Practice and Challenges of Government Employees and Transport service provision in Addis Ababa

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Abstract

This study was conducted to evaluate current practice, major challenges, and effects of service provision of public transport service enterprise on performance of government employees. Both qualitative and quantitative research designs were employed. The result shows there are areas where the enterprise is good at, i.e., time and security related issues, while there are areas like comfort that need strong improvement. Numerous challenges exist in the system, similar to those in other urban transport systems in Addis Ababa. Current urban development levels, financial problems, competing demands, an ever-increasing number of service users, etc., are among the challenges that affect the provision. Each problem affects the efficiency and effectiveness of transportation. Based on the identified results, possible courses of action are proposed so as to give insight to the enterprise to understand the key factors that affect its service quality and its effect on employees' performances.

Key words: government employees transport, practice, service Quality, challenge, effect

1. Introduction

Most trips in developing countries are carried out using some form of public transport or on foot (Armstrong Wright, 1993). As Ethiopia is one of the developing countries, the practice in the capital, Addis Ababa, is the same. The city is challenged with transportation problems, and there is a big gap between public transport demand and supply in Addis Ababa (Addis Ababa Transport Policy, 2011). Civil servants are among the many in society who are highly challenged by this problem. Over recent years, the government has been making an intensive effort to improve the urban transport situation through making the public service employees' transport service functional. The provision has been in place since 2013 for federal and city administration public servants.

Currently, the enterprise is transporting more than 100,000 government employees from their homes to their places of work in the morning and back to their homes in all parts of the capital city (report made by the PSETSE, 2016). In order to maximize its service and address the rapid increase in unmet demand, continuously assessing the provision,
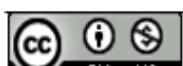
evaluating its challenges, and devising strategies is essential.

Public service employees' transport is one of the social facilities that provide transport service to civil servants. The report made by PSETSE (2016) shows that the number of users is increasing day by day and the demand for services is increasing. Although the carrying capacity of a bus is 85 passengers, comprise of 50 cushioned seated and 35 standing passengers, as per the researchers' observation, most of the time the bus exceeds the recommended capacity and is traveling in a crowded situation. It is also noted that providing equitable and efficient public transportation in the face of ever-increasing demand with limited available resource is one of the challenges faced by the Addis Ababa City Administration (Abreha. et. al., 2007).

In addition, given the detachment of Addis Ababa's residential and commercial areas and the size of the city, the buses travel an average of not less than 10 kilometers per day. Moreover, due to traffic congestion in the city, the respective passengers are required to arrive early in the morning, at 6 a.m. or before, in order to arrive at their destination on time. In our most cases, every government employee moves to their working place for five to six days a week. This daily, long-distance movement has a positive impact on employees' productivity, health, work life balance, and so on. Thus, the existing practice of the public employee's transport service delivery requires a continuous assessment to make on-time corrective measures to maximize the intended contribution and be efficient in its resource utilization and goal accomplishments.

Therefore, this study is aimed at assessing the practice and challenges of Public Employee's Transport Service delivery in Addis Ababa with specific objectives of evaluating the service provision, major challenges and effects of service provision on the government employee productivity.

2. Methodology of the study

The study is focused on the Public Service Employees Transport Service Provision in Addis Ababa, which started its operation in September, 2014. PSETSE was established under regulation No. 298/2006 of the Council of Ministers as one of the government's developmental institutions. Prior to the commencement of the PSETSE, due to the rapid development of the city and the rapid growth of the population, the demand for and supply of transport has been increasing day by day; and this problem is highly affecting the government employees who are face - to- face to the problem and the community that expects to receive services from government institutions.

That is why the Public Service Employees Transport Service Enterprise was established on September 5, 2007 E.C. PSETSE begins with 55 buses in 10 lanes. Now it has more than 430 buses managed in four corridors or branches in Addis, known as east, west, north and south. That overlaps at the two lines (west –east and south -north) and has access points ranging from 27 to 59 and lines ranging from 11 to 24.

The study was designed as a descriptive research design in order to describe what has actually been happening in the transport service provision of government employees. It has employed a mixed research approach that comprises both quantitative and qualitative methods. A quantitative approach was used to describe the perceptions, opinions, and feelings of respondents in quantitative terms such as frequency, percentage and correlation. A qualitative approach also employed to get insights and detailed information from key informants of interview and focus group discussion. Researchers' observation and document analysis also included.

