



## ‘JEEP-NICHE’: COMPARATIVE EXPERIENTIAL STUDY OF JEEPNEY DRIVERS IN METRO MANILA UNDER THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT MODERNIZATION PROGRAM (PTMP)

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### ABSTRACT

Jeepneys, a symbol of Filipino ingenuity, a mode of transport for the masses, and a ‘niche’ for many. With the Public Transport Modernization Program in place, this industry has been shaken up with new regulations and policies that aim to formalize this sector. Despite the policy's noble intention, it stirred a complex dynamic among stakeholders—particularly drivers. Utilizing a comparative case study design grounded in Rational Choice Theory and Institutional Theory, it investigates the motivations behind drivers’ adherence or resistance—compliance dynamics, to the program among traditional and jeepney drivers in Metro Manila. Highlighting on how socio-economic factors, social pressures, and network effects influence drivers’ decisions. The research reveals that financial constraints are a significant barrier to compliance while communal influences and support networks can impact conformity to the new standards. The study advocates for a more tailored approach to the modernization program, suggesting improvement in financial aiding mechanisms, community, engagement efforts, and network-building initiatives to enhance adherence. By offering a deeper insight into the drivers’ compliance behaviors, this study contributes to valuable perspective for refining the implementation of the modernization program, ensuring it is more inclusive, and supportive to the unique needs of the jeepney community.

**Keywords:** *Jeepney Modernization, Public Transportation, Policy Compliance Dynamics, Institutional Theory*

### INTRODUCTION

Passenger jeepneys in the Philippines are significant due to their blend of history, ingenuity, and cultural identity (Baltazar, et. al., 2024). Their origins can be traced back to the aftermath of World War II, when a gap in public transportation emerged. Filipinos, known for their resourcefulness, transformed military jeepneys left behind by Americans by extending their bodies, adding roofs, and decorating them with vibrant designs (Torre et al, 2019; Grava, 1972).

These iconic jeepneys not only became a daily commuter staple—accounting for about 40% of all motorized trips nationwide—but also symbolized Filipino core values such as resourcefulness and unity. They fostered connections among passengers through shared rides and close proximity, embodying the spirit of “bayanihan” (Baltazar et al., 2024; Parrucho & Padullo, 2023; Cruz, 2016; Gatarin, 2023). However, traditional jeepneys face challenges due to their aging conditions and outdated technology, including restricted accessibility for people with disabilities, high on-street rivalry contributing to traffic congestion, passenger safety concerns, and issues with environmental sustainability (Mateo-Babiano et al., 2020; Regidor et al., 2009).

However, despite such challenges, ordinary Filipinos favor jeepneys since it is the most affordable land-based transportation option (Metke et. al., 2018; Ong et. al., 2023). In response to the urgent need to rehabilitate the public transportation particularly on jeepneys, the government launched the Public Utility Modernization Program (PUVMP) in 2017, in virtue of the Department of Transportation’s Department Order No. 2017-011, now rebranded as Public Transport Modernization Program (PTMP) as the amended version of the program under DOTr Department Order 2023-022. The program

maintains its emphasis on the modernization by complying with safety and environmental standards, and operational sustainability of the means of public transportation (Cruz, 2024).

The program mandates the phase-out of old public utility vehicles (PUVs) aging 15 years old and above, ensuring that PUVs adhere to the emission, specifications, and safety requirements set by the modernization program, that seeks to set a bar for public transportation standards in the Philippines (Gatarin, 2023; Malasique et al., 2022). The program is also aligned with the government’s vision of AmBisyon Natin 2040—in achieving an efficient, affordable, and environmentally sustainable transport system (Lontoc, 2017; NEDA, 2017). Which also aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals 9 and 11 of the United Nations—building a resilient infrastructure, sustainable industrialization, and creating inclusive, safe, and sustainable cities with access to safe, affordable, and sustainable public transportation (Lontoc, 2017).

Despite the noble intention of the program, it faced a lot of pushback and resistance from various stakeholders including transportation groups and allied political groups due to the financial hurdles that hindered drivers and operators to comply with the program (Sunio et. al., 2019; Tacderas, 2022; Tulad, 2023). Which led to numerous protests and transport strikes since 2017, with some groups calling for the total cancellation of the PUV Modernization Program (Sunio et. al., 2019; Tulad, 2023). Critics argue that the programs burden small drivers and operators disproportionately and labeled the program as anti-poor and envisaging financial hardships to the vulnerable sector of jeepney drivers and operators—with the high costs of loan obligations to comply with the modernization program (Pontawe & Napalang, 2018).

However, the proponents of the PTMP emphasize the program's potential to professionalize and enhance the livelihoods of jeepney industry stakeholders (Bautista, 2024). Initial consolidation to cooperatives or corporations is expected to streamline jeepney deployment and route rationalization. Despite the complexities and opposition to the program, the government remains committed to realizing the program's objectives for a more sustainable and efficient transportation system. The program will also cater for the affected jeepney drivers and operators with alternative livelihood options within cooperatives or consolidated PUV entities (Marcos, 2023; Bautista, 2024).

Despite existing research on individual jeepney drivers and the broader modernization program, a gap persists in understanding why some jeepney drivers and operators comply while others do not with the regulations set by the PTMP. This paper explores how socio-economic factors, social pressure within jeepney communities, and network effects influence Metro Manila's compliance and non-compliance among traditional and modern jeepney drivers.

