

## **QUALITY OF WORK LIFE: A STUDY OF MUNICIPAL CORPORATION BUS DRIVERS**

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### **Abstract**

The work of professional bus drivers is considered as extremely stressful. It is an environment over which they have no control whatsoever and is an atmosphere that wrecks their schedules, disrupts their home life, makes social activities and regular breaks very hard to plan and supplies constant hassle. This paper deals with the quality of work life of the bus drivers and the factors that lead to an imbalance, causing high probability of road accident.

A qualitative study was conducted with the help of fifteen bus drivers from four different Pune Municipal Corporation bus depots, India. In-depth interviews were conducted and through naturalistic observation method, data was collected. Analysis of the data was done through coding process. Some suggestions are also being made so that the quality of work life of the drivers could be improved, thus, ultimately leading to better transport service to the citizens and a reduction in the rates of accidents.

**Key Words:** Work life, driver, stress.

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### **Introduction**

India's passenger transport for short and medium distances is bus oriented. Buses even compete with railways on certain long-distance routes by offering night services. The Indian bus transport industry is dominated by the publicly owned State Road Transport Undertakings. The state government controls the fares and, to a large extent, the most relevant aspects of their supply. Like many other passenger transport industries, the safety of travelers and other road users is of prime importance. Bus drivers successfully balance the competing demands of safety, customer focused service and company operating regulations. However, with the growing population over the years, it has become difficult for the state transport units to meet with the increasing transport needs of the public.

The physical and psychological health of the bus driver is a critical factor in the driving performance. Any impairment could lead to undesirable consequences for the passengers. This could be due to the lack of driver's decision-making authority, fatigue, fear of assault, social isolation, tight running schedules, vehicle mechanical faults, reduced rest breaks, poor cabin comfort, continually rotating shift patterns, adverse weather conditions, traffic congestion, the sedentary nature of the job, noxious air from other vehicles, pressures of ensuring safety of passengers, and demanding passengers (Carrère, Evans, Palsane, & Rivas, 1991; Duffy & McGoldrick, 1990; Evans, & Johansson, & Rydstedt, 1999; Evans & Carrère, 1991; Evans & Johansson, 1998; Fisher & Jacoby, 1992; Greiner, Krause, Ragland, & Fisher, 1998; Kompier & di Martino, 1995; Krause, Ragland, Greiner, Syme, & Fisher, 1997; Rydstedt, Johansson, & Evans, 1998).

Acknowledging that bus is one of the most popular modes of public transport worldwide, and, that the strong likelihood of this transport enduring for the foreseeable future, there is clearly a need to actively address the psychosocial environment of the bus drivers.

On the international scene, articles and reports were found that address problems of driver fatigue leading to accidents in Canada<sup>1</sup>, Australia<sup>2, 3</sup>, Belgium<sup>4</sup>, Denmark<sup>5</sup>, Malaysia<sup>6</sup>, Africa<sup>7</sup>, Israel<sup>8</sup>, Brazil<sup>9</sup>, and Great Britain<sup>10</sup>. International conferences have been held on the subject<sup>11</sup>. Also, the European Union Transport Commission has addressed the issue<sup>12, 13</sup>. However, when coming to India, there have been hardly any studies done to reflect the state of the Indian bus drivers.

This paper discusses the quality of work life of the Pune municipal corporation bus drivers (also called PMT). It is concerned with exploring the work life issues experienced by the drivers and the circumstances under which they perform their

duties. The information is based on a naturalistic observation and in-depth interviews of the Municipal corporation bus drivers, India and is able to take a micro-view from the participants themselves in an effort to ease out causal factors that affects the work life of them. Many of these themes have been explored from a macro-perspective in the international scenario (e.g. Dorn, 2003; Křivohlavý, 2003; Wahlberg, A. E., 2003; Broughton, J. et al., 2003; Issever, H., et al., 2002; Matthews, G., 2001; Baštecká, Goldmann, 2001; Hennessy, D. A et al., 2000; Carty, M., et al., 1999 ), but international studies of this type from the micro-perspective using qualitative methods, reflecting the Indian scenario, till date has not been undertaken. Hence, the present study tries to find, the quality of work life of the Pune Municipal Transport Bus drivers and their perception about the initiatives taken by the organisation to improve their life at work.

