

Social Perceptions on Low-Income Women Driving CNG-Auto-Rickshaws as an Empowerment Tool

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Extended Abstract:

The research paper looks to explore general people's thoughts, perceptions, and attitudes about low-income women driving CNG-Auto-Rickshaws, and how through their driving CNG's, as an alternative employment platform in the transport sector as opposed to the usual norm in the RMG sector in Bangladesh, women empowerment can be attained.

The study also highlights the perceptions of these general people to distinguish the feasibility and lucrativeness of CNG driving compared to that of the RMG sector in Bangladesh through which, an understanding of the need for women autonomy via female-driver enhancement in the transportation sector, is explored. New pathways of development and viability are managed effectively when women have the means to work on a transportation system alongside men. Women not only can modernize the effects to the community's needs but also can highly acknowledge their own daily transportation communal sufferings to better and modernize transportation systems be it in a localized way or in a globalized stance. Participating in the undergoing economic transformation in Bangladesh would enhance women's calibers in a new dimension, therefore, women should take part among such transformations. Seeing the Transportation sector as a new avenue for the women would bring about economic diversification. It would add to the labor aid and when the concentration of women in the transportation sector gets increased, women would be more comfortable working there, and eventually, their employment would be more socially acceptable.

The study for this research paper is comprehensively large as all the factors are closely knitted. We interview 400 people where 120 respondents are youth, 80 respondents are parents, 100 low-income women and 100 low-income men. From low-income counterparts', the women respondent's occupation ranges from Apartment based Sweeper to Garments worker whereas, from the men respondents, their occupation range from Street vendors to CNG drivers. There are four sets of questionnaires for the four target groups along with an additional one where the owner of a CNG Transportation was questioned. For this paper, semi-structured interview is the method of inquiry. The interviews took place all over Dhaka where it ranged from 15 to 30 minutes. We have chosen Thematic Content Analysis as the methodology. Using a Thematic Content Analysis method, we analyze contents of the interviews to identify "themes" regarding various aspects of general societal perceptions of low-income women driving CNG-Auto-Rickshaws and seeing CNG driving as an alternative employment platform in Bangladesh. One of the main contributions of this study is that it helps to identify factors specific to decision making prowess of the low-income women and their empowerment via their employability in the Bangladeshi patriarchal economic context. This research paper also focuses on the lack of decision makings by the low-income women due to the patriarchal philosophies in Bangladesh which coincides with their self-assessed vulnerabilities through their thinking and behavioral patterns. CNG-Auto-Rickshaw driving is far more than just getting a driving license. It also means going to work in a red zone:

an openly hostile field where road rage, physical threats and sexual violence are often sparked by the sight of a woman behind the wheel. Despite neat and positive intentions, societal prejudices against women working are still banal in front of the low-income women. This is seen throughout the research study through the respondents' subtle nuances in Bangladesh's societal norms.

Low-income women are also wrapped up in their views that their families, husbands and in-laws won't allow them to be CNG drivers. Regardless of what women or the majority of the elite groups think, the majority of the low-income men, perhaps surprisingly, provided lenient and compliant assertions.

Whilst the tolerant behavior of men allowing and willing to adapt to the new grounds of this female-oriented-CNG-driving profession is pleasantly interesting to acknowledge, reaching the ultimate goal of job attainment and women empowerment is still a far cry. This paper proposes women can break free from the rigid traditional norms that restrict them, and move into new roles that help them realize their full potential. This paper also pinpoints by spreading awareness among the respondents, particularly to the elite target group about the lack of female involvement in many sectors in Bangladesh and the lower wage gap between men and women.

The findings from this research paper can also serve as a source of hypotheses that can be studied further and also analyzed to understand its validity. The findings presented in this paper can also serve as the basis for further studies in relation to the transportation sector, locally, in a Bangladeshi context, in the Asian context, and somewhat in a global context. Keeping the cognitive behaviors of the respondents (suppressed freedom of expression, behavior and rights) in mind, this research study can aware and help economists, policy analysts, policy developers, social agencies, transport planners, geographers, citizens, netizens and the individual as a whole in order to understand the economic and social depth of women empowerment through CNG driving.

Key words: Gender Biasness, Gender Disparity, Gender Inequality, Women Empowerment, Women's Rights, Societal Perceptions, Decision Making, Equal Opportunity, Women Professional Chauffeurs, Female CNG-Auto-Rickshaw Drivers, Bangladesh