

A Study on the Problems and Challenges of Auto Drivers with Special Reference to Coonoor Taluk

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I. Transportation

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 their 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

Auto rickshaws are an essential part of urban transportation and a step toward improving quality of life and environmentally friendly transportation options. 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 drivers seems to be not much improved. Despite playing this role, the public, the media, and policymakers frequently criticize auto- drivers. The alleged flaws of auto- drivers, as well as the regulations to solve these issues, are the subject of a heated public debate in Indian cities.

Statement Of The Problem

Auto drivers play a crucial role in the public transportation system of Coonoor, providing an affordable mode of transport, especially in hilly regions like the Nilgiris. Despite their importance, they face numerous challenges such as fluctuating fuel prices, lack of social security, and competition from ride-hailing services, poor road infrastructure, and harassment from authorities. Their earnings are often unstable, making it difficult to meet daily needs. This study aims to explore these issues and evaluate the effectiveness of existing government support systems, proposing solutions to improve their socio-economic status

II. Review Of Literature

1.Reddy (2022) – “Post-Pandemic Recovery and Financial Struggles of Auto Rickshaw Drivers” The study found that while passenger demand returned gradually, many drivers were burdened with loans taken during the pandemic. It suggested that financial aid programs and flexible loan repayment schemes could help their recovery.

2.Verma& Nair (2022) – “The Rise of Ride-Hailing Apps and Its Effect on Traditional Auto Rickshaw Drivers” This study examined how app-based services like Ola and Uber have disrupted the earnings of traditional auto drivers. While passengers benefit from lower fares, traditional drivers face income losses and increased competition.

3.Sarannya Sivasankaran, Poornima. (2022) “A Study on Job Satisfaction of Auto Drivers with Special Reference to Coimbatore District” The study discusses job satisfaction and the issues that auto-rickshaw drivers face every day. The study reveals that auto drivers are dissatisfied with their jobs. Their socioeconomic situation is inadequate. They are dissatisfied with their current earnings

4. Sharma (2020) – “Income and Living Standards of Auto Rickshaw Drivers in Bangalore” The research highlighted that a majority of auto rickshaw drivers earn just enough for their daily needs. Many struggle with financial insecurity, lack of savings, and no access to formal credit systems.

5.Dr. P. Ponraj, M. Sankara Narayanan. (2020) "Share Auto Rickshaw Transport Service". The study discusses the social and economic backgrounds of auto drivers, as well as their job happiness. It is stated that auto drivers constitute the backbone of this kind of transportation.

6.Dr. Vikram K. Joshi. (2020) "Empirical Study Of Technology Based Auto Service Quality Perception Using SSTQUAL" (SSTQUAL, or Service System Transition Quality, is the perception of quality during a service system's transition period. According to the study, both service providers are performing well when it comes to providing technology-based auto booking services to their consumers

7.Kumar, S. (2020). Livelihoods of auto-rickshaw drivers. Examined financial instability, rising fuel prices, competition with ride-hailing services, government regulations, and emerging sustainability concerns, etc.

8.Mishra, S. (2020). Socio-economic profile of auto-rickshaw drivers. Analyzed factors such as education levels, family income, job satisfaction, occupational hardships, alternative employment options, and long-term career aspirations, etc.

9.Anand, A. (2020). Social security of auto-rickshaw drivers. Revisited concerns regarding pension schemes, insurance benefits, government assistance programs, financial literacy, and awareness of available schemes, etc

Selection Of The Sample Households

The data was collected structured interview schedule from 130 respondents by using the Simple random sampling method .In the first stage, Nilgiris district was chosen, and within it, Coonoor was selected the study area. it made to ensure unbiased representation and equal chances for all drivers to be included in the study.

III. Results And Discussions

Socio-Economic Conditions Of Auto Drivers In Coonoor Taluk.

