


RESEARCH ARTICLE

Thematic analysis: Physical, psychological, and social pressures on taxi drivers of Lahore

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ABSTRACT

The taxi industry plays a significant role in urban transportation systems on commercial and flexible terms. This study aimed to investigate drivers' overall pressures and constraints, such as; physical, psychological, and social pressures. The goal of this study was to provide practical recommendations for the betterment of this industry, such as approved authentic work timings, workload reduction, a maximum of 8 hours of driving, and fixed stops to detect, distinguish, and treat physical and mental health related to the job specification, training, and development courses to cope with mental, physical, and occupational stress to promote positive changes. The study consisted of eight male taxi drivers recruited using a purposive sampling technique. A qualitative research design was used. A series of questions was administered to taxi drivers after obtaining consent from the participants. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data after collection. This article provides an inclusive evaluation of work conditions and factors that impact the overall well-being of taxi drivers. The result indicates that social pressures, physical health, psychological health, financial pressures, and unhealthy work conditions impact the overall well-being of the taxi drivers.

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INTRODUCTION

Workplace hazards have been a significant cause of concern in the taxi industry, and management has been actively involved in reducing the hazards taxi drivers face. However, there appears to be insufficient emphasis on drivers' physical health and emotional well-being. Injuries and disabilities caused by road traffic accidents are universal issues, with the predictable quantity of sufferers having persisted constantly over the past few years. Unfortunately, it continuously increases, with approximately 1.2 million people dying yearly worldwide (World Health Organization, 2015).

The taxi industry is essential to the urban transportation system, both financially and in terms of flexibility. It attracts a large number of people and is convenient for public transportation. The taxi business is systematized all over the world. Operational conditions, behaviors, well-being, and acquaintance with road misfortunes have been exciting topics for investigators, containing behavior sciences, psychology, and finances (Poo, Ledesma, & Lopez, 2018). However, taxi service complaints are increasing daily because of behavioral issues by taxi drivers and administrations. Taxi

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transportation companies and drivers face more challenges than opportunities (Jayaraj, Hasan, & Ahmad, 2019).

Customer-oriented service work is an essential part of the economy, and the culture of customer sovereignty, where the customer is king, is becoming increasingly prevalent. The results regarding dignity, emotional labour, and customer abuse in the workplace were discussed. Taxi drivers work long hours for low wages and report hypertension, weight gain, and musculoskeletal pain associated with the sedentary nature of their job, stressful working conditions, and poor dietary habits. They also experience a high work-related fatality rate (Wang & Linda, 2013). A study found a relationship between work-related factors, stress, and traffic fines. Aggression during a drive intermediates the relationship between stress risk tendency and traffic sanctions. Traffic penalties and fines increased because of drivers' different personality traits and tolerance levels. When anger emerges, it leads to road misbehavior and can cause harmful incidents (Montoro, Useche, Alonso, & Cendales, 2018).

The need for taxi transportation is increasing day by day in big cities like Lahore because of the increase in population. There are so many riding services in the big cities that some people prefer to travel in taxis operated by transportation companies compared to the online riding transportation system. A study concludes that these online companies sometimes mislead users through vague pricing, safety, and security issues (Silver & Fischer-Baum, 2015).

This study uses a biopsychosocial model to define taxi drivers' physical, mental, and societal health. The biopsychosocial method was established by George Engel and John Romano. Whereas biomedical medicine models emphasize pathophysiology and biological methods for treating disease, the biopsychosocial approach highlights the status of considerate human health and disease in their maximum frameworks. The biopsychosocial tactic methodically studies biological, psychological, and social features and their multifaceted connections in understanding well-being, disease, and health maintenance (Frankel et al., 2003).

According to Thomas (1997), Engel was famous for his psychoanalytic guidance, significantly impacting consultation-liaison psychiatry. His biopsychosocial model became a guiding principle and belief for psychiatric and medical settings. He connected the subject's life story to present psychological and health issues (Engel, 1997). Later, this model was used by many physicians to identify patients' health-relevant issues (Engel, 1980). Humanistic potentials are highly appreciated in the context of the biopsychosocial model. It includes specialized techniques for assorted biological, mental, and social wonders linked to human well-being (Cohen & Clark, 2010).

