



EVALUATIVE STUDY ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF AUTO RICKSHAW DRIVERS IN DIMAPUR, NAGALAND

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Abstract

This study explored the lives of auto rickshaw drivers in Dimapur district, evaluates their socio-economic conditions and examined the problems and challenges they encounter. Using both primary and secondary data sources, the study sheds light on the struggles and contributions of the drivers to the community. Four prominent auto stands were surveyed in Dimapur district from which 60 participants were sampled. Analyzing the data using statistical charts, averages and percentages had unveiled several findings. The study revealed that 58.33% of drivers found their earnings sufficient to support their families. Different fare charges in favour of students and senior citizens were found common amongst the drivers. Poor roads and fuel price hikes were the major problems while acquiring the skill of repairing and self-discipline were the major challenges of the auto rikshaw drivers in Dimapur. In essence, this study highlights the pivotal role and hardships of auto rickshaw drivers in providing economical and reliable transport system in Dimapur. By providing insights into their socio-economic conditions, struggles and contributions, the study aimed to foster empathy and drive positive changes in urban transport system in and around Dimapur district with respect to auto rikshaw drivers.

Keywords: Auto rikshaw, drivers, socio-economic, conditions, problems, challenges, Dimapur

Introduction: An auto could be an integral part of the transport system which is employed by passengers to convey between locations of their choice. This differs from other modes of conveyance where the pick-up and also the drop-off locations are determined by the passengers. Auto rickshaw plays an important role in urban transport system in India. Auto rickshaws are relatively cheaper and easily available form of public transport in the cities of

India. Auto rickshaw drivers spend a considerable amount of time in an environment exposed to air and noise pollution and full body vibration. They work on a daily basis to earn for their family. Auto rickshaw drivers are mostly of persons with low educational level. Many autos are owned or rented by the auto drivers who with their humble behaviour and hard work earn money by taking the passengers to their destination. They also provide door to door services and acts as a feeder mode to public transport, generally of train, bus and even air commuters to access the station. However, they face many problems and challenges and had to go through several hardships in rendering their services to the community. By providing insights into their socio-economic conditions, struggles and contributions, the study aimed to foster empathy and drive positive changes in urban transport system in and around Dimapur district with respect to auto rickshaw drivers.

Statement of the Problem: One of the major problems faced by the auto-rickshaw drivers in Dimapur District is the deplorable road condition which causes a lot of inconvenience to the auto rickshaw drivers as well as the passengers resulting in traffic jams during the peak hours and frequent accidents.

The fluctuations in fuel prices added a lot of burden to the auto rickshaw drivers. The frequent increase in fuel prices has a severe setback for the drivers, making it impossible for them to continue operating without incurring losses. With the increase in prices of various commodities, they struggled to sustain their job and notably exploit innocent and unaware public and become argumentative.

Significance of the Study: The study will highlight the level of services provided by the auto rickshaws and how auto rickshaws impact general Dimapur city's overall transport system. Auto rickshaw drivers are playing a very crucial role in Dimapur district today as they are able to provide accessible and affordable services to every nook and corner of the district. This study will help in knowing the social and economic conditions as well as the problems and challenges faced by the auto rickshaw drivers in Dimapur district.

Area of Study: Dimapur being the gateway of Nagaland has made it into a business hub with people coming from all over the country mainly for business purposes. For the in-depth and comprehensive coverage of the study area, we have selected four different locations in Dimapur, namely; Dhobinalla Auto stand, New Market Auto stand, Rail Gate Auto stand and Super market Auto stand. These areas were selected as they were the main and popular auto stands in Dimapur. The sample included 60 respondents; 15 respondents each from the four different locations were taken at random.

Literature Review: Shlaes and Mani (2013), in their work, '*A case study of auto rickshaw sector in Mumbai*' concluded that auto-rickshaw industry in Mumbai is very complex and rife with tension. It has clear opportunities for improvements with major focus on driving training, enhanced infrastructure and enforcement, permit and repair, in-flight auto rickshaw services and drivers engagement.

Subendiran(2014),in his '*Socio-Economic and Lifestyle Problems of Auto Rickshaw Drivers in Palani*' observed the general opinion of public on Auto Rickshaw Drivers(ARDs) and found out that ARDs exploit innocent and unaware public. He also revealed that despite governmentintervention and strong actions against defaulters, there is no standard fare practiced in Palani. The study also concluded that ARDs are argumentative by nature, unreliable and it is unsafe to travel on some routes and during certain hours of the day.

