

When Policy Fails to Reach Home: The Lived Experience of Taxi Drivers and Their Families of Economic and Occupational Insecurity

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Article Info	Extended Abstract
Article type: Research Article	Objective: Employment does not necessarily guarantee economic and social security. This issue is particularly important for taxi drivers, who directly bear a substantial share of the costs and risks of their occupation. The central question of this study is how the gap between actual occupational risks and institutional support mechanisms transfers insecurity from the workplace to family life. Accordingly, the proposition “policy fails to reach home” constitutes the central problem of the study. It refers to a situation in which formal support mechanisms often stop at the boundaries of the organization and employment relationship, while the consequences of inadequate support become evident in families’ everyday lives. The study therefore aims to identify the dimensions of occupational and economic insecurity among taxi drivers and explain how these insecurities spill over into family life. Methodology: The present study is applied in terms of its purpose and was conducted using a mixed-methods design of the sequential exploratory type, comprising two independent quantitative and qualitative components. The quantitative component was designed to examine the level of job insecurity among line taxi drivers in Tehran. The statistical population consisted of 31413-line taxi drivers, from which a sample of 380 drivers was selected using Cochran’s formula. Multistage sampling followed by quota sampling was employed, and data were collected through a researcher-developed questionnaire and analyzed using statistical methods. The qualitative component was conducted independently of the quantitative component and involved a different population, with the aim of understanding family members’ experiences and perceptions of the consequences of drivers’ job insecurity. In this component, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 family members of taxi drivers. Participants were selected through purposive and convenience sampling, and theoretical saturation was used to determine sample adequacy; that is, no new themes emerged in the final interviews. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis and systematic coding. The quantitative and qualitative data were not integrated or merged because the two components involved different populations and units of analysis. Instead, the findings from the two components were
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presented alongside one another in the discussion as complementary evidence, providing a broader understanding of taxi drivers' job insecurity and its implications for family life.

Findings: The quantitative findings showed that drivers' assessments of their occupational and organizational conditions were generally unfavorable. Job security, with a score of 2.75, and welfare services, with 2.10 out of 100, received the lowest evaluations. Scores for working conditions, income structure, perception of the occupation, organizational commitment, and management style were 16.75, 21.75, 25, 30, and 31.50, respectively. By contrast, interaction with colleagues, with a score of 57.25, was relatively more favorable. Significant positive relationships were also found between perceptions of the occupation and organizational commitment, management style, income structure, working conditions, job security, and welfare services.

The qualitative findings showed that these conditions appear in family life as an accumulated experience of insecurity. The first dimension is weak social and institutional support. The absence of social security insurance and inability to pay insurance contributions increase concerns about illness, accidents, disability, and old age. Consequently, risks that would normally be partly managed through social protection mechanisms are transferred to families.

The second dimension is economic pressure and the erosion of working capital. Insufficient income combined with vehicle maintenance and repair costs means that the vehicle, the driver's main income-generating asset, is simultaneously a source of income and expenditure. Vehicle deterioration, rising spare-parts and tire costs, and inadequate support for vehicle replacement reduce household real income and limit savings. Under these conditions, even continued employment becomes a source of economic pressure because stopping work can make it difficult or impossible to cover basic expenses such as rent.

The third dimension is physical and psychological exhaustion. Heat and cold, traffic, noise pollution, long working hours, and continuous interaction with passengers create considerable physical and psychological pressure. Family members experience these pressures through fatigue, irritability, emotional tension, and the driver's reduced effective presence at home. Thus, the consequences of harsh working conditions do not remain confined to the workplace but spill over into family relationships through the driver's physical and psychological condition.

The fourth dimension is declining family welfare. The lack of welfare services, housing facilities, support for vehicle replacement, and recreational opportunities forces families to give up part of their welfare needs in response to economic pressures. Reduced recreation and family purchases, lack of savings, and difficulties covering housing and children's marriage expenses are examples of this process. What appears at the organizational level as a "lack of welfare services"



is therefore experienced at the family level as a decline in quality of life and welfare opportunities.

Experiences of disrespect and low occupational status were also prominent. Continuous interaction with different groups of passengers, inappropriate behavior, disputes over fares, and organizational reprimands increase the psychological pressure of the occupation. Insecurity, therefore, is not merely economic but also has social and status-related dimensions. One of the most significant findings concerns the intergenerational transmission of insecurity. Some family members do not recommend taxi driving to their children or relatives and regard it primarily as a temporary response to difficult economic circumstances. Thus, current insecurity affects not only family welfare but also perceptions of the future and the occupational choices of the next generation. Taken together, these findings can be conceptualized as a “chain of insecurity spillover”: institutional and support gaps lead to occupational insecurity; occupational insecurity produces economic pressure and erosion of working capital; economic pressure and harsh working conditions lead to physical and psychological exhaustion; and this exhaustion and pressure ultimately spill over from the workplace into family life, reducing family welfare and intensifying future insecurity. Within this chain, the family is not merely a recipient of occupational consequences but becomes a unit for absorbing and managing risk.

Conclusion: The findings indicate that the situation of taxi drivers cannot be explained solely by “job dissatisfaction” or “low income.” Rather, it reflects a condition of “employment without security,” in which drivers are employed but their employment does not necessarily provide economic, social, and future-oriented security for themselves and their families. This finding is consistent with recent international studies linking harsh working conditions among drivers to fatigue, stress, mental health problems, and work–family conflict. However, by placing the family at the center of analysis, the present study demonstrates how insecurity is transferred from the workplace to the home and reproduced there. From this perspective, the proposition “policy fails to reach home” represents a disconnect between social protection policies and the actual experience of family life. When insurance, retirement protection, disability support, vehicle replacement assistance, housing facilities, and welfare services are inadequate relative to occupational risks, families are forced to bear the costs of insecurity through reduced consumption and leisure, lack of savings, increased work pressure, and a narrowing of future prospects. The main policy implication is therefore a shift from a driver-centered and job-centered approach toward a family-centered and risk-oriented approach, in which drivers’ security is defined and guaranteed not merely at the workplace but in relation to the security and well-being of their families



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