This study focuses on the functionalism theory of sociology to depict social values and their social impacts on taxi drivers. Theoretically, "functionalism" emphasizes society through social constructs like organizations, specific pyramids, customs, and values. This theory refers to the activity that interferes with and endorses maintaining a helpful system. In the 20th century, this theory was related to many reputable authors such as Émile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, Herbert Spencer, and Robert Merton, who founded American social theory in the 1950s and 1960s. According to this theory, society is a complex system wherein all elements and parts work together to endorse commonality, harmony, and constancy. It looks at society's structure as a whole (Diago, 2019).

Social anxieties and pressures are the reason for a traffic rule violation, and psychological characteristics in taxi drivers, including attitude, norms, emotions, aggression, self-orientedness, agitation, restlessness, and selfishness, have a destructive impact on their overall performances and safety measures (Aghabayk, Mashhadizade, & Moridpour, 2020). A daily emotional routine plays a vital role in someone's professional life. A longitudinal study conducted in Malaysia confirmed that a

person's emotional needs were related to acute and severe anxiety and fatigue, whereas acute fatigue causes had an impact on safety motivation. At the same time, acute emotional needs and fatigue are significantly related to traffic accidents (Husain, Mohamad, & Idris, 2019). After completing their piece training, licensed taxi drivers found grey matter in their hippocampus that would help them learn and remember the place map where they got to work. Meanwhile, it was linked with artificial intelligence, which helped them learn about environments and places. (Griesbauer, Manley, Wiener, & Spiers, 2022).

Additionally, many factors affect taxi drivers' performance and interest because of their job specifications. According to research, a large number of taxi drivers were obese and self-reported hypertension, high levels of cholesterol, piles, palpitations, and diabetes. Fatigue and fewer hours of sleep harm their lives, precisely when they are busy working for more than 8 hours and traveling too long without completing their bodily needs (Lim & Chia, 2015). All over the world, taxi drivers face many physical and psychological problems that are interlinked with each other. Lower back pain is a widespread occupational problem among taxi and truck drivers because of their long routines of driving without any breaks (Wang et al., 2017). Driving is critical, and employees must sit in a specific posture for hours while staring straight at the road for a safer drive. In this case, they do experience neck and back pain. Studies found a strong relationship between head position and acute neck pain among drivers; these pains can cause severe accidents if not considered and well treated (Friska & Ichsan, 2018).

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSD) are associated with driving jobs in which the driver must be constant in one position, causing severe knee pain, backbone pain, and collar pain. Refining automobile assembly, lessening vibration, and teaching drivers about accurate approaches to managing obesity inhibition may reduce musculoskeletal syndromes among taxi drivers (Aminian, Jamshidi, Mehrdad Sadeghniaat-Haghighi, & Sekhavati, 2016). According to a study, drivers are at higher risk of cardiovascular disease because of work stress, less physical activity, an unhygienic diet, and poor health care analysis (Gany et al., 2013).

This research project integrates the various factors that may influence the safety behavior, physical health, and emotional well-being of taxi drivers into a model that shows hazards, aversion to risk-taking, aggression, and drivers' perceptions of management's commitment to health and safety as directly influencing the physical symptoms, emotional well-being, and unsafe behavior of taxi drivers. The present study is a qualitative one that aims to investigate physical health and psychological issues related to the taxi drivers of Lahore.

The main objective of this study was to find societal, psychological, physical, and environmental factors that affect the overall well-being of drivers. Secondly, there is a lack of policymaking in the taxi industry, specifically in Pakistan. It is urgently necessary to take some practical steps to enhance this industry at the governmental level. It is essential to educate drivers and society, as well as to respect and value every profession. This study highlights the issues relevant to taxi drivers, specifically in Pakistan's social and psychological context.