Attarte and Ingle (2007) in their survey on '*Hearing impairment and noise annoyance among auto rickshaw drivers working at Jalgaon City*' found that most of the drivers suffer sleep disorders, communication interference, poor concentration and headache. Some of the driversalso suffer from irritation, anxiety and tinnitus. They suggested the remedies to cut the noise related problems like making good roads, traffic regulation, vehicle maintenance, pure fuel and silencers for vehicles etc.

According to Verma, koobrichtniand Tlic(2014), big cities indeveloping countries are typically characterized by high density, poor public transport, poor roads, inadequate parking facilities, air pollution, crowd, accidents and a host of other transport problems. In the end they also suggested that making public awareness on unnecessary use of horn and the effects of noise caused by auto rickshaws should be created and enforced.

Shah and Iyer (2004) touches upon the role of auto rickshaws in transport system of a city and contribution to emissions andemphasize oninformationrelatedtotechnologiesforemissionreduction,useof alternate fuels and issues related to maintenance of vehicles.

Ramachander (2015) while conducting a study on the financial well-being of auto drivers in Bangalore had stated that the lives of the auto drivers areone of financial struggles with lower earnings and savings.

Ranjan (2015) examined the relationship between work-life balance and quality of life among auto-rickshaw drivers in Mumbai and indicated that those who spent more time on family then work (driving)experiences a higher quality of life then that spent on work (driving) than family.

Objectives

1. To assess the socio-economic status of auto rickshaw drivers in Dimapur
2. To find out the problems and challenges of auto rickshaw drivers in Dimapur.

Methodology: This is a mixed method study. The present study is conducted by using both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire and by direct interaction with respondents in different auto stands in Dimapur who were randomly selected. Secondary data was collected from various articles, magazines, journals, internet sources, etc.

Data analysis and discussion

Social Profile: The study revealed that majority of the auto rickshaw drivers, 46.67%, fall under the age group of 30-40 years followed by the age group 20-30 and 40 and above at 23.33% each and the rest 6.67% fall in the age group of 15-20 years (Table 1).

With regard to marital status, it was found that majority of the drivers were married i.e., 58%, while 33% of them being single, 5% of them being widowed and 4% resulted to be divorced (Table 1).

The study also observed that very high majority of the auto rickshaw drivers, 83%, were living in a nuclear family and the rest 17% were living in a joint family (Table 1).

Table 1: Social Profile (In %)

Particulars		Frequency	%
Age	15-20 Years	4	6.67
	20-30	14	23.33
	30-40	28	46.67
	40 and above	14	23.33
Marital Status	Single	20	33
	Married	25	58
	Divorced	2	4
	Widowed	3	5
Type of family	Nuclear family	50	83
	Joint family	10	17
Category	ST	25	41.67
	SC	18	30
	OBC	8	13.33
	General	9	15

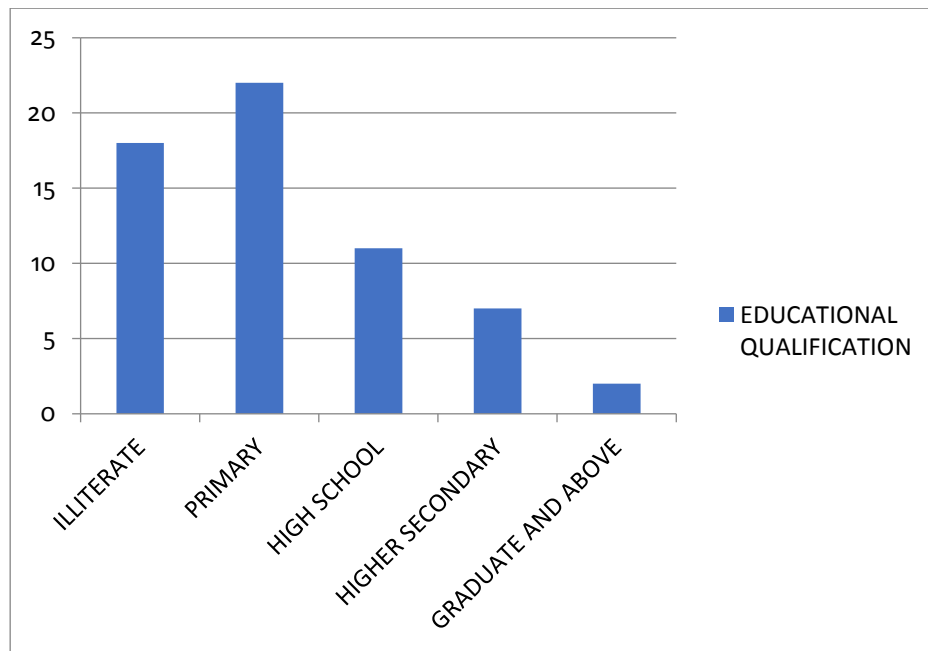
(Source: Field Survey, January, 2018)

The data also shows that majority of the workforce, 41.67%, belonged to the ST category followed by the SC category at 30%, general category at 15% and the OBC at 13.33% (Table 1).

