

Women Transport Workers in India: Challenges and Realities

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Abstract

Women's involvement in non-traditional occupations has increased significantly in recent years. However, this inclusion does not necessarily translate into equitable working conditions. In this context, the transport industry is seen as one of the areas where women's participation remains limited and underexplored. Most existing studies on women have focused on their participation in the labour force and their use of public transport rather than their occupational challenges. Therefore, the study aims to investigate the various occupational challenges experienced by women bus conductors in the transport industry. A quantitative method was used to collect primary data from 105 female bus conductors using a structured questionnaire. The results indicate that women conductors experienced various challenges, including gender discrimination, disrespect from commuters, psychological stress, and safety concerns. In conclusion, to promote an improved experience for women working in transport, gender-sensitive workplace policies should be implemented, along with increased institutional support, a safe work environment, and organisational practises that support dignity, inclusion, and occupational well-being.

Keywords: Occupational Challenges, Transport Sector, Women bus conductors, Gender discrimination, Non-traditional occupation.

Introduction

Occupation can be defined as one of the most significant factors in determining social inclusion, economic participation, and well-being of individuals. However, the experience of occupational participation is not the same across all employees of the labour force, due to the effects of organisational structure, workplace environment, social norms, and occupational requirements on employment conditions (Avent-Holt et al., 2020). In the last several years, there has been numerous studies have been conducted on the workers' experiences beyond their remuneration and productivity, especially looking

at the challenges that are encountered by the workers, such as physical, psychological, social, and structural barriers at their work (International Labour Organisation, 2019). The occupational challenges can affect not just an employee's overall happiness and satisfaction with their job, but also the employee's level of commitment to their work, occupational identity, and long-term career sustainability. The changing nature of the labour market has led to an increase in women's participation in various sectors that have been recognised as traditionally male-dominated sectors. While this represents a positive development in gender equality and labour diversification, women's experiences in the labour market are still shaped by existing inequalities and systemic barriers. Studies constantly demonstrate that women continue to be employed in gender segregated occupations but face inequitable outcomes in the workplace, even when they are part of the formal labour force (Acker, 1990). In addition to occupational challenges, women who work in non-traditional sectors face additional pressures related to the legitimacy of their work, acceptance by their colleagues, professional credibility, the balance between work and personal life, and the availability of institutional support from their employer.

Among such sectors, transport remains an important yet under-researched area of women's workplace experiences. The transport sector significantly impacts economic growth through its role in promoting mobility, providing social services and generating jobs. Despite its critical importance, historically, men have overwhelmingly dominated the workforce in the transport industry, especially in operational jobs like driving, conducting, and route management, etc (Turnbull, P, 2013). The increase of women in transportation jobs is evidence of changing employment patterns and society's perception of women in traditionally male-dominated industries. Although transport has experienced a steady increase in female representation does not mean that women experience the same equal outcomes as men. Many studies have documented that women in transport experience multiple challenges, such as workplace violence, lack of infrastructure, unstable work schedules, job stress and discrimination based on their gender (Peters, 2013). In contrast to many other sectors, where the majority of work takes place under a controlled institutional setting, workers in the transport industry often work in dynamic

public workplaces where they must interact with commuters and adapt to a changing work environment.

Within the transport workforce, the bus conductor profession has a unique position because their roles combine a variety of operational responsibilities with customer services and public interactions. These conductors provide several services, including fare collection, ticket dispensing, assisting passengers, regulating crowds, coordinating routes, communicating and interacting with passengers and ensuring service continuity. For women bus conductors, the occupational demands of their positions are more challenging and compounded due to the intersection of their duties with the broader societal and gender norms, as they often work in an environment formerly characterised by male workers. Therefore, women bus conductors' experiences are influenced by more than their workloads but also by the socio-cultural perception of their work, relationships with coworkers, concerns regarding the safety and support from their employees. Occupational challenges experienced by women can be viewed from multiple dimensions, including physical challenges such as fatigue, extended hours of work, and physically demanding work routines. Psychological challenges such as stress, emotional exhaustion, anxiety and feeling pressured to meet the expectations of their employers, coworkers, and customers. Whereas occupational challenges include a lack of appropriate facilities at the workstation, a lack of a support system, limited access to welfare measures, and poor management practices. Social challenges include gender-based discrimination, being treated disrespectfully, being excluded, experiencing concerns for safety and difficulty in balancing work and family responsibilities (Dr Iram Naz et al., 2025). Among these dimensions, the occupational challenges of women working in transportation deserve particular attention due to public-facing jobs that generally require managing emotional interaction and operational responsibilities.