### **Significance of The Study**

Pune Municipal Corporation was chosen as the study as it was felt that this would support an argument for typicality. More importantly than typicality in the case selection, was the concern for purposive attributes. As this study concerns itself with the minutiae of quality of work life of the bus drivers, a case study site rich in various aspects of QWL of the drivers in India was deemed to be important.

Pune City had 2.5 million people in 2001; a 62% increase since 1991. According to the 2001 census provisional counts, the urban agglomeration around Pune has a population of around 5.06 million people in 2008. In contrast, the Public Transport in Pune run by the Pune Municipal Transport (PMT) has hardly changed its capacity.

The findings in this study are significant in that they provide insight into the complexity of work in PMT bus driver's work life. Furthermore, they show that there are many factors that can potentially impact the quality of work life of the drivers. This study also supports the idea that the well-being of the drivers merit serious consideration by Municipal Corporation decision-makers.

### **Background**

The Pune Municipal Transport was established in 1950 under the provisions of the Bombay Provisional Municipal Corporation Act 1949, and since then, it is being managed by the Bombay Provisional Municipal Corporation. The following three statutory authorities have control over Pune Municipal Transport:

- a) Pune Municipal Corporation
- b) Bus Transport Committee
- c) General Manager

### **Pune Municipal Corporation**

Every year PMT prepares a budget estimate "B" and present it at the annual general meeting of the Pune Municipal Corporation consisting some of the issues like purchase of buses, construction of bus stops and other building, purchase of requisite materials etc. After review, the PMC approves the budget estimate "B" submitted by PMT.

### **Bus Transport Committee**

Since it is difficult for Pune Municipal Corporation to look after all the matters of PMT, it has established a separate transport committee namely "Bus Transport Committee" which looks after all the activities of PMT on behalf of PMC.

### **General Manager**

With the help of the General Manager and other senior executives, it frames policies and takes decisions, on important issues of PMT.

### **About Pune Municipal Transport**

Pune municipal transport is the main public transport in Pune. It is one of the oldest state transport undertakings in the country and has a uniqueness of being managed by the city itself. Due the migration of people to Pune from different parts of the country for getting employment opportunities, enhancing their standard of living, for education, etc. the population of Pune has increased rapidly in the past two decades.

The objective of Pune Municipal Transport is to provide an efficient, economic and reliable transport service with in Pune and its suburbs. It is the responsibility of the PMT to accomplish its objectives. But the objective of PMT is not being achieved properly. There are some deficiencies that have been found such as untimely service, road accidents etc. To a great extent, the PMT bus drivers are held responsible for this situation. It is generally believed that *Stress* among the PMT bus drivers is a major cause of this inefficiency.

### **Purpose of The Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of bus drivers with respect to the quality of their work life. Specifically, this study addressed the following research questions:

- 1) How do staff members experience their work environment in terms of stress, work load, time pressure, and work-life balance?
- 2) What is the experience of staff relating to Quality of work life initiatives?

### **Research Methodology**

For better understanding of the driver's quality of work life, qualitative methods were employed in this study. This is because; a major strength of the qualitative approach is the depth to which explorations are conducted and descriptions are written, usually resulting in sufficient details for the reader to grasp the idiosyncrasies of the situation (Myers, 2000). The research for this study was conducted onsite at the bus depots since Creswell (2003) explains that qualitative research takes place in the natural setting. According to Creswell, qualitative researchers look for involvement of their participants in data collection and seek to build rapport and credibility with the individuals in the study. Sensitizing concepts, referring to the concepts or categories that analysts bring to the data, provide the researcher with a general direction in which to look for data (Patton, 2002). This study was influenced by the sensitizing concepts that emerged from the review of the literature, namely work stress, factors influencing quality of work and strategies adopted to cope with stress.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The study was also guided by the concept of Naturalistic Observation. This is because social attitudes like prejudice are studied through observation in natural, real-life situations. The naturalistic observation is a type of study classified under the broader category of field studies; no experimental approaches are used in the field or in real-life settings. In the naturalistic observation method the researcher very carefully observes and records some behaviour or phenomenon, sometimes over a prolonged period, in its natural setting. The subjects or phenomena are not directly interfered with in any way. This usually involves observing the participants as they go about their activities in real life settings. This research attempted to understand quality of work life

from the participant's point of view. Therefore, the qualitative design of this study helped foster an understanding of each participant's unique experience through in-depth interviews. It also provided an understanding of the phenomenon being researched through direct, first hand experience.

