

SOCIO ECONOMIC STUDY OF AUTO RICKSHAW DRIVERS: A CASE STUDY OF CHURU CITY, RAJASTHAN

Anju Ojha

Assistant Professor (Geography)
Govt. Lohia College, Churu (Rajasthan) India
Email: draj2280@gmail.com

How to cite this paper:

Ojha Anju (2024) Socio Economic Study of Auto Rickshaw Drivers: A Case Study of Churu City, Rajasthan, Journal of Global Resources, Vol. 10 (01)

DOI:

10.46587/JGR.2024.v10i01.009

Received: 17 Nov. 2023

Reviewed: 02 Dec. 2023

Final Accepted: 24 Dec. 2023


Freely available Online
www.isdesr.org

Abstract: *This research article delves into the socio-economic aspects of auto-rickshaw drivers in Churu City, Rajasthan state, India, shedding light on the challenges they face and their impact on the livelihoods of this crucial workforce. Auto-rickshaws, a ubiquitous mode of public transportation in many Indian cities, play a significant role in the urban transport ecosystem. This study aims to provide insights into the socio-economic conditions of auto-rickshaw drivers, their challenges, and potential avenues for improvement. Auto-rickshaw drivers form an essential yet often marginalized segment of India's urban transportation workforce. This research delves into the socio-economic conditions and challenges faced by auto-rickshaw drivers, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of their livelihoods. Through a mixed-methods approach, including surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions, the study examines income disparities, working conditions, legal ambiguities, and social stigmas affecting this group. Preliminary findings highlight irregular income patterns, precarious working conditions, and the absence of legal protection. The study also uncovers the social stigma associated with the profession, impacting the mental well-being of auto-rickshaw drivers. The research concludes with targeted recommendations, emphasizing the need for policy interventions, improved working conditions, and community awareness programs to address the socio-economic challenges faced by auto-rickshaw drivers in India.*

Key words: Socio-Economic and Health Status, Parallel Transportation, Auto-Rickshaw Drivers

Introduction

The vast majority of the India's workforce is employed in what is often called the 'informal' sector, generally known in India as the unorganised sector. Not surprisingly, almost half of informal sector workers are in the primary sector. The term informal sector was coined in the early 1970s to describe certain characteristics of the dual nature of production system and employment situation as commonly found in developing countries. The informal sector is therefore, growing steadily over the time, to bring about improvement of the working conditions, and labour productivity. Criteria used to define the informal sector, is the relationship between the formal and informal economy, tax evasion, and public choice analysis (Gerxhani, 2004). Workers generally included in the informal sector are urban poor, migrant from rural areas, persons with low education skill level, young school learners entering the labour market for which the informal sector, Auto rickshaw driving also has acquired a significant place and remains to be the backbone of urban transport system in most cities. The auto rickshaw drivers must earn their living by transporting people and goods from one destination to another destination for miles day and night, often carrying heavier loads than their physical capacities. With this backdrop, the present paper aims to capture the working conditions, living conditions and health aspect of auto rickshaw drivers in Churu city of Rajasthan. Auto rickshaw drivers are economically very weak. Poverty is an important cause which compelled males to drive autos. Another reason for drive auto is non-availability of employment for their livelihood. There is constant struggle and competition among the auto rickshaw drivers. From early morning to evening they plied auto. Their children could not go to school for proper education and many of them suffered from malnutrition. Education plays a crucial role in the development of human being. Auto rickshaw drivers are mostly uneducated when they do not find reliable job, they are forced to engage themselves to work as auto rickshaw driver. Large family size is burden to the males who are uneducated, unskilled, that required more income for their livelihood and they are forced to do pity jobs. As the auto rickshaw drivers are not aware of family planning measures, they tend to have minimum of 5 children which they can hardly afford. Ali (2013) analysed the socio-economic conditions of auto rickshaw drivers of Rajasthan and found that they mainly belonged to backward castes and their conditions were more miserable than that of scheduled caste people. Various studies the most of the auto rickshaw drivers also tried to save their money although they have imperfect money storing arrangements. Nandhi (2011) analysed that despite their mobile lifestyle and unstable earning, migrant auto rickshaw drivers are potentially bankable. This is evident from the saving that they regularly accumulate.

