

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION. ALLY OR ADVERSARY FOR THE STUDENT BODY? <sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

Public transportation is a vital public service that can have either positive or negative effects on individuals' quality of life, particularly among populations whose daily activities rely heavily on it, such as university students. This article presents a qualitative study conducted with undergraduate students enrolled in Psychology and Neurosciences, as well as Social and Community Work, from the morning shift at Emiliano Zapata University (UNEZ). The primary objective of the study is to analyze the impact of rising public transportation fares—specifically urban bus fares—on students' everyday lives.

This research is grounded in prior studies addressing mobility and the quality of transportation services. At the international level, Hassold and Narváez (2024) examined mobility patterns among university students at Pablo de Olavide University in Spain. At the national level in Mexico, research such as that conducted by Pérez and Pinto (2021) in Colima assessed university students' satisfaction with public transportation systems, highlighting key challenges related to service quality and accessibility.

The theoretical framework of this study is

structured around core concepts including fare increases, service quality, social life, and academic performance, which provide a robust basis for an in-depth analysis of the findings. Particular attention is given to the ways in which transportation costs intersect with students' academic performance, social interactions, and perceptions of public transportation services.

Adopting a phenomenological approach, the study explores students' subjective experiences, focusing on how increases in public transportation costs affect—or do not affect—their financial resources, their ability to purchase academic materials, their punctuality, their participation in extracurricular activities, and their social lives. Additionally, the research examines whether students perceive a relationship between fare increases and improvements in the quality of transportation services.

Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews consisting of 23 questions. The interviews were conducted with ten students selected using chain or network sampling (snowball sampling), a method that facilitated the collection of rich, in-depth testimonies regarding participants' experiences and emotional responses to this issue. Overall, this study aims

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to contribute to a deeper understanding of the academic, social, and economic implications of rising public transportation fares for morning-shift students at UNEZ, offering a qualitative perspective rooted in their everyday realities and challenges.

### Keywords

Public transportation. University students. Service quality. Transportation costs. Fare increase. Academic performance. Social life.

### Theoretical Framework

Transportation is one of the most important public services, as it is among the most widely used and enables the movement of large numbers of people to their destinations. It can be defined as the movement of people within a city, characterized by the simultaneous mobilization of large volumes of passengers along corridors with high demand density (Rojas Parra & Mello Garcias, 2005).

Public transportation constitutes a fundamental component of urban mobility. Mobility is understood as “the way in which an individual carries out a program of activities across spatial and temporal dimensions; thus, a trip responds to a specific motive and involves the use of a particular mode of transport at a given time of day” (Obregón Biosca & Betanzo Quezada, 2015, p. 63). This definition highlights how individuals organize and carry out their activities in different locations and at different times, selecting a mode of transportation according to a specific purpose.

Analyzing the conditions under which public transportation services operate is essential, particularly with regard to service quality. Quality refers to the extent to which goods or services meet the expectations and needs of their users. In this regard, Deming (1989, cited in Escobar Valencia & Mosqueta Guerrero, 2013) conceptual-

izes quality as a pathway toward productivity and competitiveness, emphasizing the role of continuous improvement processes in service provision (p. 210).

Another closely related concept is environmental impact, which refers to any human activity capable of generating changes in the natural environment or its components, such as air, soil, water, and vegetation. These changes may range from minor alterations to significant transformations that disrupt environmental balance. Environmental impact has been defined as “the alteration, modification, or change in the environment, or in one of its components, of a certain magnitude and complexity, produced by the effects of human action or activity” (Soriano Parra et al., 2015, p. 100).

Public transportation systems may generate environmental impacts that, in turn, contribute to social unrest. Social unrest can manifest as dissatisfaction or discontent among the population in response to various social conditions, potentially leading to demands for change through different forms of collective action. Cea Leiva et al. (2023), drawing on Iglesias de Ussel et al. (2020), describe social unrest as a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses institutional, economic, cultural, and political dimensions. It may appear in an active or latent state, with the active form often emerging in response to specific events and being closely associated with social disturbances and mobilizations (p. 121).