### **Selection of Participants**

Participants for this study consisted of drivers employed in four different depots of Pune Municipal Transport. Randomised quota sampling was done to select the drivers from four different routes who had first hand experience of working as a driver with the phenomenon of interest.

Having representation of drivers traveling for different routes, their experience and views on their quality of work life was obtained. Drivers were invited to participate in this study via personally contacting them after explaining them the cause and importance of this study. Since the recruitment process involved a request for voluntary participation, it was difficult to accurately predict the number of staff who would participate in this study, as many as twenty-five drivers were approached. In the end, fifteen participants agreed to volunteer.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection took around four months which consisted of individual interviews and naturalistic observation. Interviews provide an opportunity for detailed investigation of each individual's personal perspective and for an in-depth understanding of the personal context within which the research phenomenon is found (Creswell, 2003). Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide which served to guide but not govern the discussion. Questions were open-ended in order to provide participants with the opportunity to fully explain their experiences. Before conducting the interviews, the researcher had traveled through the various routes and had silently observed the drivers performing their jobs. It helped the researcher to get a feel and understand their quality of work life in a better way.

Interviews were conducted either in the bus depots, at a restaurant situated nearby and also in a private area often chosen by the participant. Interviews generally lasted one hour, were tape recorded, and transcribed verbatim. Participants were made aware of the recording and transcribing procedures prior to their involvement with the study. After the interviews memos and notes were written about questions, impressions, and feelings researcher had during the interviews.

Naturalistic observation took place while studying quality of work life of the drivers. This type of observation was useful in gaining a better understanding of the quality of work life of the drivers and how they felt and reacted at different situations. Observation notes were documented immediately. In order to maintain the confidentiality of all recorded material, appropriate safeguards were taken to ensure that this material is protected. At the conclusion of the interview participants were asked to allow the researcher to contact them for follow-up verification of the transcription and interpretation of the data. The anonymity of each participant was protected by referring to each participant only as a *participant* and assigning each participant with a number.

### **Data Analysis**

Following the procedure recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1998), three types of coding were adopted to analyze the data. First, open coding was used to discover and identify the properties and dimensions of concepts in the data. Second, axial coding was employed to link the core categories together at the level of properties and dimensions. Third, selective coding was used as a process of integrating and refining theory. To organize this process, a systematic approach to the analysis of transcripts was adopted in a procedure akin to that of Turner (1981).

### **Establishing Trustworthiness**

A variety of strategies were employed to enhance the validity of the study. Firstly, audiotapes of the interviews provided a concrete reference to the original source to verify any potential discrepancies. The interviewer transcribed the interviews, word for word, immediately after each interview. Moreover, some triangulation of data sources and triangulation of multiple analysts (Patton, 1990) occurred to strengthen findings (A researcher colleague helped in this process). For example, data were obtained from two different sources with different researchers conducting the interviews in each location and emerging themes were followed up during the interview process to check the consistency of responses. Interpretations were discussed with the fellow researcher to gain a different perspective and to examine rival explanations.

Richardson (2000) suggests that our research be evaluated on the basis of substantive contribution and asks whether it contributes to our understanding of social life. This study aimed to enhance our understanding of the participants' working lives with respect to quality of work life and issues relating to it. Richardson also offers

reflexivity and impact as evaluative measures for research. A reflexive journal was used throughout the study in order to reflect on and document researcher's beliefs, feelings, and emotions. Any thoughts or questions that surfaced regarding new research directions and practices were also documented.

Narratives and detailed descriptions of the work life experiences were included in the report to maximize accuracy and to minimize the possibility of distortion resulting from researcher bias in the data. Sample limitations were considered to shed additional light on to the validity of emerging themes and helped qualify the degree to which general themes could be established.

