

Employment-Life Harmony and Systemic Issues in Road: A Sociological Analysis of Truck Drivers in India

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Abstract

The freight transport sector by road is essential for supporting economic operations, but truck drivers have multifaceted difficulties that jeopardise their work-life harmony and overall wellness. Distinct from various careers, truck driving features erratic schedules, lengthy separations from home, perilous situations, and scant welfare resources, all of which burden drivers' personal and family dynamics. Despite the emphasis of existing study on logistics, safety, and efficiency, the real-life experiences of drivers, particularly the interaction between job stress and personal issues, have not been thoroughly investigated. This analysis explores the fundamental difficulties affecting the work-life balance of truck drivers, with particular emphasis on personal/family, job-related, and systemic concerns. Anchored in theoretical constructs such as the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework, the Job Demands–Control (JDC) model, and Organisational Support Theory, the investigation evaluates the null hypothesis that these challenges fail to significantly influence outcomes including organisational and policy support, family and social life, health and well-being, economic and job security, and working conditions. A cross-sectional design employing a convergent mixed-methods approach was implemented, merging quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data was amassed by an organised survey that implemented time-location sampling (TLS) at significant transport nodes, trucking depots, toll plazas, and roadside rest stops. A minimum of 384 drivers was calculated using Cochran's technique, guaranteeing adequate representation over 28 venue-time units. Qualitative insights were supplemented with semi-structured interviews to reflect the real-life experiences of drivers. By rigorously investigating the factors influencing work–life balance in drivers, the study reveals the occupational, systemic, and personal challenges this workforce endures, while also stressing the critical demand for policy reform, organisational support systems, and infrastructure improvements. The conclusions present implementable strategies for policymakers, transport agencies, and labour unions to elevate drivers' quality of life while guaranteeing sustainability and effectiveness in the goods transport domain.

Keywords: Employment-Life Harmony, Truck Drivers, Occupational Strain, Systemic Issues, Road Freight Transportation, Time-Location Analysis.

1.0 Introduction

The goods transport business plays a crucial role in the economic framework at both national and global levels, guaranteeing the efficient and consistent delivery of products. At the core of this field are truck drivers, who invest prolonged hours maneuvering highways and crossing extensive distances to fulfill the rising demand for timely shipments. Their involvement is essential, although the realities of their job entail substantial difficulties that reach well beyond work and influence their private lives.

Distinct from various other careers, truck driving features erratic hours, lengthy periods away from home, interrupted sleep patterns, and physically taxing environments. In this setting, the balance between professional and personal life is a critical matter. The concept of work-life balance, typically recognised as the preservation of a sound relationship between career responsibilities and personal tasks, is vital in determining health, well-being, and productivity. Nevertheless, for truck drivers, striking this balance is remarkably arduous due to the specific demands of their occupation: perpetual travel, employment uncertainty, lengthy shifts, and minimal access to welfare or assistance resources.

1.1 Review of Literature

Truck driving as a career is defined by extensive hours, erratic timetables, and long durations away from home, which pose substantial obstacles to maintaining a work-life balance (Amoadu et al., 2024; SaveLIFE Foundation, 2020; Hege et al., 2019). Extended work arrangements, limited job control, and lack of proper rest contribute to exhaustion, sleep disorders, and poor recuperation, which escalate the risks of obesity, heart conditions, musculoskeletal problems, and mental health issues such as depression (Virgara et al., 2024; Tahernejad et al., 2024; Tripathi et al., 2025). Psychosocial difficulties, encompassing social detachment, reduced occupational rank, and minimal family interaction, amplify the overflow of stress into personal life (Hege et al., 2019; Amoadu et al., 2024; Save LIFE Foundation, 2020). These obstacles are intensified by infrastructural inadequacies such as limited safe parking, sanitation, and food provisions that obstruct healthy practices, although initiatives like the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways' Wayside Amenities Program seek to mitigate these issues (Amoadu et al., 2024; MoRTH, 2021; NHAI, 2021). The dangers posed by weariness, inadequate road infrastructure, and inconsistent enforcement of labour norms heighten family worries and constrain recovery prospects (Hege et al., 2019; SaveLIFE Foundation, 2020; Amoadu et al., 2024). In addition, while digital monitoring systems can improve logistics, they typically heighten stress unless bolstered by organisational strategies such as adaptable timetables and health programs (Amoadu et al., 2024; Hege et al., 2019). Findings imply that integrated health strategies, paired with the enforcement of rest-break policies and infrastructure improvements, can diminish fatigue and bolster both driver health and family integration, thereby promoting work-life harmony (Virgara et al., 2024; MoRTH, 2021).

