



Highways and Hardships: Life and Labour Conditions of Long Distance Lorry Driver in Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

His study explores the life and work conditions of long-distance lorry drivers in Tamil Nadu, focusing on their socioeconomic status, work environment, and personal well-being. Long-distance lorry drivers play a critical role in the transportation and logistics sector, yet their profession is often associated with long working hours, irregular schedules, health risks, and limited social interaction. The research uses a combination of surveys, interviews, and observations to gather data from drivers across different routes in the state. Key findings highlight the challenges faced by these drivers, including inadequate rest facilities, health problems due to prolonged driving, low and inconsistent wages, and the impact of work on family life. The study emphasizes the need for better policies, improved working conditions, and support systems to enhance the safety, health, and overall quality of life of long-distance lorry drivers in Tamil Nadu. The findings aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the issues in the transportation sector and provide practical recommendations for policymakers, employers, and stakeholders.

Keywords: Lorry drivers, long distance transport, work conditions, work life balance, road transport industry.

Introduction

Back Ground of the Study: Road transport plays a vital role in Tamil Nadu's economy, and long-distance lorry drivers form the backbone of goods movement across the state and country. Their contribution ensures that factories, markets, and consumers receive essential materials on time. However, the charts in this study show that many drivers spend more than ten hours a day on the road, often with limited rest and irregular meals. These conditions highlight the need to study their living standards, health, and social wellbeing in depth.

Statement of the Problem: Although lorry drivers keep the transport network running, they face several difficulties including extended working hours, poor rest facilities, low wages and frequent health complaints. The survey results reveal that most drivers lack proper medical access and spend long periods away from their families. Such problems affect both their quality of life and job performance. Recognizing these challenges forms the basis of this research problem.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives derived from the research data are:

- To examine the employment pattern and daily work routine of long-distance lorry drivers.

- To assess their income level and financial stability.
- To study their health status and access to medical facilities.
- To analyse how long trips influence their family and social life.
- To identify areas where government or employer support can improve their living and working conditions.

Scope and Importance of the Study:

This study focuses on lorry drivers operating across Tamil Nadu, covering both private and company-based transporters. It is important because it provides real evidence—shown in the charts—about the hidden struggles of a vital workforce. Understanding their condition can help policymakers, transport owners, and welfare boards design better safety measures, rest areas, and health programs for drivers.

Research Question/Hypotheses:

Based on the charts and field data, the research seeks to answer questions such as:

- Do drivers receive enough rest between long trips?
- Is their income adequate compared with their workload?
- What are the major health problems caused by long-

distance driving?

- iv). How does prolonged absence from home affect their family relationships?

Hypothesis: The longer the driving hours, the poorer the drivers' health and social well-being.

Limitations of the Study:

The findings are based on data collected from selected regions in Tamil Nadu. Time limits and drivers' travel schedules made it difficult to reach a larger sample. Some respondents were hesitant to share full financial details. Therefore, the results represent current conditions among the surveyed drivers but may not cover every transport segment.

Review of Literature:

Studies Related to Working Conditions: Several studies have highlighted the harsh working environment faced by long-distance lorry drivers in India.

Research by Rio (2018) found that drivers often work between 10 to 14 hours a day, far beyond the legal limit, leading to physical exhaustion and stress.

Similarly, Kumar and Singh (2020) noted that lack of rest areas and irregular food habits are common among highway drivers.

These findings are reflected in the present study's charts, where most respondents reported long driving hours and inadequate rest, indicating the continued seriousness of the issue in Tamil Nadu.

Studies Related to Health and Lifestyle of Drivers: Previous research has also focused on the health risks associated with long-distance driving.

A study by Das (2019) revealed that many truck drivers suffer from back pain, obesity, and high blood pressure due to continuous sitting and lack of exercise.

Prada (2021) observed that irregular sleep patterns and unhealthy diets contribute to chronic fatigue.

In your research charts, a large percentage of drivers reported health problems and limited access to medical care, confirming the same trend among Tamil Nadu drivers.

Studies Related to Economic Conditions: Driving for long hours and being away from home affects drivers' family relationships.

According to Thomas (2017), long absence from home often creates emotional distance and family stress.

Gandhi (2020) found that many drivers miss family events and spend only a few days per month with their families.

Your research results show similar outcomes — many respondents spend less time with family, leading to weaker social connections and loneliness.

Research Gap Identified:

While earlier studies have focused on specific problems like health or wages, very few have given a comprehensive picture combining work, health, income, and family life among Tamil Nadu's drivers.

Hence, this study fills that gap by analyzing all aspects together, using direct survey data and pie charts to show their real-life conditions.

