

Palayan Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association and the Proposed Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program

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Abstract. The Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP) of the Philippines aims to upgrade the country's road-based public transportation system by introducing safer and more environmentally friendly vehicles, improving regulations, and consolidating the company. This study adopts a qualitative, phenomenological approach to investigate PAJODA Jeepney drivers' awareness, stance, and coping strategies in PUVMP. The study utilized guide questions and group interviews to collect perceptive data from the participants, which are then transcribed, evaluated, classified, and broken down into themes revealed by data analysis. The findings of this study could be a valuable resource for people interested in conducting similar or related research in the near future.

Keywords: Jeepney, Modernization, Philippines, Public transport system

1. Introduction

The exploitation of the symbiotic interaction between the community and the environment can be attributed to the human need for more monetary and material security (Mangahas et al., 2018). In contemporary times, there exists a body of research that establishes a correlation between pollution and environmental concerns with regard to conventional jeepneys. The Philippines' Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP) intends to modernize the road-based public transportation system by introducing safer and more environmentally friendly vehicles, strengthening regulations, and consolidating the business. The enforcement of legislation aimed at mitigating undesirable bureaucratic conduct poses a significant difficulty for the majority of governmental entities (Romero et al., 2019). The initiative aims to increase the quality of life in cities, decrease financial losses brought on by missed

productivity due to travel, reduce medical expenses and preventable fatalities, decrease greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and enhance the operators' and industry's financial standing by raising service quality standards.

The PUVMP was made possible by the Department of Transportation (DOTr) issuing Department Order No. 2017-011 on June 19, 2017, also known as the Omnibus Franchising Guidelines (OFG), that aims to fundamentally transform the nation's public transportation system by making both commuting and public transportation operations more respectable, humane, and on par with other forms of transportation.

By establishing a countrywide transportation system that is safer, more effective, dependable, practical, economical, climate-friendly, and environmentally sustainable, the initiative also aspires to give all Filipinos a comfortable way of life. Given that public transportation is considered a public asset, assessing its value only based on private costs will invariably provide economically unfavorable results. It is important to consider the social advantages that can result from an improved public transportation system, as highlighted by Balaria et al. (2017). These benefits include the decrease of greenhouse gas emissions, enhanced social inclusion, increased development opportunities, and improved public acceptance.

However, Jeepneys are the most common form of public transportation in the Philippines; the favored form of motorized land transportation commuters take advantage of. Although regarded as paratransit, jeepneys are mainstay transportation for both urban and rural areas have transportation. In Philippine urban areas, public transportation constitutes 80 percent of the overall ridership and trips, of which 40 percent are served by jeepneys (Sunio et al, 2021).

1.1. Origin of the Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP)

Kasuma (2023) stated that Jeepneys are a vital component of the Philippines' public transportation system because of their flexible itineraries and less expensive fares than cabs, trains, or motorized tricycles. Jeepneys were originally adapted and replicated from US military jeeps left over from World War II.

The Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP), which was initially introduced in 2017, is the "jeepney phase-out." Traditional jeepneys are

considered dangerous and harmful to the environment by the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB). It seeks to replace jeepneys that are 15 years old or older with new vehicles that meet Philippine National Standards and are propelled by an electric drivetrain or a diesel engine that complies with Euro 4 regulations (Bacelonia, 2023).

By the end of 2023, operators of jeepneys must join cooperatives or corporations under this phase-out. Their ability to obtain loans and payment plans for "modern jeepneys" should be aided by this. For seven years of payments, the program plans to provide a 5.6% subsidy with a 6% interest rate.

1.2 Drivers' Response to PUVMP

From March 6 to March 12, 2023, jeepney transportation in several cities in the Philippines demonstrated against the proposed Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program. By replacing jeepneys, buses, and other public utility vehicles (PUVs) that are at least 15 years old over the course of the following three years, the program hopes to increase the effectiveness and environmental friendliness of our public transportation system. On September 30, 2019, the group transport group PISTON protested the aforementioned modernization proposals, which led to the most recent significant transport strike (Transport strikes in Philippine history, 2023).