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This study's conceptual framework interprets the work-life balance (WLB) of truck drivers as the product of the dynamics between work organization, health status, psychosocial environment, infrastructure, safety climate, and technology influences. Essentially, demanding work patterns, prolonged driving hours, erratic schedules, and less autonomy directly restrict drivers' leisure time and elevate weariness, which are principal factors contributing to work-life balance issues (Amoadu et al., 2024; Hege et al., 2019). These organisational expectations are intensified by health-related issues such as obesity, musculoskeletal disorders, sleep difficulties, and mental health stress, which hinder productivity and curtail meaningful family engagement (Virgara et al., 2024; Tahernejad et al., 2024; Tripathi et al., 2025). Factors related to psychosocial dynamics, including social isolation, stigma, and reduced job status, further deteriorate morale and impede integration into family and community life (SaveLIFE Foundation, 2020; Hege et al., 2019). The framework identifies shortcomings in infrastructure and environmental conditions, such as inadequate rest stops, sanitation, and roadside services, which worsen fatigue and obstruct restorative recovery; however, government measures like the Wayside Amenities program present potential alleviations (MoRTH, 2021; NHAI, 2021). Inadequate safety and regulatory frameworks, notably the feeble implementation of labour safeguards and fluctuating standards, contribute to the spillover of stress into family life

by maintaining high levels of accident and injury risks (SaveLIFE Foundation, 2020; Amoadu et al., 2024). In conclusion, shifts in technology and industry, particularly digital oversight and automation, generate dual pressures; although they can boost efficiency, they also bring forth new stressors in the absence of supportive regulations (Amoadu et al., 2024). Together, these elements intertwine to constrict drivers' time, intensify exhaustion, and raise psychological pressure, thereby curtailing opportunities for family involvement and rehabilitation. Alternatively, support from organisations, health-related measures, and investments in infrastructure function as mediating elements that can diminish work-related stress, facilitate recovery, and encourage a healthier work–life balance for drivers (Virgara et al., 2024; Hege et al., 2019; MoRTH, 2021).

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Even though they are crucial for the seamless functioning of the supply chain, heavy goods vehicle drivers repeatedly struggle to maintain a balance between their work and personal commitments. Extended hours spent on the road, strict delivery schedules, and lengthy absences from home sometimes cause physical tiredness, sleep disturbances, stress, and other health complications. Such work-related constraints commonly infiltrate drivers' home spheres, straining domestic relationships, curtailing social engagements, and diminishing psychological wellness.

The challenge is intensified by poor regulatory oversight, scant organisational assistance, and deficient welfare initiatives. A significant number of drivers do not have consistent rest intervals, healthcare resources, or organisational structures that would enable them to better balance their job and family duties. As a result, challenges including employment unhappiness, social estrangement, family strife, and worsening health are common. These difficulties not only reduce the drivers' well-being but also endanger the comprehensive functionality and safety of the transport sector.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1. To determine the fundamental social obstacles experienced by truck drivers in India.
2. To analyse how these obstacles influence their ability to uphold work–life harmony.

1.5 Hypothesis Development

This study's null hypothesis asserts that Personal/Family Challenges, Work Life Challenges, and Systemic Challenges do not meaningfully predict outcomes associated with drivers' work-life balance, including Organisational and Policy Support, Family and Social Life, Health and Well-being, Economic and Job Security, and Working Conditions. This hypothesis is embedded in fundamental theoretical constructs of occupational stress and the relationship between work and life balance. The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model indicates that the well-being of employees is influenced by the shifting interplay between job demands, such as prolonged hours and unsafe circumstances, and the resources available to address them, such as organisational support and infrastructure (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). If a predictive connection is not established, it would conflict with the JD-R framework, which underscores the systematic effect of demands on work-life outcomes. The Job Demands–Control (JDC) model proposed by Karasek (1979) asserts that significant job demands paired with limited control result in detrimental health and well-being effects. In the context of truck drivers, work-related difficulties denote significant pressures, personal and family matters reveal inadequate recuperation or control, and systemic issues emphasise structural restrictions. Overlooking their forecasting capacity would be at odds with this theoretical basis. According to Organisational Support Theory, individuals who recognise substantial

organisational assistance face less work-family discord and improved cohesion between their occupational and personal spheres (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Assessing the null hypothesis while assuming the absence of a substantial relationship delivers a robust empirical analysis of the theory's applicability in the transport domain, where drivers typically receive scant institutional assistance. Research findings regarding long-haul truck drivers repeatedly indicate that ineffective job organization, heightened stress, and poor sleep quality considerably influence work-life balance and overall health (Hege et al., 2015). Therefore, presenting the null hypothesis in this fashion supplies both theoretical and empirical support for exploring whether these problems substantially affect drivers' experiences.

