. The conceptual model is shown in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



Source: Constructed for the study

3. Research Methodology

This study is grounded in a pragmatic research philosophy, integrating both qualitative and quantitative techniques to discover skill gaps and skills

development needs for potential migrant workers in the GCC countries. Pragmatism facilitates integration of objective data analysis with contextual insights, enabling the study to capture both observable trends and stakeholders' lived experiences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

3.1 Research Design and Data Collection

The study utilized a mixed-methods exploratory sequential design, carried out in two distinct stages: an initial qualitative phase followed by quantitative data collection phase. This tactic enables an in-depth exploration of skill gaps through interviews before generalizing the findings to a larger sample.

3.2 Qualitative Stage

3.2.1 Research Questions for Qualitative Interviews.

The qualitative phase of the study was steered by three fundamental research questions; what skills are mostly sought after by the employers in the GCC countries? What major skill gaps are experienced among Bangladeshi workers? and how skill development interventions can be prioritized to bridge skill gaps?

3.2.2 Data Collection Technique.

During the qualitative phase, eight KIIs were conducted with a diverse range of stakeholders, including recruiters, employers, policymakers, labor attachés, academicians, and trainers until data saturation was reached. The interviews were conducted through a combination of in-person and online modalities. Structured questionnaires were shared with selected key informants to complement the interview data. The KIIs were conducted in depth to examine skills sought after by the employers, existing skill deficits among Bangladeshi workers, and key priority skill development areas for Bangladesh. All interviews were conducted with consent, audio-recorded, transcribed word for word, and analyzed.

3.2.3 Qualitative Data Analysis.

The qualitative information was analyzed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis process, enabled by NVivo software. The process began with initial coding, where data were coded line-by-line to capture potential themes. These codes were then assembled into patterns based on resemblances, classifying key trends in the data. Subsequently, iterative discussions were made into wider themes. After numerous circles of refinement, three principal themes

emerged: skills sought after by the employers, skill gaps among Bangladeshi migrant workers, and priority skills development areas for Bangladesh. The process continued until it reached a data saturation level, meaning no new perceptions were emergent from more talks, confirming the comprehensiveness of the identified themes. The insights derived from the qualitative analysis were then used to design quantitative survey instrument, ensuring that the survey questions exactly reflect the real-world skill demands and gaps identified.

3.3 Quantitative Stage

3.3.1 Data Collection Technique.

The findings from the qualitative stage shaped the basis to develop a structured survey instrument administered to 300 Bangladeshi migrants employed in the GCC service sector. The survey was carried out to collect data on key variables such as demographic characteristics, occupational profiles, skills proficiencies, and echelons of wage earnings.

3.3.2 Sample Size Determination.

The survey sample size was initially determined using Cochran's formula for finite populations (Cochran, 1977), which proposed a sample size of 385 respondents. Nevertheless, due to practical limitations such as logistical challenges, limited time, and problems in accessing workers from various GCC countries, the final sample size was reduced to 300 respondents. The sample size was considered acceptable to provide statistical power for regression analyses while accommodating field constraints. Prior to the study survey, a pilot survey was conducted involving 25 respondents to assess the comprehensibility, clarity, and appropriateness of the survey questions. Based on the pilot survey findings, it was concluded that a sample of 300 responses would be adequate for descriptive and inferential statistical analyses.

3.3.3 Survey Administration.

An initial pilot version of the questionnaire was developed and disseminated to Bangladeshi migrant workers employed in the GCC countries. Feedback obtained from the pilot participants was used to refine and finalize the instrument. The final questionnaire prepared in both Bangla and English gathered demographic details along with information related to individual skills and competencies. The survey data was collected through a mixture of in-person and online approaches.

Participants were contacted directly by the researcher where possible, while others were reached through intermediaries such as family members, friends, recruitment networks, workers' associations, and the Bangladesh Embassy in the GCC countries. Follow-up reminders were issued to improve response rate and ensure a representative sample. Informed consensus was obtained from all contributors prior to data collection.

3.3.4 Quantitative Data Analysis.

Quantitative data were investigated by means of SPSS and MS Excel software. Descriptive statistics were first used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics, occupational patterns, and skill competencies. Pearson correlation was then applied to examine the relationships between various skill domains and wage earnings. Furthermore, multiple regression analysis was done to ascertain the direct effects of skills on wage earnings. The reliability of the skill measurement scales was confirmed using Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.941$, which indicate excellent internal consistency, and a very high rate of reliability.