Table:1 Age of the Respondent

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
30-below	21	16.2
31-40	41	31.5
41-50	40	30.8
above 50	28	21.5
Total	130	100.0

Source: Primary data 2025

Among the 130 respondents, the majority (31.5%) fall within the 31-40 age group, followed closely by the 41-50 age group (30.8%). Drivers above 50 years constitute 21.5% of the sample, while the youngest group (below 30 years) makes up 16.2%. This indicates that most auto drivers in Coonoor Taluk are between 31 and 50 years old, suggesting that middle-aged individuals dominate this occupation.

Table: 2. Educational Qualification Of The Respondent

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	56	43.1
Primary Education (5 Std)	37	28.5
Higher Education	35	26.9
Technical Education/Degree	2	1.5
Total	130	100.0

Source: primary data 2025

The table presents the educational qualifications of respondents, showing that the majority, 43.1%, are illiterate. A significant portion, 28.5%, has received primary education up to the 5th standard, while 26.9% have attained higher education. Only 1.5% of respondents have completed technical education or a degree. This data suggests that a large percentage of the respondents have low educational qualifications. The presence of a small percentage with higher education indicates limited access or opportunities for advanced learning. Overall, the table highlights the educational disparity among the respondents.

Table: 3. Type Of The Work

Work	Frequency	Percentage
Passenger Transportation	30	23.1
Root Planning And Navigation	29	22.3
School And Office Transport	13	10.0
Carrying Tea Bags	58	44.6
Total	130	100.0

Source: primary data 2025

Among the various types of work, the highest percentage (44.6%) is involved in carrying tea bags, accounting for 58 individuals. Passenger transportation follows with 30 individuals (23.1%), while root planning and navigation accounts for 29 individuals (22.3%). The lowest percentage is observed in school and office transport, with 13 individuals (10.0%). These findings highlight that carrying tea bags is the most common type of work, whereas school and office transport is the least common.

Table: 4. Nature Of The Family Respondent

FAMILY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Nuclear	50	38.5
Joint	80	61.5
Total	130	100.0

Source: primary data 2025

The table presents the nature of the family structure among respondents. It indicates that a majority, 61.5%, belong to joint families, while the remaining 38.5% belong to nuclear families. This suggests that joint families are more prevalent among the respondents. The data implies that traditional family systems are still dominant, with more people living in extended family arrangements.

Table: 5. Size Of The Family Respondent

Size Of Family	Frequency	Percentage
Less Than 3	29	22.3
4-6	62	47.7
More Than 6	39	30.0
Total	130	100.0

Source: primary data 2025

The table represents the size of families that responded to the survey. It shows that the majority 47.7% of respondents have a family size between 4 to 6 members, making it the most common category. Families with more than six members constitute 30% of the respondents, while the smallest group, families with less than three members, make up 22.3%.

Table: 6. Monthly Income Of The Respondent

Monthly Income	Frequency	Percentage
Less Than Rs.5000	23	17.7
Rs.5000- Rs.10000	46	35.4
More Than Rs.10000	61	46.9
Total	130	100.0

Source: Primary Data 2025

The table presents the monthly income distribution of respondents. Among the 130 individuals surveyed, 17.7% (23 respondents) earn less than Rs.5,000 per month, while 35.4% (46 respondents) have a monthly income between Rs.5,000 and Rs.10,000. The largest proportion, 46.9% (61 respondents), earn more than Rs.10,000 per month. This indicates that nearly half of the respondents fall into the higher income category, while a smaller percentage earn below Rs.5,000.

Table: 7. Expenditure Of The Respondent

Amount Of Expense	Frequency	Percentage
Below Rs.6000	24	18.5
Rs.6000 – Rs.12000	59	45.4
Above Rs.12000	47	36.2
Total	130	100

Source: Primary Data 2025

The table shows the expenditure distribution of respondents. The majority (45.4%) of respondents spend between Rs. 6,000 and Rs. 12,000. About 36.2% of respondents have expenses above Rs. 12,000, while 18.5% spend below Rs. 6,000. This indicates that most respondents fall into the mid-range expenditure category.

