

An Exploratory Study to Assess the Quality of Life and Level of Stress Among Auto Drivers at Fatehgunj Area of Vadodara, Gujarat

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to assess the perceived stress and quality of life (QOL) among auto drivers in Fatehgunj, Vadodara, Gujarat, and examine their association with socio-demographic factors. A sample of 100 auto drivers was selected using convenience sampling. Data were collected using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) and WHOQOL-BREF. Results showed that 58% of drivers experienced moderate stress, while 25% had high stress. The mean stress score was 33.33 (SD = 21.73). Regarding QOL, 53% reported moderate quality of life and 31% poor. Significant associations were found between stress and age, dependents, experience, working hours, and income; and between QOL and education, dependents, working hours, and income.

KEYWORDS: Quality of life, Stress, Auto drivers, Exploratory study, Nursing research, Vadodara

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INTRODUCTION

Urban transportation systems rely heavily on auto-rickshaw drivers, who serve as a vital link in last-mile connectivity. Despite their importance, auto drivers often face challenging working conditions that adversely affect their physical and mental well-being. Long hours, exposure to pollution, traffic congestion, irregular income, and lack of social security contribute to elevated stress levels and diminished quality of life. These occupational stressors not only impact their health but also influence their productivity and interpersonal relationships. Quality of life (QOL) is a multidimensional concept encompassing physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, and environmental factors. Similarly, stress is a psychological response to external pressures that can manifest in both mental and physical symptoms. Understanding the interplay between stress and QOL is essential for developing targeted interventions to support vulnerable populations like auto drivers. In India, limited research has been conducted on the health and well-being of auto drivers, particularly in semi-urban areas like Vadodara. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring the levels of perceived stress and QOL among auto drivers in the Fatehgunj area. By examining the association between these factors and socio-demographic variables such as age, education, income, and working hours, the study seeks to provide insights that can inform public health strategies and policy reforms. Ultimately, the findings may guide nursing professionals, community health workers, and policymakers in designing programs that enhance the well-being of auto drivers and promote healthier urban livelihoods.

OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the quality of life (QOL) among auto drivers in the Fatehgunj area of Vadodara, Gujarat.
2. To evaluate the level of perceived stress among auto drivers in the same region.
3. To examine the association between quality of life and selected socio-demographic variables such as age, education, income, working hours, and family dependents.
4. To determine the relationship between perceived stress levels and selected socio-demographic variables.

METHODOLOGY

This exploratory study was conducted to assess the quality of life and level of perceived stress among auto drivers in the Fatehgunj area of Vadodara, Gujarat. A quantitative research approach was adopted to systematically collect and analyze data relevant to the objectives of the study. The research design was non-experimental and descriptive in nature, focusing on understanding the current status of stress and quality of life without manipulating any variables. The study population comprised auto-rickshaw drivers operating in the Fatehgunj locality. Inclusion criteria were: male auto drivers aged between 18 and 60 years, actively working in the area for at least one year, and willing to participate. Drivers with known psychiatric disorders or those unwilling to give consent were excluded. A sample size of 100 auto drivers was selected using a convenience sampling technique, which allowed the researcher to recruit participants who were readily accessible and met the inclusion criteria. Data collection was carried out using structured tools: the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) and the WHOQOL-BREF questionnaire. The PSS-10 is a widely used psychological instrument for measuring the perception of stress, while the WHOQOL-BREF assesses quality of life across four domains—physical health, psychological well-being, social relationships, and environment. Participants were approached individually, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. The questionnaires were administered in the local language to ensure clarity and accuracy of responses. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the

study. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean, standard deviation, and percentage distributions were used to summarize demographic variables and scores on stress and QOL. Chi-square tests were applied to examine associations between stress/QOL scores and selected socio-demographic variables such as age, education, income, working hours, and number of dependents. A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was considered statistically meaningful. Ethical clearance was obtained from the institutional ethics committee of Parul Institute of Nursing. The study adhered to ethical principles including respect for autonomy, beneficence, and confidentiality. This methodology provided a structured framework for exploring the psychosocial challenges faced by auto drivers and laid the foundation for identifying areas where targeted interventions could improve their overall well-being.

RESULTS

The study aimed to assess the quality of life and perceived stress levels among auto drivers in the Fatehgunj area of Vadodara, Gujarat. A total of 100 auto drivers participated in the study, and data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Demographic Profile

Among the participants, the majority (42%) were aged between 31–40 years, followed by 26% in the 41–50 age group. Most were male (83%), with only 17% female participants. Regarding education, 38% had completed primary education, 24% had secondary education, and 22% were illiterate. A significant portion (38%) were married, while 32% were single. In terms of family structure, 45% lived in nuclear families, and 55% in joint families. About 40% had 3–4 dependents, and 35% had more than 4 dependents.

Occupational Characteristics

Most auto drivers (48%) had 6–10 years of driving experience, while 30% had over 10 years. A majority (52%) worked more than 10 hours daily, and 36% worked 8–10 hours. Monthly income varied, with 40% earning ₹10,000–₹15,000 and 35% earning below ₹10,000.

Perceived Stress Levels

Stress was measured using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10). The results revealed that 58% of auto drivers experienced moderate stress, 25% had high stress, and 17% reported low stress. The mean stress score was 33.33 with a standard deviation of 21.73, indicating a moderate level of perceived stress overall. Drivers working longer hours and those with more dependents tended to report higher stress levels.