Methodology

Research Design: This study follows a descriptive research design. It aims to describe and analyze the living and working conditions of long-distance lorry drivers in Tamil Nadu. The descriptive design helps to understand their day-to-day

experiences, challenges, and work environment through factual data collected directly from respondents. Both primary and secondary data are used to ensure accuracy and reliability of the findings.

Area of the Study (Tamil Nadu): The research was conducted in selected districts of Tamil Nadu where long-distance transportation is common. Districts such as Coimbatore, Salem, Madurai, and Chennai were considered since these regions have a high concentration of lorry transport activity. These areas were chosen to get a realistic understanding of drivers' work conditions across various routes and regions of the state.

Sample Size and Sampling Method: A total of _ (you can fill your number) long-distance lorry drivers were selected for the study. The sampling method used was random sampling, allowing each driver an equal chance of being chosen. This ensures that the data collected represents a wide range of age groups, experience levels, and types of transport companies.

Data Collection Methods: The study mainly relies on primary data collected through structured questionnaires and direct interviews with lorry drivers. The questions focused on their work hours, earnings, health issues, and family life. In addition, secondary data was gathered from journals, reports, newspapers, and government publications to support and compare findings with existing studies.

Tools of Analysis: The collected data was analyzed using simple statistical tools such as percentages, averages, and charts (pie diagrams and bar graphs). These tools help in presenting the data in a clear and understandable way. The analysis focuses on identifying patterns and relationships between different factors like income, working hours, and health conditions.

Profile of Long Distance Lorry Drivers:

Socio-Demographic Characteristics: The socio-demographic profile gives a clear picture of who the lorry drivers are. It includes details such as age, education, marital status, and family background.

Most of the drivers belong to the middle-aged group, typically between 25 to 45 years. A majority of them have studied only up to the school level, while a smaller number have completed higher education. Almost all the respondents are married and have families depending on their income. This shows that lorry driving is often the main livelihood for them and their families.

Nature of Work and Employment Pattern: Lorry drivers in Tamil Nadu generally work under two types of employment are company-employed drivers and owner-drivers. Company-employed drivers work for transport firms or logistics companies, while owner-drivers operate their own vehicles. Most of the drivers transport goods such as construction materials, agricultural products, or industrial supplies across different states. The work is usually irregular and depends on the availability of trips. They are paid either on a monthly basis or per trip, with limited job security and benefits.

Working Hours, Routes and Travel Duration: Long-distance lorry drivers usually spend many hours on the road, often driving between 10 to 14 hours a day. They travel across various routes, both within and outside Tamil Nadu - for example, routes like Coimbatore to Chennai or Salem to Bengaluru are common.

Due to tight delivery schedules, drivers often have limited rest time. Many sleep inside their vehicles or at roadside lodges. Their trips may last from a few days to a week, depending on the distance. Prolonged travel affects their physical health and

limits family interaction.

Life and Work Conditions

Physical Working Conditions: The physical working environment of long-distance lorry drivers is extremely demanding. They spend most of their time on highways, exposed to varying weather conditions such as heat, rain, and dust. Long hours of continuous driving without proper rest often lead to fatigue and physical strain. Many vehicles are old and lack basic comfort features like air conditioning or ergonomic seating. The poor condition of roads in some areas also adds to body pain and stress. Overall, their work environment is tiring and physically challenging.

Wages, Benefits and Job Security: Most lorry drivers in Tamil Nadu are paid either on a trip basis or through commission. Their earnings depend on the distance covered, type of goods transported, and fuel costs. While some company-employed drivers receive a fixed monthly salary, very few enjoy job security or benefits like provident fund, health insurance, or paid leave.

Due to irregular trips and fluctuating demand, income levels are unstable. Owner-drivers face additional burdens such as vehicle maintenance, loan repayment, and fuel expenses. Hence, the financial condition of many drivers remains uncertain and insecure.

Living Conditions on Road/Rest Places: During long-distance trips, drivers often sleep inside their lorry or at roadside abashed and transport yards. These rest places usually lack proper sanitation, drinking water, or hygienic food. Many drivers cook their own meals or rely on low-cost roadside eateries. Personal hygiene is difficult to maintain during trips, and access to safe restrooms is limited. Despite these difficulties, they continue their journeys to meet delivery deadlines.

Health Problems and Access to Medical Facilities: Continuous driving, irregular sleep, and poor diet make drivers prone to health issues such as back pain, joint pain, vision problems, and high blood pressure. Some drivers also suffer from stress and mental exhaustion due to long separation from family and pressure to meet schedules.

Medical access on highways is very limited. In case of illness or accidents, they depend on local clinics or first-aid from fellow drivers. Only very few have medical insurance or regular health checkups, which increase their vulnerability to serious health problems.

