

Re-Engineering Social Protection and Welfare Measures of Truck Drivers in India

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Abstract:

Truck operators are essential for facilitating the transportation of commodities and maintaining economic functions; nonetheless, they frequently encounter insufficient social safeguards and restricted access to welfare provisions owing to legislative and bureaucratic obstacles. This research investigates the current welfare initiatives, highlights the regulatory obstacles impacting welfare provision, and formulates a rights-oriented regulatory policy framework for truck drivers in India. Primary data were gathered from 450 truck drivers utilizing a structured interview framework via Time-Location Sampling (TLS). The information was examined by Structural Equation Model (SEM). The results indicate that the documentation burden, challenges with interstate mobility, inadequate regulatory enforcement, and insufficient awareness are the primary obstacles hindering access to welfare programs. The research additionally validates that enhancing the accessibility and efficacy of welfare initiatives substantially aids in the establishment of a rights-oriented regulatory policy framework. The research suggests a model that prioritises equity, accessibility, accountability, transparency, involvement, and inclusivity to enhance welfare services and social protection for truck drivers in India. The research offers actionable suggestions for policymakers and welfare organisations to improve the efficiency and availability of welfare initiatives.

Keywords: Truck Drivers, Welfare Measures, Social Protection, Regulatory Challenges, Rights-Based Policy Framework, Welfare Accessibility

1.0 Introduction

By guaranteeing the constant flow of commodities between locations and promoting industrial and economic growth, truck drivers play a crucial role in maintaining the road freight transportation system. Due to administrative complexity, regulatory flaws, low awareness, and the transient nature of their work, many truck drivers still have restricted access to welfare benefits despite their substantial contribution. These difficulties impede the realisation of labour rights and reduce the efficacy of current social protection systems. In order to improve the delivery of welfare benefits and bolster social protection for truck drivers in India, the current study looks at the welfare measures that are available to them, identifies the regulatory barriers that affect their accessibility, and suggests a rights-based regulatory policy framework.

1.1 Statement of Problem

Truck operators provide the essential foundation of India's logistics and freight transport system, significantly aiding in the seamless transfer of commodities, bolstering industrial operations, enhancing commerce, and fostering general economic advancement. Notwithstanding their essential function, they persistently encounter several obstacles, such as insufficient social security, adverse working environments, health and safety hazards, income volatility, and limited access to mandated welfare provisions. Extended working hours, erratic work schedules, hazardous road conditions, and the pervasive nature of informal employment exacerbate their occupational and social vulnerabilities (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2015; Ministry of Road Transport and Highways [MoRTH], 2021). Despite the existence of legislative frameworks like the Code on Social Security, 2020, and the India Motor Transport Workers' Welfare Fund Act, 1985 that offer welfare benefits to motor transport workers, a significant number of qualifying truck drivers are deprived of these advantages due to insufficient awareness, complex administrative processes, disjointed institutional structures, ineffective enforcement of labour laws, documentation challenges, and the transient nature of their occupation (Government of India, 1985; India Motor Transport Workers Welfare Fund Board, 2024).

From a rights-oriented viewpoint, the entitlement to social protection, occupational health and safety, healthcare services, and satisfactory working conditions is a fundamental labour right acknowledged by international standards, such as the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (International Labour Organization, 2012; United Nations, 2015). Nonetheless, empirical data is still scarce concerning the efficacy of current welfare programs, the regulatory obstacles that hinder their accessibility, and the policy steps necessary to guarantee fair and comprehensive welfare provision for truck drivers in India. This absence of proof underscores the necessity for an exhaustive evaluation of welfare execution and regulatory limitations. Consequently, this research examines the current welfare initiatives and regulatory obstacles impacting truck drivers in India and suggests a rights-oriented regulatory policy framework designed to enhance welfare provision and guarantee fair access to social protection.