Educational Profile:

The study reveals that majority of auto rickshaw drivers had a primary-level education accounting for 36.67%, while 18.33% have education up to high school level, 11.67% respondents completing up to higher secondary and a mere 3.33% have a graduate and above qualification. Thus, the data depicts that the overall literacy level is quite satisfactory with 70% of the respondents literate and the rest 30% illiterate (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Educational Qualification



(Source: Field Survey, January, 2018)

Work Experience and working hours:

The data revealed that highest percentage, 45%, of auto rickshaw drivers has been on the road for 3-7 years followed by 26.67% of them for 7-10 years, 15% for 10-15 years, 10% for 15 years or more, and a mere 3.33% for 0-3 years. Thus, the study found that unlike other profession, persons engaged in auto rickshaw driving does not sustained for as many years as in other job (Table 2). This is in conformity with the age group of auto rickshaw drivers (Table 1) where a very high majority, about 77% of them falling below the age of 40 years. They seems to compensate this comparatively fewer no of years in the job by working extra

hours in a day while on the job because the data reveals that 58.33% of rickshaw drivers put in between 5-10 hours per day, 26.67% put in between 2-5 hours, 11.67% put in more than 10 hours, and a mere 3.33% put in less than 2 hours a day(Table 2).

The study revealed that 30% of those who drove auto rickshaws did so because of lack of education, 20% of them resulted in driving auto for lack of employment opportunities, another 20% for financial gain, 13.33% for lack of other skills, 10% as a hobby, and 6.67% to supplement their income.

Table 2: Work Experienceand working hours

Particulars		Frequency	%
Experience	0-3 years	2	3.33
	3-7 years	27	45
	7-10 years	16	26.67
	10-15 years	9	15
	15 years above	6	10
Working hours in a day	Less than 2 hrs	2	3.33
	2-5 hours	16	26.67
	5-10 hours	35	58.33
	More than 10 hrs	7	11.67
Reason for driving auto	Uneducated	18	30
	Profitable	12	20
	No other skill acquired	8	13.33
	No other employment option	12	20
	Hobby	6	10
	To earn extra income	4	6.67
Availability of alternate job	Yes	12	20
	No	40	66
	Not really sure	8	14

Source: Field Survey, January, 2018

It was further confirmed that for majority, 66%,of the auto rickshaw drivers, there is no other employment option apart from driving auto while 20% have alternate jobs andthere was hesitancy for the rest 14% of them to disclose availability of alternative job avenues(Table 2).

Monthly Average Income: The study revealed that 51.67% of auto rickshaw drivers earned an average monthly income of 10-20 thousand rupees, 35% earned between 5-10 thousand, while 6.67% earned between rupees 20 to 30 thousand. Simultaneously it was found that a mere 3.33% earned above 30 thousand and 3.33% earned less than 5 thousand a month (Table 3). This shows that the earning from auto rickshaw driving is nominal or not high (Table 3).

With respect to the satisfaction about the income earned from auto rickshaw driving, the study revealed that majority, 58.33% of the rickshaw drivers felt their income covers their monthly family basic needs, while 13.33% are not satisfied with the income earned, that is, it does not meet the monthly family basic requirements and 28.34% were reluctant to disclose about their satisfaction on monthly earning from driving auto. The overall scenario, however, shows that income earned from driving auto is encouraging because the study further revealed that 50% of the respondents spend most of their income earned from driving auto on household expenses, 31.67% of them spend most on children's education, 5% of them spend most on medical expenses, on savings and on paying debts respectively, and 3.33% on other expenses.