One of the most visible expressions of social unrest is social protest, understood as the public manifestation of dissatisfaction with perceived injustices caused by governments, institutions, companies, or other actors. In this regard, Pérez and Pereyra (2013), in their article *Social Protest Amid the Crises of Argentine Democracy*, define protest as a public event of a contentious nature carried out by a social actor that involves an effort to mobilize resources.

University students constitute a significant

segment of participants in protest movements. This group is characterized by its commitment to academic training, time management, self-assessment of progress, reflection on acquired knowledge, and responsibility in completing academic tasks. At the university level, students are expected to develop autonomous and disciplined study habits. Durán Chinchilla et al. (2021) describe university students as individuals who are not only engaged in producing academic outcomes, but also in shaping themselves as capable agents of production. Studying, therefore, entails strong commitments to self-regulation, self-evaluation, reflection, and responsibility, making self-education a central task of the university student role (p. 191).

The effort invested by students throughout their academic trajectory, along with their achievements and skills and the application of acquired knowledge, is commonly conceptualized as academic performance. Academic performance has been defined as the level of knowledge and academic skills demonstrated by students in a specific area or subject, expressed through an evaluation process that may include quantitative and qualitative measures (Jiménez, 2000, cited in Castellanos Páez et al., 2017, p. 151).

Another fundamental dimension of university students' experiences is social life. Social life "represents a very important aspect of the individual, as it forms the basis of their social structure and encompasses the set of personal relationships each individual maintains, allowing for active integration into society" (Carmona Valdés, 2015, para. 3). These relationships are essential, as they enable continuous interaction with others and foster active participation in social contexts.

Finally, a key concept underpinning this discussion is quality of life, a multidimensional construct with diverse interpretations that cannot be confined to a single domain. Quality of life is often used to assess the conditions in which indi-

viduals live and interact with their environment. In this sense, Borrero Benítez et al. (2012) define quality of life as a concept applicable to the assessment of human needs and satisfaction levels, the evaluation of outcomes of programs and services, guidance in service provision, and the formulation of national and international policies aimed at the general population as well as specific groups, such as individuals with disabilities (p. 2).

## Background

The literature review revealed a limited number of studies within the international context that directly address increases in public transportation fares. However, related research has examined university student mobility patterns. In this regard, a study conducted in Spain entitled *Analysis of the Mobility Behaviors of Geography and History Students at Pablo de Olavide University* by Hassold and Gavira Narváez (2024) provides relevant insights. The authors note that the study of the mobility behaviors of undergraduate students in Geography and History and their double degrees at Pablo de Olavide University represents a small sample of the overall student body that commutes daily to its facilities, but it offers an initial approach to the mobility patterns exhibited by students on campus.

This research focused on identifying the means of transportation used by university students in their daily commute to campus through survey data. The findings indicate that "79% of students commute to the university using public transportation, while private vehicle use is more common among residents of metropolitan municipalities with limited public transportation availability" (Hassold & Gavira Narváez, 2024, p. 71). These results underscore the high level of reliance on public transportation among university students.

Another key dimension of the present study

concerns the quality of public transportation services. At the national level, several studies have addressed this issue. In 2021, the study *Measuring the Perception of Quality of Life Regarding Satisfaction with Public Transportation in Costa Rica* examined the relationship between public transportation services and users' quality of life. Zúñiga López and Allen (2021) argue that: Mobility has become an increasingly important issue in Costa Rica; therefore, improving the public transportation system is increasingly relevant. To identify which elements of the public transportation system affect quality of life according to user perceptions, it is essential to understand users' opinions regarding the conditions under which the service is provided.

The authors emphasize the importance of delivering high-quality transportation services, as these significantly influence users' daily experiences and interactions within their social environment. Consequently, improvements in public transportation systems may positively affect individuals' quality of life.

