

An Empirical Study on The Ethical Practices of Auto-Rickshaw Drivers In Coimbatore

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Abstract- *This study focuses on the ethical practices of auto rickshaw drivers in Coimbatore, with special attention to fairness in charging, behaviour towards passengers, and adherence to rules. Data was collected mainly from student respondents, who shared their travel experiences and opinions. The findings show that many passengers face issues such as overcharging, refusal to use meters, and demands for extra payment, which lead to frustration and dissatisfaction. At the same time, respondents valued drivers who followed the meter, behaved politely, and ensured safe travel. The study also highlights the growing role of app-based services like Rapido, Ola, Uber Auto, and Namma Auto, which provide transparent fares and convenience, building more trust among passengers. Overall, the research suggests that promoting and rewarding ethical drivers, along with encouraging app-based services, can improve passenger satisfaction and support fair practices in the auto rickshaw industry of Coimbatore.*

Keywords- thical practices, Auto rickshaw drivers, Coimbatore, Fair charging, Passenger satisfaction, Rapido, Ola Auto, Uber Auto, Namma Auto.

I. INTRODUCTION

Auto rickshaws form an essential component of intermediate public transport in Coimbatore, providing affordable and flexible mobility, particularly for students, professionals, and residents dependent on short-distance travel. Their accessibility and convenience make them a preferred option for many commuters, yet persistent issues such as overcharging, refusal to operate with meters, cancellation of rides, and impolite behavior have raised concerns about driver ethics and passenger satisfaction.

While such practices diminish trust in the service, drivers who follow ethical norms—charging fares fairly, ensuring safety, and treating passengers with respect—are perceived positively and contribute to stronger commuter confidence. Ethical conduct in transport is therefore not merely a matter of compliance but central to equity, reliability, and sustainable urban mobility.

The rise of app-based platforms such as Rapido, Ola Auto, Uber Auto, and Namma Auto has attempted to address some of these issues by offering fare transparency, ride monitoring, and grievance mechanisms. However, even within these systems, unethical practices such as demands for additional fare or arbitrary cancellations remain prevalent, indicating that technology alone cannot replace ethical responsibility.

This study focuses on the ethical practices of auto rickshaw drivers in Coimbatore, drawing primarily on student perspectives as frequent users. By analyzing their experiences, the research highlights recurring challenges, identifies qualities passengers associate with ethical driving, and emphasizes the importance of supporting and rewarding fair practices to improve the credibility and sustainability of auto rickshaw services in the city.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sivadas (2023), in his doctoral research “*A Study on the Living Conditions of Auto-Rickshaw Drivers in Pallithazham*” conducted at St. Teresa’s College, Ernakulam, analyzed the socio- economic realities of auto-rickshaw drivers. The study revealed the challenges of fluctuating income, rising fuel expenses, and extended working hours, which collectively undermine financial security. It also examined family responsibilities, housing conditions, and the education of drivers’ children, emphasizing that welfare programs and policy interventions are necessary to improve their living standards. The findings suggest that strengthening the socio-economic position of drivers not only benefits their households but also contributes to the overall efficiency of the urban transport system.

In a study on app-based mobility services, Sheeba and Sowmya (2023) investigated customer satisfaction with Rapido in “*A Study on Customer Satisfaction and Gratification of Rapido Services.*” Their findings indicate that affordability, convenience, and app usability are key determinants of user satisfaction. While many customers favored Rapido for its cost-effectiveness, concerns such as

surge pricing, limited availability, and inconsistent driver behavior were noted. The study concludes that sustained improvements in safety, service quality, and customer support are essential to building trust and fostering user loyalty.

Ethical concerns in urban mobility were addressed by Anilkumar (2022) in his article “*Auto Rickshaw Drivers and Ethical Challenges in Urban Transport*,” published in the *Journal of Social Development Studies*. His research highlighted common passenger grievances, including refusal to operate by meter, overcharging, and instances of driver misconduct, all of which erode public trust. The study stresses the need for driver training in customer service and stronger regulatory enforcement, arguing that ethical practices are fundamental for ensuring fairness, safety, and credibility in auto-rickshaw services.

