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**THE RAMIFICATIONS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC MILIEU OF AUTO-RICKSHAW OPERATORS IN KERALA : AN IN-DEPTH CASE STUDY CARRIED OUT IN PATHANAMTHITTA**  Dr. Jyotsna S.\*

## ABSTRACT

Auto-rickshaws, commonly known as three-wheelers, have become an integral part of India's urban mobility system. Recognized for their cost-effectiveness, these vehicles have gained popularity, especially among the middle class, for short to medium-distance travel within cities. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns has significantly impacted the health, livelihoods, and general well-being of individuals across various sectors, creating vulnerable situations for many. This paper focuses on assessing the repercussions of COVID-19 on the socio-economic status of auto-rickshaw drivers in specific regions of Kerala. The study aims to identify the challenges and issues faced by auto-rickshaw drivers in Pathanamthitta during the pandemic, particularly those struggling to meet their daily needs.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Lockdown, Pandemic, Auto-rickshaws

### Introduction

Since December 2019, the world has grappled with an unprecedented disaster – the COVID-19 pandemic. India, the second most populous country, has implemented social distancing and lockdown measures to curb the virus's spread. This has led to a severe demand shock, potentially causing a significant GDP slowdown due to disruptions across various sectors. The pandemic's impact extends beyond the economy, profoundly affecting human lives. The challenges faced by India mirror the global struggle against COVID-19, highlighting the complex interplay between public health and economic well-being in the face of this unprecedented crisis.

The global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has resonated deeply in India's extensive transportation network, notably affecting auto-rickshaws, vital components of Kerala's public transport. The pandemic has disproportionately affected marginalized communities, with a significant impact on auto-rickshaw drivers. The imposed lockdown has drastically worsened

their lives, forcing them to grapple with uncertainty and seek alternative means of livelihood. In this challenging context, this study aims to explore the numerous issues faced by auto-rickshaw drivers during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown, focusing on understanding their struggles and the pressing need for solutions to sustain their livelihoods.

The central objectives of this study are as under:

1. To find out the socio-economic status of autorickshaw drivers during the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. To analyse the problems and challenges of auto-rickshaw drivers during the COVID-19 pandemic
3. To put forward some policy recommendations for improving their condition under the present coronavirus situations

### Literature Review

In the Indian sub-continent, three-wheeled vehicles like rickshaws, auto-rickshaws, easy bikes, etc., are widely used. A substantial body of research has focused on the socio-economic status of three-wheeled

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