



RESEARCH ARTICLE

A STUDY ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND HEALTH STATUS OF AUTO DRIVERS OF TIRUPPATUR, VELLORE DISTRICT

*¹Lisa Elango, ²Moieson Thairiyam, D. and ²Karthiga Sharma, P.

¹Assistant Professor, P.G & Research Department of Social Work, Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur- 635601

²Mphil scholar, P.G & Research Department of Social Work, Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur- 635601

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the socio-economic and health status of auto drivers in Tirupattur, Vellore District, Tamil Nadu. Tirupattur is a rural area where the basic amenities like transport are not frequent too many interior areas. Frequency of Public transport is very less so the people opt for autos which is more convenient for them to travel. In this town auto transport has become a bread winning job for many men, so the researchers choose this topic to study the socio economic status and the health issues faced by the auto drivers. Interview schedule was used as a tool for data collection. In this research the researchers used snow ball sampling techniques for collecting data from the respondents. Analysis was done on the data collected from the respondent to gain deeper information. This study indicates that how the socio-economic and health challenges of auto drivers at tirupattur are being addressed and how Government can help the auto drivers to overcome the problems faced by them.

Key words: Socio-economic status, Health challenges, Auto drives.

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INTRODUCTION

Socio-economic means study of the economic activity will affects social processes of the individuals, Socio-economic often focus on the social impact of economic change and the goal of socio-economic study is generally to bring about socio-economic development, and that examines social and economic factors for better understanding, how the combination of both influences something. Socio-economic and health challenges examines the social, economic and health conditions of the individual in the present scenario, and studies the challenges which have been faced by the auto drivers in Tirupattur. An auto is a type of vehicle for hire with a driver, which is used by a single passenger or small group of passengers. An auto conveys passengers between locations of their choice. This differs from the other modes of public transport where the pick-up and the drop-off locations are determined by the passenger, auto can either be hailed or are hired from the auto stands or can be hailed on the street, there are additional charges for luggage, and auto is the cheapest form of taxi. Auto-rickshaws provide door-to-door service and act as a frequent mode to public. Auto drivers are playing very important role in our society. Cores of commuters mainly depend on the auto drivers for safe journey and to reach their destination.

The work of the auto drivers is full of responsibility. The auto driver is responsible for safety and punctuality. Auto drivers' job requires a high level of concentration and alertness, when auto comes to signals, and his immediate environment.

Review of Literature

Socio Economic and Health Challenges

Arunraja (2015) says, "Socio-economic status denotes a person's status or position on within the society (or any social group) by social class or wealth or income. The term socio-economic status refers that the social class in which an individual is a member. It is grouping of people into different classes on the basis of occupation. Traditionally, society was divided into upper, middle and working classes according to socio-economic grouping". Socioeconomic background includes all aspects of income profession, culture, religious beliefs, family relations and standard of living. An individual has more salary than others and leading a high profession like engineer, doctor or judge have a high status. As per Rajesh Ranjan, (2015) in a study done by him among the auto drivers has come out with Health. He Says, "Health inequalities can be instrumental in drawing attention to the health of socioeconomically vulnerable groups in India in the context of rapid economic growth. It can shape the dialogue for public health action, emphasizing the need for greater investments in health, and monitor effectiveness of health programs". Our

*Corresponding author: Lisa Elango,

Assistant Professor, P.G & Research Department of Social Work, Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur- 635601.

objective was to examine the health challenges of auto drivers, a number of studies observed that the lack of resources to pay for treatment often leads to the poor foregoing health care or becoming indebted or impoverished trying to pay for it. Low income was a major factor for not seeking treatment during illness. A number of studies show that risks and crisis situations due to low level of health security are endemic for auto drivers. The working conditions are the main cause to have an adverse effect on the health conditions of auto drivers. Low nutritional intake due to low income, constant physical labour increases health problems to the auto drivers. Lack of resources to pay for the health care often forces the poor workers either to forego it or become indebted. Most of studies reported health problems mainly related to respiratory due to inhalation of the tobacco dust and body aches due to the peculiar posture that has to be maintained at all times of work. Thus in this research the researcher studied the socio-economic and health challenges of auto drivers.

