

**LIVED WORK EXPERIENCES OF EMPLOYEES WORKING IN THE SWIFT
SERVICES OF KERALA STATE ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATION**

Dissertation Submitted to Kerala University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Award of the Degree of

Master of Science in Counselling Psychology

Submitted by

ANJANA R

LC24PCP03

Under the Guidance of

Dr. Ammu Lukose

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Department of Counselling Psychology



DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

LOYOLA COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES (AUTONOMOUS).

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

2024-2026

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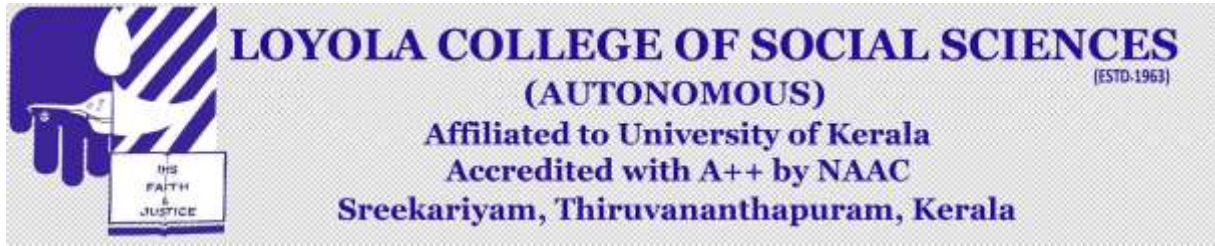
Loyola College of Social Sciences (Autonomous), Thiruvananthapuram



Department of Counselling Psychology

Loyola College of Social Sciences (Autonomous), Thiruvananthapuram

2024-2026



Certificate

This is to certify that the research entitled “**Lived Work Experiences of Employees Working in the Swift Services of Kerala State Road Transport Corporation**” is an authentic work carried out by Anjana R, under the supervision and guidance of the Dr. Ammu Lukose, Assistant Professor & Head of the Department (In Charge), Department of Counselling Psychology, during the Fourth Semester of the M.Sc. Counselling Psychology programme in the academic year 2024-2026.

Dr Ammu Lukose

Guide & Head of the Department (In Charge)

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Thiruvananthapuram

Submitted for the examination held on:

Examiner:

Declaration

I, **Anjana R**, do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “Lived Work Experiences of Employees Working in the Swift Services of Kerala State Road Transport Corporation”, submitted to the Department of Counselling Psychology, Loyola College of Social Sciences (Autonomous), Sreekariyam, Thiruvananthapuram, under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Ammu Lukose, Assistant Professor, Department of Counselling Psychology, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Science (M.Sc.) in Counselling Psychology of Kerala University, is a bona fide work carried out by me during the academic year 2024–2026.

I further declare that this dissertation has not been submitted, either in part or in full, to any other University or Institution for the award of any degree, diploma, or other academic qualification.

Place: Sreekariyam

Anjana R

Date:

Reg. No: LC24PCP03

M.Sc. Counselling Psychology

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who supported and guided me throughout the completion of this research study.

I extend my sincere thanks to my research guide for the guidance and support provided during the course of this study. I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Ms. Sachu R Sunny, PhD Scholar of Centre for Development Studies, for her constant guidance, encouragement, and support throughout every stage of this research. Her valuable suggestions, motivation, and willingness to help whenever needed played an important role in the successful completion of this study.

I would also like to thank all the faculty members of the Department of Psychology for their constant encouragement, support, and academic guidance. I extend my special thanks to Ms. Jasmine Sarah Alexander from the Department of Social Work for her valuable guidance and support in understanding qualitative analysis, which greatly contributed to the completion of this research.

I am grateful to the KSRTC fan page administrators, Mr. Achuthan VP and Mr. Shahin Shahul, for their valuable help in connecting me with participants and supporting the data collection process. I express my heartfelt gratitude to all my participants for their time, cooperation, and willingness to share their experiences, without which this study would not have been possible.

I would also like to acknowledge ChatGPT for its assistance during the preparation of this dissertation. Lastly, I would like to thank myself for believing in this journey, remaining committed through every challenge, and finding the strength to complete this research with determination and sincerity.

ABSTRACT

The present study explores the work experiences, challenges, and wellbeing of employees working in the KSRTC Swift service of Kerala State Road Transport Corporation. The study aims to understand how drivers and conductors perceive their daily work roles, occupational challenges, work–life balance, and coping strategies within the context of long-distance public transportation services. A qualitative research approach was adopted, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews with KSRTC Swift employees. The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes in participants’ experiences. The findings revealed that employees experience a demanding work environment characterised by extended duty hours, physical and mental exhaustion, operational challenges, passenger-related difficulties, and difficulties in maintaining personal and family life. At the same time, participants expressed a sense of responsibility, commitment, and pride towards their profession. The study highlights the significant impact of occupational demands on employee wellbeing while also emphasising the role of personal coping mechanisms, social support, and organisational factors in managing work-related stress. The study contributes to a better understanding of the lived experiences of public transport employees and provides insights for developing supportive workplace practices to enhance employee wellbeing, job satisfaction, and work–life balance.

Keywords: Employee wellbeing, Public transport employees, Work–life balance, Occupational challenges, Coping strategies, Employees’ experiences, Thematic analysis

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Work is a fundamental aspect of human life that extends beyond earning a livelihood. It provides individuals with opportunities for personal growth, social interaction, identity formation, and a sense of purpose (Blustein, 2008; Steger et al., 2012). Since adults spend a substantial part of their lives in the workplace, the quality of their work experiences significantly influences their physical health, psychological well-being, interpersonal relationships, and overall quality of life (Diener & Seligman, 2004). Work has therefore been recognized not merely as an economic necessity but as an important determinant of individual well-being and social participation.

The World Health Organization (WHO) emphasizes that work can serve as a protective factor for mental health when employees are provided with safe, healthy, and supportive working conditions (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022). Meaningful work contributes to confidence, achievement, social inclusion, and recovery, whereas poor working environments, excessive workload, lack of organizational support, role ambiguity, job insecurity, and unhealthy workplace relationships may adversely affect employees' mental health and work performance (WHO, 2022). The WHO further highlights that approximately 15% of working-age adults live with a mental health condition, while depression and anxiety alone account for an estimated loss of 12 billion working days annually worldwide, underscoring the importance of promoting mentally healthy workplaces (WHO, 2022).

The experience of work is inherently subjective. Employees performing similar roles within the same organization may perceive and interpret their work in remarkably different ways based on their interactions, expectations, organizational culture, personal values, coping abilities, and lived realities (Smith et al., 2009). Consequently, understanding work requires looking beyond measurable indicators such as salary, workload, or job satisfaction to explore how employees personally experience and assign meaning to their everyday occupational lives. Such subjective experiences influence motivation, commitment, resilience, job performance, and psychological well-being.

Within counselling psychology, understanding people's lived experiences occupies a central position (McLeod, 2013). Rather than focusing solely on observable behaviour or measurable outcomes, counselling psychology seeks to understand how individuals interpret their experiences, construct meaning from them, and cope with challenges encountered in different life domains. The workplace represents one such important life domain where individuals encounter opportunities for growth alongside occupational demands, interpersonal relationships, organizational expectations, and emotional challenges. Exploring these experiences enables a deeper understanding of the psychological realities that shape employees' well-being and professional functioning.

The transportation sector represents one of the most essential public service systems in any society. Public transport employees play a crucial role in ensuring safe, reliable, and accessible mobility for thousands of people every day. Their responsibilities often extend beyond operating transport services to include managing passenger interactions, maintaining schedules, responding to emergencies, and adapting to continuously changing work environments. These responsibilities expose employees to unique occupational demands that may influence both their professional experiences and psychological well-being.

In Kerala, the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) has served as the backbone of public road transportation for several decades, connecting urban centres, rural communities, and remote regions across the state. Recognizing the need to modernize long-distance transportation services and improve operational efficiency, the Government of Kerala established KSRTC SWIFT Ltd. in December 2021 as a government-owned company to provide managerial, technical, and operational support for long-distance bus services and the operation of KIIFB-funded buses through an Intelligent Central Control Centre (Government of Kerala, 2021). The establishment of KSRTC SWIFT reflects a significant step towards strengthening public transport services while improving operational management within the state.

Despite the growing importance of KSRTC SWIFT in Kerala's transportation system, limited attention has been given to understanding the experiences of the employees who sustain these services on

a daily basis. Existing discussions largely focus on operational performance, passenger services, infrastructure, and organizational functioning, whereas the voices of employees remain comparatively underexplored. Understanding how employees experience their work environment is essential, as their perceptions, emotions, and workplace experiences influence not only their own well-being but also the quality and effectiveness of the services they provide.

