

# Managing Violence of Public Transport and Logistics Industry in South Africa

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**Abstract:** The paper seeks to address challenges pertaining taxi and truck violence in the transport and logistics industry in South Africa. The taxi owners rose against government to demand COVID-19 taxi relief funds. The private car drivers were also blocked on the road carrying passengers, it was not considered whether they were carrying family or friends. The trucks violence occurred when immigrant truck drivers employed in South Africa and import goods from other countries to South Africa had free movement while the South African truck drivers are prohibited by foreign countries to get employment and drive freely. Taxi violence and truck violence is a burning issue for the department of transport, logistics and taxi industry in South Africa. Both logistics trucks and taxi industry play a vital role in transporting movement of goods and passengers. The violence started about routes and innocent passengers are caught in the crossfire. The inability by African National Congress led government to regulate taxi industry is a serious problem amongst taxi operations, passengers, and communities. The deregulations of taxi industry have brought many challenges such as violence and conflict in South Africa. This paper adopted a qualitative methodological approach to interrogating taxi violence in the chosen study location, using semi-structured interviews as a research instrument. The respondents were consenting drivers of minibus taxis who were selected using a nonprobability sampling technique. Interviews were conducted with 14 males and one female participant. The violence between truck drivers is rife, where foreign trucks are blocked, and truck drivers are assaulted. This paper conclude that there is a need for the South African government to regulate taxi industry, control of routes and prioritise South Africans as for employment in logistics industry in order to manage violence in transport industry. What emerges from this research is that the success of government's attempts to restructure and regulate the minibus-taxi industry is severely hampered by the nature of the relationships that exists within the industry and between the industry and government. There is a general feeling of hostility, fear, and lack of trust among all the parties, and the fragile nature of these relationships threatens to adversely affect the formalisation, restructuring and regulation processes.

**Keywords:** Violence, Regulate, Passengers, Driver, Transport

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## 1. Introduction

Progressive transport system is essential to the development of a region as well as the whole country. It is what builds networks among nations, and it is crucial for the drive of the market and businesses. It is what aids commuters to get to their workplace and to their families. South Africa is in dire need of a sustainable and safe public transport. Although the country is making tremendous progress in terms of infrastructure and providing transport for the public, it is merely not enough as there are still problems concerning the usage of trains and buses and majority of the poor still do not have access to adequate transport. Truck and taxi drivers' livelihood is in the taxi industry and logistics environment. The violence in the industry has a negative impact on the drivers, passengers and goods carried in the trucks. They escalate to affect the economy of a

country because that causes food price increase. Transport industry violence is not a new phenomenon; it started during apartheid in South Africa. There were many different causes of transport industry violence that included fighting for routes and passengers. Many passengers lost lives caught in the crossfire of transport industry wars. After 1994, the transport industry violence continued to take place where logistics industry truck drivers in South Africa are involved in violence with foreign national truck drivers. The cause of the violence was when South African truck drivers were controlled and given rules where and when to drive when entering foreign countries. The biggest challenge is that South African logistics companies employ foreign truck drivers whilst South Africans are neglected. South African employers are said to be employing foreign drivers so that they can be easily exploited, and they do not affiliate in labour unions.

The logistics industry went on strikes and started burning violence against foreign truck drivers. The transport industry in South Africa is facing multiple challenges of dramatic transformation to ensure that all the needs of stakeholders are incorporated. After 1994 towards 1999 the taxi industry provided transport for 5 to 10 million people every day and has a daily turnover of R15 million (Weekly Mail & Guardian, 1999). After 2020 the number of commuters had declined extensively due to COVID-19 and a lot of people lost their jobs and others are working from home. The transport is now costing passengers since the war between Ukraine and Russia. The war took too long, and it has affected third world countries negatively. The transport industry had to increase fees after the continuous petrol hikes in South Africa. This has affected the transport industry and the passenger's resort to other means of transport like trains and working from home. The public transport taxi industry was once perceived as a success story of black economic empowerment, it has recently become violent and lawlessness, conflict, and death. The act of violence is caused by the means of protecting economic interests in a market that is overcrowded and has limited resources. The taxi owners, drivers, passengers have been killed in the bloody taxi wars that erupted between rival taxi associations and hired assassins to kill each other and the violence affected the passengers (Sekhonyane & Duggard, 2004). In 1960, the apartheid regime instituted policies that prevented entrepreneurs from operating minibus taxis. The government refused to issue road carrier permits to them. The competition between the rail and buses, which was and is subsidised by the government, also played a role because taxis were losing commuters. The refusal by the government to grant permits constrained the growth of the taxi industry as it made the operation of most taxis illegal and subjected its operators to prosecutions and confiscation of their vehicles (Molefe 2016).