Using Rational Choice Theory of Smith (1776) backed by Institutional Theory of Scott (2008), this study analyzes the motivations behind compliance and non-compliance with the PUV Modernization regulations. By examining these factors, this research aims to contribute to a comprehensive understanding emphasizing the compliance dynamics of jeepney drivers and operators in Metro Manila. Through a comparative analysis, the study examines the reasons why certain jeepneys adhere to the program's regulations while others do not. This study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities in compliance with PUV Modernization. This identifies areas for improvement in program manifestation, ensuring stakeholders in the jeepney sector are not left behind. Moreover, this research could offer valuable recommendations for legal and policy reforms to make the modernization program more inclusive and supportive of jeepney drivers' unique needs. Lastly, study's findings could inform discussions on how transport policies interplay with these legal areas, potentially advocating for a holistic approach to lawmaking that considers the multifaceted impacts of legal regulations on various stakeholders.

The study's objectives are: (1) To investigate the socio-economic factors influencing jeepney drivers' and operators' decision to comply with or resist the Public Transport Modernization Program in Metro Manila. (2) To analyze the motivations and demotivations for compliance and non-compliance with the Public Transport Modernization Program among jeepney drivers and operators in Metro Manila, using institutional theory as the lens. (3) To evaluate perceived challenges and opportunities associated with compliance and non-compliance with the Public Transport Modernization Program from the perspectives of jeepney drivers and operators in Metro Manila.

With that, this study aims to answer the following questions: (1) What are the specific socio-economic factors influencing the decisions of jeepney drivers and operators in Metro Manila to comply or not comply with the Public Transport Modernization Program? (e.g., income level, vehicle ownership, family size), (2) Using institutional theory as a lens, what are the key motivations and demotivations driving jeepney drivers and operators in Metro Manila to comply or not comply with the Public Transport Modernization Program?, (3) How do the perceived challenges and opportunities associated with compliance or non-compliance with the Public Transport Modernization Program influence the decision-making of jeepney drivers and operators in Metro Manila?

This study only explores the factors influencing compliance and non-compliance with the Public Transport Modernization Program

(PTMP) among traditional and modern jeepney drivers, specifically within Metro Manila. The research confined its investigation to this geographical area due to its distinct urban characteristics and transportation dynamics, providing a focused analysis. Thus, the study did not extend to the broader dynamics of other stakeholders, such as commuters, government entities, or other forms of land-based public transportation apart from jeepneys.

## Literature Review

### Challenges on Traditional Jeepney & System

Traditional jeepney drivers' "boundary system" as a method of earning wages is riddled with inefficiencies and issues. Under this method, drivers strive to fulfill a daily profit target, which frequently results in delays and operational issues. Drivers usually wait to fill up their vehicles before starting their routes, which causes aggravation for passengers due to prolonged travel times (Roces, 2023; Bautista & Moya, 2023). This delay becomes even worse when operators charge a daily fee, which encourages drivers to prioritize popular stops over less frequent ones, resulting in on-street competition and potentially reckless driving behaviors that can lead to accidents (Roces, 2023; Bautista & Moya, 2023; Mettke et al., 2018).

Moreover, the decentralized franchise system complicated the monitoring and control of the number of vehicles on a specific route (Roces, 2023). Moreover, the physical design of jeepneys has accessibility in terms of mobility inside the vehicle for passengers, as these medium-sized vehicles demand passengers to bend down when boarding and have a restricted legroom that reduces passenger comfort, especially when the jeep is fully loaded (Ong et al., 2023; Amponsah & Adams, 2016).

Although jeepneys have the capability to operate on either unleaded gasoline or diesel, studies revealed that jeepneys contribute to fifteen percent (15%) of the particulate matter emission in Metro Manila (Westerman, 2018). Studies emphasize that there is a need for collaboration between government initiatives and jeepney operators in prioritizing safety measures, regular maintenance (GIZ, 2019; Agaton et al., 2020), and drivers' defensive driving training, along with strict enforcement of traffic regulations (Ong et al., 2023). To address these challenges, the collaborative efforts of the government bodies under DOTr led to the development of the PUV Modernization Program in 2017.

### The Rationale of PUV Modernization

The Public Transport Modernization Program (PTMP), formerly PUV Modernization Program, aims to overhaul the country's public transport system, focusing on passenger safety and environmental law compliance—the Clean Air Act of 1999 or Republic Act 8749 (Lontoc, 2017; Mateo-Babiano et al., 2020). The program encompasses ten key components, including regulatory reform, route rationalization, fleet modernization, and financing of modern PUVs, with the goal of establishing modern regulations for PUVs based on passenger demands (DOTr, 2017). This regulatory strategy emphasizes reducing on-street competition by mandating the consolidation of jeepney operators as cooperatives or corporations to meet each transport route demands, thereby regulating the dispatch of traversing jeeps on the streets (GIZ, 2016; Mateo-Babiano et al., 2020).

It is crucial to address the emission problems for jeepney fleets to reduce carbon dioxide and particulate matter emissions (Fabian & Gota, 2009). With the existence of pertinent laws such as the Clean Air Act, the rationale for PTMP is also present in the government's

long-term vision, AmBisyon Natin 2040, that aims to provide Filipinos a "matatag, maginhawa, at panatag na buhay" (stable, comfortable, and secured life). Particularly in "maginhawang buhay" through connectivity and mobility improvements (NEDA, 2017). Thereupon, in the primary objective of the PTMP to steer the modernization trend towards sustainable alternatives (GIZ, 2016; Tacderas et al., 2021), prioritizing road-based public transport is crucial for reaping short and mid-term benefits, aligning with ongoing mass transit enhancements and aiming to decrease overall motorization in the Philippines (NEDA, 2017).