The present study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore the lived work experiences of employees working in KSRTC SWIFT services. Qualitative research is particularly appropriate for gaining an in-depth understanding of how individuals perceive, interpret, and assign meaning to their experiences within their natural work settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By focusing on employees' narratives, the present study seeks to understand the realities of their everyday work lives, the challenges they encounter, the factors that influence their work experiences, and the meanings they attach to their occupational roles. Through thematic analysis of participants' accounts, the study aims to identify recurring patterns and themes that characterize their work experiences. Such an understanding is expected to contribute to counselling psychology, occupational mental health, and organizational practice by generating insights that may support employee well-being, workplace interventions, and future research.

Background of the Study

Public transportation is an essential component of a nation's social and economic development. It facilitates mobility, improves access to education, employment, healthcare, and other essential services, and contributes significantly to economic growth and social inclusion. The effectiveness of a public transportation system depends not only on infrastructure and technological advancements but also on the employees who ensure its day-to-day functioning. Drivers, conductors, inspectors, and other operational staff play a crucial role in delivering safe, efficient, and reliable transport services while managing the diverse demands associated with their profession (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2023).

The nature of work in the public transportation sector is unique and demanding. Employees are often required to work irregular shifts, extended duty hours, weekends, and public holidays while simultaneously managing passenger interactions, maintaining schedules, responding to unforeseen

situations, and ensuring operational efficiency. In addition to these physical demands, they frequently encounter occupational stress arising from workload, organizational expectations, public accountability, and the need to balance professional responsibilities with personal life. Previous research has indicated that transportation employees are vulnerable to work-related stress, fatigue, emotional exhaustion, and other psychosocial challenges that may affect both their well-being and job performance (Costa, 2010; Tse et al., 2006).

The Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) has served as the backbone of public road transportation in Kerala for several decades. As one of the largest state-owned public transport organizations in India, KSRTC connects urban centres, rural communities, and remote regions, providing affordable and dependable transportation to millions of passengers each year. Over time, the organization has continuously adapted to changing transportation needs through technological innovations, administrative reforms, and service modernization initiatives.

As part of these modernization efforts, the Government of Kerala incorporated KSRTC SWIFT Ltd. in December 2021 as a wholly government-owned company to provide managerial, technical, and operational support for long-distance bus services and to operate buses funded by the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB). The establishment of KSRTC SWIFT aimed to enhance operational efficiency, strengthen service delivery, improve fleet management, and provide better passenger services while supporting the modernization of Kerala's public transportation system (Government of Kerala, 2021).

While organizational reforms are generally intended to improve efficiency and service quality, they also influence the experiences of the employees responsible for implementing these changes. Employees working in KSRTC SWIFT perform their duties in a dynamic work environment that requires them to balance operational responsibilities, passenger expectations, organizational policies, and changing administrative procedures. Their work extends beyond driving or conducting buses and involves continuous interaction with passengers, decision-making under varying circumstances, adapting to organizational changes, and managing the psychological and physical demands associated with public

transport services. These experiences shape not only their professional functioning but also their overall well-being.

Existing literature on transportation employees has largely focused on measurable variables such as occupational stress, burnout, fatigue, work schedules, accident prevention, and job satisfaction, predominantly using quantitative research methods (Useche et al., 2018; Tse et al., 2006). While these studies have contributed significantly to understanding occupational outcomes, they often provide limited insight into how employees themselves perceive, interpret, and make meaning of their everyday work experiences. A qualitative research approach enables researchers to explore these experiences in depth by understanding participants' perspectives, emotions, and interpretations within their natural work contexts. Such an approach is particularly relevant in counselling psychology, where understanding individuals' subjective experiences contributes to a deeper appreciation of their emotional well-being, coping strategies, resilience, and professional identity.

The present study originated through the researcher's prolonged engagement with the context of KSRTC SWIFT services as a regular passenger. Over an extended period, repeated observations and interactions with employees across different KSRTC SWIFT routes revealed recurring narratives regarding their work experiences. Rather than relying on the perspective of a single employee, the researcher interacted with staff working in multiple services and found that similar experiences and concerns were consistently expressed across participants. These recurring observations highlighted the need for a systematic qualitative investigation to understand these experiences scientifically rather than relying on isolated accounts or assumptions.

Despite the increasing importance of KSRTC SWIFT within Kerala's public transportation system, there remains a limited body of qualitative research exploring the lived work experiences of its employees. Understanding these experiences is important not only for appreciating the human dimensions of public transport work but also for informing organizational practices, employee well-being initiatives, counselling interventions, and policy decisions. Accordingly, the present qualitative study seeks to explore the lived work experiences of employees working in KSRTC SWIFT services. By identifying the

common themes emerging from employees' narratives, the study aims to generate a comprehensive understanding of their work realities and contribute to the fields of counselling psychology, occupational health, and public service research.

Need of the Study

Employees are the foundation of every organization, and their work experiences significantly influence their psychological well-being, job performance, motivation, organizational commitment, and quality of service. Understanding employees' experiences is particularly important in occupations that involve high levels of responsibility, continuous public interaction, and demanding work conditions. Public transportation employees perform an essential role in society by ensuring safe and reliable mobility for thousands of passengers each day. However, the nature of their work often exposes them to physical demands, psychological pressures, organizational expectations, and interpersonal challenges that may shape their overall work experiences.

Although previous studies have examined occupational stress, burnout, job satisfaction, fatigue, and work-life balance among transportation employees, much of the existing literature has relied on quantitative methods that measure specific variables. Such studies provide valuable statistical evidence but often fail to capture the richness and complexity of employees' personal experiences. Understanding how employees perceive and interpret their work requires a qualitative exploration that allows them to describe their experiences in their own words (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

KSRTC SWIFT is a relatively recent initiative within Kerala's public transportation system, established with the objective of strengthening long-distance transport services and improving operational efficiency (Government of Kerala, 2021). While considerable attention has been directed towards the operational performance and service delivery of KSRTC SWIFT, limited attention has been given to the experiences of the employees who are responsible for delivering these services. Their perceptions regarding workplace conditions, organizational practices, interpersonal relationships, professional responsibilities, and everyday challenges remain largely unexplored within the existing literature.

The present study emerged from repeated interactions and observations within the KSRTC SWIFT work environment, which indicated that employees across different services shared several common experiences related to their work. These recurring narratives highlighted the need for a systematic qualitative inquiry to understand these experiences from the employees' own perspectives rather than relying solely on organizational reports or public opinion.

The findings of the present study are expected to provide a deeper understanding of the lived work experiences of employees working in KSRTC SWIFT services. Such knowledge may contribute to identifying areas that require organizational attention, promoting employee well-being, improving workplace support systems, and encouraging future qualitative research in the field of occupational mental health and counselling psychology.

Significance of the Study

The present study is significant as it explores the lived work experiences of employees working in KSRTC SWIFT services through a qualitative approach, providing an in-depth understanding of their everyday occupational realities. While previous research on transportation employees has predominantly focused on measurable variables such as occupational stress, burnout, fatigue, and job satisfaction, relatively few studies have explored how employees themselves perceive, interpret, and make meaning of their work experiences. By documenting employees' narratives, the present study contributes to a deeper understanding of the human dimensions of work within the public transportation sector.

From the perspective of counselling psychology, the study contributes to understanding the relationship between occupational experiences and psychological well-being. Employees' perceptions of their work environment, organizational support, interpersonal relationships, and professional responsibilities influence their emotional health, coping strategies, resilience, motivation, and overall quality of life. Understanding these experiences enables counselling professionals to appreciate the psychological realities associated with public service occupations and may facilitate the development of

appropriate counselling interventions, employee assistance programmes, stress management initiatives, and workplace mental health promotion strategies (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022).

The study is also significant for employees working in KSRTC SWIFT services. Providing employees with an opportunity to express their experiences allows their perspectives to be acknowledged and documented in a systematic and scientific manner. The findings may help highlight both the challenges and the positive aspects of their work, thereby creating greater awareness of the factors that influence their professional and personal well-being. Such understanding may contribute to the development of supportive work environments that recognize employees' experiences and promote their overall welfare.

For the management of KSRTC SWIFT and other public transport organizations, the findings may provide valuable insights into employees' perceptions of their work environment and organizational practices. Understanding employees' experiences can assist administrators in identifying strengths, recognizing areas requiring improvement, and developing employee-centred policies that support well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational effectiveness. Since employees are central to the delivery of quality public transport services, addressing workplace concerns may ultimately contribute to improved service quality and organizational performance.

The present study also contributes to the growing body of qualitative research in occupational and organizational settings. By exploring employees' lived work experiences rather than focusing solely on measurable outcomes, the study demonstrates the value of qualitative inquiry in understanding complex workplace realities. The findings may encourage researchers to undertake similar qualitative investigations among employees working in other public service sectors, thereby enriching the literature on occupational experiences and employee well-being.

Furthermore, the study has implications for policymakers and stakeholders involved in public transportation and employee welfare. Insights into employees' work experiences may inform the development of policies and programmes that foster healthy workplaces, strengthen organizational

support systems, and enhance employee well-being. Such initiatives are consistent with the recommendations of the World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization, both of which emphasize the importance of promoting safe, healthy, and supportive work environments as an integral component of organizational effectiveness and sustainable development (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2023; WHO, 2022).