1.2 Review of Literature

Social protection is broadly acknowledged as a crucial labour entitlement that fosters income stability, workplace safety, healthcare accessibility, and satisfactory working environments for at-risk employees. The International Labour Organization (ILO) asserts that every worker, encompassing individuals in informal and transient jobs, ought to have fair access to social protection via rights-oriented regulatory systems that guarantee equality, accountability, and non-discrimination (ILO, 2012; ILO, 2015; ILO, 2021). Truck drivers constitute one of the most susceptible professional categories owing to extended working hours, job-related stress, hazards associated with road safety, inconsistent employment, and restricted access to welfare provisions. Research indicates that insufficient labour safeguards and substandard working environments negatively impact drivers' health, welfare, and transportation safety, underscoring the necessity for robust welfare policies and enhanced regulatory frameworks (Useche et al., 2022). In India, the Motor Transport Workers Act of 1961 establishes legal regulations for labour

conditions and welfare; yet, enforcement is uneven, especially for those employed in the informal transport sector.

India has instituted one of the most extensive welfare frameworks for transport labourers via the India Motor Transport Workers' Welfare Fund Act of 1985, offering pensions, medical aid, accident compensation, educational assistance, maternity benefits, and various other social security provisions. Notwithstanding these legal stipulations, evidence suggests that obstacles like restricted worker participation, employer non-adherence, insufficient awareness, and feeble regulatory enforcement have hindered the efficient provision of welfare benefits (Government of India, 1985; India Motor Transport Workers' Welfare Fund Board, 2026). Prior research indicates that welfare law is inadequate in isolation without robust institutional governance, adherence to regulations, and synchronised execution (Nair, 2004). Despite the extensive exploration of occupational health, labour welfare, and social protection in existing literature, there is a paucity of research regarding the regulatory obstacles faced by truck drivers in India and the formulation of a holistic rights-based policy framework to enhance welfare provision and guarantee equitable access. This study thereby fills a significant void by analysing current welfare initiatives and suggesting a rights-oriented regulatory policy framework for truck operators in India.

1.3 Research Gap

Current research on truck drivers has predominantly concentrated on occupational health, road safety, working conditions, and labour welfare, with insufficient emphasis on the efficacy of welfare initiatives and the regulatory obstacles affecting their availability, especially in India. Despite the existence of statutory welfare measures under the India Motor Transport Workers' Welfare Fund Act, there is a lack of empirical data regarding the impact of regulatory obstacles on the provision of welfare and social protection. Moreover, there is yet to be an exhaustive investigation that has formulated a rights-oriented regulatory policy framework incorporating values like accessibility, equity, accountability, participation, and transparency to enhance welfare provision for truck drivers. Consequently, this research tackles this deficiency by analysing the current welfare initiatives, pinpointing the regulatory obstacles hindering their execution, and suggesting a rights-oriented policy framework to provide fair access to social protection for truck drivers in India.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This research investigates the current welfare policies and regulatory obstacles impacting truck drivers in India through a rights-oriented social protection lens. It emphasises assessing the accessibility and efficacy of legal welfare initiatives, while pinpointing obstacles like inadequate regulatory enforcement, insufficient awareness, documentation demands, institutional collaboration, grievance resolution, and interstate portability that affect welfare provision. The research advocates for a rights-oriented regulatory policy framework aimed at enhancing welfare initiatives and guaranteeing fair access to social protection for truck drivers. The focus is confined to welfare and regulatory matters, excluding operational or economic facets of the road transport industry.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The research is important as it offers empirical data regarding the discrepancies between current welfare provisions and their actual execution among truck drivers in India. The study delineates regulatory obstacles and suggests a rights-oriented policy framework rooted in equity, accessibility, accountability, participation, and social protection, providing actionable recommendations for policymakers, the India Motor Transport Workers' Welfare Fund Board, and labour administrators to enhance welfare provision. It further enriches the scholarly discourse on labour welfare and social protection by examining a comparatively neglected domain and lays the groundwork for subsequent enquiries into rights-based governance and welfare policies for transport workers.

1.6 Objectives of the Study

To analyse the current welfare initiatives and regulatory obstacles impacting truck drivers in India. To establish a regulatory policy framework centred on rights that enhances welfare initiatives and guarantees fair access for truck drivers.

1.7 Null Hypothesis of the Study

H₀₁: Regulatory obstacles do not markedly affect the availability of welfare provisions for truck drivers in India.