Auto rickshaw driving activity is an important occupation of the informal sector, where a million of poor not only serve the transportation needs of the society but also try to meet out their own economic and employment needs of the society but also try to meet out their economic and employment needs. Economically, auto rickshaw drivers are one of the poorest of the poor in the society of Churu city. The reasons which forced them to drive auto are unemployment, poverty, low income, low educational status and large family size. If auto rickshaw diver is provided access to adequate financing, social security and better designed vehicles, then they will have the ability to own their assets and transform themselves into dignified human beings. The main objective of the study is to analyse the socio-economic condition of auto rickshaw driver in Churu city. The study based on the primary data collected through field survey 2023 and drawn certain conclusions.

Study Area

Churu district is the part of Thar desert. It is bounded in the north by Hanumangarh district; in the west by Bikaner district; in the east by Sikar and Jhunjhunu districts of Rajasthan and Hissar of Haryana; and in the south by Nagaur district of Rajasthan. The district covers an area of 13784.38 km² with population of 20, 41,172 (Census 2011). The boundaries, as they exist today, were carved out finally in 1959, based on the regional languages, suggested by the States Re-organization Commission and presently comprise the seven tehsils, viz. Rajgarh, Taranagar, Churu, Sardarshahar, Ratangarh, Sujangarh and Bidasar. It is linked by roads and railways with Delhi, Jaipur, Bikaner, Jodhpur, Sri Ganganagar, Hissar, etc. The district relates to the national highway no.11 and 65 passing through Ratangarh, Churu and Rajgarh tehsils.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are to examine the living conditions of auto rickshaw driver by analysing their educational and economic status in Churu city. The main objectives are as follows:

- To assess the socio-economic status of auto-rickshaw drivers in Churu city.
- To identify the key challenges faced by this workforce.
- To propose recommendations for addressing the identified issues.

Data source and Methodology

The study employs a mixed-methods approach, including surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions. A representative sample of auto-rickshaw drivers from diverse urban settings across India is selected. Primary data was collected through structured interviews and surveys, covering aspects such as income levels, working conditions, health, and social perceptions. Secondary data from existing literature and government reports supplements the primary data. Respondents have been selected from the different parts of the city. The survey was carried out during the June and July, 2023. For this purpose, 200 auto rickshaw driver were interviewed in the different areas of the city and the data so collected were used for the present analysis. For data analysis, the frequencies of the responses of the auto rickshaw drivers were counted and percentages were calculated applying simple statistical methods. Later, the data were analysed and converted into the tabular form as per the need of the study. Based on these tables statistical diagram has been drawn. After analysing these tables and diagrams inferences have been made pertaining to the various socio- economic conditions of auto rickshaw drivers.

Income and Livelihood

Examine the income sources and earning patterns of auto-rickshaw drivers. Analyses the variability in earnings based on location, time of day, and competitive factors. Assess the economic sustainability of this profession and its impact on the drivers' livelihoods.

Working Conditions

Investigate the working hours, conditions, and occupational hazards faced by auto-rickshaw drivers. Explore the physical and mental stressors associated with the job, including long hours of sitting, exposure to traffic pollution, and safety concerns. Long working hours and inadequate rest also creates health and mental issues and exposure to environmental pollutants pose health risks for auto-rickshaw drivers. The absence of social security measures adds to their vulnerability.

Social Status and Perception

Explore the societal perceptions of auto-rickshaw drivers and the associated social stigma. Evaluate the impact of this perception on their self-esteem, social interactions, and integration within communities.

Living Conditions of Auto Pullers

Table 01 show that 34 percent of the auto rickshaw drivers lay between age group of 20-30 years, whereas 25 percent of the auto rickshaw drivers fall in the category of 30-40 years. These two groups show the highest percentage of auto rickshaw drivers and are efficient in performing physical work, on the other hand, 21 percent and 12 of auto rickshaw drivers fall in the age group 40-50 years and more than 50 years respectively, whereas only 8 percent auto rickshaw drivers belong to the category of <20 years. It may be noted further that among the auto rickshaw drivers 41 percent are Hindus and 59 percent are Muslim in city.