Finally, the present study contributes to academic knowledge by addressing a relatively underexplored area within the Kerala context. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, limited qualitative research has specifically explored the lived work experiences of employees working in KSRTC SWIFT services. By documenting employees' perspectives through a qualitative approach, the study adds context-specific evidence to the fields of counselling psychology, occupational health, organizational behaviour, and public transportation research. It is expected that the findings will serve as a foundation for future studies and encourage further exploration of employee experiences within similar organizational settings.

Objectives

General Objective

To explore and understand the lived work experiences of employees working in the Swift services of Kerala State Road Transport Corporation.

Specific Objectives

1. To examine the nature of work and job responsibilities of employees working in the Swift services of Kerala State Road Transport Corporation.
2. To explore the challenges and difficulties experienced by drivers and conductors while working in the Swift service.
3. To explore how employees' work experiences influence their well-being, work–life balance, and coping strategies.

4. To explore employees' perceptions of organizational factors, including duty schedules, administrative practices, and financial aspects, that influence their work experiences.
5. To identify the suggestions provided by employees for improving their working conditions and overall work experience.

Research Questions

1. How do employees working in the Swift services of Kerala State Road Transport Corporation describe their daily work roles and responsibilities?
2. What challenges and difficulties do drivers and conductors experience while working in the Swift service?
3. How do these work experiences influence their wellbeing, work–life balance, and coping strategies?

Statement of the Problem

Work experiences play a significant role in influencing employees' psychological well-being, job performance, motivation, and overall quality of life. In occupations such as public transportation, employees encounter diverse professional responsibilities, organizational expectations, and interpersonal interactions that shape their everyday work experiences. Although previous research has extensively examined occupational stress, burnout, job satisfaction, fatigue, and other work-related variables among transportation employees, relatively little attention has been given to understanding how employees themselves perceive and interpret their work experiences, particularly through qualitative inquiry.

KSRTC SWIFT has emerged as an important component of Kerala's public transportation system, with employees performing essential roles in delivering long-distance transport services across the state. Despite their significant contribution, limited qualitative evidence is available regarding the lived work experiences of these employees, the challenges they encounter, the factors that influence their work, and the meanings they attribute to their occupational roles. Understanding these experiences is essential for

promoting employee well-being, strengthening organizational support, and informing workplace practices.

In view of this research gap, the present study seeks to explore the lived work experiences among employees working in KSRTC SWIFT services through a qualitative research approach. By examining employees' narratives and identifying the common themes emerging from their experiences, the study aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of their work realities and contribute to the existing knowledge in counselling psychology, occupational health, and organizational research.

Operational Definitions

Lived Work Experience:

Lived work experience refers to the personal perceptions, meanings, emotions, and interpretations that employees attach to their everyday work life. In the present study, it refers to the experiences of employees working in the KSRTC SWIFT services regarding their job roles, occupational challenges, organizational environment, interpersonal interactions, psychological well-being, coping strategies, and the overall meaning they attribute to their work.

Employees:

Employees refer to individuals employed in the KSRTC SWIFT services who perform operational duties essential for the functioning of the transport system. In the present study, the term specifically refers to drivers and conductors working in KSRTC SWIFT services who participated in the research.

KSRTC SWIFT Services:

KSRTC SWIFT Services refer to the long-distance bus services operated by KSRTC SWIFT Ltd., a Government of Kerala company established to provide managerial, technical, and operational support for long-distance public transportation under the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation.

Occupational Challenges:

Occupational challenges refer to the physical, psychological, organizational, administrative, and interpersonal difficulties experienced by employees while carrying out their professional responsibilities in the KSRTC SWIFT services.

Psychological Well-being:

Psychological well-being refers to employees' emotional and mental state as influenced by their work experiences, including their ability to cope with occupational demands, maintain emotional balance, and function effectively in their personal and professional lives.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of literature is a critical component of any research study as it provides an understanding of the existing body of knowledge related to the research problem. It enables the researcher to examine previous theoretical and empirical contributions, identify gaps in the existing literature, and establish the need for the present study. Reviewing relevant literature also helps in developing a conceptual understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and provides direction for the research.

The present chapter reviews the literature related to the lived work experience among the employees of SWIFT Services in Kerala State Road Transport Corporation. The review is organised into two major sections: the theoretical review and the empirical review. The theoretical review discusses the concepts related to work, work experience, lived work experience, work environment, and employee well-being. The empirical review presents previous studies related to employees' work experiences, the public transport sector, and workplace well-being. The chapter concludes with the identification of the research gap and highlights the relevance of the present study. The review primarily includes peer-reviewed journal articles published during the last 10–15 years, along with seminal works wherever necessary.

Theoretical Review

Work and the Meaning of Work

Work is a fundamental aspect of human life and plays a significant role in shaping an individual's identity, purpose, and quality of life. It is generally understood as the physical or mental effort undertaken to achieve specific goals, fulfil responsibilities, and earn a livelihood. Beyond its economic value, work provides opportunities for personal growth, social interaction, skill development, and a sense of accomplishment. It also enables individuals to contribute meaningfully to their families, organisations, and society.

The meaning that individuals attach to their work varies depending on personal values, occupational roles, organisational culture, and the environment in which they work. For some, work represents financial security, while for others it serves as a source of personal fulfilment, social recognition, and professional development. Consequently, the experience of work extends beyond routine job tasks and is influenced by daily interactions, workplace relationships, organisational practices, and working conditions.

In service-oriented organisations such as Kerala State Road Transport Corporation SWIFT Services, employees work in environments that require continuous interaction with the public, adherence to operational schedules, and the ability to respond to dynamic workplace situations. These unique characteristics shape employees' perceptions of their work and influence the experiences they derive from their occupational roles. Therefore, understanding the meaning of work provides an important foundation for exploring the lived work experiences of employees in the present study.

Lived Work Experiences

Lived work experience refers to the personal meanings, feelings, and interpretations that individuals attach to their everyday work. Unlike work experience, which focuses on the tasks performed and skills acquired, lived work experience emphasises how employees perceive and make sense of their day-to-day experiences in the workplace. It recognises that employees working in similar roles may experience the same work environment differently based on their interactions, responsibilities, expectations, and personal circumstances.

Lived work experience is shaped by several factors, including workplace relationships, organisational culture, leadership practices, work demands, recognition, and the overall work environment. These experiences influence employees' attitudes towards their work, their sense of belonging, and their overall well-being. Exploring lived work experiences therefore provides a deeper understanding of employees' realities beyond measurable aspects such as salary, workload, or job performance.

In the context of Kerala State Road Transport Corporation SWIFT Services, employees encounter diverse situations in their daily work, including interactions with passengers, adherence to schedules, operational responsibilities, and organisational expectations. Understanding how employees interpret these experiences can provide valuable insights into the realities of working in the public transport sector. Therefore, exploring their lived work experiences is central to the present study as it helps capture the meanings employees attach to their work and the factors that shape those experiences.

Work Environment

The work environment refers to the physical, social, and organisational conditions in which employees perform their duties. It includes factors such as the nature of work, working hours, workplace relationships, organisational policies, leadership, safety, and the resources available to employees. A supportive work environment enables employees to perform their responsibilities effectively and contributes to their overall well-being, whereas an unfavourable work environment can negatively influence their work experiences and quality of life.

In service organisations, particularly in the public transport sector, the work environment is dynamic and often unpredictable. Employees are required to adhere to strict schedules, ensure passenger safety, manage operational challenges, and interact with people from diverse backgrounds. These responsibilities, combined with long working hours, shift duties, traffic conditions, and public expectations, shape employees' day-to-day work experiences. Research has shown that transport workers commonly experience challenges related to workload, time pressure, shift work, passenger interactions, and organisational factors, all of which influence their workplace experiences and well-being.

For employees of Kerala State Road Transport Corporation SWIFT Services, the work environment extends beyond the organisation to include the road network, passengers, traffic conditions, and the operational demands of providing reliable public transport services. Understanding this work environment is essential to exploring how employees perceive their work and the meanings they attach to their daily experiences.

Empirical Review

Studies on Employees' Work Experience

Recent research has increasingly focused on understanding employees' work experiences from their own perspectives, recognising that these experiences influence both individual well-being and organisational outcomes. Qualitative studies have shown that employees' work experiences are shaped not only by the nature of their job but also by workplace relationships, organisational culture, leadership, and the broader work environment.

A recent review by Bhatnagar (2026) examined service work as a lived experience and highlighted that frontline employees often experience their work through continuous interactions with customers, organisational expectations, and workplace systems. The review found that service workers frequently negotiate emotional demands, organisational control, and the need to maintain professionalism while dealing with challenging situations. The study emphasised that understanding employees' lived experiences provides deeper insights into their work realities than focusing solely on organisational outcomes.