Thus, this paper examines the occupational challenges faced by women bus conductors in the transportation industry. Specifically, the study looked at the social and physical work environment, safety issues, occupational stress, commuter behaviour, gender related discrimination and the work-life conditions that women conductors experience. The study also aims to contribute to a better understanding of women's

occupational realities in male-dominated occupations and provide data that can be used to develop a more inclusive, safe and supportive environment.

Review of Literature

In this section, the existing literature on the study has been assessed. The various studies on women's employment have shown that non-conventional occupational women often face many challenges and experiences compared to other sectors of employees. (Acker, 1990) emphasised that the workplace culture is a neutral structure for every gender, but due to the structural masculinity norms and expectations, it leads towards the division of labour, organisational malpractice, and gendered inequalities. The women working in a male-dominated occupation often face structural barriers, unequal treatment and limited workplace validation. (Turnbull, P, 2013) also analysed the international perspectives from several countries and illustrated that women are still absent in operational transport roles and subject to institutional barriers, stereotypes in the workplace, insufficient facilities, irregular hours and safety concerns. (Kumar, 2018) described the issues and challenges facing women's empowerment in Indian railways. The research reveals that women of Indian Railways are relatively disempowered and they enjoy somewhat lower status than men, despite many efforts undertaken by the government. (Rubab, 2008) described the occupational stress, social and family difficulties and job contentment of working women in Bangladesh. This study also illustrated the difficulties and how far these difficulties for working women can be solved by giving them emotional sustenance, voicing against the long-standing harassment of women and advocating equality for them. (Dobbs, 2007) examined the relationship between gender, transport, and opportunities and argued that transport should not be perceived simply as infrastructure but rather as a social institution that affects women's participation in the workplace.

Numerous studies focused on shift work affecting women, which is the most challenging occupational demand in the non-traditional occupations and creates psychological strain and affects the sleep cycle of the employees (Maurya & Dr Manisha Agarwal, 2015). (Kurbett & Jadhav, 2017) discussed that the women bus conductors have experienced more challenges in their work due to increased overload and the extension of working hours. The study also mentioned that the majority of women conductors

experienced severe musculoskeletal pain in the legs, ankles/feet, knees, thighs, palms, etc, because of their constant standing and prolonged working hours. Similarly, (Somashekar & Kumar G.C., 2012) study highlighted that shift work, handling commuters and standing work positions during peak long working hours lead to various challenges and problems among women conductors. Another study also found that those working in passenger services tend to experience more psychological stress due to the workload, long working hours, inequality and public interactions (Padavic et al., 2020; Taklikar, S., 2016). Women employed in the transport sector in developing countries face a range of barriers to accessing positions in this field, mobility restrictions, and unsupportive institutional environments, disrespectful public behaviour, safety issues and work-life integration (Cresswell, 2016; Peters, 2013). Additionally, (Madariaga, 2013) revealed that women's public visibility in non-traditional occupations is often subjected to increased levels of scrutiny and behavioural issues. (Robertson, 2023) claimed that female conductors have often experienced exclusion in their occupation, questioning of their authority, and being assumed to be working temporarily in the transport industry. Despite these insights, a critical limitation of existing studies was in the Indian context. Most of the studies focused on workplace inequality, work shifts, public interactions, work pressures, and other dimensions. Thus, the recent literature indicates that women are underrepresented in the transportation industry because of the very small number of studies conducted on women working in the transport industry and focused on the multi-dimensional occupational experiences.

Theoretical Perspective

For the present research, the Gendered Organisation Theory has been used to gain insight into the challenges faced by the women bus conductors. The gendered organisation theory was developed by Joan Acker in 1990, which elaborates that organisations are not neutral, but rather have structures, processes, occupational expectations, and daily interactions that are socially constructed within the organisation, which is often biased in favour of masculine standards and continues to reinforce gender-based disparities. This theory was chosen for the study because the transportation industry has been traditionally male-dominated, particularly for occupations such as

commercial driving and conducting. Although there is an increasing number of women employed within the transportation industry, the culture of the workplace, the social expectation placed upon women, the organisational policies and practices, and the public perception of women's capabilities in these occupations still influence their experiences. In the context of the present study, the Occupational Challenge faced by women bus conductors cannot be understood simply in terms of workload or individual performance. Rather, the result of the study revealed the challenges arising through high-order institutional and interactional mechanism data consistent with Acker's assertion that gender inequalities are embedded within the organisational structure.

