

ROLE AND PROBLEMS COLLEGE BUS DRIVERS: A CASE STUDY OF MANGALURU CITY OF KARNATAKA STATE

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Abstract

Mangaluru has been considered as one of the most sought-after education destinations in India, which provides quality education starting kindergarten up to Masters and professional courses. Mangaluru city is home to a wide variety of educational institutions which include, schools, engineering, management and hospitality. National Institute of Technology, Surathkal, among the country's premier engineering Colleges, located around 10-20 km from Mangaluru City. Large numbers of well-established schools and Colleges are found here. People from various states of India prefer their children to study in Mangaluru due to quality of education and various other reasons. Mangaluru has seen a lot of development in last few years basically due to increasing educational institutions. Besides, the city is also selected under smart city project.

Transport is an essential part of fast developing cities. College buses are an important source of transport for students mainly in metropolitans and small cities. Close to 81% of all employed persons in India make a living by working in the informal sector. Among the five south Asian countries, informalisation is the highest in India and Nepal (90.7%) says a new report by International Labour Organisation (ILO). In the present era of globalisation, service sector in India provides 47% of job opportunities around the world (ILO). Drivers are a major segment of informal sector. College bus drivers are major part of it. This paper studies the problems and perspectives of college bus drivers in Mangaluru City. This study is based on primary data which was collected from 60 college bus drivers of various educational institutions of Mangaluru City with at-least one-year experience in the profession.

Keywords: Informal sector, College bus drivers, socio-economic conditions.

Introduction

To access the public education system, students must get to school systems, with implications for equity, student success and well-being. The need for safe passage of each child to school and back home is of paramount importance to every educational institution. To ensure safe travel the educational institutions have their own fleet of outsourced college buses as per standards and manned by trained drivers and personnel sensitized to the needs of school children.

Gurukula system was present in India during ancient times. There was no transport system that was available. In 1910 during pre-independence, horse-drawn carts were used to transport students to schools.

Post-independence especially after 1960's there developed public school education in India but there was no such transportation facilities that were provided. Later as private educational institutions began operating in India, they started providing college bus facilities for their students. It was introduced basically for two reasons. Firstly, to attract more number of admissions. Secondly, for the convenience and safety of the students.

Mangaluru a well-known fast developing city in the state of Karnataka, well known as educational hub of Karnataka. There are good number of educational institutions in the city who attract thousands of students from all over the country. Educational institutions here are the pioneers in the country and have a long history as long as 140 years. Besides few well known public educational institutions, there are a good number of private schools and colleges in the district who provide standard educational infrastructure such as modern class rooms, renovated play grounds, IT and research labs, well updated library, hostel facilities, green campus, canteen facility, food stalls, and transport facilities to the students.

The establishment and expansion of educational institutions in Mangaluru taluk have greatly resulted in increasing job opportunities. The institutions have created jobs for teaching and non-teaching faculties in and around the city of Mangaluru. Since the city is dominated with private transport system, this has created the need for transportation facilities for the students. Since most of the educational institutions provide transport facilities, it has become priority for almost all schools and colleges in the city. This has created increasing demand for college bus drivers and helpers. Few institutions consider the drivers as a part of non-teaching faculty but many others take them on contract basis. Since they are paid on the basis of days of work and not given the social security benefit such as Provident Fund, Employee State Insurance, they come under the informal sector. There have been many accident cases of college buses that are reported in India. The reports of these accidents clearly reveal that, few cases were caused by the negligence of the drivers and many others were due to child behaviour that distracts the drivers

Keeping this broad concept and issues in background, the present study is an attempt made to find out the responses of college bus drivers regarding the various kinds of problems faced by them on duty, besides to know their opinion for creating better work environment for their welfare and safety of the students.

2. Review of Literature

Parents and institutions strive to provide safe transport facility to their school going children. It is commonly believed that school buses are safer than other transport. But several tragedies or problems related to the school buses have occurred, which indicate the existing unsafe conditions of these buses. The safety of the general people and students both within the bus as well as those in the roads are given least priority (Gangopadhyay et al, 2005).

In many schools and colleges, the face that parents and guardians see is not of headmaster or principal or teacher- it is the face of school bus driver. The man who is charged with awesome responsibility of getting dozens of students from their homes to their classrooms in a safe and efficient manner (Rossen, 2017).