H₀₂: The availability of welfare initiatives does not markedly affect the efficacy of welfare measures for truck drivers in India.

H₀₃: The efficacy of welfare initiatives does not substantially aid in the establishment of a rights-oriented regulatory policy framework for truck drivers in India.

H₀₄: Regulatory obstacles do not exert a considerable direct influence on the efficacy of welfare initiatives for truck drivers in India.

H₀₅: The availability of welfare initiatives does not substantially influence the connection between regulatory obstacles and the efficacy of welfare initiatives for truck drivers in India.

1.8 Research Design and Sampling procedure

Table 1: Map of Location (Venues)				
Zone	State	Sampling Venue	Location	S
South	Kerala	Vizhinjam Port	Logistics hub	75
	Tamilnadu	V O C Port, Tuticorin	Resting point	75
Central	Gujarat	Mundra Port	Freight hub	75
	Maharastra	Jawaharlal Nehru Port	Checkpoint	75
East	West Bengal	Kolkata Port Trust	Distribution center	75

	Odisha	Paradeep Port	Transport hub	75
Total Sample				450
Time Block		Time	Venue-Day-Time Calculation	
Morning		6:00–10:00 AM	Total Venues (a)	6
Afternoon		11:00 AM–3:00 PM	Number of Days (b)	7
Evening		4:00–8:00 PM	Time block (c)	4
Night		9:00 PM–1:00 AM	Total VDT (a×b×c)	168
Number of Interviews Collected from VDT Unit: 168 (VDT Unit) ×4 (Sample Respondents) =672				
Note: S= Sample Size, Purposive Sampling Method to identify the Qualified Respondents				
Research Design: Convergent Mixed-Methods Cross-Sectional Design				

1.8.1 Time-Location Sampling (TLS) Methodology

Due to the absence of a thorough sampling framework for truck drivers and the significant mobility of the target population, Time-Location Sampling (TLS) was utilised to gather participants. Initially, six primary locations frequented by truck drivers were discerned through field surveys and discussions with transportation organisations. These locations encompassed freight ports, truck parking zones, logistics hubs, wholesale marketplaces and interstate checkpoints situated throughout the southern, central and northern areas of India. A deliberate selection method was utilised to choose these sites as they had a significant density of truck drivers and were deemed suitable for accessing qualified participants. The six chosen locations are Vizhinjam Port, V O C Port, Tuticorin, Mundra Port, Jawaharlal Nehru Port, Kolkata Port Trust, Paradeep Port. To guarantee regional coverage, an equal distribution of 75 respondents was designated for each location, culminating in a total intended sample of 450 truck drivers.

Upon pinpointing the locations, the sampling framework was established by integrating the chosen venues with a week's span and four specified time intervals: morning (6:00–10:00 AM), afternoon (11:00 AM–3:00 PM), evening (4:00–8:00 PM), and night (9:00 PM–1:00 AM). This process produced 168 Venue-Day-Time (VDT) units (6 venues × 7 days × 4 time slots), encompassing all potential chances for enlisting participants. In each VDT unit, four qualified truck drivers were selected and interviewed using purposive sampling according to the study's inclusion criteria, yielding 672 interview opportunities (168 VDT units × 4 respondents). Fieldwork persisted across the designated VDT units until the target sample size of 450 completed and valid questionnaires was attained. Participants were accepted solely if they were currently employed as truck drivers, aged 18 or older, and willingly agreed to partake in the research. The TLS methodology guaranteed sufficient representation across various geographic areas, operational timelines,

and working hours, thus enhancing the variety and representativeness of the study sample while reducing selection bias linked to a highly mobile workforce.