The PTMP focuses on modernizing PUV fleets, streamlining franchise procedures, and promoting industry consolidation (Malasique et al., 2022; Mateo-Babiano, 2020). Industry consolidation aims to optimize revenue and minimize costs, supported by government agencies like the DOTr and the Office for Transport Cooperatives (OTC) (Pontawe & Napalang, 2018; Mateo-Babiano, 2016). The regulatory approach seeks to reduce on-street competition, necessitating most current operators to merge to meet route demands, with franchise standards now requiring applicants to be cooperatives or corporations (GIZ, 2016; Mateo-Babiano et al., 2020). The introduction of the Philippine National Standard (PNS) 2126:2017 for PUVs, developed by the Department of Trade and Industry's Bureau of Philippine Standards (BPS) in collaboration with the Truck Manufacturer's Association (TMA), sets stringent guidelines for PUVs regarding dimensions, seating arrangements, capacity, and maximum mass (Ang, 2018; Roces, 2023).

The standard aims to ensure that there is uniformity and that modern jeeps are equipped with safety features such as dash cams, speed limiters, CCTV Cameras, and automatic collection systems (Roces, 2023). With that, modern jeepneys are also reckoned to feature amenities such as air conditioning and accessibility ramps for persons with disabilities. Moreover, the lifeline of PUVs is now restricted to a maximum of 15 years (Paterna, 2018; Roces, 2023). These enhancements in regulating PUVs not only improve the comfort and convenience for passengers but also align with the extensive goals of enhancing the safety and sustainability of the public transportation sector (Roces, 2023).

### Implications and Challenges of PUV Modernization

The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) will only grant franchises or the certificate of public convenience (CPC) to qualifying applicants such as consolidated cooperatives or corporations, non-compliance to the consolidation rule will lead to cessation of operations (DOTr, 2017). As of 2024, approximately 73.96% of jeepneys have joined cooperatives nationwide, while in Metro Manila, the consolidation rate of jeepneys is only at around 51% (Sadongdong, 2024).

The introduction of modern PUVs offers a significant opportunity to improve air quality, as these vehicles comply with stricter emission standards, leading to a potential decrease in air pollutants like particulate matter and nitrogen oxides (GIZ, 2023). Studies by the Blacksmith Institute and Clean Air Asia Center (2017) estimate that significant reductions in these pollutants will contribute to cleaner air and improve public health. However, regular maintenance of modern PUVs is also crucial to ensure sustained emission control. While modern PUVs offer environmental benefits, affordability remains a major concern. The high costs of acquiring these vehicles may necessitate fare increases, potentially disproportionately impacting low-income Filipinos who rely heavily on public transportation (Mendoza, 2021). Similarly, Malasique et al. (2021) point out that the program might lead to job losses for some jeepney drivers and operators who need help to afford the cost of modernization.

Despite the challenges, the Public Transport Modernization Program offers potential benefits for both drivers and commuters. The profit-sharing models can incentivize program participation and offer a more stable income, along with a sense of ownership of the cooperative. Membership in cooperatives can grant access to social benefits such as SSS and PhilHealth, which is absent in the informalized jeepney sector. Additionally, the program can create opportunities for drivers to gain new skills and certifications necessary to operate modern PUVs and enhance their employability with the new system (Office for Transportation Cooperatives, 2024). Moreover, Modern PUVs offer improved efficiency and comfort. Features such as GPS-based route planning and designated lanes can optimize traffic flow, reducing congestion and leading to faster commuter times (Mettke et al., 2016). Additionally, improved comfort and amenities such as air conditioning could attract new riders, particularly those who opted for private vehicles (Redman et al., 2013).

### Theoretical Framework

The study utilized rational choice theory and institutional theory as the backbone for understanding the study. Rational Choice Theory of Adam Smith (1776) proposes that individuals make decisions based on a calculated assessment of a person's own interests, weighing the benefits and cost of various options to maximize their utility. Institutional Theory of W. Richard Scott (2008) on the other hand proposes that organizations, influenced by societal norms, values, and laws, adopt structures and practices from both formal and informal institutions to gain legitimacy and support, even if those practices aren't the most efficient. Formal institutions include laws, regulations, and government bodies, while informal institutions encompass cultural norms, values, and social expectations. Within the implementation of the Public Transport Modernization Program (PTMP), these theories are utilized to analyze why certain jeepney drivers and operators comply with the program while others do not.

By studying the surrounding rational considerations and the interaction between legal institutions and the informal practices of jeepney drivers and operators, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of how legal and governance structures impact compliance and resistance within regulated sectors. Furthermore, the theory offers insights into the broader implications for public transportation policy in Metro Manila. In acknowledging the complex interplay of institutional pressures and organizational responses, policymakers can design more effective and accepted policies.

In comparison to development theory and co-production theory, rational choice theory and institutional theory are applicable frameworks in understanding the reason behind compliance dynamics of jeepney drivers to PTMP. Development theory focuses primarily on broader social change, while co-production theory emphasizes citizen engagement and empowerment. Therefore, rational choice theory emerges as the preferred framework due to its emphasis on individual decision-making processes where people act based on perceived costs and benefits, with institutional theory that emphasizes formal rules and social norms that align well with the decision-making process and behaviors within organizations—the implementation of the PUV Modernization and the established tradition of jeepneys.

### METHODOLOGY

The study employed qualitative exploratory case study design to explore the compliance dynamics of traditional and modern jeepney drivers with the Public Transport Modernization Program (PTMP). The case study design was used to facilitate the in-depth detailed

exploration of a bounded system—traditional jeepney drivers (driver-operators), and modern jeepney drivers (cooperative members). As Creswell (2013) highlighted, case studies are effective for developing a comprehensive understanding of a particular phenomenon. Furthermore, following Neuman's (2002) exploratory method, this research delved into a topic that is under-researched or not well-understood, provisioning new insights into the compliance behaviors of jeepney drivers.