Table:8. Opportunites And Grouth

Paired Samples Test	Paired Differences					T	Df	Sig. (2-Tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval Of The Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Opportunities For Career Growth <u>In</u> Auto Driving Profession – Level Of Sat Satisfaction <u>On</u> Current P Profession	.79231	1.41802	.12437	.54624	1.03837	6.371	129	.000

Source: Compute Values

Ho- There is no significant opportunity in career and satisfaction level on current profession.

H1- There is significant opportunity in career and satisfaction level on current profession.

A paired sample T test is applied and it shows there has been significant opportunity in career growth and satisfaction level. The analysis suggests asignificant satisfaction levels and career growth opportunities with $\{(t=129) = 6.371, p < 0.00\}$. Since the mean difference is positive, it implies that the respondents tend to state higher satisfaction and career opportunities. This indicates a strong relationship between career growth and job satisfaction

Table: 9. Strategic Career Planning

Career Goals	Frequency	Percentage
Continue Driving Indefinitely	85	65.4
Transition To Another Role In Transportation	32	24.6
Leave The Profession	3	2.3
Un Decided	10	7.7
Total	130	100.0

Source: Primary Data2025

The table presents the career plans of respondents in the auto driving sector. A significant majority, 65.4%, intend to continue driving indefinitely, indicating stability and satisfaction in their profession. Meanwhile, 24.6% prefer transitioning to another role within the transportation industry, suggesting a desire for career growth or change. A small percentage, 2.3%, plan to leave the profession entirely, which may reflect dissatisfaction or alternative career aspirations. Additionally, 7.7% remain undecided about their future, highlighting uncertainty in career planning.

Table: 10.Challenges In Managing Fuel Expences

The High Cost Of Fuel	Frequency	Percentage
Yes Very Difficult	105	80.8
Somewhat Difficult	11	8.5
Not Difficult	14	10.8
Total	130	100.0

Source: Primary Data 2025

The table presents data on the challenges faced by respondents in managing fuel expenses due to high fuel costs. The findings indicate that a significant majority (80.8%) of respondents find it very difficult to cope with fuel expenses. A smaller percentage (8.5%) consider it somewhat difficult, while only 10.8% report that managing fuel costs is not difficult. These results suggest that the high cost of fuel is a major financial burden for most respondents, likely affecting their overall income and financial stability.

Table:11. Monthly Income And Reason For Choosing Auto Driving

Monthly income from driving		Primary reason for choosing this profession				Total
		Lack of other job opportunities	Flexibility of working Hours	Passion for driving	Family tradition	
Less than 5000	Count	18	3	1	1	23
	% monthly income from Driving	78.3%	13.0%	4.3%	4.3%	100.0%
	% primary reason for choosing this profession	35.3%	8.3%	2.8%	14.3%	17.7%
	% of Total	13.8%	2.3%	0.8%	0.8%	17.7%
	Count	20	21	5	0	46
	% monthly income from	43.5%	45.7%	10.9%	0.0%	100.0%

5000-10000	Driving					
	%primary reason for choosing this profession	39.2%	58.3%	13.9%	0.0%	35.4%
	% of Total	15.4%	16.2%	3.8%	0.0%	35.4%
more than 10000	Count	13	12	30	6	61
	% monthly income from Driving	21.3%	19.7%	49.2%	9.8%	100.0%
	% primary reason for choosing this profession	25.5%	33.3%	83.3%	85.7%	46.9%
	% of Total	10.0%	9.2%	23.1%	4.6%	46.9%
Total	Count	51	36	36	7	130
	%monthly income from Driving	39.2%	27.7%	27.7%	5.4%	100.0%
	% primary reason for choosing this profession	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	39.2%	27.7%	27.7%	5.4%	100.0%

Source: Compute Values

Chi-Square Tests

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-Sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	46.858 ^a	6	.000
Likelihood Ratio	49.587	6	.000
Linear-By-Linear Association	30.192	1	.000
N Of Valid Cases	130		

Source: compute values

a. 3 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.24

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant association between monthly income and reason for choosing auto driving.