Beltran (2023) emphasized that 100,000 jeepney drivers have concluded a protest against government plans to phase out one of the country's most used yet polluting modes of public transportation, amid expectations that the proposal will be altered. Piston and Manibela transport unions began the strike on March 6, forcing schools in Metro Manila and many other places to move teaching online and other companies to work from home.

Jeepneys, which began at the close of World War II when enterprising Filipinos repurposed surplus US army jeeps into public minibuses capable of carrying up to 25 people at a time, are now the cheapest and most prevalent mode of commuter transport in the country (Philippines Jeepney strike drives home modernisation concerns, 2023).

For Filipino commuters, particularly students and low-wage employees, jeepneys are a lifeline. They provide a cheap form of transportation that helps thousands of independent operators sustain their families. However, given its

high emissions output and outmoded design, ongoing usage of the jeepney has led to mounting environmental and safety concerns. Transport organizations worry that the PUVMP may cause some independent operators to fall into a monopolized debt trap due to consolidation and the high cost of upgraded jeepneys (Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, 2023).

1.4. Research paradigm

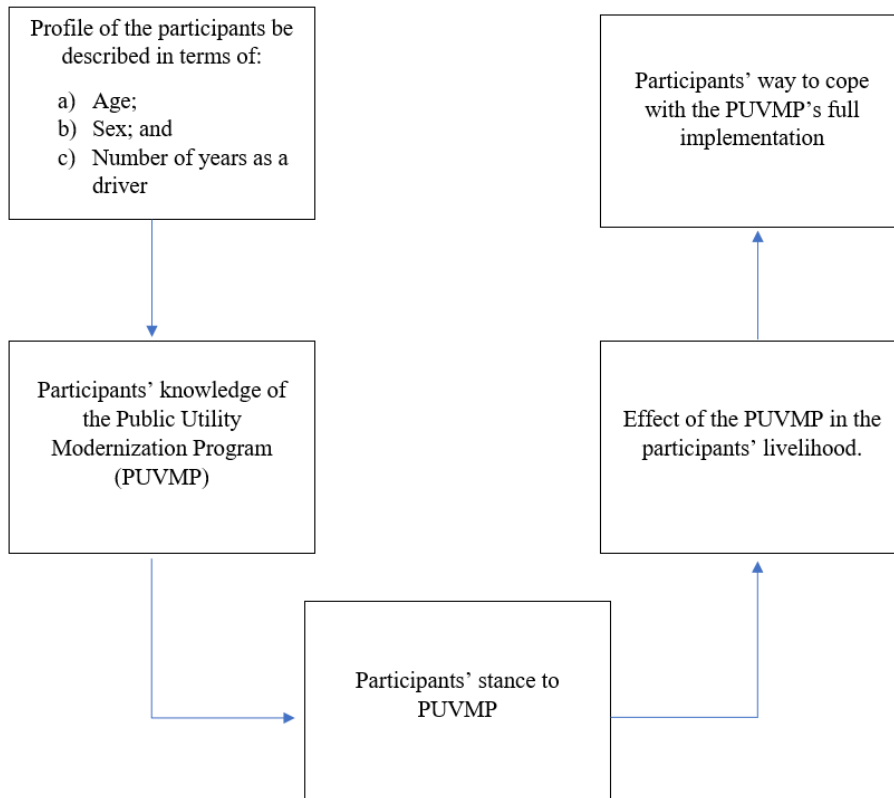


Figure 1. Research paradigm

The study analyzed the data collected from the participants such as their profiles, awareness and stance regarding the proposed PUVMP, perceived effects to the participants' livelihood, and coping strategies. All these data were used to come up with recommendations applicable to the present scenario.

1.5. Research Problem

The study specifically answered the following questions:

1. How may the profile of the participants be described in terms of:
 - a) Age;
 - b) Sex; and
 - c) Number of years as a driver?
2. How may the participants' awareness of the Public Utility Modernization Program (PUVMP) be described?
3. How may the participants' stance with regard to the PUVMP be described?
4. How may the perceived effects of the PUVMP implementation to the livelihood of the drivers be described?
5. How may the coping strategies of the participants be described?
6. What recommendations may be offered based on the findings of the study?