The study used a purposive sampling method, as recommended by Crochan (1977), to ensure the selection of individuals with specific characteristics vital to the research goals, thereby ensuring a diverse range of participants. The sample consisted of ten (10) traditional, and ten (10) modern jeepney drivers, for a total of twenty (20) participants. This sample size aligns with the recommendations of Hagaman & Wutich (2006), which suggests that 16 or fewer interviews can be sufficient to identify common themes, while a larger sample of 20 to 40 participants ensures data saturation.

The data collection was conducted from September 12-18, 2024, through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with randomly selected traditional and modern jeepney drivers who met the qualifications set by the researcher. These KIIs were chosen as the primary method for gathering data to gain a holistic understanding of the factors influencing their adherence to PTMP. KIIs are also a practical means of getting participants to the study as Focused Group Discussion (FGD) is not viable as the availability of jeepney drivers varies and there is a low likelihood of gathering the number of participants at the same time and place. The researcher maintained a neutral and objective stance during the interviews to mitigate potential biases. Participants in this study were not offered any compensation, ensuring their responses remained uninfluenced.

Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the study. Participants were fully informed of the study's purpose and procedures, and written informed consent was obtained. Anonymization was applied during the analysis and reporting stages to safeguard the confidentiality and identity of the participants. The researcher implemented strict measures to safeguard the data collected by securing all transcripts, and audio recordings with confidentiality. Access to these materials was limited to the researcher and his adviser, in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 and the policies of the Colegio de San Juan de Letran - Manila. The data will only be retained for necessary duration to complete this research, after which it will be securely disposed of.

The data collected was analyzed using thematic analysis where codes were identified and grouped into themes allowing for a comparative analysis of compliance dynamics between two groups of jeepney drivers—traditional and modern. Additionally, the comparative analysis helped to systematically examine the collected data, revealing patterns, relationships, and potential explanations for compliance and non-compliance of jeepney drivers with PTMP. Moreover, a triangulation method was employed to strengthen the credibility of the research findings. This involved incorporating multiple data sources, including KIIs with the participants and insights from relevant regulatory bodies such as the representative of the transportation department through the Public Transport Modernization Program Central Project Management Office (PTMP CPMO), a specialized unit within the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the

challenges and opportunities in complying with the regulations under the Public Transport Modernization Program (PTMP), identifying the areas for improvement in program manifestation, ensuring no jeepney drivers are left behind. The introduction of the PTMP marks a significant shift in the jeepney industry, prompting diverse reactions from its stakeholders. The program initially intended to solve the numbing problem of the public transport sector, being an informal economy that is subjected to unstable income variability and lack of social benefits. It is a program that is a product of national lobbying efforts of the National Confederation of Transport Unions, intending that PUV drivers and operators—which includes jeepneys, shall have an improved job security and working employment protections through the establishments of cooperative or corporations as an avenue of managing the same (International Transport Workers Confederation, 2022).

### Socio-economic Factors Influencing Compliance to PTMP

Professionalize jeepney drivers and enhance the livelihood within the jeepney industry. However, for traditional jeepney drivers, the financial burden is a major concern as Participants 1 and 3 highlighted the lack of capacity of their association-turned-cooperatives to purchase new vehicles. In contrast, Participant 3 fears the burden of installment payments, expressing that *"it's not that I don't want a modern jeep. The income is low, the price of gasoline is high, and the ownership [of the jeep] is not mine."*

Income variability is also presented as a pressing concern, with Participant 3 expressing concern about the proposed fixed salary system brought about by the cooperative system, which they believe offers lower earnings than their current variable-based income. Corollary, supported by Participants 5 and 9, which emphasized that the modernization threatens their financial autonomy. As Driver 9 noted, *"It would be better if someone provided the modern jeepney units to us for free or covered the payment. Regardless, we still need to figure out a way to cover the costs."* Additionally, drivers are concerned that the nature of their routes does not justify the cost and necessity of acquiring modern jeepney units—as highlighted by Participant 8.

Moreover, the preference for traditional jeepneys due to their durability and quality emerged as a theme, as Participants 6 and 7 argued that upgrading the existing jeepneys might be a more beneficial option than switching to modern ones. They highlighted the fear that modernization could compromise vehicle quality, stating, *"Instead of [traditional] jeepney phaseout, the government should provide us with assistance for repairs, spare parts for the jeep; we'll just fix [or upgrade] it."* Lastly, there is a clear resistance to government mandates as most of the participants feel pressured or coerced to comply with the franchise consolidation under tight deadlines set by the government, which they see as unrealistic given their financial situations and the economic factors such as fluctuating crude oil prices.

On the flip side, modern jeepney drivers navigated different socio-economic realities. For some, the modernization program as articulated by Participants 14, 15, and 16, provided the stability of income and acquiring social benefits, increased revenue and enhance vehicle safety—an aspect underscored by the International Labor Office (2013), as crucial for securing better working conditions, social protection and inclusive development for transitioning workers from the informal to formal economy. However, for some modern jeepney drivers, the modernization only meets a practical need. Participant 11, for instance, finds the modernization set-up better suited to his physical limitations as an older driver, emphasizing the social benefits, stating, *"This jeep [referring to modern jeep] is air-*

*conditioned and doesn't emit [black] smoke. This transformation is not just about comfort, especially for me. I'm old; I might get sick if exposed to smoke."*

Nonetheless, the sentiment towards government assistance and subsidies is mixed, while most of the modern jeepney drivers agreed that the support was sufficient, Participants 15 and 16 feels that the government support needs to be more robust to cover the high cost of amortization of the vehicles to comply with the modernization program.