Similarly, within the Mexican national context, two studies closely related to the present research were identified. In Colima, Pérez Cruz and Pinto Pérez (2021) conducted a study entitled *Satisfaction with Public Transportation Services among University Students*, which sought to estimate university students' satisfaction with respect to the quality components of urban public transportation services in the state of Colima. This research examined whether students were satisfied with the transportation units they regularly used to commute to their educational institutions. Their findings indicate that:

In absolute terms, the price of the trip, followed by planning, carries the greatest weight in its effect on satisfaction due to two main factors: cost and route. The first factor is related to the fare paid and the perceived value of the service, which has the strongest effect on overall satisfaction (Pérez Cruz & Pinto Pérez, 2021). These

findings highlight the central role of transportation fares in shaping users' satisfaction and, consequently, their choice of transportation mode.

In relation to fare policies and broader transportation challenges, the report *Public Transportation in Mexico Toward 2030*, published by the International Association of Public Transport (2024), states that public transportation in Mexico faces significant challenges as it approaches 2030, a year in which the country is expected to have made considerable progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals established by the United Nations.

The report emphasizes the need for substantial improvements in transportation services, with a focus on environmental sustainability and user benefits. To this end, greater attention has been directed toward criteria such as fleet renewal, management models, transition to clean energy, the implementation of new technologies, fare and subsidy policies, legislation, and infrastructure development, as highlighted by specialists at the 15th International Transport Congress (International Association of Public Transport, 2024).

While such reforms aim to enhance service quality and promote sustainable mobility, they may also have economic implications for users, as fare increases are often justified by anticipated improvements in service quality. However, the report notes that public transportation services in Mexico remain unsatisfactory for many users, particularly due to high fares relative to the quality of service provided. This situation is further exacerbated by the lack of public policies that prioritize users' economic constraints. According to the International Association of Public Transport (2024), public transportation fares in Mexico vary widely across cities and modes. In many cases, costs are high relative to the quality of service offered, generating user dissatisfaction. Among both the general population and the political class, prejudices regarding subsidies

persist, and there is no national transportation policy that prioritizes fare and subsidy issues.

Overall, these findings highlight the relevance of examining the impact of rising public transportation fares on university students, particularly in contexts where service quality improvements do not necessarily correspond to increased costs.

## **Objectives**

### **Overall objective**

To analyze the impact of the increase in public transportation fares (urban bus services) on morning-shift students at Emiliano Zapata University (UNEZ).

### **Specific objectives**

To identify how increases in public transportation fares (urban bus services) affect the academic performance of morning-shift students at Emiliano Zapata University.

To determine whether increases in public transportation fares affect the social life of morning-shift students at Emiliano Zapata University.

To examine whether students at Emiliano Zapata University perceive a relationship between increases in public transportation fares and the quality of the service provided.

## **Hypotheses**

Increases in public transportation fares (urban bus services) negatively affect the academic performance of morning-shift students at Emiliano Zapata University.

Increases in public transportation fares negatively affect the social life of morning-shift students at Emiliano Zapata University.

Students at Emiliano Zapata University perceive a relationship between increases in public transportation fares and the quality of public

transportation services.

## **Research Questions**

How do increases in public transportation fares (urban bus services) affect the academic performance of morning-shift students at Emiliano Zapata University?

To what extent do increases in public transportation fares affect the social life of morning-shift students at Emiliano Zapata University?

Do students at Emiliano Zapata University perceive a relationship between increases in public transportation fares and the quality of public transportation services?

## **Justification**

Mobility is a highly relevant issue in Mexico, particularly for individuals who lack access to private transportation. As noted by Hassold and Gavira Narváez (2024), mobility “plays an essential role in the daily lives of the population, especially in the case of students who are required to commute daily to their educational institutions” (p. 1). For university students, access to efficient and affordable transportation is therefore fundamental, as limitations in mobility can directly affect class attendance and academic continuity.