3.4 Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Phases

The research utilized the findings from the qualitative phase to design the quantitative survey, confirming that the questions reflected real-world skill demands and skill gaps. Through the integration of both phases, the research applied triangulation, where qualitative insights were compared and validated against the quantitative results to enhance the credibility of the findings.

This integrative approach allowed the qualitative findings to guide the survey instrument development, while the quantitative data served to confirm and complement the qualitative insights. Together, the combination of both data sources strengthened robustness and validity of the study's conclusions.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

This study followed rigorous ethical standards thru all stages of the research development. Participation was willingly and all contributors were informed about the research purpose, scope, and potential results. Verbal confirmed consent was obtained from all respondents after ensuring that they fully understood their rights and the purpose of their participation. To protect privacy, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, with personal identifiers kept separate from the survey data. The study considered cultural sensitivity by respecting local norms

and practices, and conducting interactions in a culturally appropriate and respectful manner. The study observed commonly acceptable ethical norms for social science research, prioritizing the protection, dignity, and well-beings of the respondents.

4. Findings: Qualitative Data Analysis

4.1 Analytical Approach

In the qualitative phase, eight KIIs were carried out with a diverse range of stakeholders such as employers, recruiters, trainers, government officials, academics, and labor attachés deployed in the GCC countries. The interviews were noted, transcribed, and examined by means of Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis in NVivo. This process revealed three main themes: skills sought after by the GCC employers, the skill gaps experienced among Bangladeshi migrant workers, and priority areas for future skill development. The interviews continued until data saturation level of was reached, meaning that the research questions were comprehensively addressed, and there was no possibility to gain new insights.

4.2 Themes Identified

- **Skills Sought After by GCC Employers.** Employers in the GCC emphasized the need for a combination of technical competencies, language proficiency, and relevant soft skills. There is strong demand for technical skills in sectors like mechanical trades, healthcare, ICT, and plumbing, with great emphasis placed on practical hands-on experience than formal qualifications. Proficiency in English is considered indispensable for customer facing roles, while basic Arabic is considered added quality for workplace communication. In addition, employers stressed on the importance of soft skills like professionalism, adaptability, communication skill, and cultural awareness, which play a key role for job retention and career progression.
- **Skill Deficits among Bangladeshi Migrant Workers.** Ongoing skill gaps continue to limit the employment opportunities of Bangladeshi migrants. While many possess certificates, most of these are not globally documented, or do not effectively replicate their practical abilities. Shortcomings in language proficiency including Arabic and English, poor communication skills, inefficiency to work as a team, lack of workplace

discipline, and ignorance of the laws limit job mobility and integration into diverse work settings. These deficiencies restrict access to better-paying jobs, secure work environment, and increase vulnerability to exploitation.

- **Priority Skills Development Areas.** To bridge existing skill gaps, almost all the key informants stressed on competency-based vocational and technical training aligned with GCC labor market needs. Respondents emphasized on hands-on technical experience over theoretical instructions. Strengthening language training in both English and Arabic is vital for workplace communication and social integration. Fostering soft skills such as cultural sensitivity and workplace ethics are vital for career development through earning confidence and dependability of the employers. The adoption of internationally accepted certifications and inclusion of legal awareness program on migrants' rights and obligations in the pre-departure training programs are essential for protecting the workers and enhancing their job prospects.

5. Findings: Quantitative Data Analysis

In the quantitative phase, the study collected data from 300 Bangladeshi workers working in the GCC countries' service sector. The survey instruments were developed based on the insights from the qualitative data and a pilot survey on 25 participants. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, reliability assessment, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis to explore the link between skills and the wage outcomes.

5.1 Socio-Economic and Skill Training Profile

Table-1 represents educational background, technical training status, and monthly salary structure of the survey population. As shown in the table, majority of the workers accounting 35.7% have acquired up to primary (I – VIII) level of education, while 19.3% acquired HSC or higher level of education. In regard to technical training, 34% workers received on the job training, while only 11.7% respondents received full-fledged technical training. Majority of the survey respondents accounting 38.3% earn between 21,000/- to 40,000/- BDT per month, while only 9.3% respondents stated that they earn above 1,00,000/- BDT per month. These findings accentuate the need for enhancing educational level as education is the bedrock of all skills and imparting full-fledged technical and vocational training on respective discipline before departure.