Everyday millions of students to school and colleges in India. Their journeys are mostly ignored by parents, management and even by the Government bodies. It is presumed that they are safe during transportation to school (Sharma 2017).

As a result of these hurdles school bus drivers quit jobs. Some common complaints from the school bus drivers is that, no authority is given to them to make the students follow rules on their buses. Management does not support them when parents complain. Institutions do implement certain policies which don't help the school bus drivers. On the other hand, managements give deaf ear to drivers report on unsafe behaviour of students on the bus (Track school bus, 2019).

Due to tight schedule and inadequate bathroom facilities, bus drivers face variety of medical issues, including urinary tract infections, incontinence and even bladder cancer (ttd.org, 2013).

There are many institutions which try to provide supportive work environment for the school bus drivers. Nearly 200 school bus drivers in the city of Mumbai are being trained in the batch of 50 drivers, by experts to handle emergency situations like mishaps and ensure safety of students. They were given lessons on safe driving skills and proper implementation of school bus policy (Times of India, 2019).

It is seen that, communication between administrator and bus driver is an essential in the success of any behavior management programme. Administrators must discuss with the drivers about the unacceptable behaviors and their extent (Sims, 2014).

It is suggested that bus drivers must use the same strategies used by the teachers. They should learn names of the students and should spend time with them. Drivers must be allowed to recognize the students with helpful and positive behaviour and encourage them so that they become an example for other students (Mulvahill, 2019).

Another suggestion from one of the drivers of Tennessee is that as students grow up, their on-bus behaviour can cause distraction. To avoid this, drivers must follow sea assignments, boys on one side girls on the other (Rossen, 2017).

3. Objectives:

- To study the socio-economic status of college bus drivers in Mangaluru City.
- To analyse the problems of college bus drivers in Mangaluru city.
- To suggest various policy measures for the empowerment of college bus drivers in Mangaluru city.

4. Methodology:

This research paper titled problems and perspectives of college bus drivers in Mangaluru City is based on primary and secondary sources.

Primary data: Primary data was collected from 60 college bus drivers of Mangaluru city who were selected randomly. The data is collected through direct personal interview method with the help of well-structured questionnaire.

Secondary data: Secondary data was collected from the publications and websites of various reports of state, national and international organizations, policies of the Government, research articles published in magazines, websites and journals.

5. Statement of the research problem:

College bus drivers play a key role in providing transportation facilities to the students of various educational institutions. Due to fast expansion of educational institutions in the city, there has been an increasing demand for drivers especially in the study area, Mangaluru City. College bus drivers have unique and greater responsibility compared to the normal private and public transport drivers. The managements usually take extra care when they recruit drivers for their institutional transport buses, because they have a greater responsibility of safety of the students. They have to bring the students safely on time to the educational institutions and take them back to their homes and hostels after the class hours. They work for 2-4 hours in the morning and the same hours in the evening. Their work is more strenuous compared to their counterparts working in the public as well as private transport buses in Mangaluru City. But they do get frequent breaks on weekends, and public holidays and long breaks during vacations. There are a few existing studies already done in India to understand the problem and perspectives of college bus drivers. But in the study area no attempts have been made to study the same. In this contest an attempt has been made to investigate the problem and perspectives of college bus drivers in Mangaluru City.

6. Findings and Analysis:

Age is one of the important indicators of demographic feature. Out of 60 respondents 12 (20%) were in the age group of 18 to 30 years, 24 (40%) were in the age group of 31 to 40 years, 16 (26.7%) were in the age group of 41 to 50 years, and 8 (13.3%) were in the age group 51 to 60 years. In the overall category, the higher percentage of respondents belong to middle age (40%) compared to other age groups. Education plays a prime role in selection of profession. Among the respondents a majority (45%) have at least completed SSLC followed by PUC (25%) and Under Graduation level (11.7%) But just (18.3%) have not completed their SSLC. Out of 60 respondents, 49 respondents (81.7%) were found to be married, 8 respondents (13.3%) were unmarried and 3 respondents (5%) were widowers.

As size of the family is directly related to socio-economic status of the respondents, out of 52 married, 34(65.38%) respondents had 1-2 children, 16(30.76%) respondents had 3-4 children and 2 (3.84%) had no children. This clearly indicates that majority of them have 1-2 children and small families. Out of the 50 respondents who had children, 7 of them (14%) have infants, 37 of them had school going children (74%) and 06 respondents (12%) children were found working.