2. Methodology

This section presents the research design, locale, participants, data gathering procedures, data analysis techniques that will be used in the study as well as the ethical considerations to be taken into account.

2.1. Research design

The study employed a qualitative, phenomenological research design to determine the Jeepney drivers' comprehension and response to the Public Utility Modernization program (PUVMP). According to Duquesne University (2023), phenomenology aids in our comprehension of the significance of people's actual experiences. A phenomenological investigation focuses on people's experiences of a phenomenon and investigates what they went through. In addition, Phenomenology is a powerful tool for understanding and gaining insights into people's actions and motivations, challenging long-held assumptions. It may contribute to the development of new theories, policy changes, or response changes (Deakin University, 2023). Semi-structured interview questions are

utilized to gather data from the participants of the study. Based on the given qualitative data, certain words, themes, or concepts will be analyzed and interpreted.

2.2. Participants

The participants for the study need to have experienced the phenomenon being explored (Creswell, 2015). The jeepney drivers of Palayan Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association are chosen as they signified the interest to participate. The personal experiences of the participants represent the relevant information sought by the researcher in this study.

2.3 Data Gathering Procedures

The researcher wrote a consent letter and presented with the participant before conducting an in-depth interview. Scanlan (2020) emphasizes that Semi-structured, in-depth interviews allow the interviewee to speak freely on specified pre-determined themes. To obtain a better grasp of a subject, the interviewer can pursue in-depth information about it by asking probing follow-up questions.

Ethical standards are adhered to in a variety of ways throughout the investigation. According to Mphahlele et al. (2018), informed consent indicates that participants participate in the study voluntarily, while also providing them with the opportunity to fully understand the nature of the study, their obligations, and the risks involved, allowing them to fully understand the study and voluntarily participate.

Informed consent letters detailing the nature and objective of the study are given and explained to participants for the purposes of this investigation. Participants are encouraged to read the letters and, if necessary, seek clarification. If the participants agree to engage in the research study, they must also sign to prove that consent is given.

2.4. Data Analysis Techniques

This study employed the content analysis approach and thematic analysis to examine the qualitative textual or verbal data that are based on the researcher's observations made while conducting in-depth interviews.

Delve (2023) stated that Thematic analysis is a simple method of analyzing qualitative data that allows researchers to look for patterns in their data. It entails

recognizing and comprehending important themes in the data as well as how they relate to one another. "Themes" are broad categories of shared awareness about a research phenomenon that tells a story about its scope. Content analysis, on the other hand, is a more practical approach that may be utilized as a quantitative or qualitative data analysis tool. It can be used on both textual and visual data, but it is more commonly used on the latter. Content analysis is, at its heart, a data collection technique used to determine the existence of specific words, themes, or concepts inside data.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Profile of the Respondents

There were 10 participants who voluntarily participated with the study and were sorted by their profile, by which includes: age, sex, and number of years as a jeepney driver.

Table 1. Profile of the Participants

Participant's Code	Age	Sex	Years as Jeepney Driver
1	53	Male	15
2	57	Male	19
3	58	Male	15
4	55	Male	25
5	48	Male	12
6	42	Male	7
7	56	Male	12
8	53	Male	17
9	75	Male	50
10	34	Male	12

The study sample consists of male individuals aged between 37 and 75 years, who have experience driving jeepneys ranging from 7 to 50 years.

3.2. Awareness of PUVMP

This section elucidates the awareness among jeepney drivers in Palayan regarding the Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP) based on the interview results.

Participant 1: Participant 1 believes that many drivers will find it difficult to adhere with the PUVMP due to the cost needed to afford the Modern Jeepneys. He also stressed that the program will be most difficult to Palayan City drivers due to low number of passengers. *“Maraming magigipit na tao, dahil sa sobrang mahal. Hindi ‘yan pwede rito sa Palayan City dahil konti lang ang mga pasahero”*

Participant 2: Participant 2 stated that he cannot afford the PUVMP demands to drivers. *“Mahal ito masyado, hindi ko kakayanin”.*

Participant 3: Participant 3 finds the PUVMP as positive if it will be offered to a cooperative through LTFRB in a much affordable price. *“Maganda, pero deepened sa sitwasyon, kung iaalok ito sa kooperatiba ng LTFRB sa mas murang presyo.”*