Research Questions

- What is the personal profile of the women conductors?
- What are the major occupational challenges encountered by women conductors?

Research Objective

- To examine the personal profiles of the women bus conductors.
- To identify the major occupational challenges faced by the women bus conductors.

Methodology

For the present research, the quantitative and qualitative research design was adopted. The research was conducted among the women bus conductors working in the transport industry in Chandigarh city. Chandigarh is one of the union territories of India, and it is considered a model city in terms of architecture, cultural growth, and modernisation. But the women's involvement in the transport sector was totally negligible until 2015. Because of the under-representation of women in this area, the study has been conducted to understand the gender specific workplace realities. For the study, a Purposive sampling technique was used, based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. A total of 105 women bus conductors were included, who are married and unmarried only. The present study data were collected through the semi-structured interview schedule, which consisted of their personal profile, working conditions and occupational challenges. The data was analysed through the Statistical tool (SPSS). The analysis

employed- frequency distribution, percentage analysis, mean score analysis and descriptive interpretation.

Results and Discussions

For analytical clarity, this section discusses the major findings of the study, which can be categorised into three broad dimensions: personal profile of the respondents, working environment and conditions of women employees and occupational challenges faced by women bus conductors.

Personal Profile

The personal profile of the respondents provides an important contextual basis to understand the occupational experience of women employed as bus conductors in the transport industry.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents according to their Demographic Profile

Personal Profile	Categories	Number of Respondents (N =105)	Percentage
Age (years)	18-23	12	11.4 %
	24-29	57	54.3 %
	30 & above	36	34.3 %
Marital Status	Single	69	65.7 %
	Married	36	34.3 %
Salary	10,000-20,000	05	04.7 %
	20,001-30,000	38	36.2 %
	30,001& above	62	59.1 %
Work Shift	Early Morning	42	40.0 %
	Afternoon	30	28.6 %
	General	33	31.4 %

Source: Computed from Primary Data

The above table presents the personal profiles of the respondents. The analysis includes age distribution, marital status, salary range, and work shift allocation among a total sample of 105 respondents. The age of the respondents indicates that more than half (54.3 per cent) were aged 24-29 years. Around one-third (34.3 per cent) of the

respondents were aged 30 and above, while only 11.4 per cent were aged 18 to 13 years. Hence, the data indicate that the majority of the respondents were in the early to middle stage of working adulthood. Additionally, the marital status of the respondent. shows that a significant number (65.7 per cent) of respondents were single or unmarried. Whereas 34.3 per cent of respondents were married. Thus, this pattern shows that the unmarried women were highly represented within this occupation compared to the married women.

Furthermore, the salary distribution shows that around three-fifths (59.1 per cent) of the respondents earned Rs 30,001 and above per month, whereas 36.2 per cent of the respondents earned Rs 20,001 to Rs 30,000 per month. Interestingly, only 4.7 per cent of the respondents earned less than Rs 20,000 per month. Therefore, this salary data reveals that the majority of the women conductors earn a moderate to high level of income. In addition, the data regarding the allocation of work shifts among the respondents indicates that 40 per cent of the respondents were working in the early morning shifts (which usually start from 5:00 am) and 31.4 per cent of the respondents were working the general shifts (which start from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm).

Meanwhile, 28.6 per cent of the respondents were working on the afternoon shift. Thus, these variations in the work shift allocation reveal that the early morning shift is particularly noteworthy in the context of women's employment in public transportation. These variations also suggest that women conductors are working in operational core functions rather than being grouped primarily within protective or limited scheduling arrangements. Consequently, the above findings indicate that most of the women conductors are young adults, largely unmarried employees and work in operational shift-based work with higher salary ranges. These demonstrate how women's involvement in the transport workforce is exceeding traditional occupational boundaries.