Similarly, a qualitative study by Dhar (2013) explored the experiences of Indian information technology professionals through in-depth interviews. The findings revealed that employees often experienced a gap between their expectations of work and the realities of the workplace, leading to what the author described as "reality shock." The study highlighted the importance of understanding employees' subjective experiences in order to improve organisational practices and employee adjustment.

These studies indicate that employees' work experiences are shaped by multiple organisational and personal factors and cannot be understood solely through objective measures such as workload or job performance. Exploring employees' lived experiences therefore provides valuable insights into how they interpret their work, respond to workplace challenges, and attach meaning to their professional roles. This forms the basis for the present study, which seeks to understand the lived work experiences of employees working in Kerala State Road Transport Corporation SWIFT Services.

Studies on employees in the Public Transport Sector

Research on employees in the public transport sector has consistently shown that the nature of transport work presents unique occupational demands. Employees are required to work for long hours, adhere to strict schedules, interact continuously with passengers, and perform their duties under changing traffic and environmental conditions. These factors significantly influence their work experiences, health, and overall well-being.

A study by Varun R et al. (2024) examined occupational stress and health among bus drivers of the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) in Kolar. The cross-sectional study involving 240 bus drivers found that 65% of the participants experienced moderate occupational stress, while the remaining participants reported severe stress. Long working hours, night shifts, hypertension, obesity, and lifestyle factors were significantly associated with higher stress levels. The authors concluded that targeted workplace health promotion programmes and organisational interventions are necessary to improve the health and well-being of transport employees.

Similarly, a study conducted among government bus drivers working under the Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (TNSTC) found that a majority of drivers experienced moderate to high levels of stress, and many also reported poor sleep quality. The study highlighted that irregular duty schedules, limited rest breaks, smoking, alcohol use, and sleep deprivation contributed to increased occupational stress. The researchers recommended improving rest facilities, ensuring adequate sleep opportunities, and implementing workplace stress management programmes for transport employees.

These studies demonstrate that employees in the public transport sector work under demanding conditions that influence their physical and psychological well-being. Although previous research has largely focused on occupational stress, health outcomes, and working conditions, limited attention has been given to understanding how employees themselves perceive and make meaning of these experiences. This highlights the need for qualitative studies exploring the lived work experiences of employees, particularly within Kerala State Road Transport Corporation SWIFT Services.

Studies in the Indian Context

Research conducted in India has highlighted that employees in the public transport sector experience a wide range of occupational and organisational challenges that influence their work experiences. These challenges include long working hours, irregular shifts, heavy workload, work–life imbalance, and continuous interaction with passengers. Such factors have been found to affect employees' physical health, psychological well-being, and overall quality of work life.

A study by George et al. (2018) examined work–life balance among 103 employees of the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC). The findings revealed that nearly one-fourth of the employees had poor work–life balance, with factors such as extended working hours, inadequate rest, and job-related demands contributing to the imbalance. The authors emphasised that improving organisational support and promoting healthier working conditions could enhance employees' well-being and job performance.

More recently, Varun R. et al. (2024) investigated occupational stress among KSRTC bus drivers in Karnataka. The study found that a majority of drivers experienced moderate occupational stress, which was associated with long duty hours, shift work, and existing health conditions. The researchers recommended workplace interventions aimed at reducing occupational stress and promoting employee health within public transport organisations.

Although these studies provide valuable insights into the working conditions and well-being of public transport employees in India, they primarily adopt quantitative approaches and focus on specific outcomes such as stress or work–life balance. There is limited qualitative research exploring how employees themselves perceive, interpret, and describe their day-to-day work experiences, particularly among employees of Kerala State Road Transport Corporation SWIFT Services. This gap underscores the need for the present study.

Studies Related to Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC)

Research focusing specifically on employees of the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) is relatively limited, particularly studies exploring employees' lived work experiences. Most available studies have concentrated on specific occupational issues such as work–life balance, workplace challenges, absenteeism, and the experiences of women employees rather than providing a holistic understanding of employees' day-to-day work experiences.

A study by Divya, A. P., and Kalaiselvi K. (2024) examined the challenges faced by married women conductors in KSRTC, with special reference to the Malabar region. The study found that women conductors experienced difficulties in balancing work and family responsibilities, societal expectations, limited opportunities for career advancement, and workplace-related challenges. Despite these difficulties, many employees adopted effective coping strategies and demonstrated resilience in managing their professional and personal responsibilities. The authors highlighted the need for organisational support and policy interventions to improve the working conditions of women employees.

Although these studies provide valuable insights into selected issues affecting KSRTC employees, they mainly focus on specific employee groups or particular organisational outcomes. There remains a lack of qualitative research exploring the overall lived work experiences of employees working in KSRTC SWIFT Services. Understanding these experiences from the employees' own perspectives can provide a richer understanding of their everyday realities, workplace interactions, and the meanings they attach to their work. This gap forms the basis for the present study.

Research Gap

The review of literature indicates that several studies have examined various aspects of employees' work, including work environment, occupational stress, employee well-being, work–life balance, and job satisfaction across different occupational settings. Research conducted in the public transport sector has primarily focused on drivers and conductors, with emphasis on occupational health, stress, safety, and organisational issues. Similarly, the limited studies available on Kerala State Road Transport Corporation

(KSRTC) have largely addressed specific concerns such as the experiences of women conductors, employee retention, and organisational challenges.

However, there is a noticeable lack of qualitative research exploring the lived work experiences of employees from their own perspectives, particularly within Kerala State Road Transport Corporation SWIFT Services. Existing studies have predominantly adopted quantitative approaches, providing limited insight into how employees perceive, interpret, and make meaning of their everyday work experiences. Moreover, research focusing specifically on SWIFT Services remains scarce despite its distinctive operational structure within KSRTC.

The present study seeks to address this gap by exploring the lived work experiences of employees working in KSRTC SWIFT Services through a qualitative approach. By understanding employees' experiences in their own words, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of their workplace realities and contribute to the existing body of knowledge on employee experiences in the public transport sector.

Relevance of the Present Study

The public transport sector plays a vital role in ensuring accessible and affordable transportation for the public, with employees serving as the backbone of its daily operations. Their work involves managing operational responsibilities, interacting with passengers, adapting to changing work conditions, and maintaining service efficiency. Understanding their work experiences is therefore important not only for employee well-being but also for improving organisational functioning and service quality.

Although previous research has examined occupational stress, work–life balance, job satisfaction, and other workplace-related issues among transport employees, there is limited evidence exploring how employees themselves experience and interpret their everyday work, particularly in the context of Kerala State Road Transport Corporation SWIFT Services. Exploring these experiences through a qualitative approach can provide a deeper understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and realities associated with their work.

The findings of the present study are expected to contribute to the existing literature on employee work experiences in the public transport sector. The study may also provide useful insights for organisational administrators and policymakers in developing employee-centred strategies that enhance workplace support, employee well-being, and the overall quality of public transport services.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Research methodology refers to the systematic procedures adopted to conduct a research study in a scientific and organized manner. It provides a framework for selecting an appropriate research design, participants, sampling technique, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures to address the research objectives. In qualitative research, the primary focus is on understanding individuals' experiences, perspectives, and meanings associated with a particular phenomenon. The present study adopted a qualitative approach to explore the lived work experiences of employees working in the Swift services of the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC-SWIFT). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews using a researcher-developed interview guide over a period of two months. This chapter presents the methodology adopted for conducting the study.

Research Design

The present study adopted a qualitative research design to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived work experiences of employees working in the KSRTC-SWIFT long-distance bus services. A qualitative design was considered appropriate because it enables the exploration of participants' personal experiences, perceptions, and meanings related to their work in a natural context. Through face-to-face interviews, the researcher gathered rich and detailed information that facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the challenges, experiences, and perspectives of the participants.

Research Setting

The study was conducted among employees working in the long-distance Swift services of the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC-SWIFT). Data collection was carried out at locations that were convenient and comfortable for the participants while ensuring privacy and confidentiality. The setting enabled the researcher to conduct in-depth interviews without disrupting the participants' work

responsibilities, thereby facilitating the collection of authentic and detailed narratives regarding their lived work experiences.

Participants

The participants of the study comprised seven employees working in the long-distance Swift services of the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC-SWIFT). The participants were selected because they possessed firsthand experience of the phenomenon under investigation and were able to provide rich and meaningful descriptions of their work experiences. Their experiences and perspectives contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the realities associated with working in KSRTC-SWIFT long-distance services.

Sampling Techniques

The study employed purposive sampling to select the participants. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique commonly used in qualitative research to identify individuals who have direct experience and relevant knowledge of the phenomenon being studied. Accordingly, seven KSRTC-SWIFT employees working in long-distance services were purposively selected, as they were considered capable of providing detailed insights into their lived work experiences.

Inclusion Criteria

The study included employees working in the long-distance Swift services of the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC-SWIFT) who had completed at least one year of continuous service. Participants were selected based on their willingness to participate voluntarily and their ability to share detailed accounts of their work experiences during the interview.