1.9 Data Collection and Analysis Tools

A systematic interview framework was employed to get feedback from truck operators in India. Preliminary research was executed to refine the interview timetable prior to the principal survey. Ninety participants were chosen using purposive selection to gather feedback through the initial interview schedule. Cronbach's alpha was utilised to evaluate the internal consistency and reliability of the study variables assessed by a five-point Likert scale of agreement and disagreement. The findings demonstrated acceptable internal consistency across all constructs, with Cronbach's alpha values surpassing the suggested minimum of 0.70: Regulatory Challenges (RC) = 0.876, Accessibility of Welfare Measures (AWM) = 0.791, Effectiveness of Welfare Measures (EWM) = 0.890, and Rights-Based Policy Framework (RBPF) = 0.754. These findings confirm that the interview schedule is dependable and appropriate for the primary research.

Table 2	
Latent Variable Construct and Indicators	
Latent Variable	Indicators
Regulatory Challenges (RC)	Registration barriers (RB), Documentation burden (DB), Weak regulatory enforcement (WRE), Administrative delays (AD), Lack of awareness (LA), Interstate portability issues (IPI), Institutional coordination (IC), Weak grievance redressal (WGR), Informal employment (IE), Monitoring and accountability (MA)
Accessibility of Welfare Measures (AWM)	Ease of registration (ER), Timely benefit delivery (TBD), Awareness of schemes (AS), Digital accessibility (DIA), Transparency (T), Satisfaction with service delivery (SSD)
Effectiveness of Welfare Measures (EWM)	Social security coverage (SSC), Healthcare support (HS), Accident compensation (AC), Insurance benefits (IB), Pension security (PS), Family welfare (FW), Educational assistance (EA), Financial security (FS)
Rights-Based Policy Framework (RBPF)	Equity (RBE), Accessibility (RBA), Inclusiveness (RBI), Accountability (RBAC), Portability (RBP), Transparency (RBT), Participation (RBPA), Sustainability (RBS)

1.11 Structure Equation Model

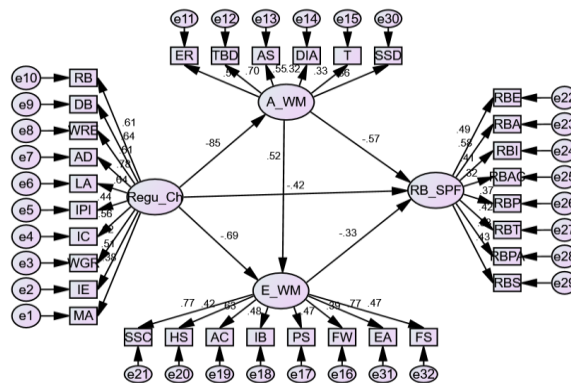


Figure 4: Structure Equation Model

Table 5
Goodness of Fit Indices

Fit Index	Description	Threshold	Value
χ^2 (Chi-square)	Absolute model fit		1725.23
χ^2/df (CMIN/DF)	Normed Chi-square	≤ 3.00	3.022 ₍₅₁₂₎
GFI	Goodness-of-Fit Index	≥ 0.90	0.911
CFI	Comparative Fit Index	≥ 0.90	0.902
TLI	Tucker–Lewis Index	≥ 0.90	0.922
IFI	Incremental Fit Index	≥ 0.90	0.900
NFI	Normed Fit Index	≥ 0.90	0.912
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation	≤ 0.08	0.0725
SRMR	Standardized Root Mean Square Residual	≤ 0.08	0.0551

The goodness-of-fit indices indicate that the proposed structural equation model demonstrates an acceptable overall fit to the observed data. The normed chi-square value ($\chi^2/df = 3.022$) is close to the recommended threshold of 3.00, indicating a reasonable model fit. Furthermore, the incremental fit indices, including GFI (0.911), CFI (0.902), TLI (0.922), IFI (0.900), and NFI (0.912), all exceed the recommended value of 0.90, confirming good model fit. The error indices, RMSEA (0.0725) and SRMR (0.0551), are below the acceptable threshold of 0.08, indicating satisfactory approximation and residual fit. Overall, these results confirm that the measurement and structural model adequately represent the data and are suitable for testing the proposed hypotheses.