### **Research Findings**

The research findings from fifteen interviews conducted with the drivers at four different bus depots of Pune Municipal Transport are presented as under. Before resending the findings a base is laid which provide an overview of the commonalities and uniqueness of each of the individual participants based on demographic information. In interpreting the findings, this background study would help the reader to understand the context of participant's lived experiences and views. Analyses of the interviews uncover four main themes: (a) Work Demands and Quality of work life. (b) Coping strategies to reduce stress. (c) Organisational initiatives to reduce stress and (d) Humor, Team work and Work life Balance

### **Description of Participants**

All the fifteen participants work as drivers with four different depots of Pune Municipal Transport. All the participants are male, as no females are employed as drivers. Eleven participants work as full time employees and four participants work as Part time. The part time participant's job is temporary in nature. All participants have done their matriculation in terms of education and have got specialised training as a driver. There is some variation with respect to their level of experience with the organisation, with length of service ranging from three years to twenty-five years. However, there is recognition of longevity reflected in years worked, as more than half of the participants have been with this organisation for more than ten years. The age range for participants is between mid-twenties and mid-fifties. The majority of participants are married, while a few are still bachelors. None of them are divorcees or widows. All but two of the married participants have children which, as they explained, can influence the amount of time they spend on domestic work. Hours spent on domestic work in a typical week ranged from as little as three hours per week to as



much as fifty hours per week, with the majority of participants indicating that they spend between ten and twenty hours each week on domestic work. Time spent commuting to and from work ranged from one to ten hours per week. Participants acknowledged that the time they spend each week on paid work, domestic work, and commuting dictates how much time they have left over for leisure pursuits. Time spent engaged in leisure pursuits ranged from two hours to twenty-one hours in a typical week.

In reporting the findings, each participant is simply referred to as a participant and assigned a number to protect their anonymity. While confidentiality is important in any study, it is particularly critical in this case since some of the participants were initially reluctant to have their interview audio-taped and during the interview they entrusted the researcher with sensitive information that they had not intended be publicly reveal. The findings describe how participants experience their work environment in terms of stress, work load, time pressure, and work life balance. The findings also highlight the nature of their experiences in relation to their quality of work life and initiatives taken by the organisation for improving it.

(a) Work Demands and Quality of Work Life:

Though the life at work and sources of stress varied amongst participants, they accepted that they experienced some amount of stress throughout the day. Once the concept of stress and meaning of quality of work life was explained to the participants, all of them accepted that stress was a common factor while at work and a concern for their job. Most of the stressors identified by the participants were associated with the kind of work that was performed.

The quality of their life at work was mainly hampered due to time pressures, deteriorating condition of the buses and increasing pollution. All these are reflected in the participant's comments.

*"The condition of my bus is at its worst position. I have reported to my authorities so many times. They do not seem to bother. Every time I use the brakes or change the gear, I have a feeling that it might not work. The steering wheel and gear is too hard to handle. Minor breakdowns are very common phenomenon. I have to drive the bus slowly. This causes delay in reaching the destination. Passengers pass comments and shout from the back. I have to just ignore them." (Participant No .3 )*

*“Sometimes I get the feeling that my head is a top and it’s spinning like a wheel. Rise in number of vehicles, traffic congestion and deteriorating condition of the roads is an issue. The increasing noise and air pollution adds fuel to it. When I reach home, my entire body starts aching. My limbs get cramp. It’s very painful.”* (Participant No 7 )

Other types of stressors identified by the participants varied amongst themselves. They relate to their professional relationship, temporary nature of their job, lack of recognition and appreciation, to name a few.

*I have to sometimes negotiate with my seniors incase I wish to go for a leave and get it exchanged with some one. Senior are not only arrogant but also sometimes, sarcastic. Sometimes, I cannot attend any family function. There is always a shortage of staff, causing extra load on us.”* ( Participant No. 4 )

*“There are a lot of personality clashes amongst the employees in this organisation. No one respects our identity. At any point of time, we have to face the criticism. We are referred to as “Yamraj” (lord of death) by the citizens. Whenever an accident takes place, by default, we are always to be blamed.”* .”( Participant No. 13 )

It should be noted here that previous research has shown that the stressors lead to an imbalance in driver’s Physical and Psychological health, causing changes in their behaviour. Disturbance in the Psychological health may include depression and anxiety causing feelings of suspicion and sense of being persecuted (Issever et al., 2002). Changes in behaviour might include alcohol consumption or increase in its proportion. (Ragland et al. 1995). It could also lead to consumption of tobacco and smoking or increase in its proportion.( e.g., Bovenzi & Sadini, 1992; Hedberg et al., 1993; Maciulyte, 2000) and usage of drugs. (Ragland et al. 1995).