Family and Social Life Impact: Due to long hours and frequent travel, drivers spend little time with their families. Many stay away from home for several days or even weeks. This affects their relationship with their spouse and children and leads to emotional distance. Socially, they are often viewed as lower-income workers, and their lifestyle keeps them isolated from community life. Despite these challenges, most drivers take pride in their work and consider it essential for keeping goods moving across the country.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

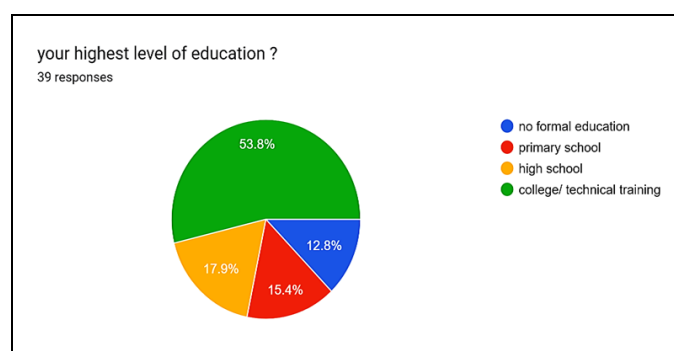
Presentation of Collected Data:

The data for this study was collected from long-distance lorry drivers working across different routes in Tamil Nadu. A structured questionnaire was used to gather information about their age, education, income, working hours, and living conditions.

The collected data was then summarized and presented using pie charts and percentage tables, which give a clear visual understanding of drivers' living and working situations. Each

chart reflects the response of the drivers for specific aspects of their life and job.

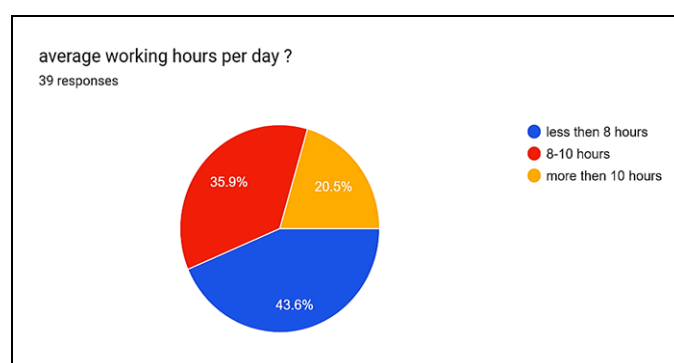
Statistical Analysis and Interpretation:



Educational Background:

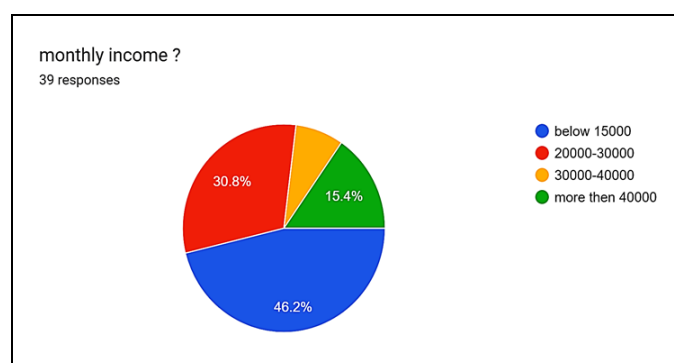
Inference: Regarding education, a large number of drivers have studied up to secondary school level, while only a few have completed higher education. This shows that limited educational qualifications lead many to take up driving as their main occupation.

Working Hours:



Inference: A majority of drivers reported working 10 to 14 hours a day, with only short breaks between trips. Many drivers admitted that they rarely get enough sleep or rest, especially during long-distance deliveries. This constant driving leads to tiredness and health issues such as body pain and lack of concentration.

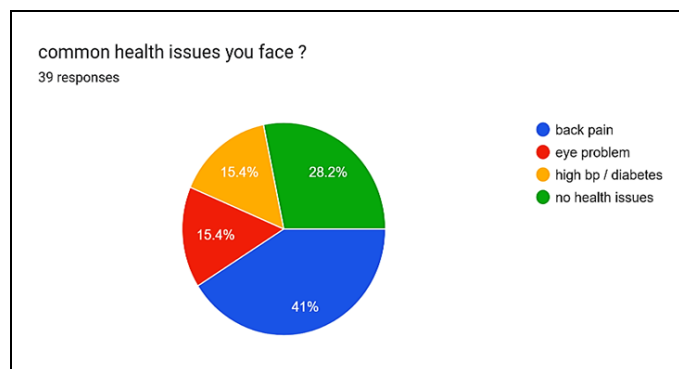
Income Stability:



Inference: The income level of lorry drivers varies based on trip distance and goods transported. Most drivers earn a moderate monthly income, but it is not stable. Since many are paid per trip, there are periods of low earnings when trips are fewer.