Table 2: Distribution showing the occupational challenges faced by the respondents
(Coding: Always = 5, Often = 4, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 2, Never = 1)

Occupational Challenges	Always	Often	Some-times	Rarely	Never	Mean Value
Does the conductor's job	15	42	38	10	00	3.59

make you physically exhausted	14.3 %	40.0 %	36.2 %	09.5 %	0.00 %	
Does a conductor's job increase your stress	14 13.3 %	35 33.3 %	47 44.8 %	06 05.7 %	03 02.9 %	3.49
Due to workloads, you are feeling anxious	00 0.00 %	09 08.6 %	69 65.7 %	16 15.2 %	11 10.5 %	2.73
Does workload increase the health issues	00 0.00 %	06 05.7 %	19 18.1 %	46 43.8 %	34 32.4 %	1.97
Faced a safety issue in the workplace	07 06.6 %	29 27.6 %	49 46.7 %	15 14.3 %	05 04.8 %	3.17
Experienced disrespectful behaviour from the commuters	23 21.9 %	41 39.0 %	25 23.8 %	11 10.5 %	05 04.8 %	3.63
Experienced verbal abuse from commuters	10 09.5 %	14 13.4 %	65 61.9 %	10 09.5 %	06 05.7 %	3.11
Commuters' behaviour threatens your safety	00 0.00 %	25 23.8 %	55 52.4 %	21 20.0 %	04 03.8 %	2.96
Male colleagues' behaviour is cooperative and respectful	12 11.4 %	18 17.1 %	66 62.9 %	09 08.6 %	00 0.00 %	3.31
Faced gender discrimination at work	22 20.9 %	46 43.8 %	25 23.8 %	07 06.7 %	05 04.8 %	3.70
Conductor's occupation affects your family life	03 02.8 %	13 12.4 %	42 40.0 %	30 28.6 %	17 16.2 %	2.57
Facing Difficult to balance work and personal life	00 0.00%	26 24.8 %	56 53.3 %	19 18.1 %	04 03.8 %	2.99

Source: Computed from Primary Data

The above table represents the perception regarding the occupational challenges faced by women bus conductors. The analysis examines the occupational challenges that encompass more than just physical demands on the job, including aspects such as psychological stress, safety concerns, social interaction within the workplace, gender specific experiences and work-life balance.

Conductor's job is physically exhausting

Perception regarding the nature of the job shows that only 54.3 per cent of the respondents believed that the conductor job was always or often physically exhausting. However, 36.2 per cent of the respondents experienced exhaustion sometimes, and only 9.5 per cent of the respondents rarely experienced physical exhaustion. The mean score of 3.59 signifies a relatively high level of agreement regarding the physical exhaustion among the respondents. Hence, the results indicate that the majority of the respondents believed that conductors faced physical exhaustion due to their occupation. These findings align with the nature of bus conductors' work, which is always associated with prolonged standing, frequent movement, repeated interactions with commuters, and attentiveness throughout their duty hours.

Conductor's job is mentally stressful

The findings indicate that 13.3 per cent of the respondents stated that their job has always increased their stress, while one-third (33.3 per cent) of the respondents reported that they experienced stress frequently. A significant proportion (44.8 per cent) of respondents mentioned sometimes, whereas only 8.6 per cent of the respondents mentioned that they rarely or never faced stress due to their job conditions. The average score of 3.49 indicates the moderate to high frequency of stress among the respondents. Therefore, it appears that the psychological demands of this occupation may be significant, as are the physical job demands.

Feeling anxious due to the workload

The data signifies that a significant portion (65.7 per cent) of the respondents revealed that they were feeling anxious due to the workload only sometimes, whereas only 8.6 per cent of the respondents were feeling anxious often, and none of them felt

anxious always. In addition, around one-sixth (15.2 per cent) of the respondents felt rarely, and 10.5 per cent of the respondents never felt anxiety due to their workload. Based on the analysis, the mean score of 2.73 indicates a moderate level of anxiety associated with the workload. Thus, the finding revealed that most of the respondents were feeling anxiety directly caused by their workload. It also seems to fluctuate according to the operational conditions and everyday responsibilities of the respondents

Workload increases the health issues

The data indicate that a majority (76.2 per cent) of the respondents rarely or never felt that the work pressure increased their health issues. However, 18.1 per cent of the respondents considered it only partially, and 5.7 per cent of the respondents often felt that the work pressure increases their health issues; no one had selected the always perception. The mean score of 1.97 shows a lower level of agreement. Thus, the findings imply that work pressure remains an occupational factor, but is still not associated with health challenges.

Faced safety issues in the workplace

Regarding the safety issues, more than one-fourth (27.6 per cent) of the respondents often experienced workplace safety issues. Meanwhile, 6.6 per cent of the respondents reported always facing the safety issues and 46.7 percent of the respondents reported sometimes. Additionally, 19.1 per cent of the respondents stated rarely and never. The average score of 3.17 indicates moderate levels of frequency regarding workplace safety concerns. So, the findings revealed that most of the respondents have faced safety issues. Similarly, this finding reflects one of the reasons behind the long-term retention of women in this transport sector.