Some of these aspects have been very well reported by the drivers.

#### (b) Coping Strategies to Reduce Stress:

Coping strategies vary from participant to participant, but they often involve some form of past-time that is personally enjoyable or rewarding to the individual. Participants described spending time socializing with others, engaging in physical activity, and spending quality time with family members in order to take their minds off work and its accompanying stressors. Furthermore, participants seem to select experiences that will provide them with an element of escape, both mentally and physically, from the demands of work. Iwasaki and Mannell (2000) refer to this type of escape-orientated strategy as leisure palliative coping, in which leisure provides a

temporary escape from stressful events in people's lives. Some of the strategies adopted by the participants are reflected as under:

*"I try do to things that make me feel good, just maybe going out to a bar, having a few drinks and freak out with friends. That's a good thing. Like just letting loose and doing things that are totally different from what I'm doing in my professional life. Sometimes, I go out and buy lottery tickets also. Playing cards with my friends give immense satisfaction."* ( Participant No. 6 )

*"I have got a three year old son. I love my child very much. Most of the time, I play with my child. I do not realize how time passes away when I am with my son".* ( Participant No.4 )

(c) Organisational Initiatives To Reduce Stress:

When the researcher initially asked about the quality of work life initiatives, many participants responded by saying that there is nothing, or next to nothing, happening within the organisation to improve the quality of work life. There is a definite separation in the minds of the participants between the programs and special events that are being scheduled for staff and the realisation that these programs are considered to be quality of work life initiatives. Their responses are more of a reflection of a lack of awareness with how the initiatives are categorised and why they are provided than they are a reflection of a lack of awareness about the programs themselves. Communication does seem to be an issue since for the most part each participant felt that they receive adequate communication about the quality of work life initiatives through notice boards, but in fact they did not recognise the events are something offered to enhance work life balance.

*"I'm not really aware of a lot of programs. There was once a meditation programme conducted for a selected few. I know they had one recently."* ( Participant No. 3 )

*"Yeah, to be honest, I'm not familiar with anything. The organisation is least bothered about anything as such."* ( Participant No. 15 )

*"We don't know about anything called as Quality of work life initiative. And I say 'we' because I don't ever remember hearing any one of the staff that I work with saying anything as such."* (Participant No. 8 )

## (d) Humor, Team Work and Work Life Balance:

In a workplace that is commonly characterised as being fast paced, demanding, and filled with stress, it may be difficult to find the time to share a laugh among those with whom you work. However, it is because of this fast paced, demanding, and stressful environment that the participants feel the need to be able to find humour during their day. It seems that when staffs are able to share a laugh with their coworkers, they are reminded to not take things so seriously. As humour becomes more a part of the work day, it is expected that work related stress will start to dissipate. Therefore, the use of humour seems to provide participants with an effective coping strategy in order to deal with work related stress. Opportunities for humour can be found amongst the participants stated as under:

*“Before starting for our destination and after reaching the last destination, we get some time to share with our colleagues. This is the time when we get an opportunity to crack a joke or pull each other’s leg. All of us take it lightly as this is the only way of entertainment for us.” ( Participant No. 14 )*

*“For us, our lunch break takes place when we reach to some destination. There is no fixed timing as such. That is the time when we meet other colleagues of ours. While having lunch, we discuss funny topics and incidents that might have happened while driving. Any passenger’s peculiar habit or activity while traveling, become our topic of discussion. This way, we try to forget our work related stress and pressure and get ourselves rejuvenated.” ( Participant No. 11 )*

**Working As A Team**

In a long term environment where drivers work, the importance of effective team work can not be overstated. The following quotes not only reflect a strong collegial relationship to which they belong, they also reflect a certain amount of personal gratification that comes from team cohesion.