Another critical issue concerns the physical condition of public transportation units. Research by Pérez Cruz and Pinto Pérez (2021), citing the Official Gazette of the State of Colima (2017), highlights the deteriorated state of many buses currently in operation. Regarding the quality factor, there is an excessively evident physical deterioration in the exterior and interior of buses currently in operation. Article 201 establishes that urban corridor service buses must not exceed 10 years of age, extendable by up to 5 years; however, most exceed 12 years.

These findings reveal significant deficiencies in the management and maintenance of public

transportation systems. Such shortcomings not only reduce service efficiency but also negatively affect users by generating discomfort, delays, and potential safety risks.

In addition to service quality, fare pricing constitutes a key element of public transportation systems. According to De Rust et al. (2003, cited in Estrada Meza et al., 2024), the calculation of the generalized price of public transportation services must take into account both the operating costs of the service provider and the time invested by users in their journeys, including opportunity costs and externalities generated by transportation. This perspective suggests that fare-setting processes should seek a balance that benefits users, service operators, and urban mobility as a whole.

However, fare increases often generate social conflict. For example, in Rio de Janeiro, hundreds of people protested against fare increases, and clashes with the police were reported (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2013). Such events illustrate how dissatisfaction with transportation costs can escalate into social unrest, reflecting the limited responsiveness of authorities to citizens' demands.

Taken together, these factors underscore the multifaceted nature of public transportation as an essential service. Deficiencies in its administration or operation directly affect users—particularly university students—who depend on public transportation to attend their educational institutions on a daily basis.

## **Methodology**

### **Type of Research**

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, as it sought to understand the experiences, perceptions, and viewpoints of morning-shift students at Emiliano Zapata University (UNEZ) regarding the impact of increases in public transportation fares. Hernández Sampieri et al. (2014)

emphasize that there are multiple subjective realities constructed in research, which vary in form and content among individuals, groups, and cultures. Therefore, the qualitative researcher begins from the premise that the social world is 'relative' and can only be understood from the perspective of the actors being studied.

This approach enabled an in-depth exploration of the meanings students attribute to fare increases in their everyday lives, allowing for the collection of rich, descriptive data and a broader understanding of how transportation costs affect participants' academic and social experiences.

### **Research Design**

A phenomenological design was employed, as it is particularly suitable for examining the lived experiences of individuals facing the economic, social, and emotional consequences of increased public transportation fares. According to Hernández Sampieri et al. (2014), the primary purpose of phenomenological research is to explore, describe, and understand people's experiences regarding a phenomenon and to identify the common elements of those experiences.

In this context, students' experiences of high transportation costs vary significantly, ranging from financial strain on their households to changes in commuting patterns or levels of academic participation. This design facilitates a nuanced understanding of how students interpret and make sense of these challenges.

### **Sample**

The study employed chain or network sampling, commonly referred to as snowball sampling. Initial participants were asked to invite peers who met the study criteria, and additional participants were recruited through institutional contacts. As noted by Morgan (2008, cited in Hernández Sampieri et al., 2014), this method involves identifying key participants and asking

them to recommend others who can contribute relevant information.

### Fieldwork

Data collection was conducted using a semi-structured interview instrument consisting of 23 open-ended questions. Interviews were carried

out with ten morning-shift students from Emiliano Zapata University, including three men and seven women. Five participants were enrolled in the Psychology and Neurosciences program (Participants 1, 5, 6, 7, and 10), while the remaining five were students of the Social and Community Work program (Participants 2, 3, 4, 8, and 9).