In response to these multifaceted concerns, the government through the Public Transport Modernization Program Central Project Management Office (PTMP CPMO), expressed their assurance that the transportation department had reissued a new directive under DOTr Department Order 2023-022 to address concerns of both compliant and non-compliant parties with the modernization program. This includes easing the compliance requirements, such as reducing the fleet size requirements and adjusting the route rationalization criteria—in coordination with the respective LGUs. Increased subsidies are said to also be in place for purchasing modern PUVs, from PHP 80,000 - PHP 160,000 to PHP 280,000, to assist drivers in making the transition more affordable. Furthermore, to address drivers' grievances and concerns, the transportation department said that it is now focusing on easing technical compliance requirements and providing financial assistance through government-owned lenders such as Landbank and DBP.

## **Motivations and Demotivations for Compliance with PTMP**

### **Motivation for Compliance**

The modernization program mandates that drivers must consolidate to form cooperatives or corporations, it aims to standardize the working conditions, reduce individual costs—that are a burden to single driver-operator and under-operator drivers, and secure government mandated benefits (Lago, 2024). While some traditional drivers coherently emphasize their support and affirm the need for jeepney modernization. Participant 5 emphasized that he is in favor of modernization however with reservations they should remain in a single/driver operator set-up and not in a corporation or cooperatives. This sentiment is similarly expressed by Participant 9, which fears the loss of the historical vehicle type and cultural identity amidst modernization pressures, stating, *"They [government] are replacing jeepneys with mini buses. It's not a jeep anymore; it's not the same—the look and the feel."*

Moreover, many drivers desire economic security and higher income associated with traditional jeepney operations. As Participant 1 states, *"I greatly prefer this lifestyle, where I'm not overly stressed about pursuing my earnings. With our daily quotas set at around five thousand pesos, there's a promising incentive: if we exceed that amount, we receive additional rewards for surpassing our quota."* This perspective underscores the belief that 'hard work leads to significant income,' aligning closely with their values and financial goals. A sentiment also echoed by Participant 10 who emphasized that despite the potential amount of government subsidies, the financial burden because of modern vehicles remains insurmountable given the level of their current earnings, this underscoring financial dependency on the traditional jeepney and its system.

Contrarily, the majority of modern jeepney drivers believe that modernization inspired them to comply with the program because of the economic benefits they gained. Several factors stimulate compliance with the PTMP, notably among modern jeepney drivers.

Many drivers, including Participants 12, 13, 19, and 20, are motivated by the prospect of employment security and the desire to support their families. Participants 15 and 16 noted improved working conditions in newer jeepneys, such as increased safety features and comfort, as key motivators. Moreover, Participants 17 and 18 emphasized the cooperative model's operational efficiencies, highlighting benefits like predictable revenue and collective decision-making. They noted, *"Being part of a cooperative has accelerated our operations. Our cooperative actively participates in making critical decisions, which streamlines our processes. Based on my experience, the modernization system for public utility vehicles (PUVs) is vastly superior to previous methods."*

Perceived institutional barriers, such as the need for further government support and information, have eroded drivers' confidence in the modernization process. Participant 4 laments the lack of government support while emphasizing the lack of timely reliable information, suggesting a communication gap that exacerbates the drivers' concerns about modernization. Similarly, Participant 6 expresses anxiety about the shift to a cooperative model, which reduces individual authority over their activities and reinforces emotions of insecurity and impotence in the face of government mandates. Traditional jeepney drivers are intensely aware of how political leadership affects their livelihoods, as Participant 3 observed. He also stated that changes are driven by whoever is in power, implying a clear relationship between political stability and economic well-being. The disappointment expressed over unmet promises by previous administrations and election campaign promises illustrates their suspicion and cynicism of government modernization programs.

### **Demotivation for Compliance**

The initial phase of the modernization program, aimed at industry consolidation, seeks to optimize revenue and minimize miscellaneous expenses of drivers (Pontawe & Napalang, 2018; Mateo-Babiano, 2016). However, the transition to modernization is fraught with demotivations particularly for traditional jeepney drivers, and initial reluctance from modern jeepney drivers. Participant 5 believed that *"there is a significant gap in fully understanding and addressing the needs of those who have chosen not to comply, and the government didn't really ask the opinion of real drivers."*

Financial barrier is an impediment, with Participant 3 and 15 cited the high cost of amortization for modern jeepneys. This notion is also supported by Participants 4 and 10 which expressed concern in the repayment viability given their financial situations. In connection, Participant 3 adds that consolidation would restrict their operational flexibility, impacting their income management. Moreover, emotional attachment is also a barrier as Participants 19 and 20 find it difficult to part with their traditional units, as it represents their livelihood and cultural heritage. Lastly, Participant 11 and 17 highlights a psychological barrier, where resistance stems from drivers' reluctance to change long-held practices.

The PTMP CPMO said that it is continuing to refine the process in on-boarding the drivers with the modernization program by reducing the technical and financial burdens. There is already an increase in available subsidies and emphasizes the freedom of cooperatives to choose modern jeepney units to any manufacturers and suggests that they can opt for lower-priced locally manufactured units as long as they comply with the program's standards. Social support initiatives are in place to mitigate demotivation and training and driver capacity building was designed to improve motivation—which the participants in this study do not have awareness and knowledge

about. The agency also intends to improve communication efforts by combating misinformation and clarifying the goals of the modernization program. Caravans showcasing modern jeepney models are part of the strategy to engage drivers and operators directly. Additionally, they said that they are refining compliance rules and coordinating with other government agencies and local governments to address broader concerns, such as route rationalization and the technical demands of modernization.