The family size of the respondents reveals respondent's responsibility. A majority of 47 of the respondents had below 6 depends in their family (78.33%) and 13 of them (21.66%) had a family size of 6

members and above. Income is an important indicator to decide the economic status of the family. When it comes to the annual income of the respondents. Majority of the 29 respondents belong to the income category of Rs. 10,000-15,000 followed by 14 respondents with Rs.10,000 and below. 13 respondents had a family income above Rs. 15,000 and below Rs 20,000 and 4 respondents had a family income Rs. 20,000 and above. Therefore, the socio-economic profile of the sample respondents shows majority of them having low-income level.

When it comes to status of job, out of 60 respondents a majority 65% that is 39 respondents were permanent employees and 35% that is 21 employees were temporary and contract based. When it comes to work experience among the 60 respondents a majority 23 respondents (38.3%) had 11-20 years' work experience. 22 of the respondents (36.7%) had 1-10 years of experience, 11 of the respondents (18.3%) had 21-30 years and just 4 respondents (6.7%) had 31 years and above experience in the profession being college bus drivers. A majority 43 of the respondents (71.6%) were working for 8 hours and above, 10 of them (16.7%) were working for 4 hours and 7 of the respondents (11.7%) work for 5-7 hours per day. Among 60 sample respondents a majority 47 respondents (78.3%) chose this profession because of good work environment and regularity job, 38 of the respondents (63.3%) say that, they selected this job because they get attractive salary, 35 of the respondents (58.3%) opined that they chose this profession because they had passion for driving. When it comes to job satisfaction it is found that 34 of the respondents (56.7%) were satisfied with the job, 17 respondents (28.3%) were highly satisfied with the job, 5 of the respondents (8.3%) were less satisfied and just 4 respondents (6.7%) were least satisfied with the current job. When it comes to the problems faced, 44 respondents opined that they faced a problem of traffic & unscientific road infrastructure, 34 respondents face problem related to distracting behaviour and lack of corporation from students, 48 respondents opined that, there was lack of punctuality of students in the morning and evening which was a serious problem. 36 respondents said that they are not given a helper/ cleaner/ supporting staff which they require the most. 18 respondents opined that they face problems regarding frequent repairs / maintenance of bus. 22 respondents mentioned that their wages/salary is not paid on time. 26 of the drivers opined that they are given additional duties in the institution along with driving, 21 respondents were of the opinion that they were not given any social security benefit such as Provident Fund and ESI, 21 drivers opined that they faced lack of job security they were not paid during mid-term and summer vacation. Talking about the health issues faced by the respondents, a majority 52 respondents (86.7%) said that they faced regular backache and body pain, 35 of the drivers (58.3%) had regular headache due to stress, 14 respondents (23.3%) faced urinary tract infections due to lack of toilet facilities on duty and 19 of them (31.7%) face other health issues. Among the respondents a majority 37 of the respondents (61.7%) opined that they wish to continue to work in the same institution, whereas 23 of the drivers (38.3%) opined that they wish to change the institution which has a better work environment and salary.

7. SUGGESTIONS:

- ❖ It is found that there is lack of talk between college management and bus drivers. Management must maintain good relationship with all their bus drivers, which is helpful to the management to know their family background and understand their problems.
- ❖ It is suggested that the parents/ guardians must take extra care so that their children board the bus on time, which helps the driver to maintain punctuality.
- ❖ Assigning an attendant to the driver in the bus will aid the drivers to work more efficiently and professionally.
- ❖ The educational institutions should make provisions for college bus drivers social security measures such as PF & ESI as per norms laid down by the Government.
- ❖ The educational institutions must employ the drivers as full-time staff and can be given additional task during vacations so that they have regular income during the entire year.

8. Conclusion:

Driver working in the educational institutions play a key role in the safe management of school and college buses. Handling students and bus requires skill and efficiency. Many college bus drivers express that their job is not appreciated and disrespected. As every profession has its respect, it is need of the hour to value their service. Even though college bus is an important mode of transport for the students, it appears to be somewhat sidelined by parents, institutions and the state. Dealing with the issues of drivers, training and supporting and respecting them would defiantly increase their efficiency and commitment.

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