	Category	
I	Academic impact	
	<b>Coding</b>	<b>Subcategory</b>
		Feeding
	Reduce Decrease	<b>Persons 5, 6 and 8:</b> They express having decreased their food consumption during their academic Schedule.
	Limit Measure	<b>People 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 10:</b> They comment that they find themselves needing to limit their spending in this area, and they buy cheaper things.
	Not applicable	<b>Person 9:</b> Reports that the increase in transportation costs does not affect their food consumption, since they usually do not eat lunch at the university.
		Academic performance
	Impressions	<b>Persons 1, 2, and 8:</b> They express that printing and making copies necessary for fulfilling their academic responsibilities has a greater impact on their expenses.
	Materials	<b>People 3, 4, 6, 9 and 10:</b> They report having experienced difficulties in obtaining the materials needed to cover their academic responsibilities, because they are limited in their budget.
	Not applicable	<b>People 7 and 5:</b> They indicate that they did not have any difficulties acquiring materials.
		Emotional impact from an academic perspective
	Disagreement Upset Sad	<b>People 1, 6 and 8:</b> They express feeling disappointed by the increase in transportation costs, as well as dissatisfaction and sadness because they have to reduce expenses and because of the consequences that the increase in transportation costs has had on their academic performance.
	Stress Frustration Impotence	<b>People 2, 7, 9 and 10:</b> They report feeling stressed, frustrated and helpless, due to the changes they are experiencing in the academic field.
	Inconvenience Courage Anger	<b>People 2, 3, 9 and 10:</b> They mention having experienced annoyance, due to the service and conditions offered by the transportation service they use to get to the university
	Not applicable	<b>Person 5:</b> Indicates that there was no emotional impact from an academic standpoint.
		Influence on tuition payment
	Not applicable	<b>People 1, 4 and 10:</b> They mention not having had difficulties covering the payment of their tuition due to the increase in the public transport service.

Scholarship		<b>People 6 and 3:</b> They express that they have no difficulties paying tuition because they have a scholarship from the university.
Budget		<b>People 2, 7, 8, 9:</b> Report having had an impact on their budget.
	Motivation and commitment	
Schedule		<b>People 3 and 10:</b> They mention that they have had difficulties arriving on time to their classes, which affects their motivation and commitment.
Demotivation Stress		<b>People 4, 7 and 8:</b> They express feeling demotivated and stressed by the waiting time of the trucks and the service they offer to users.
Price		<b>Persons 2 and 7:</b> They comment that the price they pay for the service influences their motivation and commitment to their studies.
Not applicable		
	Possible school dropout	<b>Persons 1, 5, 6 and 9:</b> They mention that the change in the price of transport does not influence their motivation towards their academic life.
Not applicable		<b>Persons 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, and 10:</b> They express that they have not considered postponing their studies due to the price of public transport.
Future option		<b>Person 2:</b> Comments that they have considered this possibility for the future, in case the price of transportation continues to increase.
At the beginning of the problem		<b>Persons 7 and 8:</b> They indicate that at the beginning of the situation they considered it, but currently this is no longer the case.
<b>2</b>	<b>Impact on social life</b>	
	Ways to socialize	
Friendships		<b>Persons 2, 3, 5 and 10: Express that they have reduced their outings with friends</b>
Family		Person 2: States that he/she refrains from going out with his/her family.
Limited		Persons 1, 4, 2, 7, 8 and 9: They mention that they analyze the decision to go out with people in their environment more, and they limit themselves more in this situation.
not applicable		<b>Person 6:</b> Expresses that the increase in the price of public transport has not influenced the way in which he/she interacts with family, friends, etc.
	Recreational activities and hobbies	
not applicable		<b>People 1, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 9:</b> They say that they do not do this type of activity.
Spent		<b>Persons 2, 6, 8 and 10:</b> They state that they have stopped carrying out activities and have limited themselves in starting some others, because they have to consider the budget they allocate to transportation.
	Emotional impact	
not applicable		<b>Person 1:</b> The price of public transport does not influence their social life, so they do not experience feelings related to this situation.
Sadness Agüita discourages		<b>Persons 2, 5, and 8:</b> They express feeling sad due to the changes they have experienced in their social life.
Stress Frustration Courage Inconvenience Difficult		<b>Persona 2, 3, 4 y 6:</b> Comentan sentirse molestos y frustrados por la necesidad de tener que reducir sus salidas con amigos y familiares.
Isolated		<b>Person 7:</b> Expresses feeling isolated because they cannot prioritize such social interactions.