In today's world it is necessary for a person to be literate. It provides dynamism Churu to the society and helps in social upliftment. In the survey (Table 01) it is found that only 05 percent of the auto rickshaw drivers were graduate and above, 14 percent of the auto rickshaw drivers were 12th and above, 45 percent of the auto rickshaw drivers were below 12th , 21 percent of the auto rickshaw drivers were literate, and remaining 21 present illiterates. It indicates that more than two third of the auto rickshaw drivers are not highly educate.

Table 01: Age Group of Auto-Rickshaw Driver

#	Age Group	No. of Auto Pullers	Percentage
1	Below 20	16	08
2	20-30	68	34
3	30-40	50	25
4	40-50	42	21
5	Above 50	24	12
	Total	200	100

Source: Based on Field Survey 2023

Figure 01: Percentage of Age Group of Auto Drivers

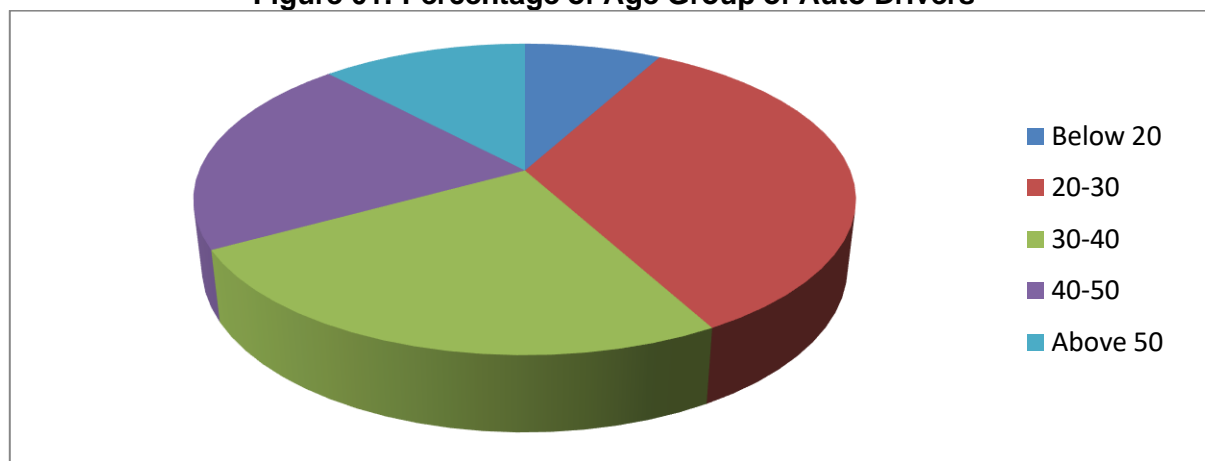
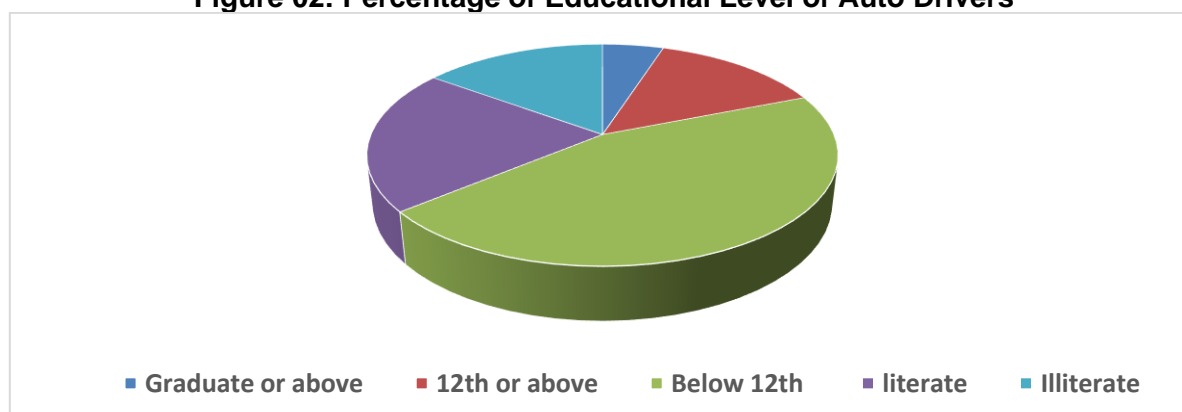


