


Transport anxiety and work performance



Authors:

Jenni Gobind^{1,2} 

Affiliations:

¹Research Department,
Milpark Education,
South Africa

²Wits Business School,
University of Witwatersrand,
South Africa

Corresponding author:

Jenni Gobind,
jenika.gobind@wits.ac.za

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Orientation: It has often been taken for granted that employees in general should arrive at work within a stipulated time. While the process of commuting from home to work and vice versa should ideally result in minimal effort, this seamless process of commute is supposedly expected not to result in anxiety or work-related stress. Individuals that rely on public transport for their daily commute to and for work are faced with physical and emotional challenges that are associated with the use of South African public transport. Enduring these challenges on a daily basis has a tendency to raise commuter levels of anxiety. The discomfort and cause of anxiety gradually trickle into the workplace infringing on work performance.

Research purpose: This article examined whether the anxiety associated with public transport results in poor work performance.

Motivation for the study: The rationale for conducting the study stemmed from the need to understand the implication of transport anxiety on the South African employee, as transport related concerns are often mentioned as a stressor in the South African workplace.

Research approach/design and method: A qualitative content analysis was relied on, and 15 commuters were interviewed. Interviewee responses were grouped into themes and analysed for frequency of word usage.

Main Findings: The study revealed that commuters experience worry and concern for their safety and job security when relying on public transport. Findings indicated that anxiety associated with using public transport does indeed result in poor work performance.

Practical/managerial implications: In light of the findings of the study it is suggested that employers take cognisance of the implications of transport anxiety in their workplaces and to give careful consideration when addressing disciplinary matters pertaining to late coming, absenteeism and poor performance.

Contribution/value-add: Re-evaluation of the South African public transport system and workplace policy is therefore recommended. Public transport has a negative impact on South African workers, of which the South African employer needs to be cognitive of when considering a sanction for poor performance.

Introduction

How work is done, by whom and where are ever changing. Yet, how individuals travel to work remains constant. Compressed work weeks, flexitime, job sharing, telecommuting and freelancing are becoming the norm in most parts of the world. The Danish workforce, according to Steed (n.d., p. 1), have a higher degree of flexitime at work, 'often being able to choose when they start their working day and having the flexibility of working from home'. These changes to the modes of work have yet to reach South African shores. The South African employee remains committed to extended working hours and 5–6 days a week work schedules. However, employee commitment to work comes at a price: long working hours compounded by the challenge of obtaining safe and reliable transport each day result in untoward anxiety. Transport, many may argue, is the least of one's concerns when trying to secure and maintain employment. In South Africa, employees are concerned with getting to work on time and returning to their homes within a reasonable time. The findings of Citrix, the London-based Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR), as referred to by Dube (2015, p. 1), state that 'flexible working hours could save commuters up to 44.1 billion rand, by reducing commuting costs and time'. In another study, Leshoro (2015), who also referred to the findings of the study, added that 'commuters may well save close to R40 billion per annum in transportation costs, which translates to about 320 million hours of travel time that could be shaved off'.

The crux of employment in South Africa is that flexitime is not as widely practiced, and irrespective of Dube (2015) and Leshoro (2015) references, the benefits of flexitime does not apply to the average employee. Flexitime, job sharing and compressed week are first world solutions that have

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yet to find place in the South African work context. Flexitime is not an option for the average South African employee, as not all South Africans can enjoy the privilege of 'working from home'. The CEBR study noted that the findings were applicable to individuals that work with information and technology and that 'not all sectors could function remotely'; McAravey as cited by Dube (2015, p. 1) used the adage of how a 'bartender cannot be away from the bar'. Regretfully, sectors that are unable to function remotely are forced to commute to work. According to General Household Survey of 2014 Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), 45.3% of South Africans rely on minibus taxi or sedan, taxi or bakkie, taxi and busses for their daily commute (Stats SA, 2015, p. 54). Many South Africans are unable to access private transport because of economic constraints and are therefore obligated to rely on public transport. This article investigates the anxiety associated with using public transport and the implication thereof on work performance.

Background

Like any other country in the world, South Africa relies on transport as a vehicle that enables the economy. Public transport in particular has a crucial function in facilitating the movement of the South African work force. National Household Travel Survey of 2013 (Stats SA, 2014, p. 3) noted that 'approximately 85% of individuals in urban, metropolitan and rural areas travelled during the 7-day reference period', prior to the surveys being conducted. In comparison, Stats SA (2014) noted that:

...in 2003, three-quarters (75.6%) of South Africans travelled during the seven days prior to the survey. This increased to 81.4% in 2013. Of the 42.4 million people who took trips across all provinces, slightly more than one in four people lived in Gauteng, 17.9% in KwaZulu-Natal, and 12.3% in Eastern Cape. (p. 3)

The 5.8% increase in travel since 2003 indicates that more individuals are travelling. This is indicative in the increase in the use of public transport (bus, taxi and train); minibus taxis showed an increased usage of 10.0% when compared with 2003 and 2013 data (Stats SA, 2014, p. 3). These data are supported when comparing the National Household Travel Survey of 2013 with the General Household Survey of 2014 which noted that there has been a drop in the use of private transport by 6.2% in 2014, while public transport usage increased by 9.4% (Stats SA, 2013, 2014). There clearly is a greater reliance of individuals on public transport. Individuals that engage in the daily commute do so for various reasons, many of whom travel for work. However, the historically marred South African infrastructure does not permit easy movement between the township and suburb or central business district (CBD) (Visser & Ferrer, 2015, p. 68).

