



A CASE STUDY OF AUTO-RICKSHAW DRIVERS IN HNAHTHIAL TOWN OF MIZORAM

Dr. C. Lalnunmawia¹ Malsawmtluanga²

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Mizoram University, PIN:796004, Aizawl, Mizoram

²Master of Arts (Economics), Mizoram University, PIN:796004, Aizawl, Mizoram

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we examine the auto-rickshaw drivers in Hnahthial town of Mizoram, India by focusing their socio-economic status, issues and challenges that are being faced and the level of their job satisfaction. The study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative interviews and observations from auto-rickshaw drivers, transportation authorities, and other key stakeholders. The study found that majority of the auto-rickshaw drivers are from the family of lower middle socio-economic status reflecting the fact that the driving of auto-rickshaw as the main source of livelihood is still not a gainful job.

The study also found that low rate of fare with an index value of 0.8 was the most serious problem among the various problems confronted by auto-rickshaw drivers, followed by lack of auto-rickshaw stand and increasing private vehicles while lack of bad quality of road was ranked as the least significant problem with an index value of 0.51. As regard to job satisfaction, the study found that overall job satisfaction of auto-rickshaw drivers is very low. There is a higher level of dissatisfaction in terms of job security and income compared to working hours. The findings of this research shed light on the socio-economic conditions of auto-rickshaw drivers, their working conditions, income levels, and the challenges they encounter on a daily basis. The paper also explores potential solutions and strategies to address these issues and improve the livelihoods of auto-rickshaw drivers in urban Mizoram.

1. INTRODUCTION

Transportation plays a key role in the growth of a country's economic system; in shaping overall productiveness, quality of life of people, access to commodity and services. An effective and well devised transportation system plays a significant role in the economic development of a nation. India's transport sector is large and diverse; it caters to the needs of more than 1.1 billion people. India has one of the largest road networks in the world, the largest railway system in Asia, and the second-largest in the world. Transport in India mainly consists of transport by land, water and air. Road transport is the dominant mode of transport in India and accounts for about 87% of passenger traffic and 60% of freight traffic movement in the country.

Among the various form of transport services, auto rickshaw is a common form of transport in India both as a vehicle for hire and for private use. India is home to three quarters of the world's auto-rickshaws, which are three-wheeled motor vehicles that are hired to move both people and goods (Mani and Pant, 2011). Auto rickshaws are an essential part of urban transportation and a step toward improving quality of life and environmentally friendly transportation options.

The number of auto-rickshaw as well as its importance has also been growing in both rural and urban Mizoram. As per the record of Transport Department, Government of Mizoram, the number of auto-rickshaw (passenger) was 3737 and 5809 by 2023, a rise of more than 2000 in just four years. Auto-rickshaws, especially in urban town of Mizoram, serve as a flexible and convenient mode of transportation that fills the gap between the limited reach of public transport and the need for door-to-door services. It highly guarantees connectivity, fits any kind of road, and is typically inexpensive for the consumer. Not only does it increase the public's transportation options but it also creates livelihood opportunities for many families. In addition to giving the public convenient access, auto-rickshaw also contributes less to environmental pollution than other vehicles. However, despite the excellent service provided by auto rickshaws, the economic situation of auto rickshaw drivers seems to be not much improved. In their service area, not even all rickshaw drivers have access to a functional rickshaw stand. Because of the fast-changing technologies and the advancements in automobile sector, many people don't value rickshaw drivers' contributions to society.

Despite playing this role, the public, the media, and policymakers frequently criticize auto-rickshaws and their drivers. The alleged flaws of auto-rickshaws and their drivers, as well as the regulations to solve these issues, are the subject of a heated public debate in Indian cities.



The main objective of this paper is to explore the many issues that auto-drivers in Hnahthial Town of Mizoram, were dealing with. The socio-economic status of auto-rickshaw drivers in the study area has also received attention in order to assess if operating an auto-rickshaw is a viable source of income there. The findings of the study are expected to provide useful information for effective policy prescription.

2. AREA OF STUDY

Hnahthial town is one of the district headquarters of the new districts in the state of Mizoram which was established on 12th September 2008 and fully functional on 3rd June 2019. It is located 22 KM towards East from Lunglei. This district is bounded on the north by Serchhip and on the south by Lawngtlai district, on the southeast by Saiha district, on the east by Myanmar. Hnahthial town is the administrative headquarters of the district.

According to the Census India 2011 data, there are 7,187 people living in Hnahthial town, of which 3,573 of them are males and 3,614 are females. 947 children (i.e.13.18%) of the total population of Hnahthial town are below the age of 6. The female sex ratio in Hnahthial town is 1011 which is higher than the state average of 976. In addition, the literacy rate of Hnahthial town is 97.24 % which is also higher than state average of 91.33 %.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the issues faced by the auto-rickshaw drivers in Hnahthial town of Mizoram
2. To examine socio-economic characteristics of auto driver in the study area
3. To examine the level of satisfaction of auto-rickshaw drivers with their job
4. To suggest suitable measures to address the problems with auto-rickshaw drivers

4. REASEACH QUESTIONS

1. Does driving auto rickshaw provide enough income to support a family?
2. Are auto-rickshaw drivers satisfied with their job?
3. What are the major problems of auto rickshaw in the study area?