Table 1. Socio-Economic and Skill Profile of Bangladeshi Migrant Workers (N = 300)

Variable	Category	%
Education	Never attended school	3.3
	Primary (I–VIII)	35.7
	Secondary (IX–X)	28.7
	SSC	13.0
	HSC & above	19.3
Technical Training	No training	17.7
	On-the-job training	34.0
	Partial training at destination	23.0
	Partial training before departure	13.7
	Full-fledged training	11.7
Monthly Salary (BDT)	Below 20,000	15.0
	21,000–40,000	38.3
	41,000–80,000	27.3
	81,000–100,000	10.0
	Above 100,000	9.3

Source: Survey data collected for this study

5.2 Self-Assessed Skill Aptitude

Table 2 outlines self-assessed skill aptitude level of the respondents. The findings reveal that majority of the survey population accounting 49.6% knew nothing about his present profession, 52.7% and 59.7% did not have workable knowledge in English writing and speaking respectively, 56.3% respondents knew nothing about the culture of the destination country, 59.2% was ignorant about laws on migrants' rights, 62.5% did not have workable knowledge on manners and etiquette, and 63.8% knew nothing about ICT. This data highlights need to strengthen pre-departure training and competency-based development programs to better prepare workers for improved workplace readiness and occupational mobility.

Table 2. Self-Reported Skill Proficiency of Bangladeshi Migrant Workers (N = 300)

Skill Domain	Knew Nothing / Not Workable (%)	Somewhat Workable (%)	Workable / Confident (%)
Work experience	49.6	21.0	29.3
English (Writing)	52.7	12.3	35.0

English (Speaking)	59.7	12.4	27.8
Cultural knowledge	56.3	24.7	19.0
Knowledge on laws & migrant rights	59.2	23.1	17.7
Manners & etiquette	62.5	20.7	16.7
ICT skills	63.8	19.5	16.7

Source: Survey data collected for this study

5.3 Reliability and Sampling Adequacy

Table 3 presents the reliability and sampling adequacy measures of the survey instrument. A Cronbach's Alpha of 0.941 indicates excellent internal consistency among 10 survey items, confirming that the scale is highly reliable for measuring the key constructs. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.905 suggests that the data are highly suitable for factor analysis, surpassing the threshold value 0.7. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: $\chi^2 = 2914.59$, $df = 45$, and $p < 0.001$ shows that the correlation matrix significantly differ from the identity matrix, supporting the data set's suitability for multivariate analysis.

Table 3. Reliability and Sampling Adequacy of Survey Instrument (N = 300)

Test	Value
Cronbach's Alpha (10 items)	0.941
KMO Measure	0.905
Bartlett's Test (χ^2 , $df=45$)	2914.59***
***p < 0.001; Source: Survey data collected for this study	

Source: Computed for the study

5.4 Correlation Between Skills and Wages

Table 4 presents bivariate correlations between key skill domains and monthly wage earnings. The findings reveal strong and statistically significant positive correlations between technical training: $r = 0.928$ and $p < 0.01$ and work experience: $r = 0.819$ and $p < 0.01$ with wages, signifying these two factors as the main drivers of wage outcomes. Other factors, such as education: $r = 0.569$ and $p < 0.01$, English writing proficiency: $r = 0.623$, English speaking proficiency: $r = 0.644$, cultural knowledge: $r = 0.528$ and $p < 0.01$, ICT skills: $r = 0.554$ and $p < 0.01$, and knowledge on laws and rights of migrants: $r = 0.485$ and $p < 0.01$; all demonstrate positive correlations with income. This suggests that while these

factors contribute to wage level, they serve as enablers for technical training and work experience.

Table 4. Correlation Between Skills and Monthly Wage Earnings (N = 300)

Variable	Correlation with Salary
Technical training	0.928***
Experience	0.819***
English (Speaking)	0.644***
English (Writing)	0.623***
Education	0.569***
Manner & etiquette	0.587***
ICT skills	0.554***
Cultural knowledge	0.528***
Laws & migrant rights	0.485***
***p < 0.01; Source: Survey data collected for this study	

Source: Computed for the study

5.5 Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 5 presents the model summary of multiple regression analysis from the multiple regression analysis, highlighting the key determinants of monthly wage earnings. The model shows strong explanatory capacity, with an R^2 value of 0.892, meaning that 89.2% of the variation in wages is explained by the independent variables. The Adjusted R^2 of 0.889, which accounts for the number of predictors, further confirms the robustness of the model.

Table 5. Model Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.945	0.892	0.889	0.379
a. Predictors: (Constant), ICT skill, Experience, Education, Laws and Rights of Migrants, English (writing), Culture, Technical Training, English (speaking), Manners and Etiquette				

Source: Computed for the study

5.6 Coefficients and Ranking of Predictors for Wage Earnings

Table 6 (Coefficients) offers important insights into the relationship between predictor variables and the dependent variable. The analysis highlights the most significant factors influencing wage outcomes among Bangladeshi migrant workers in the GCC service sector. A detailed interpretation of the result is

provided below, along with the ranking of the predictors based on their impact on wages.