Significance of the Study

There has been health inequalities among auto drivers which is due to poor socio-economic condition of the auto drivers. A number of studies observed that the lack of resources to pay for treatment often leads to the poor foregoing health care or becoming indebted or impoverished trying to pay for it. Low income was a major factor for not seeking treatment during illness. A number of studies show that risks and crisis situations due to low level of health security are endemic for auto drivers. The research will help researcher to become familiar with socio-economic and health challenges of auto drivers so that it gives better equipped to handle difficulties, improving self-image, overcome the challenges. The research is all about giving researcher a clear and concise overview on each essential socio-economic and health challenges that researcher needs to know about.

General objective

To study the socio-economic and health challenges of auto drivers.

Specific objective

- To examine the social challenges of auto drivers.
- To understand the economic challenges of auto drivers.
- To bring out the Health Issues of auto drivers.

Research Design & Sampling

The researcher has selected descriptive design because this design will give the detailed description of the study and therefore it will be more understandable and useful. In this study the researcher describes the socio-economic status and health challenges of auto drivers at tirupattur. The researcher has selected the auto drivers at Tirupattur, Vellore District, for the research study. The researcher used non probability sampling design and the samples for the data collection have been taken as 50 samples through snow ball sampling. SPSS was used to enter and analyzed the data. The data were further analyzed and interpreted using various tests.

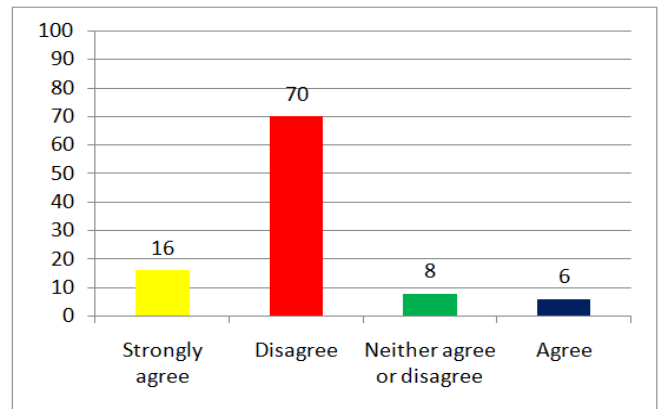
Tools for Data Collection

Interview schedule was used as a main instrument for data collection. This interview schedule helped the researcher to know more about the socio-economic status and health

challenges of auto drivers. Analysis is done on the data collected from the respondent to gain deeper information. This study indicates that how the socio-economic status and health challenges of auto drivers at tirupattur are being addressed.

Analysis of Data

Social Status



Distribution of Respondents by Social status

In this research majority (70 percent) of the respondents said that they don't have proper social status. There were 16 percent that is a little more than one tenth of the respondents said that they have good status among the public. There were eight percent that is less than one tenth of the respondents who said sometimes they are being respected and sometime they are being insulted. Only six percent of the respondents were agreed with proper social status. Thus it shows that auto drivers face lot challenges socially as no respect from public, ill-treated, recognition from the public.

Economic Status

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by income

Income per Month	Frequency	Percentage
Below Rs.3000	0	0
Rs. 3001 to 6000	20	40.0
Rs. 6001 to 9000	12	24.0
Rs. 9001 and above	18	36.0
Total	50	100

The study shows that nearly half (40%) of the respondents were earning more than rs.3000 per month. There were one third (36%) of the respondents were earning between 6001-9000. There were a little more than one tenth (24%) of the respondents earning 9001 and above. It shows that the respondent's income is not permanent income; it may differ according to the effort taken by the driver or on the customer frequency. Thus with this fluctuations in the income the auto drivers cannot meet their day today needs like food, clothing, shelter and education of the children etc...

Distributions of Respondents by Debt

From the data collected it was evident that nearly majority (70%) of the respondents have debt. There were one third (30%) of the respondents who said that they do not have debt. It shows that the most of the respondent have debt. Thus it explains that the auto drivers since they don't have proper

income and their income may be based on the frequency of customers, they struggle a lot to manage their day to day life.