*“When there’s team cohesiveness and people are working together then your day is smoother and your day is happier. There is a great understanding amongst each one of us. Whenever I need a leave in an emergency, colleagues on leave, cancel their leave and act as my replacement. Even I do the same for others. I mean, this is very common amongst us.” ( Participant No. 8 )*

In addition to the personal gratification that participants derive from working as interconnected team members, there also seems to be an acknowledgement of the carry over value that this team work brings to the residents by way of improved

service. As the quote below illustrates, quality of service is often enhanced through effective team work:

*We work as a team. Due to this we're able to reach the destinations on time without much problem and are able to meet the traveler's expectations. In case there is a breakdown of the bus while traveling on the route, within a small period of time; the passengers are offloaded to some other bus in the same route. This is only possible because of the collegial relations that we share amongst ourselves.*" ( Participant No. 15 )

### **Work Life Balance**

Every individual's assessment of the extent to which they feel that they are able to achieve work life balance vary according to the circumstances like family responsibilities and time spent on commuting. Most of the time, participants seem to be able to separate their home life from their work life and recognise the importance of having a balance between the two.

*"I want to give more importance to my family than my job. My organisation is not bothered if I fall sick but my family is. I need time to spend with my wife and children. Most of the time, I am not able to do so."* ( Participant No. 4 )

*"When I go home, I do not carry my work along with me. In my house, I am a father, a husband and a friend, nothing else. Sometimes, on holidays, I get the message to come back to work. I have instructed my wife to say that I am not at home."* ( Participant No. 6 )

### **Discussion**

Internationally, working conditions and the factors affecting quality of work life leading to stress for bus drivers have received considerable attention. In the present scenario, unsatisfactory working conditions and job stress may be indicative of working in a society where work-life balance is a desired, but often elusive, goal (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Sturges & Guest, 2004). In this context, it was found that bus drivers are exposed to a range of stressors such as the behaviour of other drivers, traffic congestion, ergonomic factors, noise, climate conditions, and work scheduling, resulting in poorer health and work performance (Evans, Johansson, & Rydstedt, 1999). Till date, large number of studies have been conducted across the globe highlighting the various facets of bus driving and its subsequent impact on the drivers (for e.g. see Lagarde et al., 2004; Legree et al., 2003;

Wahlberg, 2003; Mayhew and Simpson, 2002; Christie, 2001; Matthews, 2001; Norris et al., 2000; Hennessy, Wiesenthal, and Kohn, 2000; Kloimuller et al., 2000; Carty, Stough, and Gillespie, 1999). They have consistently shown that professional drivers are at increased risk of accident involvement (Broughton et al., 2003) and have work-related issues to deal with that are likely to increase driver stress and exposure to risk (Dorn and Brown, 2003). However, through this study, the researcher has tried to highlight the conditions of the bus drivers, in the Indian context, under which they have been consistently performing their duties, using qualitative methods. It has tried to examine the perceptions of quality of work life amongst the drivers of Pune Municipal Corporation using an inductive, naturalistic Observation and in-depth interview approach. The findings from this study suggest that contending with stressful situations in the workplace is a common occurrence for the bus drivers leading to deterioration in their quality of work and life. These findings also extend the conceptual framework of quality of work life beyond the notions of stress, work load, and time pressure dealt with in previous research. The interpretive nature of this study allowed the exploration of the extent to which participants experience stress during their work and their perceptions of their quality of work life.

### **Responding To The Research Questions**

As stated in the beginning, this study was designed to address the following questions:

- 1) How do staff members experience their work environment in terms of stress, work load, time pressure, and work-life balance?
- 2) What is the experience of staff related to Quality of work life initiatives?

While addressing the first research question, it was discovered that the work environment can be characterised as one in which work demands are often time consumptive and stress inducing. The bus drivers were going through heavy amount of work stress causing deterioration in their quality of life at work. Acute shortage of staff, deteriorating conditions of the buses and bad roads were found to be the prominent factors responsible for this.

Through responding to the second research question, the data helped to reveal that though quality of work life initiatives can provide staff with much needed opportunities for humour and balance during their work day, not many efforts have been taken by the organisation to improve the quality of work life of the drivers.