Participant 4: Participant 4 holds a favorable perception of the Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP), although acknowledging its high cost. However, the implementation of the program through the Land Bank of the Philippines poses challenges for drivers who belong to cooperatives, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged. *“Maganda sana pero di kaya ng budget, kahit pa ihain sa kooperatiba ‘yan di pa rin kaya dahil Land Bank rin ang kakausapin naming”.*

Participant 5: Participant 5 believes that the PUVMP originated from the late President Benigno Aquino III. *“Ideya lang ‘yan ni Noynoy”.*

Participant 6: Participant 6 was happy at first to find out about the program, but the positive feeling instantly faded due to the price of the Modernized Jeepney, by which they will have to purchase. *“Natuwa ako pero nakakalungkot din at napaka mahal ng Modernize Jeepney”*

Participant 7: Participant 7 is frightened by the PUVMP. He also stated that the DOTr advised them to form a cooperative. *“Nakakatakot ang programa, pero pinayuhan kami na gumawa ng kooperatiba.”*

Participant 8: Participant 8 believes that the program only favors the government and ignores the consequences it has for life-long jeepney drivers like him. He added that the PUVMP was explained to them by barangay officials. *“Sa gobyerno lang pabor ‘yang modernized program na pinaliwanag samin ng barangay. Paano naman kaming mga matatagal ng driver, ito lang pinagkakabuhayan namin.”*

Participant 9: Participant 9 became aware of the Palayan Urban Vegetable Movement (PUVM) through the officials of the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Palayan. The individual in question demonstrates a lack of response towards the program, despite acknowledging that it has the potential to detrimentally impact his means of subsistence.

Participant 10: Upon receiving information from the Land Transportation Regulatory and Franchising Board (LTRFB), Participant 10 quickly formed an adverse perception of the program, particularly with regard to his jeepney units which would become obsolete following the program's implementation. *“Lugi ako dyan. Gutom lang ang dala ng program ana ‘yan sa driver na tulad ko. Ang dami pang jeep unit na mawawala sakin, anon a lang gagawin ko dyan”.*

All of the participants described the Modernized Jeepney as unaffordable for life-long jeepney drivers and have families to support.

To lessen greenhouse gas emissions, toxic fumes, and other types of air pollution, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources has mandated that drivers and operators use an electric vehicle or a combustion engine that complies with a Euro IV emission standard. This requirement is being enforced by the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB).

The Philippine government's decision to require jeepney drivers to switch to more environmentally friendly, modern jeepneys has sparked criticism for its anti-poor implications. Jeepneys comprise only around 2% of the total vehicles in

the Philippines, yet drivers are being effectively forced to get electric vehicles they cannot afford.

A traditional jeepney will cost you between ₱150,000 and ₱250,000. Utilizing a current e-jeepney would cost drivers and operators up to ₱2.8 million, or more. A ₱160,000 subsidy, according to the LTFRB, will be given. This only represents 5.7% of the modern jeepney's overall cost (Rivas, 2023).

3.3. *Stance towards the PUVMP*

The Public Utility Modernization Program (PUVMP) is met with disapproval by all participants, primarily stemming from the elevated costs associated with the Modernized Jeepneys. However, a few of the participants acknowledged the advantages envisioned by the program.

Participant 1 applaud the modernized features such as the vehicle's air condition will be most convenient for the drivers and commuters. *"Dahil sa bagong sasakyan at aircon, pabor sa driver at pasahero pero di tlaga kaya ang presyo"*.

Participant 5 recognizes and related the program as the government's solution to pollution problems of the country. Following fears of a general transportation strike, the government has extended the deadline for the phaseout of jeepneys under the Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP) to the end of the year, temporarily suspending the implementation of the LTFRB Memorandum Circular 2023-013 and Department Order 2017-011 of the Department of Transportation. Individual traditional jeepney operators are required by the policy to cease operations if they do not join a cooperative by December 31, 2023, a timeframe that was extended following the strike announcement. It is stated that joining the aforementioned organizations will allow them to purchase "modernized jeeps" or minibuses, which drivers and operators said were too expensive at more than two million pesos each.