Both primary and secondary sources of data were applied. The primary sources of data were generated through a survey questionnaire, interviews, and focus group discussion. While the Enterprise report, recorded documents, survey results, plans, books, journals, and other published and unpublished literature were the primary sources,

A survey questionnaire was prepared by the researchers by modifying previously proposed service quality attribute measures by various scholars and filled by users. It was attempted to investigate the practice of the service delivery in terms of five quality service indicators: timeliness, accessibility, reliability, comfort and security, the challenges faced while they use it, and the effects of the service provision on their productivity.

A semi-structured interview and focus group discussion guide questions were developed to get in-depth information purposefully. KII was comprised of issues about the service contribution in enhancing employees' productivity and practical challenges. While FGD also comprised the existing service delivery, challenges, and possible solutions expected from stakeholders, Furthermore, thorough documents and related literature were scrutinized.

Combining purposive and random sampling methods, a multi-stage sampling procedure has been adopted in this study. The study was employed purposefully on the public service employees' transport service enterprise (PSETSE). It has four branches or corners (East, West, and North and South). Sampling was employed in two stages; the selection of corners and the selection of respondents from the selected corners. For the first stage, two corners (South and East) where the majority of travelers were concentrated were selected purposively. The second stage of the sampling was the selection of respondents. Within the

two corners, there are 241 buses and 20485 travelers with their standard carrying capacities. Therefore, the sample size for survey respondents would be calculated at a 95% confidence level and a 0.05 margin of error. With a total population of **20485,** the sample size will consist of **393** survey respondents, determined by applying a simplified formula provided by Yamane (1967). Finally, to select the respondents, we took long and frequent distance travellers into consideration.

Both qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques were employed in this study. Survey data was presented and analyzed by descriptive statistics like frequency count and percentage. Correlation and linear regression were also analyzed, mainly by employing SPSS version 24.

Reliability tests of final questionnaires were conducted on pilot test with a sample of 40 bus service users. It was done in the north and west, which were not part of the scope of the study. Moreover, to maintain the quality of the data, one-day training was provided for data collectors, and the researchers also conducted intensive supervision to ensure full implementation of research principles.

3. Results

This section presents the analysis and discussion of the data obtained from primary and secondary sources according to the research specific objectives and research questions. A total of 393 question papers were distributed and 383 (97.5%) of them were valid and returned back. The qualitative surveys, key informant interviews, and focus group discussion were all 100% as intended.

The representative of the data shows the gender diversity and occupational profile of the respondents. Accordingly, the majority of them are female and employees of city administration offices, respectively. Regarding

age, the respondents diversified age groups, and they are also representative of the study area as providers of full information. The majority of respondents in this study were first-degree holders, married, and employees earning less than 9000 birr per month. In addition, they have relevant work experience at government organizations. In general, respondents' demographic and socio-economic data will make them convenient for this study.

3.1. Discussion on the results of the Study

Most government organizations are open for five days per week. Accordingly, the majority (95.1 %) of respondents of this study are regular user of the bus for more than three and above working days per week . the result of the study also indicated us the majority of the respondents used the service as it is free of payment; reliable and easily available in its bus stop respectively. In this regard, Zeithamlet *a,.* (2006) showed that the more affordable the service is, the better the service is perceived by customers and has effect to increase overall satisfaction of the users. Thus, the government employee's transportation is preferred by its users as it is free, safe and relatively closes to work and residential areas it would increase the satisfaction of the users and provide a better view of their workplace.

The results related to the time usage for waiting and to reach to the bus stop depicted as follows; though, 53.5 % of the respondents walk up to 20 minute to reach in to the bus stop, there are significant numbers of commuters (46.5%) who walk above the recommended walking distance. On the other hand, according to Abreha (2007), cited by Armstrong et al, (1987), the waiting time is perceived as the most inconvenient or 'heavy' part of the whole journey time. And the average waiting time in developing countries should be in the range of 5-10 minutes considered to attain an acceptable level of service. However, depending on the

prevailing conditions of PT, it may be extended to 10-20 minutes of maximum waiting time.