### Recommendations to improve the quality of work life of the drivers

It is clear from this study that lots of initiatives need to be taken to improve quality of work life of the bus drivers. Initiatives can provide staff with experiences that are conducive to improving their overall quality of work life. It is also clear that quality of work life can contribute to the perceived enhancement of the quality of service by the drivers. Since quality of work life and quality of service are key organisational priorities, several recommendations can be offered to improve the quality of work life of the drivers. Some of them are mentioned as under:

1. There is a need to provide an opportunity for staff to interact socially with other members of the organisation both formally as well as informally.
2. Arrangement of get together parties and related activities on various occasions is very much needed to be done by the organisation.
3. There is a need of robust systems in place such as targeted training to strengthen and enhance stress coping strategies for bus drivers (e.g., exploiting relaxation exercises and learning how to change negative appraisals of stressful situations).
4. Introducing employee assistance programmes (EAPs) to provide workers with the counseling support to manage their personal problems. This would be effective in assisting drivers to ensure that good psychological health is maintained
5. Health promotion on-site educating drivers of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle would also be justified; motivating drivers to engage in regular physical exercise, adopt a healthy and balanced diet, and reduce tobacco and alcohol intake. There is a need for free and regular medical checkup of the drivers to keep them fit.
6. A genuine attempt to improve the whole work environment is needed, which may not only lead to achievement of “distress” prevention but also find ways to generate eustress.
7. While recruiting the drivers, realistic job previews (RJPs) to potential employees outlining positive and negative job related information could be given so that individuals can form more accurate expectation from their job. This would help to align person environment fit leading to workforce more resilient to the difficulties of the job.

8. The proposed fixed work schedules rather than the usual rotating shift patterns that may change from week to week, will go some way to minimise fatigue (as highlighted by Evans, 1994), but will also help to establish regular meal times discouraging meal skipping which would further lessen fatigue.

9. There is also a need to recruit more drivers so that the existing drivers are relieved from working for extended hours, causing fatigue in them.

10. A lack of balance within the work day may suggest a need for greater promotion of the intended benefits of quality of work life initiatives and for more support and encouragement to be extended to staff in their efforts to participate.

### **Limitations**

While conducting this study, there were quite a number of limitations that were noted in the design of the study. Recognizing these limitations help us to give future direction for research. Since the nature of this research was interpretive, the findings may not be generalized to represent the larger section of the work force. Even amongst the fifteen participants, some different meanings, experiences and views were found. Example of these divergence were found while individually accessing and narrating their quality of life at work and how it varied in accordance with family responsibilities; time spent commuting to and from work and whether participants were full time or part time workers. Another example how views and experiences differed amongst participants came into picture while discussing whether they were aware of or had experienced the quality of work life initiatives taken by the organisation.

The study is also limited to the extent that the researcher had to rely on informant's experiences, recall abilities and self-reporting. As with all studies that rely on informants, the researcher is unable, conclusively, to exclude the possibility that informants (intentionally or otherwise) supplied inaccurate or misleading responses (either for reasons of social desirability bias or simply to conceal other acts). Although the researcher designed this research to limit such bias, the possibilities of such issues must be acknowledged.

The nature of this study was interpretive. While this approach allows us to illuminate and more clearly understand the concept and constructs of quality of life at work, the nature of the design precludes causal claims.



Although the research design and methods develop rich insights, the extent to which these results could be empirically generalised, is constrained by the selected context of the research. As stated by Brantlinger *et. al.*, (2005, p. 203), “qualitative research is not done for purposes of generalization, but rather to produce evidence based on the exploration of specific context and particular individuals”. Hence, in this regard, further research in varying context is needed to gauge the generalisability of the insights gained in the current study. Although the researcher feels that the approach has generated deep, rich and interesting insights into these phenomena, it limits the extent to which researcher is able to comment on the full range of quality of work life aspects. The limitations and contributions of the study lead to number of potentially fertile opportunities for further research.