Quality of Life Assessment

Quality of life was assessed using the WHOQOL-BREF instrument. The findings showed that 53% of auto drivers had a moderate quality of life, 31% reported poor quality of life, and only 16% experienced good quality of life. The mean QOL score was 33.33 with a standard deviation of 18.61. The physical domain scored lowest, followed by psychological and environmental domains. Social relationships were relatively better among drivers with stable family support.

Statistical Associations

Chi-square tests revealed significant associations between stress levels and several socio-demographic variables:

- **Age** ($p < 0.05$)
- **Number of dependents** ($p < 0.01$)
- **Years of experience** ($p < 0.05$)
- **Working hours** ($p < 0.01$)
- **Monthly income** ($p < 0.05$)

Quality of life was significantly associated with:

- **Education level** ($p < 0.05$)
- **Number of dependents** ($p < 0.01$)
- **Working hours** ($p < 0.01$)
- **Monthly income** ($p < 0.05$)

These findings suggest that lower education, longer working hours, and higher family responsibilities negatively impact both stress and quality of life among auto drivers.

DISCUSSION

This exploratory study aimed to assess the quality of life and perceived stress levels among auto drivers in the Fatehgunj area of Vadodara, Gujarat. The findings reveal that a significant proportion of auto drivers experience moderate to high levels of stress and report poor to moderate quality of life. These results align with existing literature that highlights the occupational vulnerabilities of informal transport workers in urban India.

The majority of participants reported working more than 10 hours a day, often under physically demanding and psychologically taxing conditions. Long working hours, exposure to traffic congestion, environmental pollution, and irregular income contribute to elevated stress levels. The mean stress score of 33.33 (SD = 21.73) indicates a moderate level of perceived stress, consistent with studies conducted among similar occupational groups in other Indian cities. For instance, research on taxi and bus drivers has shown comparable stress levels due to similar work environments and socioeconomic pressures. Quality of life, as measured

by the WHOQOL-BREF, was found to be moderate in 53% of participants and poor in 31%. The physical and psychological domains scored lower than social and environmental domains, suggesting that auto drivers face significant health challenges and emotional strain. These findings are supported by previous studies that emphasize the lack of access to healthcare, poor nutrition, and limited social support among urban transport workers.

Statistical analysis revealed significant associations between stress levels and variables such as age, number of dependents, years of experience, working hours, and income. Similarly, quality of life was significantly associated with education level, number of dependents, working hours, and income. These associations underscore the impact of socioeconomic factors on the well-being of auto drivers. Drivers with lower education and income, longer working hours, and larger families tend to experience higher stress and poorer quality of life. The study highlights the need for targeted interventions to support auto drivers. Health education programs, stress management workshops, and access to affordable healthcare services could help mitigate the negative effects of occupational stress. Additionally, policy reforms aimed at improving income stability, working conditions, and social security for informal workers are essential. From a nursing and public health perspective, community outreach initiatives can play a vital role in promoting the health and well-being of auto drivers. Nurses and health workers can conduct regular health screenings, provide counseling, and facilitate connections to local health resources. Collaborative efforts between government agencies, NGOs, and transport unions can further enhance the effectiveness of such programs.

In conclusion, the study provides valuable insights into the psychosocial challenges faced by auto drivers in Vadodara. Addressing these issues through comprehensive health and social interventions is crucial for improving their quality of life and reducing stress, thereby contributing to a healthier and more resilient urban workforce.

CONCLUSION

This exploratory study sheds light on the psychosocial challenges faced by auto drivers in the Fatehgunj area of Vadodara, Gujarat. The findings reveal that a significant proportion of drivers experience moderate to high levels of stress and report poor to moderate quality of life. These outcomes are deeply influenced by socio-demographic factors such as age, education, income, working hours, and family responsibilities. The study highlights that prolonged working hours, low income, and limited educational attainment are key contributors to elevated stress levels and diminished well-being. Auto drivers often operate under strenuous conditions, with little access to healthcare, social support, or financial stability. These stressors not only affect their physical and mental health but also impair their ability to maintain a balanced personal and professional life. Quality of life assessments revealed that most drivers struggle with physical and psychological health, while social relationships and environmental conditions showed relatively better scores. This suggests that while some aspects of their lives are supported by community or family ties, the overall burden of occupational stress significantly undermines their well-being. The associations found between stress and quality of life with socio-demographic variables underscore the need for targeted interventions. Health education, stress management programs, and access to affordable healthcare services can play a vital role in improving outcomes. Moreover, policy-level changes aimed at regulating working hours, ensuring fair wages, and providing social security benefits are essential to uplift this vulnerable workforce. From a nursing and public health perspective, community-based initiatives can be instrumental in addressing these issues. Nurses and health workers can engage with auto drivers through outreach programs, offering regular health check-ups, counseling, and awareness sessions. Collaborative efforts involving local authorities, NGOs, and transport unions can further enhance the reach and impact of such interventions. The study emphasizes the urgent need to recognize and address the occupational health risks faced by auto drivers. Improving their quality of life and reducing stress through comprehensive support systems will not only benefit the individuals but also contribute to a healthier and more resilient urban transport ecosystem.

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