Experienced disrespectful behaviour from the commuters

Regarding commuters' behaviour towards women bus conductors, it was found that 21.9 per cent of respondents always experienced disrespectful behaviour from commuters, and 39 per cent reported that such experiences occurred often. Meanwhile, 23.8 per cent reported partially, and 15.3 percent reported never or rarely experiencing such behaviour. The average score of 3.63 indicated a high level of agreement with the perception of disrespectful treatment by commuters towards respondents. Thus, the

findings reflect that such experiences were not occasional incidents but part of routine occupational challenges.

Experienced verbal abuse from commuters

Furthermore, the findings also indicated that the respondents experienced verbal abuse from the commuters during the course of their work. It was found that around one-tenth (9.5 per cent) of the respondents always experienced verbal abuse, and 13.4 per cent mentioned often. However, a significant proportion (61.9 per cent) of respondents mentioned sometimes, which reflects their day-to-day exposure and interaction. In addition, 15.2 per cent of the respondents experienced rarely and never. The mean score of 3.11 indicates a moderately frequent occupational challenge. Hence, the result signifies that the majority of the respondents experienced verbal abuse by commuters occasionally to always. This highlights that communicative hostility was embedded in the occupational interaction.

Commuters' behaviour threatens personal safety

It was found that around one-fourth (23.8 per cent) of the respondents mentioned that they often feel the threat to their safety, and none of them reported always. Whereas more than half (52.4 per cent) of the respondents mentioned it sometimes, and 23.8 per cent of the respondents reported rarely and never. The mean score of 2.96 shows the moderate frequency of perceived safety threats. Thus, findings reflect that a considerable proportion of respondents experience a moderate level of concern, but it impacts the meaningful level of concern regarding their personal safety while performing their duties.

Male colleagues' behaviour is cooperative and respectful

Regarding the male colleagues' behaviour, findings reveal that around fifth-eighth (62.9 per cent) of the respondents experienced that male colleagues' behaviour was occasionally cooperative and respectful towards them. While only 11.4 per cent of the respondents experienced that their male colleagues were always cooperative and respectful, 17.1 per cent of respondents experienced it often. This reflects that women's inclusion in the transport work culture is still undergoing an adaptation process. In addition, 8.6 per cent of the respondents experienced it rarely. The mean score of 3.31 shows a moderately positive perception of workplace relations. Therefore, the finding

indicates a balanced work environment but not entirely consistent experience of cooperation and respect for male colleagues.

Faced gender discrimination at work

The result signifies that one-fifth, 20.9 per cent of the respondents have always experienced gender-based discrimination at their workplace. Meanwhile, 43.8 per cent of the respondents experienced gender discrimination often, and 23.8 per cent of the respondents experienced it occasionally. Furthermore, a small proportion of respondents, 11.5 per cent, mentioned that they never or rarely reported gender discrimination. The overall high mean score of 3.70 shows a strong level of agreement among all occupational challenge indicators. Therefore, the finding demonstrates that the respondents have encountered gender-based discrimination at least occasionally during their work schedule. This finding also inferred that many respondents experienced differential treatment, not only due to work performance, but also based on the suitability of women employees to operational and public-facing positions. This shows that gender discrimination is one of the most prominent challenges experienced by the respondents.

Occupation affects family life

The data shows that a considerable proportion (40 per cent) of the respondents occasionally felt that their occupation affects their family life, and only 2.8 per cent of the respondents stated that their job duties always affect their family life, while 12.4 per cent of the respondents mentioned it often affects their family life. Furthermore, more than one-fourth (28.6 per cent) of the respondents had rarely experienced, whereas 16.2 per cent of the respondents never felt that the job duties affected their family life. The average score of 2.57 shows a moderate and occasional level of influence. Overall, it was deduced that respondents were occasionally experiencing difficulty with occupational demands and family responsibilities. Thus, these results show that the job duties do not have a severe effect on the family life amongst all respondents.

Faced Difficulty to balance work and personal life

Findings on the difficulty of balancing work and personal life indicate that around one-fourth (24.8 per cent) of respondents often faced this difficulty, and none reported always. More than half (53.3 per cent) of respondents stated sometimes or occasionally.

Around one-fifth (18.1 per cent) of respondents stated rarely, and 3.8 per cent never faced difficulty in balancing work and personal life. The mean score of 2.99 also indicates a moderate but frequent level of work- life imbalance. Thus, the findings indicate that respondents occasionally encounter difficulty maintaining equilibrium between occupational and personal life. It was also apparent that respondents were managing occupational and personal roles by handling time- bound responsibilities, time schedules, public service demands, and gender- based unequal treatment, among others.