5. METHODOLOGY

Data Source: The study is mainly based on primary and secondary data. For the collection of primary data, a well - designed questionnaire was developed and data were collected through personal interview in the study area. Secondary data is collected from various published and unpublished report, concerned Government Departments records, journals, website and other resources.

Sampling Design: The study employed simple random sampling technique for selection of the sample from the study area. The present study determined the sample size of 52 respondents using the following sample size formula; $S = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$ where, N = total population and e = margin of error.

Tools of Analysis: The data so collected were analysed by using suitable and simple statistical tools like percentage, average, etc.

To measure Job Satisfaction Index (JSI), the study employed three questions to measure the extent to which auto-rickshaw drivers are satisfied with their jobs. The three questions are as follows: 1) How satisfied are you with your working hours? 2) How satisfied are you with your job security? 3) How satisfied are you with your income? All questions are measured using 5 points Likert Scale where employees were asked to rate their level of satisfaction as Extremely satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Dissatisfied, Extremely Dissatisfied. The JSI was then calculated using the following formula

$$\text{Job Satisfaction Index} = \left\{ \left(\frac{\text{Question mean value}}{4} \right) - 1 \right\} \times 100$$

Based on the above formula, the score of JSI ranges from 0 to 100 from which the score ranges are classified as follows:

- 80-100 : Very high satisfaction
- 70-79 : High satisfaction
- 60-69 : Acceptable satisfaction
- 50-59 : Low satisfaction
- 0-49 : Very low satisfaction

For finding the order of importance of problems related to auto-rickshaw service, five-point likert scale was used based on the auto-rickshaw drivers' perception. It comprises of very strongly agreed, agreed, neutral, disagreed and strongly disagreed. The highest important problem was assigned a scale value of 5 followed by high importance with a scale value of 4 and so on. Relative index of importance was then ranked using the following formula.



$$\text{Relative Index of Importance (RII)} = \sum \frac{SiFi}{AN}$$

Where, \sum = summation Si = ith scale value, Fi = frequency of ith importance given by the respondents, A = highest scale value N = total number of respondents.

6. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Socio-economic Status of the Respondents

Socioeconomic status is the position of an individual or group on the socioeconomic scale, which is determined by a combination of social and economic factors such as income, amount and kind of education, type and prestige of occupation, place of residence, and in some societies or parts of society, ethnic origin or religious background. SES plays a significant role in determining an individual's quality of life, health, social position, and class. Thus, socio-economic status (SES) affects many aspects of human functioning, including physical and mental health. In this study, self-designed socio-economic status (SES) scale was employed with a score ranges of 5-20, where the score of 0-5 indicate low SES, 5-10 lower middle SES, 10-15 middle SES, 15-20 upper middle SES, and above 20 high SES. The parameters and sub-parameters included in the present SES scale and their scores are presented in table-1 below.

Table-1: Socio-Economic Status (SES) Scale and Scores

Parameters	Sub-parameters	Scores
Types of Ration Card	AAV	1
	PHH	2
	APL	4
Average Monthly Income	10000-15000	1
	15000-20000	2
	20000-25000	3
	25000-30000	4
	Above 30000	5
Level of Education	Below High School	1
	Class-X	2
	Class-XII	3
	Graduate	4
	Above Graduate	5
Ownership of Rickshaw	Rental	1
	Own Property	3
Sources of Income other than Driving	Not at all	0
	Occasionally	1
	Frequently	2
	Regularly	5

Source: Author's Self-Designed

Although there are different SES scales available to employ such as the Kuppaswamy scale, BG Prasad scale, and Udai Pareekh scale, the above SES scale as presented in table-1 has been chosen as it is considered relevant for the present area of the study. Using this SES scales, the study measure the socio-economic status of auto-rickshaw drivers in the study area.

On the basis of the above scale, the household achievements of the auto-rickshaw driver were measured and presented in table-2.

Table-2 Socio-Economic Status of the Respondents

Socio-economic Status	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Low SES	14	25.00
Lower Middle SES	18	32.14
Middle SES	12	21.43
Upper Middle SES	9	16.07
High SES	3	5.36

Source: Author's Calculation from Survey Data



As illustrated in table-2, majority of the auto-drivers in the study area are from lower middle SES family with 32.14 percent followed by low SES and middle SES with 25 percent and 21.43 percent respectively. The high SES consist only a negligible percent indicating the fact that the auto-rickshaw drivers in the study area are mostly from middle and below middle SES. This demonstrates the fact that the auto-rickshaw drivers find it difficult to improve their SES using their occupation on the one hand and the lack of decent livelihood opportunities in auto-rickshaw driving from the present system.

6.2 Major Problems of Auto-Rickshaw Drivers

Auto rickshaw drivers follow the unhealthy lifestyle like irregularity of meals, unavailability of restrooms, stressful occupational conditions and so on. Over and above the health-related issues, the present study attempted to identify various problems related their day-to-day business. Tabl-3 shows the list of various problems as stated by the respondents in the study area.