Accordingly, the data obtained from the study shows that 46.7% of respondents stand for less than 10 minutes, and 43% of respondents are forced to stand for 11–20 minutes. While 10.4% are forced to wait longer than 20 minutes. In connection with this, one of the main issues that users of this transport service have pointed out as a problem in open queries is that, due to overcrowding of the bus, we need to arrive early and wait for the bus in order to get a seat. In this regard, the conducted survey showed that among the bus users who are working only at one sub-city administration of Addis Ababa, the majority (55.96%) of bus users are forced to be out of the office early to avoid queues (Kirkos sub-city Public service office, 2013).

From this, one can understand that, though the waiting time is within the accepted standard, some commuters are forced to reach early and have a long queue to get a seat. As Iles (2005) indicated, passengers are more satisfied with a route network which enables them to complete their journey without having to transfer from one vehicle to another. So, identifying whether the majority of the bus users need to transfer to reach their destination was one of the main points in this study. In view of that, the data shows 140 (37.0%) of them use another bus to reach the office. Though the majority of respondents are not transferring into the other bus, considerable users are supposed to do so, and this might affect the commuter's satisfaction. Whereas, 193 (50.7%) of the respondents confirmed the availability of similar government organizations around their home, while 188 (49.3%) of the respondents said no. This means that half of the respondents must commute a long distance to and from work every day, even though there is the option of transferring to a nearby office. This shows that in addition to delivering the transport service, other assessment-based interventions

might be helpful in solving the transport problem better.

Transport service delivery and its execution

To see how the enterprise is delivering the service, researchers tried to assess users' evaluation based on quality service criteria. Responses given under each criterion is analyzed below.

Timeliness

Time in this context refers to time spent waiting to transfer to another bus, the trip from home to office or vice versa, and waiting time at the bus stop. In this regard, 35.9% of the respondents agreed that they would get the second bus immediately when a transfer is necessary. While 64.2% of respondents (36.1% were neutral and 28.1% disagreed) remained unconvinced that they would receive. The second point is evaluating their perception of the journey; hence, 60.5% of the respondents (the majority) agreed that the journey is tedious. A greater number of respondents (56.9 percent or 215) said they will get the bus immediately on time and will not wait for longer to get it, while 36.5 percent of respondents agreed that they will stay for a longer time at the bus stop.

As, the findings shown that, the journey is tedious for the majority of respondents. This may be due to the longer waiting time, the bus crowdedness, and the long journey to reach the office. Different literature indicates this problem has its own effect on the commuters' work performance. The act of commuting is often not pleasurable as these individuals are subjected to hours of travel and continuous queues (Visser & Ferrer, 2015). Newman (2014) explains that a journey lasting more than 15 minutes is associated with commuters' anxiety. According to him, as travel time increases beyond 30 minutes, all aspects of the personal well-being of commuters will be affected, and this will impact their performance in the workplace.

Though the data obtained from these and trip-related questions above show us waiting time is up to the intended maximum waiting time, there are commuters who leave their offices very early and stand in a queue to get a seat. In addition to this, the data obtained from interview and document analysis also indicated that the bus departure time is fixed and very strict as of the assigned time. However, due to the bus crowding and the absence of a nearby bus stop to their office, some employees are forced to stand at the bus stop early. For instance, one of the interviewees said as follows:

> *Employees who travel a long distance are concerned about finding a seat due to the bus's ever-increasing demand. And they are leaving their office early to avoid the queue (interview participant, 2021).*

Reliability

Turnquist and Blume (1980) define transit service reliability as "the ability of the transit system to adhere to a schedule or maintain regular headways and a consistent travel time".

Based on this fact, the study assess the reliability of the service provision with respect to on time arrival of buses at the bus stop, punctuality of buses depart from the stop, usage of specified and known bus stop and prescribed routes. Accordingly, the majority of respondents agreed to the above each indicators as the transport service provision is reliable to them. Similarly, the qualitative data also agreed with the case. The following is evidence.

> *The enterprise has a well-organized system with uninterrupted and efficient bus flow (replacement). And it is providing quality service with the help of knowledgeable and experienced staff and management. So, it allows us to say that our customers are reliable with our service as they will be*

able to get the service on time and that they are confidently waiting for it (FGD, 2021). Here it is concluded that the enterprise has better achievement to satisfy its customers in its on-time arrival and departure from the stop and deploying experienced and skilled drivers so as to give quality service. On the other hand a considerable number of commuters are found dissatisfied with regard to using specified bus stops. Hence, due to different reasons like overcrowding, misconduct of coordinators who are assigned from commuters themselves, skipping specified stops are mentioned as a problem repeatedly.