Table 6. Coefficients table

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.141	.070		2.020	.044
	Technical training	.614	.031	.671	19.567	.000
	Experience	.242	.029	.268	8.377	.000
	English (Writing)	.026	.031	.032	.818	.414
	English (Speaking)	.019	.035	.023	.533	.594
	Culture	.036	.035	.035	1.015	.311
	Education	.007	.028	.007	.249	.803
	Laws and rights of migrants	-.054	.037	-.055	-1.458	.146
	Manner and etiquettes	-.005	.047	-.005	-.104	.917
ICT skill	.033	.032	.035	1.042	.298	

a. Dependent Variable: salary

Source: Computed for the study

5.6.1 Interpretation of Coefficients Table (Table 6). As follows:

- **Unstandardized Coefficients (B).** These values indicate the change in monthly wage earnings for each one-unit increase in the predictor variable, while keeping all other variables constant. For example, the unstandardized coefficient for technical training: 0.614 implies that one unit rise in technical training leads to 0.614 units increase in wage earning.
- **Standardized Coefficients (β).** These coefficients enable comparison of the relative importance of the predictors, with larger β value indicating stronger effects on wage earnings. In this model, technical training has the highest β value: 0.671, indicating that it has the greatest influence on wage outcomes among all predictors.
- **t-value.** The t-value measures whether a coefficient significantly vary from zero, with greater absolute values signifying greater statistical significance. In this case, technical training has a notable high t-value of 19.567, confirming strong statistical significance.

- **Significance (Sig.).** The p-value indicates whether the coefficient is statistically significant or not. A p-value below 0.05 specifies a significant predictor. In this case, technical training and experience have a Sig. of 0.000, which is well below the threshold level of 0.05, demonstrating a highly significant factor in deciding wage outcomes.
- As shown in the Table 6, technical training is the strongest predictor of wage earnings with a β value 0.671, demonstrating that technical skills should be the primary focus of skill development initiatives. The high significance of $p < 0.001$ underscores the critical role of technical training in wage potential.
- Experience ranks second in terms of influence on wage earnings with a β value 0.268, suggesting that practical experience significantly contributes to higher wage earnings.
- Knowledge on cultural and ICT skills both demonstrate moderate but positive impact on wage outcomes with a β value 0.035 each. While both the factors are imperative for employability, they have relatively weak influence on wage earnings compared to technical training and experience.
- Writing (0.032) and speaking (0.023) proficiency on English has a relatively minor impact on wage outcome. Nevertheless, English proficiency remains vital for employability and career progression, particularly in customer-facing or supervisory roles.
- In this model, β value in respect of education, knowledge on laws and rights of migrants, and manners and etiquette are not statistically significant, as their p-values exceed the threshold level 0.05. Though these factors enable employability, but they do not have direct impact on wage outcomes for Bangladeshi migrant workers in the GCC service sector.

6. Discussions and Triangulation

This study identified significant skill gaps in technical skills, language proficiency, and soft skills among Bangladeshi workers employed in the GCC countries. These detections are consistent with the prevailing literatures, which identified skill deficits as key constraints on wage outcomes and job security (Siddiqui, 2016; Robinson, 2021). For example, both qualitative and quantitative findings revealed that technical training and work experience are the strongest determinants of wage outcomes. These findings are supported by the research work of Khatun et al.

(2022) and Ali, Uddin, & Kamrujjaman (2015), who emphasized the vital role of skill attainment in enhancing labor market outcomes.

The triangulation of the qualitative and quantitative results provides a comprehensive understanding of the skill gaps and their consequences on wage outcomes. The qualitative analysis indicated that language proficiency in English and Arabic is vital for higher-paying jobs which has been resonated in the quantitative analysis as well, where English efficiency displayed a moderate but statistically significant correlation with wage levels: $r = 0.623$ for English writing and $r = 0.644$ for English speaking. Likewise, the qualitative analysis underscored the significance of soft skills, such as adaptability and cultural awareness, which were found to be complementary for technical skills. While the quantitative data showed weak associations between soft transferable skills and wages, the qualitative data emphasized their significance in career development, signifying that these factors are indispensable for long-term occupational achievement, mostly in customer-facing front desk role and supervisory responsibilities.

Additionally, the study's conceptual context and theoretical lens grounded on Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) and Signaling Theory (Spence, 1981), which is contributory in elucidating how investments in skills development can enhance workers' employability and increased productivity. The conclusions of the study are consistent with Human Capital Theory, which postulates that skill development directly contribute to higher earnings, as confirmed by the strong positive correlations between technical training: $r = 0.928$ and work experience: $r = 0.819$ with wages. The relatively weak associations between education: $r = 0.569$ and wage proposes that while certain skills are important, they serve as enablers, increasing the effectiveness of technical training and experience.