Table 02: Education Level of Auto-Rickshaw Driver

#	Education Status	No. of Auto Pullers	Percentage
1	Graduate or above	10	05
2	12 th or above	28	14
3	Below 12 th	90	45
4	literate	42	21
5	Illiterate	30	15
	Total	200	100

Source: Based on Field Survey 2023

Figure 02: Percentage of Educational Level of Auto Drivers



Facilities Available to the Auto Rickshaw Driver

Condition of houses is directly related with the socio- economic conditions of the people. 80 percent of auto pullers are living in pucca house, 09 present in kacha houses and 11 percent in the semi-pucca houses. The study shows that 94 percent auto rickshaw driver having water from municipal taps and only 06 percent of them are having motor facility. Toilet is the important indicator of social and economic status of the people indirectly. It is also an important element of sanitation. It is clear from the observation that 04 percent of auto pullers are going in the

field or open area, while 12 percent are using public toilet and 84 percent of them are having private toilet.

Table 03: Causes for Auto Rickshaw Driving

#	Reasons	No. of Auto Pullers	Percentage
1	Poverty	30	15
2	Low Income	10	05
3	Unemployment	26	13
4	Family Burden	74	37
5	Unskilled	34	17
6	Uneducated	20	10
7	Small Land Holding	06	03
Total		200	100

Source: Based on Field Survey 2023

Table no 3 show that 15 percent of the auto rickshaw drivers drive rickshaw due to poverty, 05 percent due to low income, 13 percent due to unemployment, 37 percent due to family burden, 17 percent and 10 percent drive rickshaw because they are unskilled and uneducated whereas 3 percent are driving auto due to small land holding.

Figure 03: Percentage of Causes for Auto Rickshaw Driving

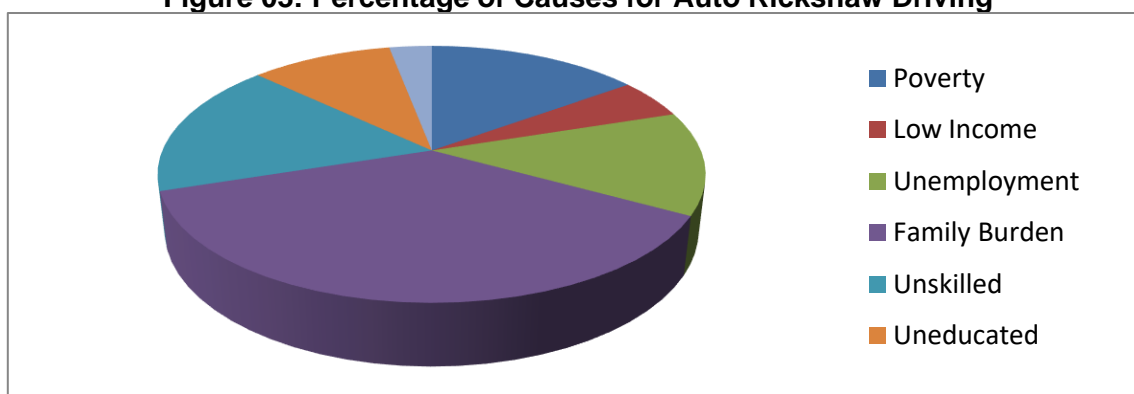
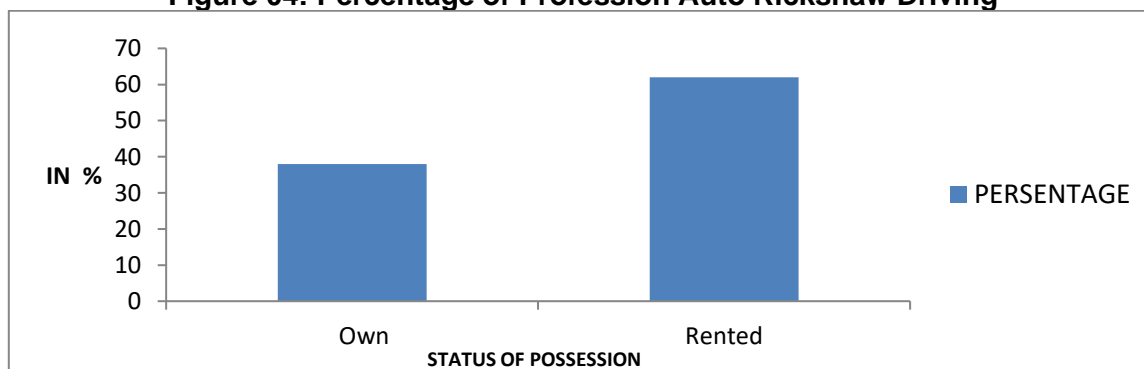