This research is valid for global and Asian cultures. Understanding the work hazards faced by taxi and truck drivers is necessary. Stress, pressure, financial issues, societal pressures, and acute health issues need to be addressed, and this study fills the gaps in the literature review according to Asian cultural values.

METHOD

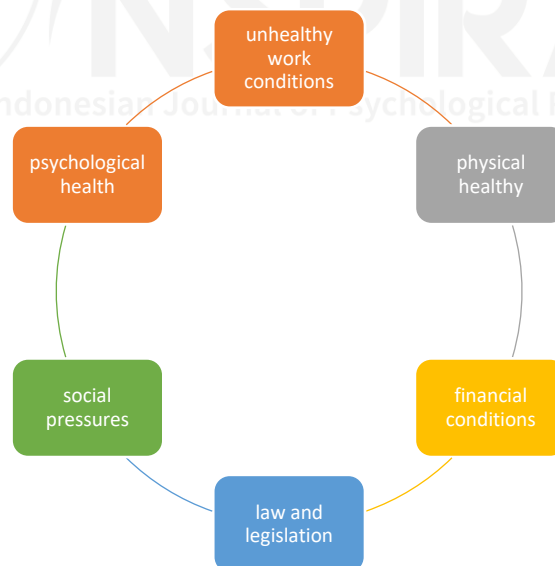
The current study has a qualitative research design, and thematic analysis was used for data analysis. The sample was collected from eight ($n = 8$ male) taxi drivers in Lahore, and a purposive sampling technique was used for data collection. Male taxi drivers with at least one year of job experience participated in the study.

Data were collected from eight taxi drivers aged 25–45 working in a local taxi service in Lahore, Pakistan, through a purposive sampling technique. Interviews were conducted via phone calls and face-to-face interaction after appointments were made with their consent. At the same time, calls were recorded with their permission according to the ethical code of conduct. Interviews with all participants were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. The in-depth interview started with, “Are you satisfied with your job?” Do you know about laws and legislation for labor rights in Pakistan related to taxi drivers? Is there a need to refresh or reorganize government regulations? Do you think the nature of your job affects your physical and psychological health? Has any job-relevant excellent or bad incident been affecting your life? Have you dealt with work pressure and ambiguity? “If you have, how do you approach the job's difficulties and burdens?”

The focus of the researcher was on sensible probes to evaluate the individuality of contestants. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed through thematic analysis to discover the main and vibrant themes.

RESULT

Thematic analysis was used to examine the data from semi-structured interviews with eight taxi drivers. The results are as follows:



Social pressure: Disrespectful behavior of society, customers and management

Taxi drivers faced disrespectful behavior from society, customers, and the company's administration as well. According to a participant, our kids and spouse felt ashamed to tell others that our father is a taxi driver, which disheartened them and kept their morale down. They do not have security or cooperation from their company. It is stated by a participant:

“No, in the past, people did respect the taxi drivers. But now no one respects us. Our society degrades us and feels ashamed to keep contact with us. They want to maintain distance from us.

People normally respect the drivers with whom they have spent a lot of time. But normally, people do not respect drivers. The owner, who gives us jobs at their home, ordered us to polish their shoes and to go grocery shopping. In other words, they used them as servants, not as drivers.”

(Interview to P4)

There are so many stories told by drivers when they ask for help from their workplace. Management refused to help and ordered them to solve their issues by themselves. If a driver got injured or was snubbed by the customer, nobody would help them. In this case, it is highly necessary to give them proper training. These kinds of circumstances make taxi drivers rude and unhelpful. Thus, this is the cycle that has always been harmful to drivers, passengers, and society.

“There should be a policy for our survival because if someone cheats us, hurts us, or we are victimized by accidents, no one would believe us. People are used to blaming us.” “There should be a policy for our survival because if someone cheats us, hurts us, or we are victimized by accidents, no one would believe us. People are used to blaming us.”

(Interview to P1)

Taxi drivers work on the roads, where they must maintain their moods and aggressiveness. They used to deal with different individuals with different mindsets. As stated by them:

“I do call the call center for help, but they said you have to solve your problems by yourself.”