Tabl-3: Problems of Auto-Rickshaw Drivers

Major Problems	No. of Respondents	Percent
Increasing Private Vehicles	10	17.86
Low rate of Fare	17	30.36
Lack of Stand Point	14	25.00
Lack of All-weather Road	7	12.50
Lack of Co-operation among the Drivers	8	14.29

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

According to majority of auto-rickshaw drivers, there is less demand for their services and more and more individuals are choosing to use private vehicles. As such, the fare is too low to support a family and frequently does not keep up with economic changes. Under such circumstances they usually overcharge when a customer requests to be taken to a remote place because they assume that other passengers would not show up on the way back.

It is also found that 25 % of the respondents faced problems regarding their standpoint. As Hnathial rickshaw stand is located in a market area, some of the vehicles used to park their vehicles, which create problems for the rickshaw driver for their parking leading to loss of customers during the prime time.

One of the main issues, according to 17 percent of the respondents, is the growing use of private vehicles for urban transportation since it has increased traffic congestion and parking lot issues, which have in turn led to a decline in customer flow and lengthier travel times.

Additionally, 14 percent of the respondents said that strong cooperation among the auto-rickshaw drivers is necessary for efficient operation, increasing the quality of services, and looking out for the welfare of the drivers.

Lack of good road connectivity is also found to be one of the major problems for auto-rickshaw drivers in the study area as it causes longer time period to reach a particular destination. Besides, bad road condition may also lead to direct damage to a vehicle’s undercarriage, exhaust system, or other vulnerable components. This can lead to costly repairs or even render the vehicle inoperable.

6.3 Relative Index of Importance

The above listed problems were based on the responses of the respondents during the survey. Each of these problems was then measured using a five-point Likert scaling technique as mentioned in methodology. Identification of problems of auto-rickshaw service is the most important single factor for further improvement in this sector. Once the problem is known, the government can develop strategies and policies to effectively address the issues and launch specific interventions as per the need. This will ensure effective policy formulation and implementation. Results of the rank scale for auto-rickshaw service is presented in Table-4.

Table-4: Relative Index of Importance of Auto-Rickshaw Drivers’ Problem

Questions	Score	A*N	Index	Rank
Is increasing private vehicles a problem for auto-rickshaw service?	185	280	0.66	3
Does low rate of fare cause a problem for auto-rickshaw driver?	224	280	0.79	1
Does lack of stand-point cause a problem for auto-rickshaw driver?	211	280	0.75	2
Does bad quality of road create a problem for auto-rickshaw driver?	143	280	0.51	5
Does lack of co-operation among the drivers lead to a problem for auto-rickshaw driver?	171	280	0.61	4

Source: Author’s Calculation from Field Survey, 2023



Table 4 revealed that low rate of fare had an index value of 0.8 and was ranked as the most serious problem among the various problems confronted by auto-rickshaw drivers, followed by lack of auto-rickshaw stand and increasing private vehicles while lack of bad quality of road was ranked as the least significant problem with an index value of 0.51. Based on these findings, the authority might formulate policies in accordance with the severity of the problems to address the stated problems.

6.4 Job Satisfaction Level of Auto-Rickshaw Drivers

Job satisfaction is crucial for the success of any individual. When workers are satisfied with their work, they are more likely to be motivated, engaged, and productive. This ultimately leads to higher efficiency and better overall performance. Table-5 shows auto-rickshaw drivers' level of job satisfaction.

Table-5: Auto-Rickshaw Drivers' Level of Job Satisfaction.

Questions	Extremely satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Extremely dissatisfied
How satisfied are you with your working hours	12	17	9	12	6
How satisfied are you with your job security	6	7	13	15	15
How satisfied are you with your income from driving	5	5	8	22	16
Job Satisfaction Index	35				

Source: Author's Calculation from Field Survey, 2023

The table presents responses to questions about job satisfaction, specifically regarding working hours, job security, and income from driving. The responses are classified into five categories: extremely satisfied, satisfied, neutral, dissatisfied, and extremely dissatisfied.

For the question about working hours, the responses are fairly evenly distributed across the categories. The highest number of respondents chose "satisfied" as their response, followed by "extremely satisfied" and "dissatisfied." Regarding job security, there is a lower level of satisfaction compared to the other questions. The majority of respondents expressed dissatisfaction, with the highest number of responses in the "dissatisfied" and "extremely dissatisfied" categories. In terms of income from driving auto-rickshaw, there is a higher level of dissatisfaction. The largest number of respondents chose "dissatisfied" as their response, followed by "extremely dissatisfied" and "neutral". A smaller number of respondents expressed satisfaction with their income.

From the result of the analysis, it can be inferred that overall job satisfaction is very low. There is a higher level of dissatisfaction in terms of job security and income from driving, compared to working hours. This suggests that these factors are major contributors to the low job satisfaction reported in this study. Addressing issues related to job security and income from driving may be necessary to improve overall job satisfaction for auto-rickshaw drivers in the study area.

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