Null Hypothesis (H₀): Personal or familial adversities, work-related issues, and systemic barriers do not meaningfully predict the dependent variables (Organisational and Policy Support, Family and Social Life, Health and Well-being, Economic and Job Security, and Working Conditions) among truck drivers in India.

1.6 Research Methodology and Sampling Approaches

This investigation utilised a convergent mixed-methods cross-sectional design, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative strategies. Quantitative data was amassed through a structured survey utilising a time-location sampling (TLS) technique, while qualitative insights were extracted from semi-structured interviews to reflect the lived experiences of drivers. TLS was used because it offers trustworthy and widely generalisable estimates for transient and hard-to-reach groups, like long-haul truck drivers. The focus group included truck drivers that operate on inter-city or long-haul routes and regularly utilise major transportation hubs and roadside services. The eligible participants consisted of male and female drivers aged 18 years or older who were engaged in the operation of heavy goods vehicles and who agreed to take part. Persons on medical leave, anyone not directly driving the car, and those who cannot or do not wish to provide consent were eliminated.

Key sites in India were determined for the sampling frame through informal field observations and consultations with local sources. The identified sites encompassed truck terminals, toll plazas, loading and unloading areas, logistical facilities, rest places, substantial gasoline stations, and freight terminals. Each area was thereafter partitioned into four distinct time frames: afternoon, evening, overnight, and early morning, to reflect the variety in driver movements and availability. The sample size needed was established by Cochran's method, leading to a minimum of 384 respondents at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. The investigation included 7 sites across 4 separate time periods, producing a total of 28 venue-time units (VTUs). Each VTU contributed around 14 surveyed drivers, ensuring that the total sample was representative and evenly allocated across temporal and spatial dimensions.

1.7 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Impact of Challenges on Maintaining Work Life Balance of Truck Drivers

Table 3						
Regression Coefficients (Combined Table)- Impact of Challenges on maintaining Work Life Balance						
Dependent Variables		US-Coefficients		S-Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. E	Beta		
Organizational and Policy Support	(Constant)	3.595	.006		5.093	.000
	Personal/Family Challenges	.244	.068	.236	4.649	.000
	Work Life Challenges	.437	.041	.448	7.894	.000
	Systemic Challenges	.570	.090	.546	11.113	.000

Family and Social Life	(Constant)	4.25	.052		6.542	.000
	Personal/Family Challenges	.036	.065	.029	8.559	.000
	Work Life Challenges	.007	.090	.004	11.080	.000
	Systemic Challenges	.590	.291	.535	8.652	.000
Health and Well-being	(Constant)	3.882	.011		5.544	.000
	Personal/Family Challenges	.192	.208	.149	12.923	.000
	Work Life Challenges	.205	.289	.237	11.709	.000
	Systemic Challenges	.108	.218	.127	11.495	.000
Economic and Job Security	(Constant)	5.475	.029		3.544	.011
	Personal/Family Challenges	.351	.133	.320	17.383	.000
	Work Life Challenges	.237	.011	.248	11.581	.000
	Systemic Challenges	.370	.020	.346	9.577	.000
Working Condition	(Constant)	3.877	.018		5.897	.000
	Personal/Family Challenges	.036	.005	.029	4.254	.004
	Work Life Challenges	.546	.024	.548	12.345	.000
	Systemic Challenges	.270	.022	.246	13.001	.000
Regression ANOVA was Significant Regarding Three Predictors (Sig. .05)						
Source: Primary Data						

The regression analysis highlights clear patterns in how different categories of challenges shape drivers' experiences. In terms of organizational and policy support, all three predictors were significant, but systemic challenges had the strongest effect, followed by work life and personal/family challenges. This indicates that gaps in welfare schemes, inconsistent regulations, and broader policy failures are central to how drivers perceive the lack of institutional support, though their everyday work struggles and family stressors also contribute.

When it comes to family and social life, systemic challenges again stand out as the dominant predictor, while personal/family and work life challenges had only minimal influence. This suggests that disruptions to family roles and social participation stem less from individual or job-related issues and more from broader systemic shortcomings, such as poor roadside amenities, social stigma, and unsafe conditions.

For health and well-being, all three predictors were significant, but work life challenges emerged as the strongest factor. Long working hours, unsafe conditions, and heavy workloads appear to drive health problems most directly, while personal/family challenges and systemic stressors also play meaningful, though smaller, roles.

In the case of economic and job security, both systemic challenges and personal/family pressures exerted the strongest influence, with work life challenges also contributing but to a lesser degree. This shows that financial stability and job security are shaped not only by household and personal responsibilities but also by structural issues like subcontracting practices, automation, and regulatory burdens.