(Interview to P2)

“There should be laws and legislation that would be active while someone insulted or harassed the driver.”

(Interview to P7)

“I personally faced many bad events. Some people are difficult to handle, but it’s the nature of our job to control the customer with respect.”

(Interview to P4)

“A person hired my taxi. When I asked him to pay the bill, he was forcing me to reduce the bill. I told him I couldn’t do that because it had all been recorded on the car meter, and he shouted and used abusive language. These are the hurdles and bad experiences related to the driving job.”

(Interview to P8)

Psychological and emotional pressures due to society and family

Psychological issues faced by drivers are very serious by nature, such as anxiety, irritation, agitated moods, and low morale. The main reason for these disturbances is noise pollution, where people use loud horns on the road while driving, and abusive behavior by the public. In short, they are a straightforward target for everyone. It is human psychology to expect respect, honor, and politeness from others. A person who is working 12 hours a day on very low wages with no societal, familial, or organizational acceptance may obviously suffer from mental dispositions. According to a participant.

“There are great chances of the driver being indulged in frustration, depression, irritation, backache, and diabetes as well. Our work conditions, people’s behavior, and abusive language make us irritated and disappointed. In fact, it is very difficult to control our aggression when a customer does not pay us a complete fare or behaves authoritatively.”

(Interview to P6)

“It was excruciating for me when I came to know that my children and wife are ashamed because of my profession, even though I am earning halal for them. From that day on, I felt guilty and lost my confidence and self-image.”

(Interview to P8)

Unhealthy job conditions lead to bad physical health

The job conditions of taxi drivers are very difficult and harmful for them. It is their job requirement to sit for long duty hours in extreme weather. In these environmental and social conditions, it has been very difficult for drivers to work hard without any appraisal.

“Yes, because of our profession, we do have problems like a painful back, vertebrae that have been disturbed, obesity because of a lack of exercise, digestive issues, and diabetes. There are lots of psychological disturbances that may affect our physical health as well.”

(Interview to P2)

Taxi drivers do have back and collar pains due to looking straight at the road; secondly, they do not have any health insurance to take care of their health. The most common diseases in drivers are piles, hemorrhoids, high blood pressure, obesity, and backache; and these are all diseases associated with long duty hours. It is the worst reality of this industry that they do not care of their employees, by not paying even a single penny for the betterment and training of the drivers. If someone resists their rights, they will prefer to terminate them.

“But normally drivers do face the problems of high blood pressure, obesity, piles, backaches, and knee aches.”

(Interview to P4)

Duty hours and work conditions are very tight to deal with because a person must work more than 10 hours a day while getting 15,000 rupees per month. If someone got injured, disabled, or needed their help in any context, they terminated the employee or refused to take any helpful steps ahead of them.

Lack of awareness about law and legislation by the taxi-drivers

There are laws and regulations for every industry in Pakistan, but the taxi industry is not working practically. It is recommended worldwide to drive only for 8 hours and take a rest between working hours to maintain efficacy, efficiency, and safety. There are labor laws in the industry, but they do not act accordingly. Taxi drivers in Pakistan are not allowed to know about their rights and governmental protections. If someone is motivated to act against the company that hired them, they have been disappointed because of the expensive judiciary. A participant stated that:

“In Pakistan, we do not have job security or insurance. We do have medical facilities, but only on paper. If someone asks for their rights according to the agreement, the owner takes serious action against them. So, we do not consider laws and regulations that are not applicable.”

(Interview to P2)

According to another participant:

“I don’t think that there is any law in our society that would secure us.” Our salary is 15,000 rupees, and our working hours are more than 14 hours. The company doesn’t consider us humans. The government should take some actions for our betterment.”

(Interview to P4)

Every human needs money to buy things for their survival. Taxi drivers do jobs with long hours, bad working environments, low wages, no insurance, and bonuses. These are the conditions that motivate them to go for illegal or unapproved ways to collect money for their families. Some claimed to get fuel discounts but did not inform the company. These are the cycles in which a factor impacts a second factor. So, this issue should be discussed seriously.