### **Conclusion**

This study provided an in-depth look into the working lives of drivers in the Pune Municipal Corporation, India. It helped to illuminate some of the stressors associated with working in a fast paced, constantly changing environment where work demands and time pressures are ever present. This study also demonstrated that quality of work life should not only be researched in terms of initiatives designed to improve work life for employees. Rather, there are potentially many factors that can impact quality of work life for drivers, including the challenges they are faced with during the work day and the condition in which they work. Quality of work life initiatives, however, can provide certain positive experiences for staff, especially when they promote the opportunity to socialise and build connections with co-workers and help to fulfill employee needs for humour, and balance. Hence, such initiatives should be taken at regular intervals. Positive influences on quality of work life, which can be provided through quality of work life initiatives, can leave staff feeling more confident and encouraged about the service they provide to the commuters. Relevant to the association between quality of work life and quality of service is the idea that professionalism lends to the employees itself. Commitment to professionalism can transcend the detrimental forces that impact both quality of work life and quality of service.

The lifestyle of the bus driver at home and at work is inextricably linked to his physical and psychological health. Growing threats to well-being such as increased road traffic and increasingly tight running schedules from commercial pressure will no doubt add to the burden felt by bus drivers. Such observations may add to the notion that poor well-being in drivers is part and parcel of the job for bus drivers, though this perspective is not helpful or ethically appropriate. What the studies reviewed indicate, is a necessity for bus operators to improve workplace practices to reduce job stressors

and ameliorate the work environment of bus drivers. Operators need to work with researchers, trade unions, policy makers and bus drivers themselves, to formulate initiatives that safeguard drivers against work stress so that the quality of their work life could be improved.

While this article has discussed the various facets of work life of bus drivers from a perspective of the participants themselves, it has focused only on the personal aspects. Even so, it is hoped that the present results constitute not only valuable insights and attract the attention of the management towards the deteriorating condition of the bus drivers and highlight their work life but also provide a tentative starting point towards the greater understanding of current scenario under which the drivers are going through so as to bring an improvement for the same.

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#### 1. TDC

Fatigue in Transportation: Multimodal Issues and Solutions

<http://www.tc.gc.ca/TDC/news/mmwork.htm>

#### 2. INTERNATIONAL ACTION DAY ON DRIVER'S HOURS

Facts about Fatigue and Driving

<http://www.itf.org.uk/SECTIONS/It/8sept98/facts.html>

#### 3. SAFETYLINE 27

Coach Drivers Checked for Fatigue

[http://www.wt.com.au/safetyline/magazine/sline\\_27/article16.htm](http://www.wt.com.au/safetyline/magazine/sline_27/article16.htm)

#### 4. EUROMYTHS

Driven Crazy by Barmy Bus Driver Brussels Ruling

<http://www.cec.org.uk/myths/newmyths/myths31.htm>

#### 5. DANISH BUS DRIVERS

<http://www.google.com/search?q=cac...serve.net/cse/projects/pdanbus.htm>

#### 6. MY AGENT: TOUR BUS DRIVERS DON'T GET ENOUGH REST

<http://www.cs.uiuc.edu/users/chai/berita/967011-960801/0184.html>

#### 7. TABLOID:BAD PLANET

Bus Drivers Wanted:

<http://www.tabloid.net/1998/04/21/D1.html>

#### 8. HOW GOOD ARE OUR BUS DRIVERS

<http://www.israelwire.com/New/990101/9901013.html>

#### 9. OSHO MEDITATIONS HELP RIO BUS DRIVERS

<http://www.osho.com/news/world/bus-dr.htm>

#### 10. DRIVER FATIGUE A KILLER ON THE ROADS

[http://www.itsafety.org/ITSA/driver\\_fatigue\\_a\\_killer\\_on\\_the\\_r.htm](http://www.itsafety.org/ITSA/driver_fatigue_a_killer_on_the_r.htm)

#### 11. JIM HILLS SPEECH ON 4/30/97

National Transportation Safety Board:

<http://www.nts.gov/speeches/jh970430.htm>

12. EUROMYTHS

Driven Crazy by Barmy Bus Driver Brussels Ruling

<http://www.cec.org.uk/myths/newmyths/myths31.htm>

13. SAFETY AND WORKING CONDITIONS IN EUROPEAN BUS AND  
COACH TRANSPORT

<http://www.itf.org.uk/SECTIONS/it/road/busleaflet1.htm>