1.11.1 Direct Effects

The structural model reveals that Regulatory Challenges (Regu_Ch) exert a strong negative effect on Administrative Welfare Measures (A_WM) ($\beta = -0.85$). This indicates that increasing regulatory barriers including registration barriers, documentation burden, weak regulatory enforcement, lack of awareness, interstate portability issues, and weak grievance redressal—substantially reduce the effectiveness of administrative welfare mechanisms. The magnitude of this coefficient demonstrates that regulatory deficiencies are the strongest obstacle to efficient welfare administration.

The Regulatory Challenges have a strong negative direct effect on Existing Welfare Measures (E_WM) ($\beta = -0.69$). This finding suggests that higher regulatory constraints significantly diminish the accessibility and effectiveness of welfare benefits available to truck drivers. Administrative inefficiencies, poor institutional coordination, and weak enforcement therefore undermine the practical delivery of welfare programmes.

The model also indicates that Regulatory Challenges have a moderate negative direct effect on the Rights-Based Social Protection Framework (RB_SPF) ($\beta = -0.42$). This implies that persistent regulatory deficiencies weaken the implementation of rights-based principles such as equity, accessibility, inclusiveness, accountability, transparency, participation, portability, and sustainability.

Furthermore, Administrative Welfare Measures demonstrate a moderate positive effect on Existing Welfare Measures ($\beta = 0.52$). This suggests that improvements in registration procedures, digital accessibility, transparency, awareness of schemes, timely benefit delivery, and service quality directly strengthen the effectiveness of welfare programmes.

However, Administrative Welfare Measures exhibit a moderate negative direct effect on the Rights-Based Social Protection Framework ($\beta = -0.57$). This negative relationship implies that existing administrative arrangements alone are insufficient to establish a comprehensive rights-based welfare system. Administrative mechanisms require further reforms to align with principles of equity and universal social protection.

Similarly, Existing Welfare Measures have a negative direct effect on the Rights-Based Social Protection Framework ($\beta = -0.33$). This indicates that the current welfare provisions, despite their availability, do not adequately support the implementation of a rights-based policy framework because of existing implementation gaps and accessibility issues.

1.11.2 Mediating Effects

The model incorporates Administrative Welfare Measures (A_WM) and Existing Welfare Measures (E_WM) as mediating variables between Regulatory Challenges and the Rights-Based Social Protection Framework.

Mediation through Administrative Welfare Measures

The first indirect pathway is:

Regulatory Challenges $\rightarrow$ Administrative Welfare Measures $\rightarrow$ Rights-Based Social Protection Framework

Regulatory Challenges negatively influence Administrative Welfare Measures ($\beta = -0.85$), while Administrative Welfare Measures negatively influence the Rights-Based Social Protection Framework ($\beta = -0.57$). Since both coefficients are negative, the indirect effect becomes positive:

$$\text{Indirect Effect} = (-0.85 \times -0.57) = +0.485$$

This indicates that reducing regulatory challenges improves administrative welfare systems, which subsequently strengthens the rights-based policy framework. Thus, Administrative Welfare Measures act as an important mediating mechanism linking regulatory reforms with rights-based welfare governance.

Mediation through Existing Welfare Measures

The second mediation pathway is:

Regulatory Challenges $\rightarrow$ Existing Welfare Measures $\rightarrow$ Rights-Based Social Protection Framework

Regulatory Challenges negatively affect Existing Welfare Measures ($\beta = -0.69$), and Existing Welfare Measures negatively affect the Rights-Based Social Protection Framework ($\beta = -0.33$). The resulting indirect effect is:

$$\text{Indirect Effect} = (-0.69 \times -0.33) = +0.228$$

This positive indirect effect indicates that reducing regulatory barriers improves the effectiveness of existing welfare measures, which subsequently contributes to strengthening the rights-based social protection framework.

Serial Mediation

The model also explains a serial mediation pathway:

Regulatory Challenges $\rightarrow$ Administrative Welfare Measures $\rightarrow$ Existing Welfare Measures $\rightarrow$ Rights-Based Social Protection Framework

$$\text{The indirect effect is: } (-0.85 \times 0.52 \times -0.33) = +0.146$$

This finding indicates that regulatory improvements first strengthen administrative welfare mechanisms, which subsequently enhance existing welfare measures and ultimately contribute to the development of a rights-based policy framework. The presence of this serial pathway demonstrates that administrative reforms and welfare improvements operate sequentially in influencing rights-based social protection.