3.4. *Perceived effects of the PUVMP to the jeepney drivers' livelihood*

All participants expressed that they will have significant repercussions as a result of the Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP) due to their exclusive dependence on their occupation as jeepney drivers to sustain their families. The individuals in question are unable to access a contemporary,

updated jeepney, resulting in the loss of their invested capital in their conventional jeepney.

It is said that there is a perceived absence of a comprehensive strategy to effectively update the public transportation system at a national level, hence raising doubts regarding the feasibility of the initiative to replace jeepneys that have been in service for more than 15 years. It has been noted that a significant number of drivers have refrained from participating in cooperatives, as mandated by the modernization program, primarily due to the substantial capital investment required.

3.5. Coping strategies should PUVMP be fully implemented

Based on the analysis, it is anticipated that individuals identified as participants 1, 3, and 9 may encounter unemployment as a consequence of the full implementation of the Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP). This outcome is primarily attributed to variables associated with their advanced age and prevailing health conditions. Based on the data provided, it is anticipated that participants 5, 6, and 7 are inclined toward engaging in entrepreneurial activities. Participant 2 has shown an intention to pursue a career in welding, while Participant 4 has indicated a preference for becoming a truck driver. Participant 8 has expressed an interest in working as a construction worker, and Participant 10 has expressed a desire to follow a life in farming.

As a means of coping, the participants saw themselves engaging in job transitions as a means of ensuring their survival.

4. Conclusions

The Public Utility Modernization Program (PUVMP) has encountered significant opposition from a majority of participants because to the excessively high cost associated with the Modernized Jeepneys. Nevertheless, a subset of the participants acknowledged the envisioned benefits of the effort, including the distinctive features of the refurbished jeepneys and their positive impact on the environment. According to all participants, the Modernized Jeepney is inaccessible for jeepney drivers with familial responsibilities who rely on this occupation as their primary source of income.

The implementation of the Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP) is anticipated to exert a substantial influence on all stakeholders

involved, as their livelihoods are predominantly dependent on engaging in jeepney driving to sustain their households. The acquisition of a modernized jeepney will prove unattainable for them, resulting in the forfeiture of the funds invested in their conventional jeepney. Once the traditional jeepneys have been gradually replaced and the Program has been completely implemented, a significant proportion of participants will seek alternative means of generating revenue. While it is improbable for certain individuals to maintain their means of living.

The Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program is viewed by the officers and members of the Palayan Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association (PAJODA) as a viable and advantageous resolution for both drivers and commuters. The use of air conditioning systems in contemporary automobiles offers notable advantages in alleviating the impact of the prevailing hot climate in Nueva Ecija. However, a significant worry arises regarding the requisite financial resources.

The government proposes to establish a partnership between the transportation industry and the Land Bank of the Philippines, with the aim of securing a concessional loan. This loan would be utilized for the purpose of acquiring enhanced jeepneys. Nevertheless, the officials and members of the PAJODA organization decline to enter into a contractual agreement with LBP for the purpose of obtaining a soft loan to facilitate the acquisition. In order to establish a contractual relationship with LBP, it is important for the Palayan City Local Government Unit (LGU) to possess a recognized legal entity, while the transport sector cooperative must also enter into a distinct agreement.

Based on the findings, the researchers made the following recommendations:

1. The Local Government Unit (LGU) of Palayan City may explore potential strategies to address the transportation sector within the city, such as securing funding for the acquisition of enhanced vehicles.
2. The Local Government Unit (LGU) of Palayan City may provide sponsorship for the budget allocation of the renovated jeepney.
3. The implementation of a livelihood program by the local government of Palayan City is imperative in order to address the needs of the transportation sector that has been displaced and lacks the financial means to acquire upgraded jeepneys.
4. The Local Government Unit (LGU) of Palayan City may evaluate the suitability of implementing the Public Utility Vehicle Modernization

Program (PUVMP) in Palayan City. This is necessary due to the limited transportation options available to commuters, namely the PAJODA and BOJODA sectors from the municipality of Bongabon, as well as the Laur transport sector. These sectors are engaged in intense competition to attract commuters.

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