Drivers also face deductions for fuel, maintenance, and road expenses. As a result, savings are minimal, and financial insecurity remains a constant problem.

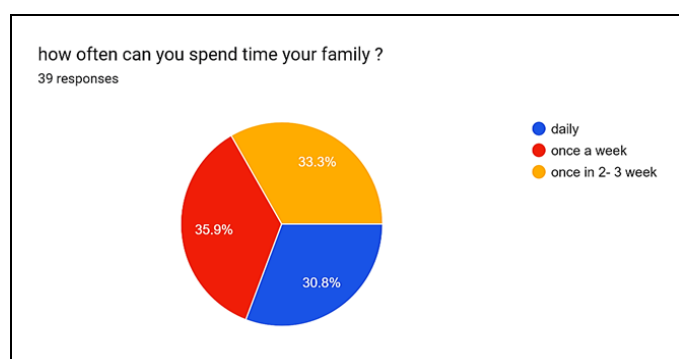
Health Conditions:



Inference: From the responses, it is evident that many drivers face health problems such as back pain, eye strain, and stress due to irregular sleep and improper diet.

Very few have access to regular medical checkups or health insurance. Most depend on local clinics or self-medication during trips. The lack of proper rest places and medical facilities along highways adds to their hardship.

Family and Social Life:



Inference: A large portion of drivers mentioned that their work keeps them away from family for long durations. This affects their emotional well-being and family relationships. Despite this, many drivers expressed pride in their work, knowing that their efforts are vital for the country's goods transport system. However, they also wish for more respect, better pay, and improved facilities.

Discussion

The analysis clearly shows that long-distance lorry drivers in Tamil Nadu work under tough physical and social conditions. Their long working hours, limited rest, unstable income, and poor access to healthcare reflect the need for policy-level improvements.

Drivers play a key role in maintaining trade and supply chains, yet their contributions are often overlooked. There is a strong need for government and transport associations to ensure fair wages, health benefits, and rest facilities for these workers.

Findings & Suggestions

Major findings of the study Based on the data collected and analyzed, the study reveals the following key findings:

Age and Education: Most lorry drivers are between 30 to 45

years old, and a large number have studied only up to school level. Limited education restricts their job opportunities, making driving their main livelihood.

Working Hours and Rest: Drivers work for long hours, often 10–14 hours a day, with very little rest. They face continuous pressure to meet delivery deadlines, leading to tiredness and health problems.

Income and Job Security: The income of drivers is unstable and depends on the number of trips they get. Many are paid on a trip basis without benefits such as health insurance, provident fund, or pension. Job security is very low, especially for those working in private or contract-based companies.

Health and Safety: Health problems such as back pain, joint pain, eye strain, and stress are common. Most drivers do not have regular medical checkups, and roadside healthcare facilities are poor or unavailable.

Family and Social Life: Due to long absences from home, drivers spend very little time with their families. This affects their relationships and emotional well-being. They also have limited participation in social or community activities.

Suggestion for Improvement: Based on the findings, the following suggestions are made to improve the life and work conditions of long-distance lorry drivers:

Regulate Working Hours: Transport companies and associations should set fixed working hours and mandatory rest breaks to avoid fatigue and accidents.

Health and Welfare Schemes: Government and private organizations should provide medical insurance, free health checkups, and emergency clinics along highways.

Fair Wages and Benefits: A minimum wage system should be introduced for lorry drivers, along with additional benefits like provident fund, paid leave, and accident insurance.

Rest and Parking Facilities: Safe and hygienic rest places with toilets, water, and food facilities should be established along major highways for drivers' convenience.

Awareness and Training: Regular awareness programs on road safety, stress management, and healthy lifestyle practices should be conducted for drivers.

Recognition and Social Respect: Drivers should be recognized for their contribution to the economy. Campaigns highlighting their importance can help improve their social image and respect in society.

Conclusion

This study highlights that long-distance lorry drivers in Tamil Nadu play a vital role in the transport and logistics sector, yet their lives are filled with challenges such as long working hours, health risks, and poor living standards. Improving their working conditions is not only necessary for their well-being but also for maintaining a safe and efficient transport system. Government authorities, transport companies and driver associations must work together to bring reforms in wages, safety, and welfare measures. Ensuring proper rest, healthcare, and recognition will lead to a more motivated and healthy workforce. In conclusion, the study emphasizes the urgent need for better policies and practical steps to uplift the life and work conditions of long-distance lorry drivers in Tamil Nadu, who keep the wheels of the economy moving day and night.

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