<b>3</b>	Transport conditions		
		User perception	
	Comfortable Nice Good		<b>Persons 7 and 9:</b> They indicate that the conditions of the units are favorable.
	Deplorable Poor quality Not good conditions Awful Lousy Destruction		<b>Persons 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10:</b> They express that the condition of the vehicles is deplorable, terrible, and awful. This indicates dissatisfaction with the transportation service.
	Disappointment Non-innovation		<b>Person 8:</b> Comments feeling disappointed at not seeing any innovation.
		Cost perception	
	OK		<b>Persons 7 and 10:</b> Express agreement with the price increase.
	It's not worth it		<b>Persona 4, 8 y 9:</b> Exponen estar en desacuerdo con el precio establecido.
	Conditions		<b>Persons 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6:</b> They indicate that, given the condition of the units, the price is not appropriate.
		Emotional impact	
	Happiness Motivation		<b>Person 7:</b> Expresses feeling happy when using the units, since they have air conditioning.
	Courage Inconvenience		<b>Persons 3, 4, 5 and 6:</b> They express feeling annoyed when taking the transport service.
	Frustration Stress		<b>Persons 2, 8 and 10:</b> They comment that they get stressed by the transport conditions when taking it.
	Disappointment		<b>Persons 1 and 9:</b> Express feeling disappointed by the service conditions.
<b>4</b>	<b>Waiting time</b>		
		User perception	
	It doesn't take long		<b>Persons 1 and 2:</b> They indicate they have no details to present while waiting for public transport.
	It's too much It's tremendous intense Two hours of waiting Espera 30 min Mas de 1hra		<b>Persons 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10:</b> They express that the waiting time is too long, therefore, it represents a problem for people.
		Emotional impact	
	Relieved		<b>Person 2:</b> Comments that they feel relieved, since it does not represent a major problem.

	Stress Frustrated Impotence Despair		<b>Persons 1, 3, 5 and 8:</b> They express that having to wait a long time causes them to experience stressful emotions.
	Annoyance Anger Rage		<b>Persons 3, 4, 6, 7, 9 and 10:</b> They state that the waiting problem is significant, as they feel annoyed.
	Sadness Feeling		<b>Persons 3 and 4:</b> They indicate that the strongest feeling they experience is sadness at having to wait a considerable amount of time.
		Cost perception	
	Disagreement		<b>Persons 1, 8 and 10:</b> Express dissatisfaction with the price they pay to take the service units.
	Agreement I didn't expect that much		<b>Persons 2, 4, and 9:</b> They comment that since they don't have to wait a long time, they agree with the price set.
	Insufficient Units		<b>Persons 3, 5, 6, 7:</b> They point out that, since there are not enough units, the price is not right.
5	Commute Time		
		User Perception	
	Slow Long Tedious Slow		<b>Persons 1, 2, 8 and 10:</b> They express having a big problem with travel time, as it is slow or long.
	Adequate Normal		<b>Persons 5, 7 and 9:</b> They indicate that they perceive time normally, since they have an estimate of how long it takes
	Very Crowded		<b>Persons 1, 2 and 8:</b> They report that, when taking the service units, they force more people to enter the transport.
	Various		<b>Persons 3, 4 and 6:</b> They comment that the time varies, since it depends on the driver of the unit and how he drives.
		Emotional Impact	
	Comfortable Satisfied		<b>Person 9:</b> Reports feeling satisfied with the travel time..
	Demotivation Missing School Energy consumption Tired Wasted time		<b>Persons 1, 2, 3, 7:</b> They express that the emotions they feel are tiredness, if the travel time to their destinations greatly affects them.
	Desperation Impatient Frustrating Stresse		<b>Persons 2, 5, 6, 8 and 10:</b> They comment that the commute time is so long that they feel desperate, which affects their health.
	Courage		<b>Person 4:</b> Indicates feeling anger about the travel time.
		Perception of cost	
	Very bad Disagrees		<b>Persons 1, 3 and 10:</b> Express disagreement with the established price.
	Is it fair yes		<b>Persons 4, 7 and 9:</b> Report having no problem with the cost.
	Travel time and conditions		<b>Persons 2, 5, 6 and 8:</b> They indicate that due to transportation and conditions, the price should be different.