The impact of ride-hailing platforms on traditional auto-rickshaw services was explored by Kumar and Thomas (2021) in their paper “*Impact of Ride-Hailing Apps on Traditional Auto Services*,” published in the *International Journal of Business and Management Research*. The study demonstrated that app-based platforms such as Ola and Uber Auto promote transparency in pricing, enable digital payments, and introduce safety mechanisms, thereby reducing fare-related disputes. At the same time, the study noted that traditional drivers face challenges in competing with app-based systems, particularly due to income instability and limited digital literacy. The authors argue that integrating ethical practices with technological adoption is necessary to balance driver welfare and passenger satisfaction.

Passenger perspectives were examined by Meenakshi (2020) in her study “*Passenger Perception towards Auto-Rickshaw Services in Tamil Nadu*,” published in the *Journal of Management and Social Science Research*. The research found that while auto-rickshaws remain a vital commuting option, dissatisfaction stems from unfair fare demands, refusal of short-distance trips, and unprofessional behavior. However, drivers who adhered to meter-based charging and displayed polite conduct were positively evaluated by passengers. The study concludes that enforcing strict fare regulations, promoting ethical behavior, and expanding the use of digital ride-hailing platforms are crucial for enhancing passenger trust and satisfaction.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Auto rickshaws constitute a widely used mode of local transportation in Coimbatore, catering to a diverse commuter base due to their accessibility and convenience. Despite their importance, passenger experiences are often

marked by concerns such as overcharging, refusal to operate with meters, unsafe driving practices, and instances of impolite behavior, all of which undermine trust in the service. In contrast, there are drivers who consistently demonstrate ethical practices— charging fares fairly, ensuring passenger safety, and maintaining courteous conduct—yet such efforts frequently remain underappreciated. The emergence of app-based platforms like Rapido, Ola, Uber Auto, and Namma Auto has introduced a degree of transparency and standardization in fare structures and service delivery. Nevertheless, challenges relating to ethics and accountability persist. Against this backdrop, it becomes essential to examine the prevalence of ethical practices among auto rickshaw drivers in Coimbatore and to understand their influence on passenger satisfaction and trust.

IV. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- To assess the level of customer satisfaction with ethical practices adopted by auto rickshaw drivers in Coimbatore.
- To analyze public perceptions and opinions regarding ethical behavior among auto rickshaw drivers.
- To identify and highlight the key challenges experienced by passengers while availing auto rickshaw services.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a descriptive research design to analyze the ethical practices of auto rickshaw drivers in Coimbatore and their influence on passenger satisfaction. Both the research framework and methodological choices are aimed at understanding passenger perceptions and experiences in a structured manner.

Type of Data

The study primarily relies on **primary data**, collected directly from respondents to ensure the originality and relevance of information to the research objectives.

Data Collection Method

A **structured questionnaire** was designed and administered to passengers who frequently use auto rickshaw services in Coimbatore. The questionnaire consisted of both close-ended and opinion-based questions to capture demographic details, frequency of usage, perceptions of ethical practices, and challenges faced during rides.

Sample Size

A total of **50 respondents** were selected for the study. The sample mainly comprised students, as they represent a significant proportion of daily auto rickshaw users in the city.

Analytical Tools

The data collected was analyzed using **percentage analysis**, which facilitated the interpretation of respondent opinions and experiences in a simplified and comparable manner. This method was chosen to highlight trends, proportions, and the overall distribution of responses across key variables.

Limitations of the Study

1. The study is restricted to **Coimbatore city**, and therefore, the findings may not be generalized to other regions with different socio-economic or transport conditions.
2. The **sample size is limited to 50 respondents**, which reduces the representativeness of the study and may not fully capture the diversity of passenger experiences.
3. Since a majority of respondents were **students**, the perspectives of other passenger groups such as working professionals, elderly commuters, and occasional users are underrepresented.

VI. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	No. Respondents	Percentage (%)
Below 20 years	29	58%
21–30 years	21	42%
Above 30 years	0	0%

Interpretation: The majority of the respondents (58%) were below the age of 20, with the remaining 42% falling within the 21–30 age group. No participants were above the age of 30. This clearly suggests that the study is largely reflective of the views of younger individuals, especially students and young professionals, whose travel experiences and ethical concerns have shaped the study's findings.

Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	No. Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	27	54%
Female	23	46%

Interpretation: The sample comprises 54% male and 46% female respondents, indicating a fairly balanced gender representation. This helps ensure that the findings reflect experiences across genders when interacting with auto rickshaw drivers through app-based services.

Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	No. Respondents	Percentage (%)
Students	35	70%
Others	15	30%

Interpretation: A significant portion of the participants (70%) were students. As such, the responses largely reflect the commuting challenges, preferences, and ethical expectations of the student population, who are frequent users of public and semi-public transport services like auto-rickshaws.

Frequency of Using Auto Rickshaw Apps

Frequency	No. Respondents	Percentage (%)
Occasionally	36	72%
Daily	6	12%
Weekly	8	16%

Interpretation: A majority (72%) of respondents reported occasional usage of auto-rickshaw booking apps, while 22% used them daily, and 16% weekly. This suggests that while app-based booking is a popular choice for convenience, regular daily dependency is comparatively lower among the respondents.

Experience of Overcharging by Drivers

Frequency of Overcharging	No. Respondents	Percentage (%)
Many Times	18	36%
Few Times	17	34%

Sometimes/Rarely	15	30%
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Interpretation: The data indicates that overcharging is a prevalent issue, with 36 respondents experiencing it frequently and 34 occasionally. Even among those who faced it less often, the existence of such practices points to a persistent ethical concern among auto rickshaw drivers, particularly those using app-based platforms.

Amount of Extra Fare Paid

Extra Fare Paid (₹)	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Below 30	9	18%
31–50	21	42%
51–70	10	20%

Extra Fare Paid (₹)	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Above 70	10	20%

Interpretation: Most respondents (42%) reported paying an extra fare between ₹31–₹50, with 40% paying more than ₹50. Only 18% paid less than ₹30. These results highlight that the additional charges are not only common but often excessive, raising concerns about the fairness and transparency of pricing.

Fair Charging Practices by Drivers

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Always	10	20%
Sometimes	19	38%
Rarely	6	12%
Never	3	6%
Not Sure	12 (inferred)	24%

Interpretation: Only 20% of participants believed that drivers consistently charged fairly. The rest indicated inconsistency, with 38% stating that fair charges were applied only sometimes. This suggests that ethical fare practices are not uniformly followed, contributing to passenger dissatisfaction.

Emotional Response to Overcharging

Emotional Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
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Frustrated	22	44%
Helpless	12	24%
Angry	7	14%
Considered Normal	8	16%
Other	1	2%

Interpretation: The emotional responses reveal that most passengers (44%) felt frustrated when asked to pay extra fare, followed by helplessness (24%) and anger (14%). Only a small group accepted it as normal, indicating that unethical fare demands primarily lead to negative emotional experiences.

Support for Ethical Drivers

Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Should Be Supported	32	64%
Not Sure	13	26%
Should Not Be Supported	5	10%

Interpretation: A strong majority (64%) felt that drivers who follow ethical practices, such as using meters and avoiding overcharging, should be rewarded or encouraged. This illustrates strong public support for ethical conduct within the auto-rickshaw industry.

Key Issues with App-Based Auto Services

Issues Faced	Percentage (%)
Demanding Extra Fare	75.5%
Ride Cancellations	30.6%
Rude or Impolite Behaviour	14.3%
Driver Not Showing Up	8.2%
No Proper Response	6.1%
No Issues Reported	2%

Interpretation: Overcharging emerged as the most common complaint (75.5%), followed by cancellations after booking (30.6%). Other concerns included driver misconduct and service reliability. These findings suggest that while app-based

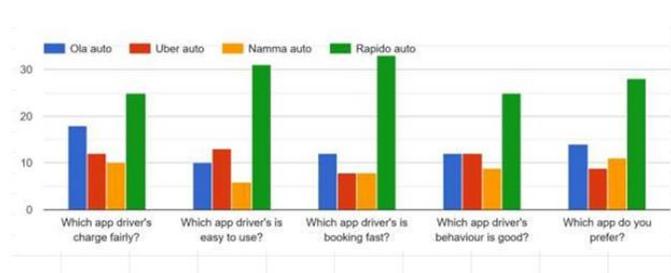
systems offer convenience, unethical behavior by drivers undermines the overall user experience and trust.