Exclusion Criteria

Employees working in city services or other non-long-distance KSRTC routes were excluded from the study. In addition, employees with less than one year of continuous work experience in KSRTC-

SWIFT long-distance services were not included, as they might not have had sufficient experience to provide in-depth insights into the phenomenon under investigation.

Research Tool

The research tool used for the study was a semi-structured interview guide developed by the researcher. The interview guide was prepared based on the objectives of the study and an extensive review of the relevant literature. It comprised open-ended questions designed to explore the lived work experiences of employees working in the long-distance Swift services of the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC-SWIFT). The semi-structured format enabled the researcher to maintain consistency across interviews while also allowing flexibility to ask probing questions and seek clarification whenever necessary. This facilitated the collection of rich, detailed, and meaningful data regarding the participants' experiences.

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the concerned authorities, and informed consent was obtained from all participants after explaining the purpose and nature of the study. Data were collected over a period of two months through individual semi-structured interviews using the researcher-developed interview guide. The interviews were conducted at a time and place convenient to the participants, ensuring privacy and confidentiality. With the participants' consent, their responses were documented for analysis. Throughout the interview process, participants were encouraged to share their experiences freely, and probing questions were used wherever necessary to obtain detailed and meaningful information. A sample of seven participants was considered appropriate for this qualitative study, as it enabled an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and generated sufficient information to answer the research questions. No new themes or meaningful insights emerged from the interviews. This indicated that the collected data were sufficient to address the research objectives.

Data Analysis

The study employed thematic analysis to systematically examine and interpret the transcribed interview data. Thematic analysis is a widely accepted method in qualitative research that involves identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004). It is particularly suitable for phenomenological studies as it facilitates an in-depth understanding of participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and meanings associated with the phenomenon under investigation.

The analysis followed the six phases proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. Both inductive and deductive coding approaches were adopted. The inductive approach enabled themes to emerge naturally from the participants' narratives, while the deductive approach ensured that the analysis remained aligned with the objectives and research questions of the study. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, member checking was employed by seeking participants' confirmation of the interpretations, and peer debriefing was carried out by obtaining feedback from research peers to minimize researcher bias. As noted by Braun and Clarke (2006) and further supported by Nowell et al. (2017), a rigorous thematic analysis enhances the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of qualitative research findings.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were maintained throughout the research process. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the concerned authorities before the commencement of data collection. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. They were informed about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences, and the confidentiality of the information they provided. The anonymity and privacy of the participants were protected, and the data collected were used solely for academic and research purposes.

CHAPTER 4

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the study based on the analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews with seven KSRTC Swift employees. The interview data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, which resulted in five major themes and related subthemes. The findings are presented theme-wise with supporting participant quotations, followed by their discussion and interpretation in relation to the existing literature and the objectives of the study. In this chapter, participants are mentioned as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6 and P7.

Overview of Themes

The thematic analysis of the interview data resulted in five major themes and their corresponding subthemes. These themes capture the shared experiences of KSRTC Swift employees regarding their work, occupational stress, organisational environment, wellbeing, and suggestions for improving working conditions.

Major Themes	Subthemes
Theme 1: Nature of Work and Occupational Demands	Professional background and motivation; Nature of driver-cum-conductor responsibilities; Long-distance travel and irregular work schedules
Theme 2: Occupational Stressors and Workplace Challenges	Passenger-related challenges; Traffic delays and time pressure; Physical demands and inadequate rest; Stress associated with driver and conductor duties
Theme 3: Organisational Support and Employment Concerns	Salary and financial concerns; Leave and work allocation; Administrative support and organisational pressure; Employee representation and organisational support.

Theme 4: Influence of Work on Physical, Psychological, and Family Wellbeing	Physical health and fatigue; Psychological and emotional wellbeing; Influence on personal and family life.
Theme 5: Coping Strategies and Recommendations for Improving Employee Wellbeing	Coping with occupational demands; Need for psychological and employee support; Suggestions for improving organisational policies and working conditions

Theme 1: Nature of Work and Occupational Demands

The first theme, Nature of Work and Occupational Demands, reflects the participants' experiences regarding their professional background, reasons for joining KSRTC Swift, work responsibilities, and the demands associated with long-distance services. Three subthemes emerged under this theme.

Professional Background and Motivation

Most participants had previous experience as professional drivers before joining KSRTC Swift. They had worked in private buses, tourist buses, tipper lorries, heavy vehicles, and other transport-related jobs. The decision to join KSRTC Swift was mainly influenced by job security, passion for driving, and a strong interest in working for KSRTC. P6 shared that he joined because *"it is a government job,"* while P7 stated, *"I joined KSRTC Swift during the COVID period because of my love for KSRTC."* Similarly, P3 explained that he had *"a passion for driving and a strong attachment towards KSRTC."* These findings suggest that both employment security and personal interest influenced participants' decision to join the organisation.

Nature of Driver-cum-conductor Responsibilities

The participants described their role as extending beyond driving or issuing tickets. Their responsibilities included vehicle inspection, passenger management, maintaining schedules, ensuring passenger safety, and handling operational issues during the journey. P5 explained that employees must *"inspect the bus, verify documents, and ensure that everything is in proper working condition before*

beginning the journey." Likewise, P2 stated that if any mechanical issue is not identified before departure, *"the responsibility may fall on us."* These findings indicate that employees perform multiple responsibilities before, during, and after every trip.

Long-Distance Travel and Irregular Work Schedules

All participants had been involved in long-distance services from the beginning of their employment. They described their work as physically demanding because of extended duty hours, irregular schedules, and limited opportunities for rest. P3 explained that a single trip *"often lasts between 17 and 18 hours,"* leaving *"very little time available for proper rest before preparing for the return journey."* Similarly, P7 described a workday that begins early in the morning and ends late at night, while P1 noted that traffic congestion and road construction frequently increase duty hours and reduce rest time. These findings show that long-distance operations require employees to continuously adapt to demanding schedules and changing work conditions.

Overall, the findings suggest that the role of a Driver-cum-Conductor in KSRTC Swift involves multiple responsibilities and considerable occupational demands. The participants' experiences highlight that long-distance duties require flexibility, endurance, and constant adaptation to operational challenges. These findings are consistent with previous studies, which have reported that transport employees often experience demanding work environments characterised by extended working hours, multiple responsibilities, and irregular schedules.

The present findings are supported by the study of Taylor and Dorn (2006), who reported that professional drivers perform responsibilities that extend beyond vehicle operation, including maintaining schedules, ensuring passenger safety, and responding to operational challenges. Similarly, Kompier and Di Martino (1995) observed that transport employees work under demanding conditions characterised by irregular schedules, long duty hours, and multiple job responsibilities. The experiences shared by KSRTC Swift employees closely reflect these findings, suggesting that the occupational demands identified in this study are consistent with those reported among transport workers in other settings.

Theme 2: Occupational Stressors and Workplace Challenges

The second theme, Occupational Stressors and Workplace Challenges, reflects the various work-related factors that contribute to occupational stress among KSRTC Swift employees. Four subthemes emerged under this theme.

Passenger-Related Challenges

Passenger interactions emerged as one of the most common sources of occupational stress. Most participants reported that passengers often become frustrated when buses are delayed due to traffic congestion, road construction, or other unavoidable circumstances. In many cases, employees are held responsible for situations beyond their control. P1 shared that *"Most passenger-related issues arise when buses do not arrive on time because of delays during the journey."* Similarly, P5 explained that *"Many passengers become upset when buses are delayed and expect employees to provide immediate solutions."* P7 further stated that passengers sometimes file complaints when employees refuse to stop at unauthorised locations, while P4 mentioned that requests for non-designated stops and disputes over ticketing frequently create conflicts. These findings indicate that managing passenger expectations is a significant challenge in long-distance services.

Traffic Delays and Time Pressure

Traffic congestion, road construction, accidents, and unexpected mechanical issues were frequently reported as factors that disrupt scheduled services. Participants explained that these delays increase workload and create pressure to maintain timings despite circumstances beyond their control. P2 described how a journey scheduled to end in the evening often extends until late at night because of traffic conditions. Likewise, P3 explained that the difference between scheduled and actual travel time creates additional pressure related to passenger reservations and service management. These findings suggest that

operational delays are an unavoidable part of long-distance services and contribute significantly to work-related stress.

Physical Demands and Inadequate Rest

Long-distance duties were consistently associated with extended working hours, irregular sleep, and insufficient rest. Participants explained that the limited time available between journeys often affects their physical wellbeing and ability to recover before the next duty. P4 described lack of proper sleep as *"a major issue,"* especially during Super Fast services. Similarly, P6 stated that although he had become accustomed to irregular working hours, *"there are still issues related to inadequate rest."* P5 also reported that employees often have only a short period for food and rest before beginning another journey. These findings highlight the physically demanding nature of long-distance transport services.