Consequently, the results indicate that the occupational experiences of women bus conductors were determined by multidimensional factors that affect workplace conditions, interpersonal, social and gender- based challenges that together create a complex organisational environment beyond their regular operational responsibilities. Although respondents mentioned a moderate level of physical fatigue and work- related pressure, the results show that the most significant occupational difficulties arose from their interactions in the workplace, with the public, with safety issues, and with the broader gendered experiences. Among all the indicators, gender discrimination was the primary concern (Mean-3.70), indicating the unequal treatment experienced by respondents and their experiences based on gender are still issues for women and barriers to their occupation and to socialisation while working in a male- dominated occupation. Similarly, respondents reported a substantial amount of disrespectful and verbally abusive behaviour from commuters (Mean of 3. 63). Thus, it demonstrates that continuous commuters' interactions and emotional demands are constituting a major source of occupational pressure and strain. Furthermore, the moderate mean scores relative to cooperation with male colleagues (Mean- 3.31), workplace safety concerns (Mean- 3.17), verbal abuse from commuters (mean-3.11), and physical exhaustion (Mean- 3.12) show that respondents are experiencing these difficulties on an occasional basis but continue to be deeply ingrained within routine work experiences. Additionally, respondents also mentioned concerns about the difficulty in managing work and personal life (Mean-2.99), commuters' behaviour regarding threats to their safety (Mean-2.96), and feeling anxious while on duty (Mean- 2.73), reflecting the emotional and social demand impact associated with the transit industry.

Comparatively, the lower mean score for the relationship between occupation and family life (Mean-2.57) and the effect of workload on health issues (Mean-1.97) indicates that respondents did not strongly associate a direct link between workload and negative effects on health; however, many respondents reported an intermittent level of anxiousness, safety concerns, and psychological pressure while performing their jobs. Thus, it can be concluded that occupational health is affected by emotional and environmental conditions more than by the level of physical activity associated with work. Overall, the results indicate that women's challenges as bus conductors are influenced by gender experiences in the workplace, passenger behaviour, psychological pressure, safety concerns, and occupational well-being, which collectively have a greater impact on their ability to carry out their responsibilities. The finding also suggests a need for increased institutional programmes or policies that protect all employees, provide a gender-sensitive approach in the workplace, encourage women working in the public transport sector, and provide a dignified, respectful and supportive work environment.

Policy implications

Findings suggest that a focus on policies to promote equality, safety and employee well-being is necessary for improving women. Occupational experiences in the transport sector. The transport organisations need to develop gender-responsive workplace policies that promote women's safety and well-being at the workplace. There is also a need to provide priority to improving workplace facilities, strengthen safety measures, establish an effective grievance mechanisms cell and provide adequate institutional support for women employees. In addition to improving policy and workplace conditions, transport organisations are encouraged to implement regular training programmes, awareness initiatives and employee welfare measures to enhance occupational confidence and reduce stress in their workplace. Supportive schedules and employee-friendly practices would also promote flexibility, allowing women to better manage their occupational and personal responsibilities. Thus, this initiative would enhance women's job satisfaction, retention rates and long-term participation in the transport sector.

Conclusion

Hence, the study investigates that women working in the transport industry are facing various occupational challenges and demonstrates how women's occupational experiences encompass es significantly more than just doing one job and performing operational job-related duties. As a result, the data indicates that conductors identified as women are confronted by challenges on multiple levels due to workplace conditions, public interactions and support from their organisations and generalised realities pertaining to gender within the transport occupations. Furthermore, another major challenge reported within the study was gender discrimination, disrespectful behaviour from passengers, occupational stress, a lack of safety at work, and balancing work and personal responsibilities. Nevertheless, several respondents reported having a relatively comfortable working environment; however, they continue to experience challenges due to inadequate workplace facilities and a lack of support from the employer. Based on the conclusions of this research, the challenges faced by women in the transport sector cannot be simply interpreted as individual adjustment but rather as a result of structural issues in the workplace and formalised institutional structures. The results also aligned with the gender organisational theory by showing that women are affected by the organisational structure and social expectations present in the male-dominated work environment. Overall, the study adds to existing literature on women working in non-traditional occupations and emphasises the importance of institutional reform, developing gender sensitive workplace practises and providing employees with centre support in order to create a safer, more inclusive and sustainable work environment.

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