Health Status

Distribution of Respondents by Physical illness

From the data collected it was clear that all (100%) the respondents said that they have some physical illness. It shows that the all the respondents are having physically illness due to their work and with the low income they were unable to meet their medical treatment. The medical assistance is also dissatisfied.

Common Health Problems faced

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents based on the Health Issues

Income per Month	Frequency	Percentage
Back pain	6	12.0
Piles	14	28.0
Eye Sight defect	3	6.0
Heart Diseases	5	10.0
Respiratory problems	10	20.0
Stress	12	24.0
Total	50	100

From the above data it was evident that the respondents face many health problems due to the job which they are doing. Less than one third (28%) of the respondents said that they had piles problem and little less than one fifth (24%) said that they had stress due to their job and their economical imbalance. And few others said they had some health problems like back pain, eye sight defect, heart diseases, and respiratory problems. It can be inferred that since the auto drivers work in a motor vehicle they get diseases due to overheat (both body heat and the vehicle heat).

FINDINGS

In this research the major findings were based on the social status which the auto drivers have in the society, the economical status based on their income and the health issues face by the auto drivers due to their job. It was found that majority (70%) of the respondents said that they were not given with proper status in the society. People insult them based on the job which they do and since few auto drivers misbehave public don't have a good opinion about other auto drivers and only few known people treat the drivers well. Sometimes people even insult and ill-treat the auto drivers which affect them more and this leads to Job Dissatisfaction. It was evident that nearly half (40%) of the respondents said that they earn Rs.3000 to Rs. 6000 per month, which is not sufficient for them to take care of themselves and their family: in particular they struggle to manage even their basic needs and because of this problem the auto drivers majority (70%) of them get debt from their relatives or from people who own a financial office. From the research it was clear that all (100%) of the respondents said that they face various health problems due to their job, few health issues were Piles problem, Stress, Respiratory problems, Eye sight issues and Heart diseases.

Suggestions

- Since a majority of the drivers are married and support a family, they overcharge to provide for the basic security that is required by individuals. The government

can step in to formulate partnerships with private insurers to provide vehicle and health insurance along with other benefits that keep the auto rickshaw drivers driven and satisfied.

- The drivers face many health issues due to their job. They said that they find it difficult to visit a hospital to take treatment since they think that instead of spending money on for treatment it can be used for their family and children education. So the Drivers they themselves can take care of their personal health because if they are hail and healthy they can take care of their family.
- The auto drivers' major problem is stress which is because of their social and economical status. So some drivers adopt various stress-coping mechanisms to overcome physical and mental stress. Some follow negative habit like smoking, consuming alcohol and chewing tobacco. But some drivers have positive habits like listening to the radio or talking to fellow drivers, spending time with their family. Thus, most drivers engage in multiple activities to cope with the stress. They have less leisure time, which adds to their strain. So the Auto Unions can have tie up with some Non Governmental Organizations or with the Government (Regional Transport Office) and conduct awareness programs to overcome stress and to take care of their health.
- A majority of the drivers who have health issues and on-the- job problems were aged between 21-40 years and have been driving auto rickshaw for at least 3-5 years. So it is advisable that they can take care of their health and can also train themselves on any other skill to make their earnings.
- The auto rickshaw, as a vehicle, vibrates a lot while on the road. The effects of noise pollution cause hearing abilities and aural disorders, even amounting to deafness at a certain stage. So the drivers can use ear plugs to safe guard their hearing abilities.

Conclusion

The research study auto drivers show a remarkable impact on their socio-economic and health perspective. As they live hand to mouth in their day today life, the challenges faced by them are enormous. At times they feel fish out of water and the future remain always uncertain, as the sibling are not interested to carry out the same profession and want to get educated and find good income fetching job but due to family inability to support their education also remain only a dream. The main reason derived from the study is that, these auto drivers are looked down by the people of that locality and there is no good social status for their commitment. So based on these backgrounds the researcher concludes with the note that the socio-economic and health issues needed to be addressed immediately to protect their health, preserve their generation and promote their wellbeing.

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