## **2. Background**

In the beginning of 1900s, the road transport existed without state regulation. The railway has been the most available means of public transportation in the societies (Smith, Dehlen, de Haan, Mare & Naude, 1994). The taxi industry revolutionary growth in South Africa began in the 1980s whereby the taxi association had a strong bargaining power in mobilizing the involvement of big business in the industry and the financial means (Khosa, 1995). The taxi

industry has been a long operating form of public transport that was predominantly used by the black community, and it was the only transport industry that the black race could be employed in during the apartheid era (Lomme, 2008). During the nineties mini-bus taxis were operational due to the Motor Carrier Transportation Act of 1930. The industry did have its difficulties when it started expanding leading to the government to prevent taxis from operating. They deregulated the whole taxi industry with the Transport Deregulation Act of 1988. Taxis were to only operate using the 16-seater policy, as the industry continued to grow the Taxi Association joined the South African Black Taxi Association in 1979, during that time only 21 taxis joined (Sey, 2008). The taxi industry formed informal and formal taxi ranks, the growth of individuals entering the taxi industry resulted in illegal operation of unregistered taxis and because the government was not paying attention to the industry there was a lot of taxi violence (Barrett, 2003). When the African National Congress came into power in 1994, they came up with policies to end taxi violence by establishing the National Taxi Task Team (NTTT) in 1995 (Sey, 2008).

Relationships within the industry and between the industry and government and law enforcement agencies remained volatile, with effective communication between the parties virtually non-existent. In 2020, during COVID-19 lockdown in South Africa, taxi owners invited the Minister of Transport, Mr Fikile Mbalula, and he declined the invite publicly on national television. The minister explained that he is not coming due to the anger of taxi owners and their known violence because they needed COVID-19 relief funds. The taxi industry needed relief funds based on the government mandate that each taxi must reduce the number of passengers they are carrying from 16 limited to the maximum of 7 passengers.

## **3. Research Methodology**

This paper adopted a qualitative methodological approach to interrogating taxi violence in the chosen study location, using semi-structured interviews as a research instrument. The respondents were consenting drivers of minibus taxis who were selected using a nonprobability sampling technique. Interviews were conducted with 14 males and one female participant. The lady was the only female taxi driver operating from the Mpumalanga taxi rank when data was collected. The semi-structured interviews

were used to obtain information on the prevalence of taxi-related violence in Mpumalanga township. The researcher used semi-structured interviews because these questions allowed the interviewer to probe for more in depth answers which thus "expanded the interviewees' responses" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005:88). The major intended outcome of these interviews was to understand how taxi drivers interpreted their experiences and observations of taxi related violence in the Mpumalanga taxi rank with regards to the meanings they ascribe to the terms and concepts associated with exposure to taxi-related violence. The results entail that violence has been increasing as more owners buy additional taxis and new owners increase the high competition which resorts to taxi violence due to fighting for routes.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The empirical findings of this study revealed different opinions and attitudes towards the nature and extent of taxi-related violence in the new democratic dispensation in South Africa. Thirteen of the drivers felt that the levels of violent conflict in the industry have increased when compared to the 1980s and the 1990s. The current incidents of taxi violence are inappropriate. What makes it worse is the fact that Government officials and traffic inspectors have their taxis operating with different taxi associations. The numbers of taxi violence have gone up – taxi violence has worsened. It will never end because of corruption and lawlessness taking place in South Africa post-1994. The government officials keep introducing new tactics of further perpetrating this violence by not issuing permits easier and not regulating taxi industry, than introducing measures to end violence in public transport industry.