Security

The following were referring to measure customers' evaluation with reference to security; the availability of designed system to secure commuters, availability of experienced drivers, system to identify eligible passengers, system designed to take corrective action were addressed.

The result has shown that majority of 287 (74.9%) of respondents agreed that transport service provision has been secured for them. Also, 87.4 percent of respondents feel that the drivers are well experienced and have the skills to control the bus effectively. Similarly, the majority (53.9% and 74.2%) of them agreed that the service users are only government employees, as they perceive that the enterprise has a system designed to identify eligible users of the service provided.

As Iles (2005) specified, poor driving standards and poor vehicle conditions are considered the primary causes of accidents. In this regard, since the enterprise has different mechanisms to minimize accidents and has a rewarding system for the best achievers, its service provision practice seems to have better acceptance among its customers. However, the data gathered from open queries and interviews

specified that the identification system has some gaps and there may be commuters who are not eligible. This is evident in the following responses from the participants:

It is usually used only by a full-time public servant, but there are people who try to use the forged ID and leave the government office but do not return the ID. There will be two coordinators in each car, which will check their IDs and show their respective organization IDs in case of doubt. But we do not want to underestimate the problem (PSETSE interviewee, 2021).

Comfort

Comfort is a service element introduced for the purpose of making PT journeys relaxing and leisurely, and it is mainly determined by the availability of seats, having space to easily move around in the bus, and its cleanliness (Cascetta & Carten, 2014). The survey data shows that nearly 52 percent of the respondents were not satisfied with the availability of seats. (about 82.3%). 127 agreed and 188 strongly agreed that due to bus overloading, they did not receive hangers designed to hold standing commuters, and 61 percent disagreed about the availability of adequate open space within the buses. 337 (88.4%) of respondents agreed that the bus was clean. When we see the response to a question about whether they had a seat or a standing hand rail in a gender perspective, 63 percent of female respondents strongly disagree, and 37.5 percent disagree. It is well known that long distances in transit can lead to physical and mental exhaustion as well as health problems. The indicator, comfort, is one of the priorities that has to be improved and is usually named among the top criteria from the passenger perspective. As seating and personal space indicators are level of crowding, we can understand that the practice of the government employee transport service is being exercised mostly on overcrowded buses. As a result, the service is not found to be as comfortable as it

ought to be and users' satisfaction in relation to this variable is low.

Accessibility

Accessibility in this study refers to availability of bus stops near their home and organization and availability of the service in all corner of the city. While the majority of respondents (61.9% and 66.6%) agreed on the availability of stops near their organization and home, a significant number (32% and 27.6%, respectively) disagreed on the above idea. majority of the respondents' evaluation with regard to the distance between stops seems good. But, the data from trip background shows significant numbers of respondents are expected to walk above the recommended distance. Moreover, in terms of coverage, the majority of respondents (51.7%) agreed that it is accessible in every corner of the city, while 28.71% and 20% of the respondents disagreed and became neutral, respectively. Data from key informant interviews also show that, while demand is not being met due to an increasing number of users, the enterprise is reaching out to all corners, including nearby towns in the Oromia region.

3.2. Major challenges of government employees transport service

Insufficient number of buses; unreasonable bus distribution that does not take into account the number of service users; overcrowding/overloading of buses, forcing commuters to commute long hours without sitting; drivers to skip specified stops; lack of nearby bus stops, forcing users to change buses to reach their destination and leave their office before the working hour; improper treatment by some unethical drivers; poor identification system; no identification system Moreover, the service does not consider shift workers and women who commute with their babies. High traffic jams and road congestion, especially at night, problems getting land to open bus stations and maintenance workshops outside of Addis Ababa in the nearby Oromia towns, and foreign currency problems to buy new buses and spare parts are also repeatedly mentioned as challenges from the enterprise side.

3.3. Effect of the Transport service on employees' performance

Literature has shown the relation between rewards and civil servants' performance, and these motivational factors have several components and experience in different countries. For example, in Singapore, employees receive an annual bonus based on the national economic growth. Chinese civil servants receive an annual bonus, but because of the difficulty in assessing individual performances accurately, virtually the same amount has been paid to every person. Some other countries pay incentives to all civil servants. in kind or in monetary payment. Whether the incentives are provided in kind or monetary payment, they have a great effect on civil servants' performance, increase their job security, and retain skilled employees at government institutions (Gokcekus & Mukherjee, 2001). Similarly, Ethiopia's government has used in-kind incentives (free transportation for all civil servants) since 2007 E.C. It is like a subsidy that aims to solve the problem by facilitating free transport and increasing the efficiency of the employees. According to this study, the majority of respondents agreed that the provision of transportation services has a significant impact on their overall effectiveness at work. will help them to be stable and to arrive at work earlier than the client. It also allows them to do their work efficiently, organize documents properly, and scrutinize their decisions as there is no rush to transport.