## Drivers' Challenges and Opportunities in Complying with PTMP

### Challenges to Compliance

International Labor Organization (2016) suggests that reformers should examine the political and economic aspects of reform in their country and identify what helps and what hinders change. However, the results show widespread resistance to modernization, primarily due to the perceived need for more government support. Participant 6 expresses the need for more government officials' understanding of the real challenges drivers face. Similarly, Participant 9 questions the necessity of switching to modern vehicles, arguing that such changes may not lead to improved services. He underscores this point, stating, *"Our [traditional] jeep is fine; it is still running. We are actually lacking jeeps on our route. People are lining up, and now they plan to remove the jeep and replace it with that minibus, which won't make a difference."*

Resistance to the push for modernization is not uncommon among drivers because they feel coerced to comply without adequate support from the government. This is voiced by Participants 3, 6, and 7, who collectively expressed that the government needs to understand their challenges fully. Participant 8 argues that the government fails to recognize the financial strain placed on drivers. Participant 9, on the other hand, advocates for the retention of current vehicles, suggesting that transitioning to modern vehicles might not yield the anticipated improvements in service. This sentiment was further emphasized by Participant 10, who underscored the need for a careful review of the modernization program. He stated, *"In this situation, we don't want to oppose the government, but if that's what they want, we have to comply. However, can we small jeepney operators actually manage this? I hope they will simply improve the existing jeepneys instead of phasing them out. Operators are willing to enhance them; they can take the old ones to the shop for repairs. It shouldn't be about switching to costly minibuses that cost 2.8 million. Where would we get that kind of money? I sincerely hope they just focus on upgrading the jeepneys."*

Transition may also be hampered by informal workers' reluctance to abandon their established routines, which is motivated by anxieties of losing independence, skepticism of formal institutions, or perceived process difficulties (Chen & Carré, 2020). This is demonstrated by conventional drivers' preference for operating independently rather than in cooperatives, which is also echoed by Participants 1 and 2, who showed a desire to own their vehicles rather than share managerial responsibilities. They believe that this autonomy will allow them to retain control over their profits. Participant 5 agreed, adding that working alone allows drivers to save more money while avoiding the difficulties of a collective pay system.

Some drivers struggle with the transition due to their emotional and sentimental attachment to traditional jeepneys. Participants 19 and 20 shared their initial reluctance to part with older models they had driven for years, as their connection to these vehicles is deeply tied to their livelihoods. This emotional bond makes it challenging for them to accept the necessity of change. The complexity of adaptation adds

another layer of difficulty. Participant 17 noted that some drivers resist modernization because of their strong commitment to traditional practices. This resistance highlights the cultural and emotional aspects of the transition, showing that not all drivers are ready to embrace the new systems introduced by the PTMP.

Additionally, modern jeepney drivers face challenges such as the complexity of vehicle maintenance. Participants 12 and 13 expressed concerns about this, stating, *"It's difficult [to maintain modern jeeps] because with the modern jeep, you can't just fiddle with it; a mechanic needs a laptop before they can even open it, unlike the old ones that you could fix quickly and be done. With the modern ones, it can take hours before you can operate again if it's broken."* The reliance on specialized technology for repairs often leads to extended downtime and lost profits, unlike traditional jeepneys, which are low-maintenance and easy to repair.

### Opportunities to Compliance

Despite the challenges, several opportunities arise from compliance. Performance-based incentives are a major motivator, as highlighted by Participant 11, who shared, *"I greatly prefer this lifestyle, where I'm not overly stressed about pursuing my earnings. With our daily quotas set at around five thousand pesos, there's a promising incentive, if we exceed that amount, we receive additional rewards for surpassing our quota."* This statement underscores how exceeding daily quotas is not only financially rewarding but also provides additional benefits, encouraging drivers to aim for higher earnings. Long-term financial security also emerges as a significant opportunity. Participant 20 expressed satisfaction with receiving a regular salary, which alleviates the stress associated with previous payment systems. This newfound stability greatly contributes to their overall peace of mind at work.

Moreover, the transition to scheduled operations at terminals has led to more stable income for many drivers. Participant 17 noted that having assigned routes eliminates the stress of searching for passengers, leading to a more reliable revenue stream. This stability significantly boosts their confidence in their day-to-day operations. The cooperative system received positive feedback from various drivers who expressed satisfaction with its operation management. Participants 19 and 20 pointed out that the cooperative alleviates many concerns, suggesting that cooperative management may enhance perceptions of government effectiveness indirectly through service delivery.

In response, the transportation department said that it is considering enhancing financial assistance through increased subsidies and offering training and support programs to build cooperative capacity. Social benefits, such as access to SSS, PAG-IBIG, and PhilHealth, are also being provided to ensure that drivers who have complied receive long-term security and support. On the other hand, for non-compliant drivers, the transportation department said that it is implementing strategies that include increasing the subsidy for vehicle purchases and providing options for lower-cost local vehicle models. The government is also addressing concerns about job displacement by offering TESDA training programs, livelihood packages, and scholarships for dependents.