Stress Associated with Driver and Conductor Duties

Participants reported that both driver and conductor duties involve considerable responsibility and pressure. However, many perceived driver duty to be more stressful because of the responsibility for passenger safety and operating the vehicle under demanding road conditions. P6 stated that *"Driver duty is more stressful than conductor duty,"* while P7 explained that although both duties are stressful, conductor duty is comparatively less demanding. Similarly, P3 noted that drivers experience greater pressure in certain services due to the responsibility of managing both operational and passenger-related challenges.

Overall, the findings indicate that occupational stress among KSRTC Swift employees arises from a combination of passenger-related issues, operational delays, demanding work schedules, and the responsibilities associated with long-distance transport. These stressors often occur simultaneously, making the work physically and emotionally demanding. The findings support previous studies which suggest that prolonged working hours, public interaction, and operational pressures are major contributors to occupational stress among transport employees.

The findings are also consistent with previous research examining occupational stress among transport employees. Tse et al. (2006) found that traffic congestion, time pressure, passenger interactions, and long working hours are major contributors to occupational stress among bus drivers. Similarly, Evans and Johansson (1998) reported that continuous exposure to demanding driving conditions and public interaction increases both physical and psychological strain. The present study similarly identified passenger-related conflicts, operational delays, inadequate rest, and the demanding responsibilities of driver-cum-conductors as significant sources of occupational stress.

Theme 3: Organisational Support and Employment Concerns

The third theme, Organisational Support and Employment Concerns, highlights the participants' experiences regarding organisational policies, administrative practices, and employment conditions within KSRTC Swift. While many participants expressed commitment to their profession and satisfaction with serving the public, they also described several organisational issues that affected their motivation, job satisfaction, and overall work experience. Concerns related to salary, overtime benefits, leave approval, administrative support, and the absence of employee representation were repeatedly discussed across interviews. Participants felt that organisational policies often did not adequately recognise the demanding nature of their work, leading to feelings of dissatisfaction and lack of support. Four subthemes emerged under this theme: salary and financial concerns, leave and work allocation, administrative support and organisational pressure, and employee representation and organisational support.

Salary and Financial Concerns

Salary-related concerns emerged as one of the most frequently discussed issues among the participants. Most participants felt that their current salary did not adequately reflect the workload, long working hours, and responsibilities associated with their job. Many also expressed dissatisfaction with the discontinuation of overtime payments, annual increments, and bonuses.

P3 stated that *"the salary is not adequate for the amount of work we perform,"* while P5 explained that *"employees often work beyond scheduled hours, but overtime compensation is either insufficient or*

unavailable." Similarly, P6 reported that although employees now receive a monthly salary, *"overtime increments are not provided,"* and P7 commented that *"the salary is not adequate considering the work we do."* P2 further highlighted the salary difference between Swift employees and permanent KSRTC employees despite performing similar duties, which many participants perceived as unfair. These findings suggest that financial dissatisfaction is a major contributor to reduced job satisfaction among KSRTC Swift employees.

Leave and Work Allocation

Participants also described difficulties in obtaining leave and managing duty schedules. Many reported that leave approval depended on operational requirements, availability of substitutes, or administrative decisions, making it difficult to balance work and personal responsibilities.

P6 explained that *"taking leave can be difficult if there is no substitute available,"* while P7 similarly stated that employees must arrange a substitute before leave is granted. P3 felt that leave allocation was sometimes unfair and suggested that some employees received preferential treatment. Likewise, P4 reported that obtaining leave during festival seasons and important family occasions was particularly difficult. These findings indicate that existing leave practices often create additional stress and affect employees' work–life balance.

Administrative Support and Organisational Pressure

Another important concern was the limited organisational support perceived by employees when workplace issues occurred. Several participants felt that officers often gave greater importance to passenger complaints than to employees' explanations, leaving them feeling unsupported.

P3 remarked that *"instead of listening to the staff's explanation, some officers immediately place blame on employees,"* while P4 stated that employees often faced disciplinary action without being given a fair opportunity to explain their side. Similarly, P6 shared that officers sometimes behaved rudely and questioned employees whenever passenger complaints were received. P2 also explained that employees

often felt their perspective was overlooked during complaint investigations. These findings suggest that the perceived lack of organisational support contributes to frustration, stress, and reduced trust in management.

Employee Representation and Organisational Support

The absence of employee representation was another issue consistently raised by participants. Most participants reported that KSRTC Swift employees were not permitted to form or join unions and believed that this limited their ability to voice workplace concerns.

P7 stated that *"a union is necessary and that we require one,"* while P5 explained that employees needed *"a platform through which they can express concerns, seek support, and communicate their difficulties to management."* P3 and P4 also strongly supported the formation of an employee union, believing that it would help protect employee welfare and improve communication with management. In contrast, P1 felt that although he had not personally required union support, such a system could still benefit employees when workplace concerns arose. These findings demonstrate a shared perception that stronger employee representation could improve organisational support and address many of the concerns experienced by KSRTC Swift employees.

Overall, the findings indicate that organisational factors play a significant role in shaping employees' work experiences. Financial concerns, difficulties in obtaining leave, limited administrative support, and the absence of employee representation contributed to dissatisfaction and increased occupational stress. These findings are consistent with previous research, which suggests that organisational support, fair employment practices, and responsive management are essential for improving employee wellbeing, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment.

These findings correspond with previous studies highlighting the importance of organisational support in promoting employee wellbeing. Bakker and Demerouti (2007), through the Job Demands–Resources model, suggested that inadequate organisational resources, including insufficient managerial support and limited employment benefits, contribute to occupational stress and reduced job satisfaction.

Likewise, Shuck and Reio (2014) reported that employees who perceive low organisational support are more likely to experience dissatisfaction and emotional exhaustion. The concerns expressed by KSRTC Swift employees regarding salary, leave policies, administrative practices, and employee representation therefore reinforce existing evidence on the influence of organisational factors on employee wellbeing.

Theme 4: Influence of Work on Physical, Psychological, and Family Wellbeing

The fourth theme, Influence of Work on Physical, Psychological, and Family Wellbeing, captures how the occupational demands of KSRTC Swift influence employees beyond their work responsibilities. Participants explained that the effects of long-distance duties extended into their physical health, emotional wellbeing, and family life. Long working hours, irregular sleep, inadequate rest, continuous travel, passenger-related conflicts, and organisational pressure were described as factors that gradually affected their overall quality of life. Although a few participants felt they had adjusted to these demands over time, most reported experiencing varying levels of physical fatigue, emotional strain, and difficulty maintaining a healthy work–life balance. The findings suggest that occupational stress is not limited to the workplace but also influences employees' health, relationships, and personal wellbeing. Three subthemes emerged under this theme: physical health and fatigue, psychological and emotional wellbeing, and influence on personal and family life.

Physical Health and Fatigue

Physical health concerns were commonly reported by the participants. Long working hours, insufficient sleep, irregular meal timings, and dependence on hotel food during journeys were perceived as major contributors to health problems. Many participants explained that the demanding nature of long-distance duties left them physically exhausted and affected their daily functioning.

P4 described *"lack of proper sleep"* as one of the biggest problems and explained that continuous travel and irregular working hours affected both health and wellbeing. He also mentioned that many employees experience health problems such as *"high blood pressure, piles, ulcers, acidity, and kidney stones."* Similarly, P5 stated that employees often experience *"physical exhaustion and irregular sleeping*

patterns," while P7 shared that he initially faced food-related health problems and now mainly experiences health issues due to *"lack of sleep."* P6 also acknowledged that inadequate rest continues to be a challenge despite becoming accustomed to irregular work schedules. These findings indicate that the physical demands of long-distance transport work have a significant impact on employees' health.

Psychological and Emotional Wellbeing

Participants described occupational stress as having a noticeable impact on their emotional wellbeing. Frequent passenger complaints, administrative pressure, long working hours, and inadequate organisational support contributed to stress, frustration, and emotional exhaustion.

P6 explained that *"the stress from work affects me emotionally, especially due to interactions with passengers and certain officers."* Likewise, P5 reported that employees sometimes feel *"frustrated, emotionally exhausted, and unappreciated despite their hard work."* P3 also shared that the lack of organisational support and continuous workplace pressure negatively affected employees' morale and emotional wellbeing. P4 stated that employees often suppress their frustration during duty and express these emotions only after returning home. However, not all participants reported the same experience. P1 and P2 explained that although the job involves stress, they had gradually adapted to these pressures and had not experienced major mental health difficulties. These findings suggest that while the intensity of emotional impact varies across individuals, occupational stress is a common experience among KSRTC Swift employees.

Influence on Personal and Family Life.

The demanding nature of long-distance duties also affected participants' personal and family lives. Most participants explained that extended working hours and irregular schedules reduced the amount of time available for family interactions and personal activities.