## **Data analysis**

The findings of this study confirm the first two hypotheses, indicating that increases in public transportation fares (urban bus services) have a measurable impact on the academic performance and academic life of morning-shift students at Emiliano Zapata University. In contrast, the third hypothesis was not supported, as participants reported no perceived relationship between fare increases and improvements in service quality.

The data reveal that rising public transportation fares constrain students' daily expenditures, particularly with respect to food consumed during academic hours. Additionally, students frequently reported difficulties in purchasing essential academic materials and paying for printing services required for their coursework. These financial constraints were accompanied by negative emotional responses, including frustration, annoyance, and disappointment. Punctuality was also adversely affected, as delays in transportation hinder students' ability to arrive on time to classes. Despite these challenges, fare increases were not reported to affect tuition payments, nor did they lead to an increased risk of academic dropout.

Fare increases were also found to influence students' social interactions. Participants reported limiting social outings, especially those involving friends, due to the added cost of transportation. Similarly, students who engage in recreational activities or hobbies indicated changes in their daily routines as a result of higher transportation expenses. These restrictions were associated with emotional consequences, such as increased stress, sadness, and feelings of social isolation.

Regarding perceptions of public transportation services, students consistently described urban routes as being of poor quality, which contributed to widespread dissatisfaction. As a result, participants considered the current fare un-

justified, arguing that the service does not correspond to its cost given the conditions under which it is provided. This mismatch between cost and perceived quality generated feelings of annoyance, stress, and disappointment.

Long waiting times emerged as another significant concern. Students described waiting periods as excessive, which elicited emotions such as irritation and discouragement. They further emphasized that the fare is inappropriate given the insufficient number of operating units. Similarly, travel times were described as slow and prolonged, although some variability was attributed to differences in drivers' practices. These conditions contributed to physical fatigue, demotivation, and heightened stress levels among students.

Overall, the results demonstrate that increases in public transportation fares affect university students across multiple dimensions of their lives, including their economic stability, social relationships, and emotional well-being. Fare increases disrupt students' budgets allocated to basic needs and trigger negative emotional responses such as frustration, stress, sadness, helplessness, and, in some cases, disappointment.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of this study indicate that increases in public transportation fares have significant economic, social, and emotional consequences for university students. From an economic standpoint, students reported substantial budgetary constraints, as transportation expenses must be prioritized, thereby reducing the resources available for personal and academic needs. Several participants emphasized that the impact of the fare increase was intensified by the elimination of previous financial support mechanisms, such as subsidized or free transportation, which had previously reduced their commuting costs.

One of the most critical concerns expressed by participants relates to the academic implications of fare increases. Deficiencies in public transportation services—particularly prolonged travel and waiting times—were reported to negatively affect punctuality, generating stress, frustration, and academic discomfort. These conditions contribute to an environment of tension that interferes with students' academic routines.

Changes in social dynamics also emerged as a relevant consequence of higher transportation costs. Students explained that participation in social activities, sports, or recreational pursuits now requires careful consideration of transportation expenses, leading them to limit or forgo such activities altogether. This reduction in social engagement has broader implications for students' emotional well-being and sense of belonging.

Finally, students expressed clear dissatisfaction with current fare levels, arguing that the cost is disproportionate to the quality and conditions of public transportation services. Participants consistently noted that fare increases should be accompanied by tangible improvements, such as better-maintained vehicles, an increased number of buses, and optimized route frequency. In the absence of such improvements, fare increases are perceived as unjustified and detrimental to students' quality of life.

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