Table 04: Possession of Auto

#	Status	No. of Auto Possession	Percentage
1	Own	76	38
2	Rented	124	62
Total		200	100

Source: Based on Field Survey 2023

Figure 04: Percentage of Profession Auto Rickshaw Driving



Economic Challenges

Discuss the economic hurdles faced by auto rickshaw drivers, such as fluctuating fuel prices, competition from ride-sharing services, and operational costs. Evaluate the impact of these challenges on their financial stability. As the auto rickshaw driver are weaker section of the society, they do not have enough money to purchase their own auto, so about 62 percent

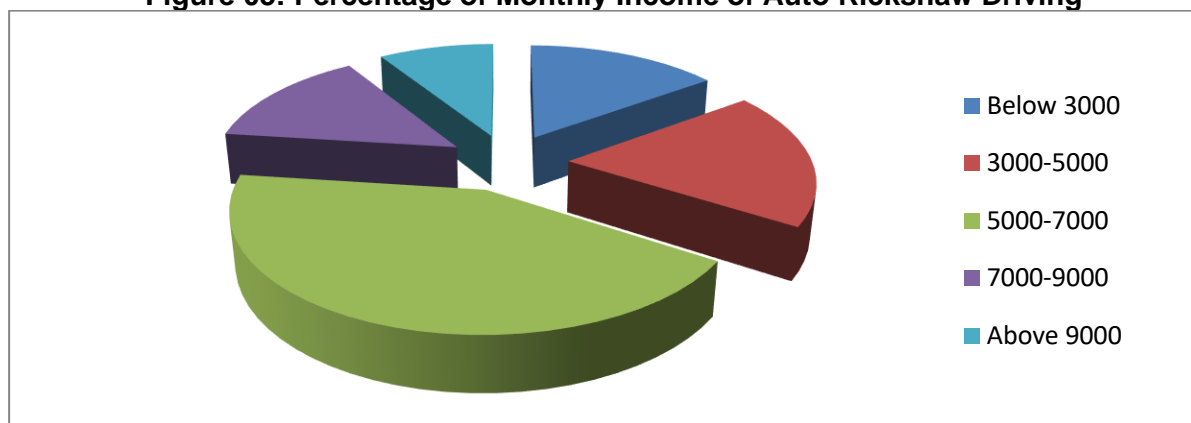
(Table 04) auto rickshaw driver is pilling auto on rent while remaining 38 percent of them are having their own auto.

Table 05: Monthly Income of Auto Rikshaw Driver

#	INCOME (in Rs.)	No. of Auto Pullers	Percentage
1	Below 3000	30	15
2	3000-5000	38	19
3	5000-7000	86	43
4	7000-9000	28	14
5	Above 9000	18	09
	Total	200	100

Source: Based on Field Survey 2023

Figure 05: Percentage of Monthly Income of Auto Rickshaw Driving



Monthly income usually depends upon the various factors such as nature jobs, skilled and unskilled person, duration upon the various factors such as nature of jobs, skilled and unskilled person, duration of working hours etc. Table 05 show that 15 percent of the auto rickshaw drivers are monthly income is below Rs. 3000, 19 percent earn Rs. 3000 to 5000, 43 percent earn Rs. 5000 to 7000, 14 percent earn 7000 to Rs. 9000 and 09 percent are earning more than Rs. 9000.