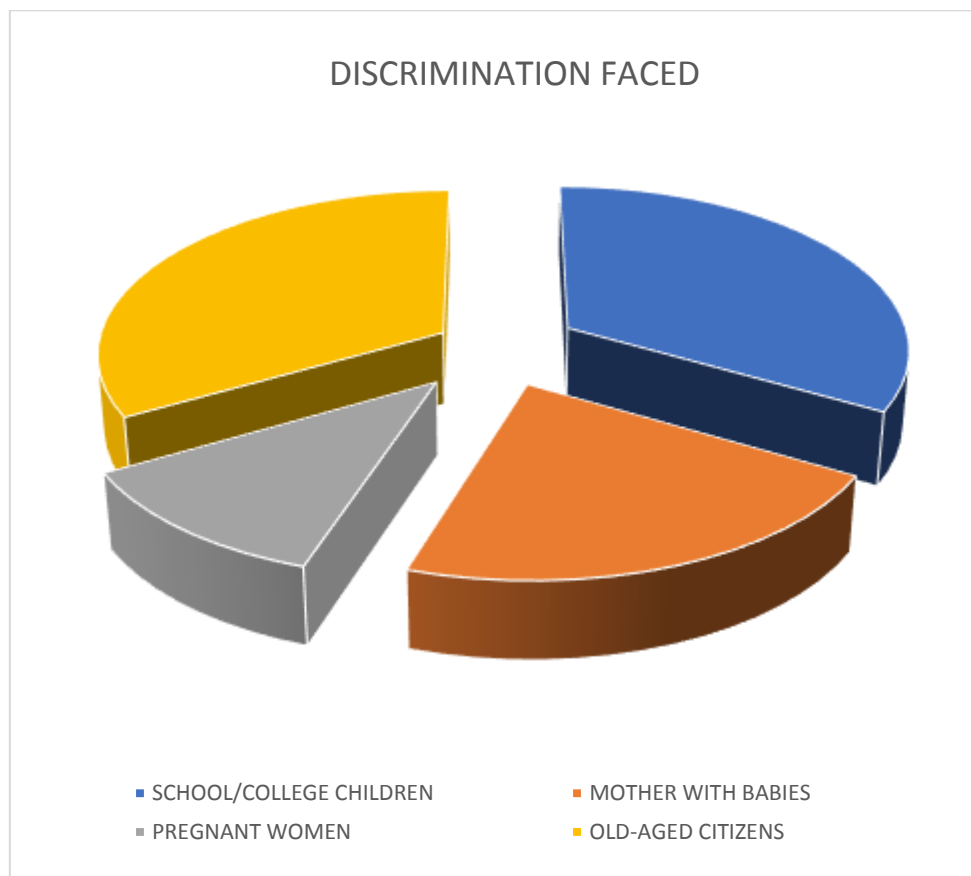
Table 3: Average Monthly Income and Expenditure

Particulars		Frequency	%
Monthly average income	Less than 5 thousand	2	3.33
	5-10 thousand	21	35
	10-20 thousand	31	51.67
	20-30 thousand	4	6.67
	30 thousand and above	2	3.33
Satisfaction	Yes	35	58.33
	No	8	13.33
	Can't say	17	28.34
Maximum expenditure	Household expenditure	30	50
	Children education	19	31.67
	Medical expenditure	3	5
	Savings	3	5
	Paying debts	3	5
	Any others	2	3.33

Source: Field Survey, January, 2018

Different Fare Charges:Despite directly facing pollution hazards and nerve breaking hardships, many auto drivers were found practicing different charges in favour of students in uniforms, senior citizens, pregnant women and mothers with babies. The study reveals that out of the total respondents as many as 33.33% of the auto rickshaw drivers commonly experienced charging fares in favour of students in uniforms, 33.33% commonly experienced charging fares in favour of elderly people, 21.67% in favour of mothers with babies, and 11.67% in favour of pregnant women (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Different Fare Charges