The situation is bad now, the violent of transport industry during apartheid era used to be better, as owners would attack one another with pangas (a broad heavy knife) and knobkerries (a short stick with a knob at the top). Today they shoot each other mercilessly. In the past the incidents of taxi violence were very few. Government should be blamed for the increased levels of taxi violence that we now face because before 1994 there were vehicle certificates called infinities. With those certificates a driver could transport passengers from Durban to Johannesburg. However, government decided to do away with these certificates and instead created boundaries which fuelled taxi violence. Whereas in the past taxi violence was more about taxi routes,

presently it is about hate, greed and revenge. The perpetrators of taxi-related violence according to the drivers of minibus taxis, is usually perpetrated by the same individuals. In other words, known stakeholders in the taxi industry initiate this form of violence. This study revealed that taxi owners and bosses are alleged to be the predominant perpetrators of taxi-related violence. Reasons that fuel hitmen for control of regulating that transpire in the taxi industry is because of taxi violence. The tendency of the pattern of finding hit men easier emerge because there are a lot of weapons accessible for hit men to use for killing.

##### 4.1 Violence Amongst Public Transport Industry

In the period leading up to South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, incidents of violence in the taxi industry increased dramatically throughout the country and continued to rise following the elections. Political affiliations came to play a key role in the ongoing conflicts in many areas around the country with the emergence to eliminate competitors. As the death toll, along with the number of injuries, kept rising it soon became apparent that the taxi industry had spiralled out of control. The worse part of the scenario is that the commuters are caught in the crossfire. It has been a coincidence that trail transport has stopped operating due to stolen of cable and rails. Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (Prasa) has removed its security that used to safeguard the rail transport properties. That has given taxi industry more passengers as trains are no longer operating in the South African townships.

##### 4.2 The Violence Situation in Logistics Industry

The trucks drivers had been consistently on protest in South Africa and up in arms against government. The main challenge was when government has been ignoring to check the number of foreign truck drivers employed in each logistic company. There has been a lot of truck operated by foreign employees within South African logistics industry. The violence began when South African truck drivers were prohibited or given some rules to minimise their movement in other foreign countries in the Southern African countries. There were conditions in those foreign countries that the logistics industry must employ their own citizens whereas South Africa has been employing everyone including immigrants across the world. This has triggered violence amongst South African truck drivers and foreign

truck drivers in South Africa. The South African government has been blamed for failing to implement its laws of regulating labour to employ foreigners on scarce skills jobs only.

### **4.3 The Taxi Industry Violence in Contemporary South Africa Post-Apartheid**

South African taxi violence is shaped by both apartheid and the mechanisms of transitioning from apartheid to democracy (Dugard, 2006); in this context, the current violence-related problems being experienced in the taxi industry in present-day South African societies. In the post-apartheid era, taxi violence has become more common, decentralised, and violent in nature when compared to the period prior to 1994 where taxi wars were rather few. The incidents of taxi-related violence have escalated and often result in the death of people, including children (Dugard, 2001). The number of people who die on the road is less than those who die during taxi-related violence (Fourie, 2003). The major causes of the persistent taxi violence are the contestation of lucrative routes. The competition for the control and domination of routes in the industry often results in an upsurge in violent occurrences, especially gun-related murders. Taxi owners have an interest in busy routes (Sekhonyane & Dugard, 2004), and those that already control the busy routes hinder new drivers who want to join and work the same routes through violence.

The taxi violence erupts, it affects innocent people as the gun-for hire men do not take careful consideration about the lives of commuters (Molefe, 2016b). Violence in the taxi industry does not only affect the associations who are in disagreements with the routes, ranks or poaching of passengers, it also affects the community at large. According to the Gauteng Province legislature (2016), some of the problems in the volatile South African taxi industry involve several stakeholders: departmental officials, taxi operators, taxi associations and law enforcement officials. Some civil servants' own taxis and meddle in the issuing of operating licences and the approval of routes to benefit themselves (Ngubane, 2020). Xaba (2016) emphasises that there is corruption in the allocation of routes and issuing of operating licences, forcing people to kill each other as routes are saturated. Any person that transports passengers must obtain a public operating licence, this applies to taxi drivers, bus drivers or any driver who is transporting people for payment

(Western Cape Government, 2019:1). According to the Western Cape Government (2019:1), a public operating licence is a permit or document giving drivers permission to transport people for public gain. There are enormous endemic problems and challenges facing the process regarding the application, granting, and issuing of taxi permits and licenses (Gauteng Province Legislature, 2016). In part, this is largely attributed to corruption manifested through undue influence, forgery, fraud, conflict of interest, abuse of authority and a culture of impunity and lack of consequences management prevalent within the entire system (Gauteng Province Legislature, 2016:3). The transport fights usually break out when drivers cross their boundaries into other territories. Jealousy and greed also perpetuate the violence in this industry. Taxi associations have routes that are considered their areas of operation.