Table 1: The followings are the generalized linear regression SPSS output

Parameter	B	Std. Error	95% Wald Confidence Interval		Hypothesis Test		
			Lower	Upper	Wald Chi-Square	df	Sig.
(Intercept)	2.381	.2342	1.922	2.840	103.306	1	.000
Timeliness	.092	.0446	.004	.179	4.215	1	.040
Accessibility	.043	.0354	-.026	.113	1.483	1	.223
Reliability	.167	.0505	.068	.265	10.880	1	.001
Comfort	.151	.0541	.045	.257	7.808	1	.005
Security	.101	.0532	-.003	.206	3.634	1	.057
(Scale)	.391[a]	.0283	.339	.450			

One of the purposes of this study was to determine whether the launch of the transport service has contributed to the performance of government employees. As discussed above, the data obtained from surveys and qualitative data shows that the transport service provision generally has a great effect on the employee's performance. But to identify the difference among the service quality indicators, a test was conducted to determine whether the quality of transport service delivery and the users' perceptions and satisfaction in relation to each quality indicator for the implementation of the service were related to their performance. Table 1, above, summarized that the three quality indicators of transport provision; timeliness, reliability, and comfort variables, have a significant impact on staff performance.

4. CONCLUSION

Transport plays a big role in improving the livelihoods of individuals as well as attaining faster economic growth at organizational and national levels. The rationale behind providing a kind motivator such as free transportation to civil servants is to promote accountability and transparency in providing efficient and effective services to the larger community. This study was conducted to assess the practice and challenges of public service transport service provision in Addis Ababa through assessing commuters' satisfaction using quality measurement attributes of bus transport service; time, reliability, accessibility, security, and comfort. The qualitative and quantitative results of this study revealed that there are areas where the enterprise is good at satisfying customers' expectations, while there is area like comfort that need strong improvement to provide effective services as intended. Like other urban transport systems in Addis Ababa, numerous challenges exist in the blue bus transport system also. Current urban development levels, financial problems, competing demands, an ever-increasing number of service users, etc., are among the challenges that affect the provision. Each problem affects the efficiency and effectiveness of transportation.

The enterprise needs to strengthen the system in use with modern technology and should design a better digitalized control system to identify eligible users. Moreover, collaborative work is needed to work with government organizations to find a way to collect the bus users' IDs during resignation, retirement, etc.

Most problems are linked with unmet demand or an insufficient number of buses with an ever increasing number of users, which causes overcrowding, discomfort, skipping stops etc.; In this regard, strengthening controlling mechanisms to reduce ineligible users -As the majority of the respondents are from low-earning categories and confirm the availability of similar government institutions, the

relocation of employees working in the same positions and responsibilities in all offices, especially in the city administration office, to the nearest facility will reduce the congestion of the bus. Moreover, having more buses seems to be very crucial. To do so, the government and stakeholders should give emphasis to improving the capacity of the enterprise through allocating adequate financial resources; facilitating foreign currency related issues is helpful. Strengthening accountability mechanisms, short-term capacity-building trainings in areas of ethics and service delivery, and periodic replacements of coordinators, who are assigned by commuters themselves, seem helpful in solving complaints related to them.

Conducting assessments and reviewing bus stops to make them closer to commuters can protect employees from inconveniences during the process of finding and shifting to another bus and will let them execute their duties properly up to the last hour in the office. Moreover, considering the demand, adjusting bus distribution and adding new bus stops is helpful.

Awareness creation, posting ground rules with a list of what is allowed and not in places that can be seen by every commuter in each bus, and making everybody abide by the rules can be helpful in reducing complaints related to noise disturbance in the course of travel (music, passenger's unwanted behavior, shouting), Since the majority of commuters are women and considering their triple role, assessment-based arrangements to make the overall service provision women-friendly are very crucial so as to increase their satisfaction and effectiveness in their organizations. Creating strong collaboration and working with stakeholders is also necessary.

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