P3 stated that the job leaves *"very little opportunity to spend quality time with family members,"* while P5 explained that he was *"unable to spend as much time with my family as I would like"* because of

long-distance travel and irregular work schedules. Similarly, P4 reported that continuous travel and physical exhaustion limited family interactions and affected overall wellbeing. In contrast, P6 shared that he generally had sufficient time to spend with his family, although he recognised that this experience was not common among all employees. P7 also mentioned that he had not experienced major family-related difficulties so far but believed such issues could arise in the future. These findings indicate that occupational demands often interfere with employees' work–life balance, although the extent of this impact differs across individuals.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that occupational stress among KSRTC Swift employees extends beyond the workplace, affecting physical health, emotional wellbeing, and family life. While some participants had adapted to these challenges through experience, the majority described the cumulative effects of demanding work schedules, inadequate rest, and continuous occupational pressure on their overall wellbeing. These findings support previous research suggesting that prolonged occupational stress and irregular work schedules can negatively influence employees' physical health, psychological wellbeing, and work–life balance.

The present findings are consistent with previous literature demonstrating the adverse effects of occupational stress on employee wellbeing. Useche et al. (2018) reported that prolonged working hours, inadequate rest, and demanding work environments negatively affect the physical health, psychological wellbeing, and quality of life of professional drivers. Similarly, Kompier and Di Martino (1995) found that transport employees frequently experience fatigue, emotional strain, and work–family conflict due to irregular schedules and continuous occupational demands. The experiences reported by participants in this study closely mirror these findings, indicating that the impact of occupational stress extends beyond the workplace into employees' personal and family lives.

Theme 5: Coping Strategies and Recommendations for Improving Employee Wellbeing

The fifth theme, Coping Strategies and Recommendations for Improving Employee Wellbeing, reflects the ways in which participants manage the demands of their profession and the changes they

believe are necessary to improve their working conditions. Although the participants experienced various occupational stressors, many described developing personal coping strategies through experience and adaptation. At the same time, they emphasised that individual efforts alone are not sufficient and that meaningful organisational support is essential for improving employee wellbeing. Participants highlighted the need for better employee welfare, fair employment practices, improved working conditions, and stronger support systems to reduce occupational stress and enhance job satisfaction. Three subthemes emerged under this theme: coping with occupational demands, need for psychological and employee support, and suggestions for improving organisational policies.

Coping with Occupational Demands

Several participants explained that they had gradually adapted to the demands of long-distance duties through experience. Rather than allowing stress to interfere with their responsibilities, they attempted to remain professional and adjust to the nature of the work.

P1 shared that although there were delays and work-related pressures, he tried to perform his responsibilities properly and not allow stress to affect his duties. Similarly, P2 explained that he had learned to manage work-related stress over time and had not experienced major mental health concerns because of the job. P6 also stated that his previous experience with irregular work schedules had helped him adjust to the demands of KSRTC Swift. These findings suggest that experience and personal adjustment were the primary coping strategies adopted by many participants.

Need for Psychological and Employee Support

Participants expressed differing views regarding the need for psychological support. While some believed they could manage stress independently, many felt that employees would benefit from professional counselling or other support systems because of the continuous pressure associated with their work.

P3 stated that *"having access to a psychologist or counsellor would provide an opportunity to share problems, receive emotional support, and learn ways to manage stress effectively."* Likewise, P5 believed that psychological services could help employees manage chronic stress, emotional exhaustion, and burnout. P4 also supported the introduction of counselling services, explaining that employees experience continuous stress and health-related difficulties. In contrast, P1 and P2 felt that they personally did not require psychological support, although P2 acknowledged that other employees might benefit from such services. Similarly, P6 and P7 believed that employees required someone to support and represent them but were uncertain whether that role specifically needed to be performed by a psychologist. These findings indicate varying perceptions regarding psychological services, while highlighting a broader need for accessible employee support.

These findings indicate varying perceptions regarding psychological services, while highlighting a broader need for accessible employee support. An interesting observation was that the younger participants appeared to express greater acceptance of psychological support and counselling services, whereas the older participants were generally less likely to identify psychologists as a preferred source of support. Although this was not a primary focus of the study, this difference may reflect generational variations in awareness and attitudes towards mental health services. It is also possible that limited awareness of the role of psychologists or the persistence of societal stigma surrounding mental health among older individuals influenced these perceptions. However, further research is needed to explore this observation in greater depth.

Suggestions for Improving Organisational Policies

Participants provided several recommendations to improve employee wellbeing and overall working conditions within KSRTC Swift. The most frequently suggested changes included fair salary structures, restoration of overtime benefits and increments, improved bus maintenance, better rest facilities, increased staffing, fair treatment by officers, and stronger employee welfare measures.

P5 recommended that employees should receive "*salaries that are proportionate to the workload and responsibilities*" and that adequate rest should be ensured between duties. Similarly, P3 emphasised fair compensation, timely organisational support during operational difficulties, and proper maintenance of buses. P6 suggested addressing "*salary-related issues, food-related issues,*" and ensuring proper servicing of buses, while P7 recommended increasing staff strength and improving bus services to reduce operational pressure. P4 also stressed the importance of equal pay for similar work, better rest periods, and fair treatment during complaint investigations. Across the interviews, many participants also highlighted the need for employee representation to communicate workplace concerns more effectively.

Overall, the findings suggest that although employees have developed personal ways of coping with occupational stress, organisational interventions are equally important for improving their wellbeing. Participants consistently emphasised that fair employment practices, supportive management, improved welfare measures, and better working conditions would not only enhance employee satisfaction but also improve the quality of service provided to passengers. These findings are consistent with previous research, which emphasises that organisational support, employee assistance programmes, and healthy working environments play an important role in reducing occupational stress and promoting employee wellbeing.

The recommendations provided by participants are supported by previous research emphasising the importance of organisational interventions for improving employee wellbeing. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) argued that increasing organisational resources, including supportive management, fair employment practices, and adequate recovery opportunities, can reduce occupational stress and enhance employee engagement. Similarly, Shuck and Reio (2014) highlighted that supportive organisational environments contribute to greater job satisfaction, employee wellbeing, and organisational commitment. The participants' suggestions regarding fair salaries, improved welfare measures, counselling services, and stronger organisational support therefore align closely with existing evidence on effective strategies for promoting employee wellbeing.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the summary, major findings, conclusion, and recommendations of the study. It provides an overview of the research conducted on the lived experiences of employees working in the KSRTC Swift service. The chapter first summarises the purpose, objectives, and methodology of the study, followed by the major findings in relation to each research question. It then presents the overall conclusion drawn from the findings and discusses the implications of the study for counselling psychology, employee well-being, and organisational practice. Finally, the chapter outlines the limitations of the study, provides recommendations based on the findings, and suggests areas for future research.

Summary of the Study

The present study was conducted to explore the lived experiences of employees working in the KSRTC Swift service. Public transport employees play a significant role in ensuring safe, accessible, and reliable transportation for the community. However, the nature of their work involves several occupational demands, including long working hours, irregular duty schedules, physical exhaustion, emotional pressure, and the responsibility of managing passenger safety. These work-related experiences can influence employees' physical health, psychological well-being, and overall quality of life. Therefore, understanding their experiences is important for developing suitable support systems and improving employee welfare within the organisation.

The study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of KSRTC Swift employees, the challenges they encounter in their work, the coping strategies they adopt, and their suggestions for improving employee well-being and service quality. The study was guided by the following research questions: (1) What are the experiences of employees working in the KSRTC Swift service? (2) What occupational challenges do employees face? (3) What coping strategies do employees use to manage these challenges? and (4) What suggestions do employees provide for improving their well-being and service quality?

A qualitative research approach was adopted for the present study as it was suitable for exploring the personal experiences, perceptions, and meanings attached to employees' work experiences. A phenomenological research design was used to understand the lived experiences of participants in relation to their occupation. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, where employees with direct experience of working in the KSRTC Swift service were included in the study.

Findings

The findings of the study are presented in relation to the three research questions formulated to explore the lived experiences of employees working in the KSRTC Swift service. The themes generated through thematic analysis provide an understanding of employees' daily work experiences, occupational challenges, and the impact of their work on their well-being, work–life balance, and coping mechanisms.

Research Question 1: How do employees working in the Swift services of Kerala State Road Transport Corporation describe their daily work roles and responsibilities?

The findings revealed that employees perceived their work in the KSRTC Swift service as a role involving significant responsibility, commitment, and public service. Drivers and conductors described their daily duties as extending beyond basic transportation responsibilities. They were responsible for ensuring passenger safety, maintaining punctuality, managing long-distance services, handling passenger needs, and responding effectively to unexpected situations during travel.

Participants reported that their work required physical endurance, alertness, patience, and adaptability due to the nature of long-distance services and varying travel conditions. Although the job was demanding, employees expressed a sense of pride and satisfaction in being part of a service that connects people across different regions. Their experiences reflected a strong sense of professional responsibility and identification with their role as public transport employees.

Research Question 2: What challenges and difficulties do drivers and conductors experience while working in the Swift service?

The findings indicated that employees experience multiple challenges related to the nature of their occupation. The major challenges identified included long working hours, irregular duty schedules, insufficient rest, physical fatigue, and difficulties associated with continuous travel. Employees also reported challenges related to traffic congestion, maintaining scheduled timings, handling passenger complaints, and managing unexpected situations during duty.