The complexities surrounding the DOTr Department Order No. 2023-022, or the Public Transportation Modernization Program (PTMP), reflect the authority vested in the Department of Transportation (DOTr), an administrative agency responsible for regulating the transportation sector. This landmark reform policy aims to formalize the long-neglected public transport industry in the Philippines. The

compliance dynamics of jeepney drivers in Metro Manila with PTMP represent a critical case study. As the transportation sector grapples with modernization, long-standing practices are challenged. Implementing PTMP has caused institutional change that disrupts existing arrangements and challenges the status quo among jeepney drivers, fostering the emergence of new norms and practices. Stakeholders, especially jeepney drivers, respond differently based on their socio-economic experiences and attitudes toward the modernization program.

Traditional jeepney drivers highlight financial barriers and challenges related to vehicle ownership as critical obstacles to compliance. They also resist the government's push for cooperativism, which is often rooted in a deep attachment to their vehicles and livelihoods and a lack of trust in government intentions. This supports the notion of the rational choice theory where the resistance is a rational choice because of the socio-economic impact on their livelihood as they are reliant on their jeepneys. This resistance can be viewed through the lens of institutional theory's regulative pillar. Their reactions are not just against the financial and practical implications of modernization but also represent a response to the formal regulatory pressures exerted by the government. These drivers see the modernization program and the push towards cooperativism as external regulations that disrupt their traditional practices and livelihoods.

This resistance highlights the tension between existing socio-economic practices and the formal rules imposed by the government, illustrating how regulative forces within institutional theory can influence the behavior and attitudes of individuals and groups within a society. They prioritize familiar routines over potential financial gains, with entrenched norms and cognitive frameworks reinforcing their resistance—which is also a rational choice because maintaining the status quo will not cause disruption and changes where drivers are comfortable. For these drivers, traditional jeepneys represent more than just a mode of transport—they symbolize long-standing livelihoods and community ties, which modernization initiatives threaten. As Notche (2023) explains, jeepneys have historically represented the resilience of local entrepreneurship and community-centered livelihood.

Moreover, traditional jeepney drivers have long operated as solo driver-operators, with each owner holding a single franchise. Though economically rational, the proposed shift toward cooperative models threatens their sense of autonomy and heritage. As Scott's cultural-cognitive pillar suggests, deeply held beliefs and values embedded in jeepney operations inform this resistance. Modernization is perceived not only as an economic shift but also as a cultural dislocation. Scott's normative pillar also helps explain traditional jeepney drivers' resistance to cooperativism, which may stem from a long-standing value system that emphasizes individual ownership and autonomy, historically favoring a more independent mode of operation.

In contrast, modern jeepney drivers approach compliance with a spirit of collaboration, emphasizing the importance of cooperative dynamics, anticipated income, social benefits, and government assistance in adhering to the program. The decisions of these drivers are their rational choice and be influenced by a normative shift towards collaboration and shared responsibility, where cooperatives are viewed as a means to secure better income, social benefits, and a more sustainable business model. Participation in cooperatives has fostered a sense of agency and shared decision-making, aligning with contemporary governance principles. Moreover, modern jeepney drivers exhibit greater openness to compliance, driven largely by perceived economic benefits and governmental support.

Furthermore, Drivers' willingness to modernization aligns with global trends towards sustainability, as the modernization program emphasizes environmentally friendly and efficient transport systems. The drivers' participation in cooperative models is not merely a financial decision but reflects broader normative shifts in societal expectations regarding public transportation's role in addressing environmental challenges. Scott's normative pillar highlights how these drivers' behavior aligns with evolving societal values, where modernization is seen both as a business necessity and a contribution to national development goals. This parallels the concept of accepting the legitimacy of an authority that encourages compliance with its laws even when those laws conflict with an individual's own self-interest—where modern jeepney drivers accept the legitimacy of the DOTr.

Both traditional and modern drivers acknowledge the economic potential of the modernization program, but their attitudes are shaped by their rational choices and different institutional factors. For modern drivers, economic necessity and the perceived benefits of modernization drive compliance. In contrast, traditional drivers face financial difficulties and distrust government initiatives, complicating their engagement with the program. This aligns with Scott's (2008) cultural-cognitive pillar, which suggests that traditional jeepney drivers hold deep-seated beliefs about the jeepney's role as a symbol of individual entrepreneurship and Filipino cultural identity. Their resistance to modernization can be seen as a defense of this identity. However, modern jeepney drivers, on the other hand, may view the shift towards cooperatives and modernization as a necessary evolution to ensure the sustainability of their livelihood amidst challenging economic and environmental conditions. The government's framing of modernization as a forward-looking and essential step facilitates this perspective. This also resonates with Scott's normative pillar, highlighting how modern drivers' acceptance of cooperatives and modernization reflects broader societal shifts toward collaboration and sustainability.

In this context, the government plays a pivotal role as an institution that imposes rules, norms, and expectations. These regulations, while limiting certain individual actions, simultaneously guide decision-making behaviors within organizations. Rational Choice Theory posits that people—in this case, the jeepney drivers—engage in a cost-benefit analysis when faced with institutional constraints. Consequently, the imposition of regulations by governmental bodies can be interpreted as influencing the decision-making calculus of organizations. As organizations strive for compliance, they weigh the potential costs of adhering to regulations against the benefits derived from such compliance. This dynamic reflects the overarching premise of Rational Choice Theory, wherein actors assess their choices in light of the incentives and disincentives presented by the regulatory environment.

Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge that the government also provides crucial resources, support, and legitimacy, which serve as incentives for compliance. The presence of these resources can significantly alter the decision-making landscape for organizations. According to Rational Choice Theory, the availability of such incentives encourages organizations to align their actions with policy directives, thereby enhancing the likelihood of compliance. In weighing the advantages of adhering to regulations against any associated costs, organizations are motivated to engage in rational decision-making that aligns with the expectations of regulatory frameworks.