The triangulation of qualitative and quantitative investigation highlights the requirement for policy interventions. In particular, the study highlights the importance of technical training and experience, while expanding language learning programs specially on English and Arabic, and incorporation of soft skills development training program in the national educational system and pre-departure training program to expand migrant workers' scope of securing higher-paying jobs and more stable employment opportunities in the GCC.

7. Conclusion

This study intended to ascertain the skill gaps among Bangladeshi workers deployed in the GCC countries and identify priority skill development areas, with a particular focus on the service sector. Using a mixed-methods exploratory sequential design, the study integrated qualitative insights from KIIs with quantitative data from a survey of 300 migrant workers. The method was used to explore critical skill deficits that directly impact wage outcomes and career progression of the migrants. Technical training and work experience emerged as the most significant predictors of wage outcomes, consistent with the principles of Human Capital Theory and Signaling Theory. Soft skills such as language proficiency, communication skill, cultural awareness, and adaptability were identified as enablers for increased wage and employability.

The findings suggest that while considerable investments have been made in technical training programs, there is a need for more focused, competency-based training program that is consistent with employer's sought after skills in the GCC countries. The study accentuates the need for a more cohesive approach that bridge the gaps between Bangladesh's traditional training programs and the evolving skill needs of the GCC labor market.

8. Recommendations

Drawing on the findings, following recommendations are made:

- Investment priority should be placed on technical and vocational education and training aligning with the requirements of the GCC countries. These programs should concentrate on technical hands-on experience and internationally documented certifications to increase employment opportunities.
- An all-inclusive language training program, directed on English and Arabic language, should be integrated into pre-departure training program. Language proficiency is essential for active communication, mostly in customer-facing front desk roles, which can meaningfully boost employability and wage level.
- Soft skills such as adaptability, communication skill, teamwork, and cultural awareness should be integrated into the overall national education programs. These skills are imperative for successful integration into

multicultural settings and for job security and career progression in the long term.

- Acquaintance on laws and rights of migrants are indispensable for all potential migrants. Hence, legal training program should be incorporated in the pre departure training program to protect migrant workers from exploitation, abuse, and unsafe working conditions.
- Stronger alignment is required for coordination between Bangladesh's labor migration strategies and the specific skills sought after by the GCC employers. Government bodies should work together with potential employers to continuously update and adjust training programs grounded on labor market needs.

9. Contribution of the Study

This study advances the field of labor migration by providing an inclusive analysis of skill gaps and key skill development areas needed for Bangladesh for employment in the GCC service sector. The study combined qualitative insights from KIIs with quantitative survey data from 300 workers by adopting a mixed-methods exploratory sequential design. This integrated method permits for a nuanced understanding of the technical and non-technical skills that are highly sought after in the GCC region, while also detecting the deficits that prevent career progression and wage outcomes. By connecting skill development with wage outcomes and remittance inflows, the study establishes a valuable framework for designing focused skill interventions aimed at enhancing the economic benefits for both migrants and the country. Besides, the study provides practical recommendations for training institutions, government bodies, and recruitment agencies to better align skill development initiatives with employers' expectations.

10. Limitations of the Study

Though the researcher personally visited GCC region to physically investigate and personally contact survey respondents, practically it was not possible to contact all respondents in person. Many participants were instead communicated through intermediaries like acquaintances, families, and friends. Another limitation stemmed from workers' low level of intellect, as many had limited reading and writing aptitudes, which made it difficult to ensure a clear comprehension of the themes and the questions. Moreover, demanding work schedules of many workers

have made it difficult to spare time for interaction and interviews. Together, above constraints influenced the depth of the responses and overall representativeness of the sample.

11. Future Research Directions

Future study could be made to explore numerous key areas to build on the findings of this research. A longitudinal study would help evaluate the long-term influence of skill development on career progression and wage outcomes among Bangladeshi migrant workers, providing an insight into the sustainability of skill developments. Sector-specific studies, such as construction, healthcare, and hospitality within the GCC would enable more specific recommendations. Moreover, a separate investigation on the role of digital literacy and ICT skills in the context of Industry 4.0 would be decisive for comprehending how technology impacts migrant workers' employability and wage outcome. Finally, research on migrants' well-being such as social integration, physical and mental health, quality of life, etcetera would deliver a more holistic view of the migrants' experience and its long-term effects.

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