The findings further revealed that these occupational demands often created physical and emotional strain among employees. Long periods away from home and demanding work schedules also affected their personal and family life. These challenges highlight that working in the KSRTC Swift service involves not only physical demands but also psychological and social pressures.

Research Question 3: How do these work experiences affect their well-being, work–life balance, and coping strategies?

The findings showed that the work experiences of KSRTC Swift employees had a considerable influence on their physical, psychological, and social well-being. Participants reported experiencing fatigue, stress, and reduced personal time due to the demanding nature of their work. Irregular schedules and extended duty hours created difficulties in maintaining a balance between professional responsibilities and family life.

Despite these challenges, employees demonstrated resilience and adopted various coping strategies to manage work-related stress. These included developing acceptance towards the nature of their job, maintaining a positive attitude, seeking support from family and colleagues, engaging in leisure activities, and practising emotional control while dealing with stressful situations.

The findings suggest that while employees have developed individual coping mechanisms to manage occupational demands, organisational support systems such as improved duty planning, adequate rest periods, and mental health support services may further contribute to their overall well-being.

Conclusion

The present study explored the lived experiences of employees working in the KSRTC Swift service, with a focus on understanding their daily work roles and responsibilities, the challenges they encounter, and the influence of their work experiences on their well-being, work–life balance, and coping strategies.

The findings revealed that KSRTC Swift employees view their work as a meaningful and responsible occupation that contributes significantly to public transportation. Drivers and conductors demonstrated a strong sense of commitment towards ensuring passenger safety, maintaining service efficiency, and fulfilling their professional responsibilities. However, the study also highlighted that the nature of their work involves several occupational challenges, including long working hours, irregular duty schedules, physical fatigue, emotional stress, and difficulties in balancing professional and personal responsibilities.

Despite these challenges, employees showed resilience and adaptability in managing the demands of their profession. They relied on personal coping strategies, social support, and positive attitudes to continue performing their duties effectively. The findings indicate that while employees have developed ways to cope with occupational demands, greater organisational support is essential to promote their overall well-being.

Overall, the study highlights the complex nature of working in the KSRTC Swift service, where professional satisfaction and occupational challenges exist together. The experiences of employees emphasise the importance of creating a supportive work environment through employee welfare initiatives, mental health support, and organisational measures that address their physical and

psychological needs. Such efforts may contribute to improved employee well-being, better work–life balance, and enhanced service quality.

Implications of the Study

The findings of the present study have important implications for KSRTC Swift management, employees, counselling psychology, and future research. By understanding the lived experiences of employees, the study provides insights into the occupational demands faced by public transport workers and highlights the importance of addressing their physical, psychological, and social well-being.

From an organisational perspective, the findings emphasise the need for employee-centred approaches within the KSRTC Swift service. Effective duty scheduling, adequate rest periods, improved workplace facilities, and supportive communication between management and employees may help reduce occupational stress and improve job satisfaction. Providing a work environment that considers employees' needs can contribute to better performance and long-term occupational well-being.

The study also has significant implications for counselling psychology. The experiences shared by employees highlight the importance of workplace mental health support for individuals working in high-demand occupations. Counselling services, stress management programmes, emotional regulation training, and psychological awareness sessions may help employees develop healthier coping strategies and improve their resilience in managing work-related stress.

The findings further indicate the importance of recognising work–life balance as an essential aspect of employee well-being. Organisations can support employees by implementing policies that consider the impact of irregular schedules and long working hours on family and personal life. Strengthening support systems may help employees maintain a healthier balance between their professional responsibilities and personal needs.

Additionally, the study contributes to the limited qualitative understanding of the experiences of KSRTC Swift employees. It provides meaningful insights into the realities of working in the public

transport sector and may serve as a foundation for further research related to occupational stress, employee well-being, coping strategies, and workplace mental health interventions.

Limitations of the Study

The present study has certain limitations that should be considered while interpreting the findings. Firstly, the study was conducted with a limited number of KSRTC Swift employees. Although the participants provided detailed and meaningful insights into their experiences, the findings may not represent the experiences of all employees working in the KSRTC Swift service.

Secondly, the study adopted a qualitative research approach, which focused on understanding the personal experiences and perceptions of participants. Since qualitative studies are based on individual narratives, the findings provide an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences but cannot be generalised to the entire population of KSRTC Swift employees.

Thirdly, purposive sampling was used for selecting participants. While this method was appropriate for exploring the specific experiences of employees working in the Swift service, it may have limited the diversity of perspectives included in the study.

Another limitation is that the study was conducted within a limited period of time. A longer duration of data collection involving employees from different locations and varying work experiences could have provided a broader understanding of the occupational experiences of KSRTC Swift employees.

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the daily work experiences, challenges, well-being concerns, and coping strategies of KSRTC Swift employees. The findings contribute to understanding the occupational realities of public transport workers and provide directions for future research and workplace interventions.

Suggestions

Based on the findings of the present study, several recommendations are suggested to improve the well-being of KSRTC Swift employees and support better work experiences.

The organisation may consider improving duty scheduling practices by ensuring adequate rest periods between trips. Since employees reported challenges related to long working hours, irregular schedules, and fatigue, proper planning of duty hours may help reduce physical and psychological strain and improve work performance.

It is recommended that KSRTC Swift introduce regular mental health support initiatives for employees. Counselling services, stress management programmes, and psychological awareness sessions may help employees manage occupational stress, strengthen coping skills, and promote emotional well-being.

The organisation may also focus on strengthening communication between management and employees. Creating opportunities for employees to share their concerns and providing timely responses may help develop a more supportive and positive work environment.

Improving workplace facilities, including comfortable rest areas and basic amenities during duty periods, may contribute to employees' physical comfort and overall satisfaction. Considering the demanding nature of long-distance services, providing adequate facilities can help employees recover from work-related fatigue.

Efforts should also be made to promote awareness among passengers regarding respectful communication and cooperation with transport employees. Positive interactions between passengers and employees may reduce workplace stress and create a healthier service environment.

Finally, employees may be encouraged to maintain healthy coping practices such as relaxation activities, physical exercise, meaningful social connections, and maintaining a balance between professional and personal responsibilities. Supporting both individual coping efforts and organisational interventions can contribute to better employee well-being and improved service quality.

Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the findings and limitations of the present study, the following suggestions are made for future research:

- Future studies may include a larger sample size involving KSRTC Swift employees from different depots and geographical locations to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of their work experiences.
- Further research may focus on exploring the experiences of drivers and conductors separately, as their roles, responsibilities, and occupational challenges may differ. This can provide deeper insights into the specific demands associated with each job role.
- Future researchers may adopt quantitative or mixed-method research approaches to examine variables such as occupational stress, burnout, job satisfaction, work–life balance, and psychological well-being among transport employees.
- Future research may also evaluate the effectiveness of workplace mental health interventions, such as counselling services, stress management programmes, and employee support initiatives, in improving the well-being of transport employees.
- Comparative studies between KSRTC Swift employees and employees working in other public or private transportation sectors may also be undertaken to identify similarities, differences, and factors influencing occupational experiences.
- Overall, further research in this area can contribute to developing a better understanding of the occupational realities of transport employees and support the development of effective employee welfare strategies.

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APPENDICES

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Participant Information

Participant Code:	
Age:	
Gender:	
Designation (Driver/Conductor):	
Depot:	
Years of Experience in KSRTC:	
Years of Experience in Swift Service:	
Previously worked in Long Distance Service:	
Previous Occupation (if any):	
Date of Interview:	

Interview Questions

1. Can you briefly introduce yourself and describe your role in the KSRTC Swift service?
2. How long have you been working in the Swift service? Were you involved in long-distance services from the beginning?
3. What kind of work were you doing before joining this field? What motivated you to choose this profession?
4. Can you describe a typical working day during your duty hours?
5. How would you describe your overall experience working in the Swift service?
6. What kinds of challenges do you usually face during duty hours?
7. Are there any specific difficulties related to duty schedules, long-distance travel, or working

hours?

8. What challenges do you experience while interacting with passengers?
9. Are there any difficulties or pressures that come from the organisational side, such as from officers or administrative policies?
10. What aspects of your work cause the most stress or pressure?
11. How do these stressors affect your performance while on duty?
12. What are your views about the salary system, deductions, bonuses, or other financial aspects of the job?
13. Do you face any issues related to duty schedules, leave, or work allocation?
14. In what ways does your job affect your personal life and family life?
15. How does the nature of this work affect your mental health or emotional wellbeing?
16. Do work stress or organisational pressures influence the way employees interact with passengers?
If yes, how?
17. Are there any unions or employee support groups for Swift staff? If not, do you think there is a need for one?
18. Do you think employees in this field would benefit from psychological or counselling support, such as having a psychologist available? Why or why not?
19. What changes do you think could improve the working conditions of Swift employees?
20. Is there anything else about your work experience that you would like to share?