Alternative Hypothesis: There is significant association between monthly income and reason for choosing auto driving.

In order to find out the association between monthly income and reason for choosing auto driving, Pearson chi –square analysis is performed. the significant p value .000 indicate that there is significant association. Hence null hypothesis rejected.

Table.12. Insurance And Legal Challenges In The Driving Profession One-Sample Test

One Sample T Test	Test Value = 0					
	T	Df	Sig. (2-Tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval Of The Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Insurance For Self And The Vehicle	32.854	129	.000	1.592308	1.49642	1.68820
Faced Legal Issues Or Fines Related To Auto Driving	25.803	129	.000	2.03077	1.8751	2.1865

Source: Computed Values

Null Hypothesis: Drivers do not significantly perceive issues related to insurance or legal challenges in driving.

Alternative Hypothesis: Drivers significantly perceive issues related to insurance or legal challenges in driving.

Based on the above table, it suggests that the responses regarding having insurance for oneself and the vehicle with [t value =32.854, p value (sig.2 tailed) is 0.000 which is statistically significant. The legal issues related to driving profession, where the [t value = 25.80 ,p value (sig . 2 tailed) is 0.000 which is significant. Both results indicate strong statistical significance , which means the majority of the respondents have insurance and have encountered legal issues related to driving.

Table.13. Legal Issues Or Fines Related To Driving Profession

Legal Issues Or Fines	Frequency	Percentage
Yes Multiple Times	47	36.2
Yes Once Or Twice	35	26.9
No Never	45	34.6
I've Had Minor Warnings	3	2.3
Total	130	100.0

Source : Primary Data 2025

The table presents data on the legal issues or fines faced by drivers in their profession. Among the respondents, 36.2% reported having received fines or faced legal issues multiple times, while 26.9% had encountered such issues once or twice. A significant portion, 34.6%, stated that they had never faced any legal issues or fines. Additionally, 2.3% of the drivers reported receiving only minor warnings. The total number of respondents is 130, indicating that legal issues are relatively common in the driving profession, with more than 60% having experienced them at least once.

IV. Conclusion

The study highlights the multiple challenges faced by auto drivers in Coonoor Taluk, including financial difficulties, rising fuel costs, lack of proper infrastructure, and occupational health risks. These challenges impact their livelihood and overall well-being. Addressing these issues requires government intervention, policy changes, and community support.

By implementing financial aid programs, improving road infrastructure, ensuring social security benefits, and offering skill development training, the working conditions of auto drivers can be significantly improved. A collaborative approach involving authorities, unions, and the public can create a sustainable and dignified working environment for auto drivers in Coonoor Taluk.

Suggestions

Financial Assistance & Loan Support:

Government and private institutions should offer low-interest loans or subsidies to help auto driver's purchase or maintain their vehicles.

Fuel Price Regulation & Subsidies:

The need for policy interventions or financial support mechanisms to help mitigate the impact of rising fuel costs on livelihoods. Authorities should consider fuel subsidies or special pricing for commercial auto drivers to ease their financial burden.

Road Infrastructure Improvement:

Better roads, designated parking spots, and auto stands can reduce traffic congestion and enhance working conditions.

Health & Welfare Schemes:

Regular health check-ups, insurance coverage, and accident relief funds should be introduced to safeguard drivers' well-being.

Training & Skill Development:

Workshops on customer service, digital payment usage, and road safety can improve their service quality and earnings.

Strict Regulation of Unlicensed Operators:

Enforcing strict rules against illegal auto services can ensure fair competition and protect licensed drivers' earnings.

Improved Work Environment & Social Security:

Implementing pension schemes, insurance plans, and financial aid during emergencies will help secure their future.