1.11.3 Hypotheses Testing Result

The results of the Structural Equation Model (SEM) indicate that regulatory challenges significantly influence the accessibility of welfare measures, thereby leading to the rejection of H_{01} . The findings also confirm that accessibility of welfare measures significantly enhances the effectiveness of welfare measures, resulting in the rejection of H_{02} . Furthermore, the effectiveness of welfare measures was found to make a significant contribution to the development of a rights-based regulatory policy framework, leading to the rejection of H_{03} .

The structural model further demonstrates that regulatory challenges have a significant direct effect on the effectiveness of welfare measures, resulting in the rejection of H_{04} . In addition, the mediation analysis confirms that accessibility of welfare measures significantly mediates the relationship between regulatory

challenges and the effectiveness of welfare measures, thereby supporting the rejection of H_{05} . Overall, the findings validate the proposed conceptual framework and emphasize that reducing regulatory barriers, improving accessibility, and strengthening welfare delivery are essential for developing an effective rights-based regulatory policy framework for truck drivers in India.

1.13 Major Findings

1. The Structural Equation Model (SEM) demonstrated an acceptable model fit, confirming that the proposed conceptual framework adequately explains the relationships among regulatory challenges, accessibility of welfare measures, effectiveness of welfare measures, and the rights-based policy framework.
2. Regulatory challenges were found to have a strong negative effect on the accessibility and effectiveness of welfare measures as well as on the development of a rights-based policy framework. This indicates that reducing regulatory barriers is essential for improving welfare outcomes among truck drivers.
3. Accessibility of welfare measures positively influenced the effectiveness of welfare measures, demonstrating that simplified registration procedures, digital access, transparent administration, and timely service delivery significantly enhance the overall effectiveness of welfare programmes.
4. The mediation analysis confirmed that accessibility and effectiveness of welfare measures act as important mechanisms through which regulatory reforms contribute to the development of a rights-based policy framework. This suggests that regulatory improvements alone are insufficient unless accompanied by accessible and effective welfare delivery systems.

1.14 Conclusion

This research illustrates that the efficacy of welfare initiatives for truck drivers in India relies not solely on the presence of mandated welfare programs but also on the regulatory framework overseeing their execution. The results indicate that regulatory obstacles, such as documentation stipulations, interstate transfer challenges, insufficient awareness, and feeble institutional frameworks, hinder fair access to social benefits. The research also substantiates that enhancing the accessibility and efficacy of welfare initiatives is crucial for fortifying social protection and advancing labour rights for truck drivers. The research suggests a regulatory policy framework grounded in rights that prioritises equity, accessibility, openness, accountability, participation, and inclusivity. Augmenting regulatory enforcement, streamlining administrative processes, broadening digital accessibility, and fostering stakeholder engagement can markedly enhance welfare provision. The suggested framework offers actionable direction for policymakers and welfare organisations to develop a more inclusive and sustainable social protection system that effectively meets the requirements of truck drivers in India.

1.15 Recommendations

- 1 Strengthen grievance redressal mechanisms by establishing dedicated helplines, multilingual mobile applications, district-level facilitation centres, and time-bound complaint resolution systems.

- 2 Improve the quality of welfare services by ensuring timely benefit disbursement, transparent processing procedures, efficient claim settlement, and continuous monitoring of service delivery performance.
- 3 Promote participatory governance by involving truck drivers, transport unions, employers, welfare board representatives, and government departments in policy formulation, implementation, and periodic review of welfare programmes.
- 4 Expand social protection coverage by strengthening health insurance, accident compensation, pension schemes, family welfare benefits, educational assistance, and financial support programmes to address the occupational vulnerabilities of truck drivers.
- 5 Establish a Rights-Based Regulatory Policy Framework that incorporates the principles of equity, accessibility, inclusiveness, accountability, transparency, participation, portability, and sustainability. Such a framework should guide future labour welfare policies and ensure equitable and effective delivery of social protection for truck drivers in India.

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