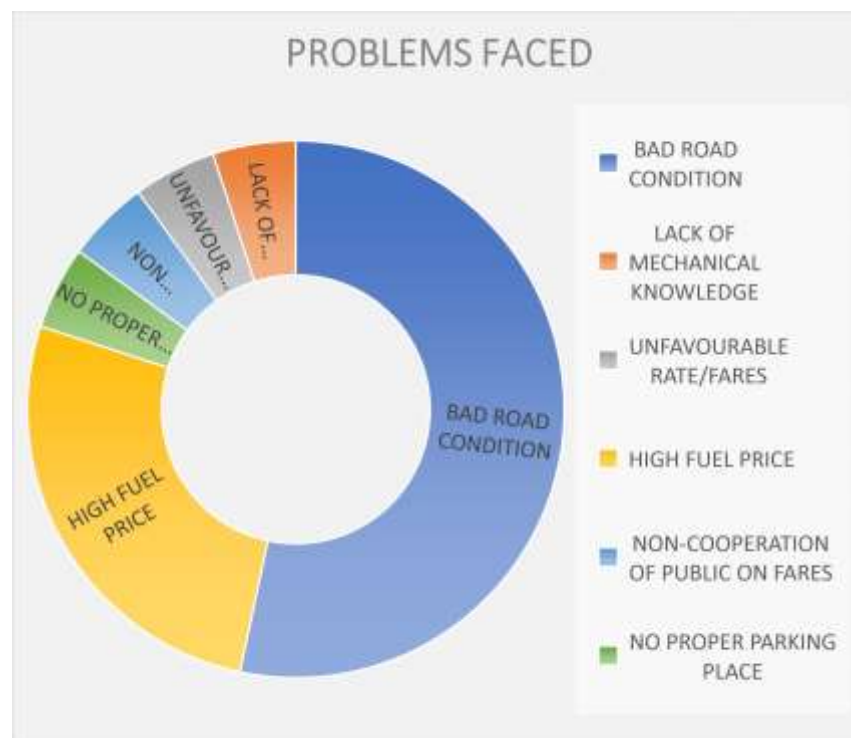


Problems and Challenges: The study revealed that for 53.33% of the respondents, poor road condition is the biggest concern while operating an auto rickshaw. Another 26.67% blamed high and frequent changes in fuel prices as the gravest problem faced, 5% cited lack of mechanical expertise in handling minor repairs, 5% cited unfavorable rates/fares fixed by authorities, 5% cites the public's resistance to paying the authorized fares for services, and 5% cited a lack of designated parking spaces (Table 4).

Table 4: Problems and Challenges

Particulars		Frequency	%
Problems and Challenges	Bad road condition	32	53.33
	Lack of mechanical knowledge	3	5
	Unfavourable rate/fares	3	5
	High fuel price	16	26.67
	Non-cooperation of public on fares	3	5
	No proper parking place	3	5

(Source: Field Survey, January, 2018)



Findings: With the help of data analysis the following findings has been made:

- It was found that majority, 58%, of the auto rickshaw drivers were family holders and high majority, 83% of them lived in nuclear type of family.
- The majority of the auto drivers had no alternate job and no other source of income apart from driving auto.
- It was found that majority of the rickshaw drivers had only primary level education and that 30% of the drivers took driving as a means of earning because they were uneducated.
- For majority of the drivers, 58.33%, money earned from driving auto was enough to sustain their family.
- The average monthly income earned of the majority, 51.67%, of the auto rickshaw drivers was found to be between Rs.10,000- 20,000/- and that the highest 50% of auto drivers spent most of their earnings from driving auto on household needs.
- It was found that majority of the auto drivers had their own bank account.
- It was found that practicing different fare charges in favour of students in uniforms, senior citizens, mothers with babies and pregnant women are found common amongst the auto drivers.
- It was found that majority of auto drivers faced major problems because of poor road condition, frequent fuel price hike and improper designated parking slots. While acquiring the skill of repairing and self-discipline in dealing with different types of passengers were the major challenges of the auto rickshaw drivers in Dimapur.

Conclusion:

The operation of auto rickshaw in Dimapur is one of the major means of transportation of people in various parts of the city. Auto rickshaws are becoming a popular mode of public transport due to ready availability, provision of door-to-door service, ease in contacting and a perception that they are affordable. This sector serves as a safety net for the uneducated and unemployed, providing a lucrative income of thousands especially for the poor who join this profession to support their family. This sector is experiencing various problems like financing of auto rickshaws, hectic traffic rules or regulations, corruption in providing permits, setting acceptable fares, the poor road condition, parking problems and impact of other transportation services. The

age group of 30-40 years mostly drive auto rickshaw in Dimapur. They have a moderate level of satisfaction in their profession. Although auto drivers are not much educated, they have a sound knowledge about the routes and places of the city. Though the earnings of most auto drivers suffice their basic family requirements, savings for future was found not forthcoming.

To conclude, the socio-economic conditions of auto drivers in Dimapur are neither good nor bad. Although they face problems and challenges in their day-to-day driving activities, they are found able to tackle them in their own stride. They have moderate level of satisfaction in their profession. The socio-economic conditions of the auto drivers can be enhanced by launching new schemes by considering their safety and security by the government.

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