Qualities Defining an Ethical Driver

Ethical Attribute	Percentage (%)
Charging as per Meter	68%
Not Demanding Extra Fare	48%
Following Traffic Rules	26%
Maintaining Clean Vehicle	24%
Not Refusing Rides	22%

Interpretation: The majority of respondents (68%) defined ethical driving primarily in terms of fair fare practices. Other attributes like cleanliness, ride availability, and adherence to traffic rules were considered important, but secondary. This demonstrates that passengers strongly associate ethics with honesty in fare collection above all else.

Comparison of Autorickshaw apps



The analysis of the survey responses indicates that Rapido emerges as the most trusted and preferred auto-rickshaw application among the respondents. It consistently received the highest ratings across key parameters, including fair pricing, ease of use, booking speed, and driver behavior, reflecting a strong level of customer satisfaction. Ola Auto ranked second, performing moderately well, particularly in terms of fair charging and overall user preference. In contrast, Uber Auto and Namma Auto received comparatively lower ratings across all evaluated factors, suggesting that users perceive these platforms as less reliable and less convenient. Collectively, the findings underscore Rapido’s dominant position in terms of passenger trust and satisfaction, with Ola Auto performing satisfactorily, while Uber Auto and Namma Auto require targeted improvements to better align with user expectations and enhance service quality.

VII. FINDINGS

1. Demographics and Usage Patterns: The majority of respondents were below 30 years of age, with students forming the largest user group. This indicates that the study predominantly reflects the experiences and expectations of young passengers who rely on auto-rickshaws for daily commuting.
2. Ethical Practices of Drivers: While some drivers consistently follow ethical practices such as fair meter usage, politeness, and ensuring safety, a significant proportion of respondents reported incidents of overcharging, refusal to take short rides, and occasional rude behavior. Ethical behavior was therefore found to be inconsistent across the service.
3. Customer Emotions: Unethical practices, particularly overcharging, frequently resulted in negative emotional responses among passengers, including frustration, helplessness, and anger, highlighting the impact of unethical behavior on passenger satisfaction.
4. App-Based Service Comparison: Among the app-based auto-rickshaw services, Rapido was the most preferred and trusted platform, excelling in fair charging, ease of booking, speed, and driver conduct. Ola Auto ranked second, performing moderately well, while Uber Auto and Namma Auto scored lower in all evaluated aspects, indicating areas for service improvement.
5. Public Support for Ethical Drivers: The majority of respondents emphasized the importance of rewarding and supporting drivers who maintain fair and ethical practices, reflecting a strong public preference for transparency and professionalism in the sector.

VIII. SUGGESTIONS

1. Encouraging Ethical Practices: Auto-rickshaw drivers should be incentivized for consistently following ethical standards, including fair meter usage, courteous behavior, and adherence to safety protocols.
2. Awareness and Training Programs: Training programs focused on customer service, road safety, and ethical conduct can help drivers improve service quality and enhance passenger trust.
3. Regulatory Oversight: Authorities and app-based platforms should implement stricter monitoring mechanisms to reduce overcharging, ride cancellations, and unethical behavior.
4. Digital Platform Improvements: Uber Auto and Namma Auto could improve their service quality by addressing pricing transparency, driver behavior, and booking reliability to match user expectations.

5. Passenger Feedback Systems: Encouraging passengers to report unethical behavior and providing timely redressal can strengthen accountability and promote better compliance among drivers.

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IX. CONCLUSIONS

The study highlights that while auto-rickshaws remain a vital mode of urban transport in Coimbatore, ethical inconsistencies among drivers significantly influence passenger satisfaction and trust. Students and young commuters, as the primary user group, perceive fair pricing and courteous behavior as the most critical indicators of ethical service. App-based platforms have contributed to increased transparency and convenience, with Rapido leading in passenger satisfaction, followed by Ola Auto. However, issues persist with other platforms, and broader adoption of ethical practices remains essential. Strengthening ethical standards, providing driver training, and enhancing monitoring mechanisms are crucial steps toward ensuring reliable, fair, and satisfactory auto-rickshaw services, thereby fostering a more trustworthy and efficient urban transport system.

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