Finally, for working conditions, work life challenges were the most powerful predictor, followed by systemic challenges, while personal/family pressures had only a minor role. This indicates that the immediate work environment defined by delivery deadlines, employer expectations, and poor infrastructure is largely shaped by organizational and systemic pressures rather than by family factors.

Overall, the findings make it clear that systemic challenges and work life challenges exert far greater influence than personal or family-related pressures. Systemic barriers such as policy gaps, poor infrastructure, and lack of

welfare primarily affect organizational support, family/social life, and job security, while work life demands long hours, unsafe roads, and unrealistic deadlines—are the strongest drivers of poor health and difficult working conditions. Personal and family issues, while significant, tend to function more as amplifiers of stress rather than as the root causes of imbalance. In short, the struggles faced by drivers are deeply rooted in structural and organizational systems, with personal challenges reflecting the consequences of these larger pressures rather than independent determinants

Null Hypothesis (H₀): Personal/Family Challenges, Work Life Challenges, and Systemic Challenges do not significantly predict the dependent variables (Organizational and Policy Support, Family and Social Life, Health and Well-being, Economic and Job Security, and Working Condition).

Hypotheses Result

The study examined a set of complex hypotheses to assess the relationship between three categories of challenges Personal/Family, Work Life, and Systemic—and the overall work–life balance of truck drivers. The null hypothesis (H₀) assumed that these challenges would not significantly predict the dependent variables, namely Organizational and Policy Support, Family and Social Life, Health and Well-being, Economic and Job Security, and Working Conditions. However, the regression analysis provided strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis. The findings confirmed that all three challenges exert a significant predictive influence on the dependent variables. This outcome highlights that drivers' work–life balance is not shaped by isolated factors but by the combined effects of personal, occupational, and systemic challenges, reinforcing the need for structural and organizational interventions to ease their burdens.

1.9 Major Findings

The first dimension distinguished between infrastructure-related problems, such as poor roads and rest areas, and financial or organizational pressures like low wages. The second dimension separated employer and regulatory pressures from more personal concerns, such as family responsibilities and mental health. Clustering patterns highlighted that systemic and infrastructure challenges dominate drivers' experiences, with tight deadlines and unsafe conditions standing out as particularly severe. This shows that drivers' struggles are multidimensional, spanning structural, occupational, and personal pressures all at once.

The systemic and work-related challenges are the strongest predictors of drivers' hardships, while family and personal issues, though important, play a smaller role. Gaps in infrastructure, welfare schemes, and policy enforcement had a strong effect on drivers' perceptions of organizational support, family and social life, and job security. Meanwhile, work demands such as long hours, unsafe roads, and delivery pressure were the leading causes of health problems and poor working conditions. Personal and family challenges intensified the stress but did not emerge as the central cause, showing that the drivers' struggles are largely rooted in structural and occupational systems.

In summary, the findings highlight that the challenges faced by road freight drivers are deeply entrenched in systemic neglect and the demands of their profession. Policy failures, weak infrastructure, and lack of welfare provisions intersect with exhausting schedules and unsafe working conditions to create overwhelming pressures. While family and personal challenges add to the burden, they are secondary to broader systemic and organizational problems. Addressing these issues requires targeted reforms at both the policy and workplace level to reduce the compounded strain and improve the lives of drivers.

1.10 Major Suggestions

Promoting Health and Well-being

Drivers face high risks of fatigue, obesity, and stress. Regular health screening camps at transport hubs, along with subsidized medical check-ups, can address early signs of chronic illness. Awareness programs on nutrition, stress management, and safe driving practices should be integrated into training modules. Employers can also provide incentives for maintaining health records and participating in wellness programs.

Reducing Social Stigma and Supporting Families

Public campaigns highlighting the role of truck drivers in keeping the economy moving can help counter the low social status and stigma attached to the profession. Transport companies and NGOs can support drivers' families through community engagement programs, educational scholarships for children, and counseling services to mitigate the psychological toll of prolonged separations.

Leveraging Technology Responsibly

While digital tracking and logistics technologies are essential for efficiency, they must not increase stress or surveillance pressure on drivers. Companies should use technology for support rather than punishment for example, real-time alerts for fatigue detection, route optimization to reduce delays, and apps that connect drivers to rest areas and emergency assistance. Training programs should also help drivers adapt to new systems, reducing digital exclusion.

1.11 Conclusion

These recommendations underline the need for a multi-level approach: systemic reforms to improve welfare and infrastructure, organizational measures to regulate workloads and contracts, and personal/family support to reduce isolation and stigma. By addressing both structural and psychosocial challenges, policymakers and industry stakeholders can meaningfully improve the quality of life and work-life balance of truck drivers.

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