Health and Safety Concerns

Highlight the health risks associated with prolonged exposure to vehicular emissions, ergonomic strains, and safety concerns on roads. Assess the lack of access to healthcare facilities and insurance coverage for drivers. Table no 6 show that 09 percent of the auto rickshaw drivers are suffering with back pain, 11 percent suffering with joint pain, 15 percent suffering with chest pain, 25 percent suffering with Asthma, 22 percent suffering with chronic headache 30 percent suffering with coughing. These all diseases related to pollution and long-time setting.

Table 06: Diseases In Auto Rikshaw Driver

#	Diseases	No. of Auto Pullers	Percentage
1	Back Pain	18	09
2	Joint Pain	22	11
3	Chest Pain	30	15
4	Asthma	50	25
5	Chronic Headache	44	22
6	Coughing	30	15
7	No Diseases	06	03
	TOTAL	200	100

Source: Based on Field Survey 2023

Figure 06: Percentage of Diseases in Auto Rikshaw Driver

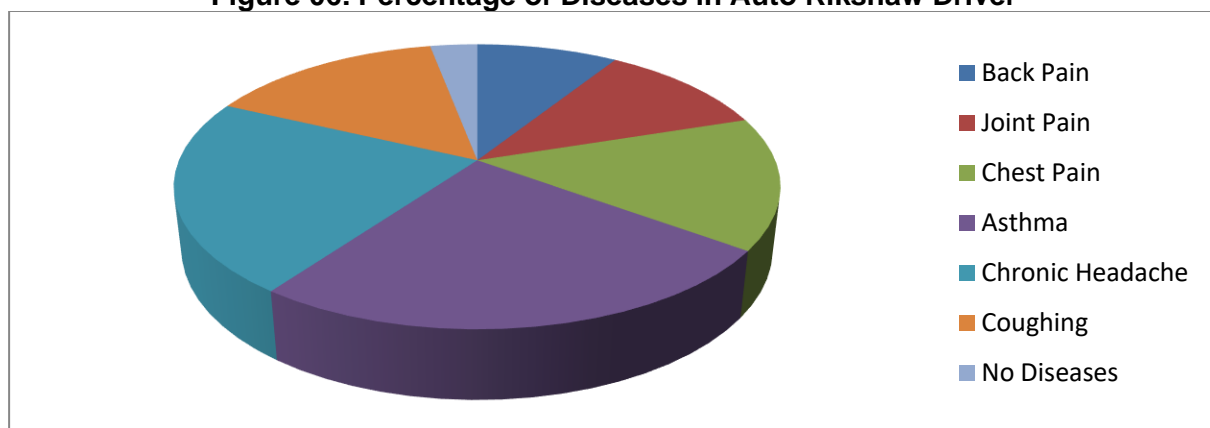


Table 07: Problem Faced by Auto Rikshaw Driver

#	Problems	No. of Auto Pullers	Percentage
1	Auto Stand	42	21
2	Police	48	24
3	Weakness	52	26
4	Eye Problem	46	23
5	No Problem	12	06
Total		200	100