To ensure the success manifestation of the PTMP, policymakers must

move beyond top-down communication and embrace a co-creation model. Developing clear and accessible communication strategies to bridge these knowledge gaps and stakeholder capacity building is key. Co-creation not only builds trust but also ensures solutions are contextually grounded in the realities faced by both traditional and modern jeepney drivers. This participatory approach aligns with Scott's institutional theory, particularly the cultural-cognitive and normative pillars. By involving drivers in the policy-making process, their deep-seated beliefs and values are acknowledged, helping to bridge the gap between traditional practices and new regulations. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and legitimacy, encouraging compliance.

Additionally, innovative financial schemes involving public-private partnerships should be explored. Collaborations with financial institutions or private investors can provide lower-interest loans or shared equity models, reducing the upfront costs for traditional drivers and making the modernization process financially feasible and socially inclusive. It could also be possible for the government to subsidize the interest rate burden to the cooperatives in the monthly amortization of modern jeepneys. In Scott's Institutional framework, addressing real needs is crucial to facilitating effective institutional change, and financial assistance is a critical component in alleviating drivers' immediate economic pressures.

Developing clear and accessible communication strategies is crucial to bridge knowledge gaps and build stakeholder capacity. These strategies should consider the socio-cultural contexts of the drivers, ensuring that information is not only disseminated but also internalized and acted upon. This approach respects the normative pillar of institutional theory by aligning new practices with the existing value systems and expectations of jeepney drivers. Apart from the strategies employed by the government, using a diverse communication channel—including community meetings, social media platforms, and local dialects—ensures that drivers fully understand the implications of the program, which will help reduce uncertainty and build confidence in governmental initiatives. Recognizing traditional jeepney drivers as credible stakeholders can nurture a collaborative mindset that is a cornerstone during the implementation of the Public Transport Modernization Program (PTMP).

Finally, expanding targeted training programs focusing on cooperative models, vehicle maintenance, and financial management is essential. Providing educational resources empowers drivers and aligns with Scott's concept that institutions evolve through stakeholder capacity-building. Such training enhances drivers' knowledge and preparedness for transitioning to modernized operations and must consider their basic living needs to encourage participation. Through these comprehensive measures, the transition can advance compliance and foster a constructive, collaborative environment that resonates with the principles of institutional theory, ultimately leading to a more modernized and inclusive transportation framework.

## CONCLUSION

The Public Transport Modernization Program (PTMP) represents a formal government-led intervention that imposes new norms. Yet, the study fails to account for the deeply embedded values and practices that uniquely define traditional Filipino passenger jeepneys as a sector. This dissonance creates significant challenges for policy implementation. The findings underscore the importance of developing a more inclusive approach to modernization, one that is sensitive to the socio-cultural and emotional realities of traditional

jeepney drivers. Policymakers must recognize that mandating coercive measures alone will not yield compliance if it disregards the institutional context in which these drivers operate. As institutional theory suggests, successful change requires a balance between external pressures and internal institutional realities.

Rational Choice and Institutional theory offered a valuable lens for analyzing the complexities of compliance and non-compliance with the Public Transport Modernization Program (PTMP) in the case study of jeepney drivers in Metro Manila. Traditional jeepney drivers operate within an institutional context characterized by long-standing norms of single-vehicle and franchise ownership, informal employment structures, and a strong cultural attachment to their vehicles. These institutional factors create significant resistance as a result of drivers' rational choice about PTMP, as modernization challenges these drivers' established way of life. To them, traditional jeepneys are not merely a tool of livelihood—they embody independence, identity, and community connections. Institutional theory highlights how these norms and values are deeply embedded, creating path dependency that makes change difficult.

Conversely, modern jeepney drivers—already integrated into the new cooperative-based model—operate within a different institutional framework. Their adoption of modernized vehicles reflects a shift in norms toward collective ownership and a more formalized, regulated transport system. These drivers have navigated the institutional pressures of modernization, motivated by economic incentives, government support, and a future-oriented vision of public transportation. This group aligns more with the normative, coercive, and mimetic pressures of institutional change, which institutional theory describes as key drivers of organizational adaptation. By acknowledging these factors, policymakers can design interventions that are not only financially and operationally viable but also culturally and emotionally acceptable.

Moreover, a law or public policy must effectively serve its intended purpose, which is to benefit the welfare of its target population. To effectively manage and implement the program, jeepney drivers who have transitioned to modern jeepneys from traditional ones could play a crucial role in influencing their resistant peers. It is important for the government to recognize that a one-size-fits-all approach is ineffective, as the program requires the acceptance of the stakeholders it affects. The government could consider shouldering the interest rates on the monthly amortization payments for modern vehicles through state-owned lenders. Additionally, the legislature could explore reducing taxes on the manufacturing and sale of public utility vehicles (PUVs) classified as modern jeepneys for public transportation. These measures would alleviate the primary financial burden on drivers, which is a significant barrier to compliance with the program.

Future researchers could further explore the intersection of institutional pressures, socio-economic factors, and emotional motivations to create a holistic understanding of compliance dynamics in the transportation sector or other similar industries affected by government interventions influencing institutional frameworks. Given that this study is only limited to traditional and modern jeepney drivers, it can serve as a stepping stone for related studies, such as those on newly emerged and formalized sub-sectors within the jeepney industry—like public assistance officers and dispatchers. This paper could inform future reforms and strategies for manifesting the Public Transport Modernization Program, achieving the ultimate objective of this paper being to identify areas for improvement, ensuring that stakeholders in the jeepney sector are not left behind.



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