“Yes, I guess there are laws in Pakistan, but not practically. Lawyers worked with high fees that were not affordable. We have salaries of 15,000, and we cannot afford their charges. In Pakistan, it’s very hard to listen to the voice of the poor people.”

(Interview to P8)

DISCUSSION

The results showed that taxi drivers are unsatisfied, insecure with their job, feel helpless, and hopeless with fewer wages, no bonus, long duty hours, no incentive or appraisal, and authoritative management. There was a relationship between the physical work environment and general health, and there was a direction in organizational involvement and both general health and safety behavior. Researchers found that aggression and risk-taking intentions were two specific individual factors influential in predicting the accident involvement of taxi drivers (Chung, Park, & Sohn, 2021).

There are laws and legislation from the government of Pakistan for the private taxi association. Drivers do not have sufficient knowledge about their rights, and if someone has the information, they do not have a sufficient amount or approach to get justice from the courts. They are financially weak and despair because of their job hurdles and difficulties. Low job control and high psychological job demands have been found to predict mental health complaints such as depression and fatigue. The study found that control protects workers from the unhealthy effects of high psychological job demands. Job control affords workers greater discretion in when and how to deal with the demands of the job. More specifically, a worker who has too much work to do will handle the stress better if the job has some flexibility in terms of its allocation of time and energy to tasks.

Taxi drivers face many health-related issues because they have to sit in the same seat for so long. Physiological issues like piles, high blood pressure, backaches, knee aches, obesity, and diabetes are very common in taxi drivers because of their profession. Fatigue is a particular problem for professional drivers, especially truck drivers. About 20% of all crashes and fatalities and 10% of all injuries involving a long-haul truck occur between midnight and 6 a.m., the peak period for driver fatigue (Blower et al., 1998). There are many bad experiences of taxi drivers related to customer dealing that may create psychological issues among taxi drivers like traumatic stress, anxiety, and irritated moods. It is all about the behavior of the customer that may impact the driver’s behavior, such as not being willing to pay the full amount of wage to the driver, bossy behavior, abusive language, physical harm, harassment, and shouts, as well.

CONCLUSION

There are many factors responsible for affecting the employee's performance, specifically in the taxi (driver) industry. According to the above findings, an employee can perform well in a friendly and secure atmosphere. In unhealthy work environments, taxi drivers won't be able to perform efficiently. Similarly, long duty hours with low wages and without health insurance lower the self-esteem and confidence of the drivers. Meanwhile, extreme unhealthy work conditions worsen the employees' (drivers') physical health, mental health, and overall well-being.

The purpose of these suggestions is to improve the work and health conditions of the taxi drivers, lower the number of fatalities due to road accidents, and save the property of civilians. There should be refresher courses to enhance their skills and knowledge about the latest vehicles and training. They must be trained to face any accidental situation with the help of coping strategies. They must be trained enough about their eatables, disadvantages of taking alcohol, naswar, cigarettes, etc. to get good health while doing their job. They must be aware of their rights, dos, and don'ts.

To increase the awareness of the public and drivers, it is necessary to increase the respect and value of any profession. Taxi drivers should be trained to deal smartly in difficult circumstances. The taxi industry should provide their drivers with medical and accidental insurance. They should refresh and reconstruct policies to enhance their enthusiasm and increase their performance. The government should check on the taxi industry to see whether it is doing business according to government rules and policies. Additionally, there should be fixed duty hours, breaks, and intervals between duty hours to maintain the well-being of the employees. There should be strict rules on vehicle maintenance, and hygiene should be checked on a daily basis to avoid accidents and diseases. Transportation companies should schedule drivers' anxiety, stress, and aggression levels timely to maintain their mental and physical health. They should be fully equipped with the psychological guidance of a professional psychologist to conduct relaxation techniques, attention span, concentration skills, and stress coping strategies. training regarding stress-control strategies to avoid any bad incidents..

DECLARATION

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The research data associated with this paper is easily available on demand by the researcher in transcription form..

Declaration of interest's statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Additional information

No additional information is available for this paper.

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