Source: Based on Field Survey 2023

Figure 07: Percentage of Problem Faced by Auto Rikshaw Driver

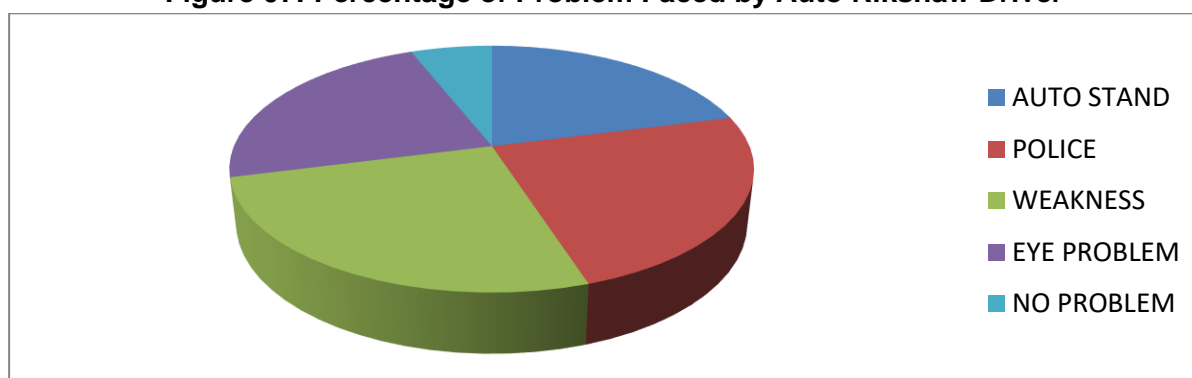


Table 07 shows that the auto rickshaw driver faces many problems. 21 percent of the auto rickshaw drivers are facing auto stand related problem, 24 percent having problem with police, 26 percent having weakness and 23 percent having eye problem.

SUGGESTION

Training and Skill Development

Suggest initiatives for skill development programs, including training in road safety, customer service, and financial literacy, to enhance drivers' capabilities and professionalism.

Community Engagement and Support

Encourage community initiatives, public awareness campaigns, and efforts to change societal perceptions to uplift the status and dignity of auto-rickshaw drivers.

Policy Reforms

Propose policy measures to streamline licensing procedures, regulate fares, and provide social security benefits for auto-rickshaw drivers. Advocate for better representation and inclusion in transportation policies.

Conclusion

The socioeconomic study and analysis of the challenges faced by auto-rickshaw drivers in Churu city shed light on the multifaceted issues affecting this vital workforce. Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative effort from policymakers, regulatory bodies, communities, and relevant stakeholders to improve the livelihoods and well-being of auto-rickshaw drivers, ensuring fair opportunities and dignified working conditions. Socio-economic condition of the workers in informal economy particularly the auto rickshaw driver is very miserable. There are no job securities and welfare provisions for them. They are bound to work at late night and at odd hours without any protection or safety. The study found that the condition of the auto rickshaw driver in Churu city is very poor. There was high proportion of auto rickshaw driver who were mainly belonged to backward castes. Illiteracy was their common feature due to low income and poverty. The auto rickshaw driver who had fixed source of income as contract to carrying school children were in better conditions than those who have not. Prevailing health problem were cough, body pain, fever, different chronic diseases among the auto pullers. Most of them had pointed out they were various accidental risks involved in this work and the working conditions were not satisfactory. The lack of proper parking place many times creates traffic problem during rush hours. These auto rickshaw drivers lack insurance facilities for vehicle in course of any damage and loss occurred to the auto. These auto rickshaw drivers do not enjoy any type of health and medical facilities in course of illness and injuries. For their improvements the remedial measures are suggested – Separate stands for auto would be much needed for easy access to the commuters at small distances or at regular. Easy access of loans to their auto rickshaw driver will reduce their dependence on the money lenders. They should be informed about the existing schemes and facilities started by the district administration for their general welfare. Separate tracks should be created for rickshaws so that they do not have to compete for road space with fast moving traffic.

References

1. Anand, Anvita and Ravi, Rajendra (2016) Autorickshaw Drivers in Delhi: Efficacy of Dialogue with Service Providers. Economic and Political Weekly [online].
2. Arun Monappa (1985) Industrial Relations, new Delhi
3. Arunraja, (2015) A study on socio-economic and health challenges of gunny sacks stitching workers at Virudhunagar
4. Arunraja, (2015) A study on socio-economic and health challenges of gunny sacks stitching workers at Virudhunagar
5. Bajaj (1961) Demographic social and economic aspect.
6. Balakrishnan, Bina C. (1985). The Taxi as a Demand Management Tool in Mumbai, India.
7. Indrani Mukherjee (1988) industrial workers in a developing society, Mittal pub., Delhi.
8. Journal of Social Development in Africa, Vol.18, No.1.
9. Rajesh Ranjan, (2015). A Study on Work-Life Balance of Auto Rickshaw Drivers in Mumbai, IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science.
10. Subramanian K.N. (1967) Labor management relations in India, Asia pub. home, Bombay
11. V.V. Gird, (1972) Labour problems in Indian Industry, Bombay