### **4.4 The Shortage of Law Enforcement in the Taxi Industry**

The problem of control and regulation that takes place in the taxi industry is in relation with a country like South Africa being lawlessness. There is lack of law enforcement implementation. The taxis do hike the taxi fees anytime when petrol increases with their own prices determined by themselves without government intervention on how many percent the price hikes should be determined. The taxis regulate themselves and never decrease the price when the petrol price decreases. Taxis can stop anywhere on the road even on the middle of the road and on the green light to stop for offloading or carrying passengers. The other private car drivers cannot complain on the spot because this can turn to a huge violence and others might lose their lives or injured. If the private car drivers value their lives, they need to keep quiet and wait for whatever the taxi does on the road patiently. The taxi can overtake on the bridge or on the wrong side anywhere and police have gotten used to this inappropriate violence by taxi owners in South Africa. There were many incidents where private cars that were carrying their families were stopped and punished by taxi owners. Some paid money and others were beaten to say, they are taking their passengers. That happens without a need to understand if they are family or colleagues driving together. The COVID-19 lockdown has fuelled this kind of violence by taxi drivers as taxis were running empty, people were working from home and others lost their jobs. The



taxi had to patrol on the road to target private cars carrying passengers. The state needs to intervene and come to rescue private cars from taxi drivers violence and regulate this industry.

#### 4.5 The Taxi and Truck Violence Impact on Passengers and Goods

The South African taxi industry is not regulated by government and the violence arising from taxi do affects commuters. The Public transport plays a critical role in the transportation system as they assist commuters to and from work, and different destination but it has its own challenges when taxi owners are fighting over routes between taxi associations which put the lives of the passengers at the crossfire as these taxi operators are killing each other. It affects the jobs of passengers as they arrive late at work due to fighting of taxi drivers. The fears about crime-related personal safety on taxis and truck drivers can have an important impact on commuters and goods. The taxi industry in South Africa is not regulated by the South African government and is controlled by taxi associations which create major problems for commuters as they fight for positions and territorial dominance in their associations. Even the hitmen are being hired to kill other rival taxi operators, which in turn causes passengers to be caught in the crossfire between rival taxi operators. Khosa (1995) argued that most of the taxi owners in the association hired hitmen in order to kill the rivals who were contesting with them for the same route or positions in the associations as they benefit more from those positions unlike just operating a taxi. Despite the available of different modes of transportation, being trains, taxis, buses, air transport and sea transport and logistics trucks, South African transport is still facing several challenges.

### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The taxi industry in South Africa has been a challenge for government to regulate the whole past 28 years of democracy in South Africa. The logistics industry is also becoming a huge challenge after the continued protests by truck drivers. The recommendations having carefully considered the findings of this research study, the following recommendations are offered:

- The clearing of demarcation of taxi routes to avoid excessive competition and conflict between rival taxi owners and associations. There must

be relevant guiding principles on how the routes are allocated. The authority board should make clear distinctions of the rightful taxi association to be given the authority to use a specific route. This will prevent issuing the same route permits to different associations.

- The South African department of transportation should consider undertaking lifestyle audits of all the officials within the Department who are involved in the process of issuing operating licenses as part of its corruption prevention measures.
- The South African government in the transport department should also consider establishing a process or system to determine whether all stakeholders in the process of issuing of operating licenses are competent enough to hold office.
- Corruption within the taxi industry internal investigations should be made with an objective to identify and remove all government officials who are involved in the taxi industry. This would make dealing with taxi-related crimes more effective. Corrective actions should be taken against officials who are selling routes.
- The logistics industry in South Africa needs to prioritise truck drivers from South Africa. The foreign truck drivers require to be employed based on scarce skills in South Africa. The South African government needs to intervene and strengthen the immigrant truck drivers' laws to stop the violence between South African truck drivers and immigrant truck drivers.

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