The act of commuting is often not pleasurable as these individuals are subjected to hours of travel and continuous queues (Visser & Ferrer, 2015, p. 200). Newman (2014) explains that the duration of travel impacts on the commuter:

...a journey lasting more than 15 minutes is associated with increased anxiety. As the journey time increases beyond

30 minutes, the negative effects of this form of commuting affect all aspects of personal well-being. (p. 16)

As Wei (2015) noted:

...the ride to work is also associated with increased blood pressure, musculoskeletal problems, lower frustration tolerance, and higher levels of anxiety and hostility. It can cause bad moods when arriving at work and coming home, increased lateness and missed work, and worsened cognitive performance. (p. 1)

These levels of physical strain contribute to commuters' discomfort and cause of anxiety which trickle into the work place infringing on work performance.

Problem statement

Many South Africans, as in most parts of the world, travel to and from work. Individuals who rely on public transport in South Africa are subjected to intolerable transport challenges (Visser & Ferrer, 2015). The stress and anxiety experienced by these individuals in getting to work and returning home affect their ability to function compared to individuals that do not share similar challenges (Durham, 2017). It is therefore the intention of the study to investigate whether the anxiety associated with public transport results in poor work performance. The problem statement simply put is do the challenges associated with using public transport manifest in poor work performance.

Research question

The research question is as follows: Does the anxiety associated with public transport result in poor work performance?

Research methodology and design

Qualitative field research methodology was used to interview participants who did not own a motor vehicle and who relied on public transport as a means of commuting to work. A semi-structured interview schedule was developed and piloted. The schedule was rephrased achieving a Flesch-Kincaid readability of 81.9. A sample of 15 public transport commuters who spend an average of 4 h commuting time in the Melville Johannesburg area were interviewed. Interviews were transcribed and captured on to excel. Content analysis was used, while relying on Atlas ti. interviewee statements were grouped into themes. Downe-Wambolt (1992) as cited by Bengtsson (2016) states that:

... content analysis is a research method that provides a systematic and objective means to make valid inferences from verbal, visual, or written data in order to describe and quantify specific phenomena. (p. 314)

The goal is to link the results to their context or to the environment in which they were produced. (p. 9).

Results are presented in words and themes, which makes it possible to draw some interpretation of the results. (p. 10).

Theoretical framework

Public transport in South Africa has always been tainted by the lack of infrastructure between township area and CBD. Many South Africans continue to commute from historically

segregated areas to the CBD for work, school or medical treatment, irrespective of the availability of transport. The convenience of a readily available taxi outweighs the safety implications that come with the convenience. Unsafe and unroadworthy taxis often driven by unskilled taxi drivers that disregard traffic regulations are an ongoing concern. 'Of the 36 lives lost daily on our roads three are killed in taxi related incidents' (Arrive Alive, 2017, p. 1).

The associated reputation of taxi drivers often results in taxis being pulled off for inspection, which in turn results in delays, offering the commuters very little solace in arriving at their destination on time. Kerr (2015, p. 3) add that minibus taxis spend most of the time in transit so that commuters often do not reach their destinations on time. These disruptions contribute to commuter anxiety; missing the taxi resulting in continued late coming threatens livelihoods, as continuous late coming may often result in dismissal (Israelstam, n.d.). The late coming and the consequences thereof, constant panic of not arriving at a destination on time, are factors that contribute to commuter anxiety. Not completing tasks on time, rollover of deadlines, getting home late (Kerr, 2015, p. 1), unable to collect children on time, after-care imposing penalty for late collections and not being with family and loved ones add to the conundrum.

Being found for poor performance because of late coming often forces employees to resort to alternatives. Employees that are dictated by public transport constraints often move jobs in an attempt to relocate closer to work. Elderly parents are forced to move in as makeshift after-care providers, as transport constraints disrupt working hours. These stressors have health and relationship implications. Demands placed by family needs, taking care of one's health and personal safety, missed transport that may result in absenteeism are stressful (Kerr, 2015).

Cause of anxiety

Macmillan (2015) reiterates Newman's (2014) and Wei's (2015) conclusion that the effects of commuting can be felt by the individual in several ways. Macmillan (2015) speaks of strain caused to lumber and shoulders, mood swings and greater exposure to pollution. Cheng (2010, p. 876) refers to various authors like Sadock and Sadock (2007) who mention that anxiety is a response towards a form of apprehension or feeling of dread and uneasiness resulting in discomfort and worry. Cheng (2010, p. 876) has also referred to James (1999) who mentions a pertinent point in relation to anxiety that emanates from the uneasiness of travel resulting from factors relating to 'what is yet unknown in one's self or an environment'. For the purpose of this article, the term 'anxiety' should not be confused or associated with social phobia. Anxiety in this context is associated with the apprehension and uneasiness associated with the experience of travel. Apprehension and uneasiness originate from the queuing, overcrowding, delays and unpredictability associated with public transport accompanied by the worry of not arriving at a destination within a scheduled time (Luke & Heyns, 2013, p. 6).

Transport may contribute to anxiety

The use of public transport may contribute to anxiety particularly if an individual suffers from agoraphobia, which according to Ebenezer (2015, p. 215) 'is a phobia that is characterised by symptoms of anxiety and panic that are associated to "travel, crowded public places and the use of lifts"'. Commuters that suffer from agoraphobia in many instances are aware of their discomfort, the trigger that contributes to the perceived anxiety. Natarajan et al. (2015, p. 6) have also reported on interpersonal interactions and criminal activity pertaining to public transport. Natarajan et al., 2015 mention that the disorder and criminal activity experienced by commuters that utilise public transport is a resultant factor that contributes to commuter anxiety. Excluding the commuter that is stressed because of their own idiosyncrasies, the general commuter is also faced with stressors that are associated with public transport.

According to Natarajan et al. (2015, p. 5), participants in the above-mentioned study cited aggressive boarding and pushing where stronger commuters frequently forced their way through, whereas women, children and elderly often waited. This type of interaction is often accompanied by rude behaviour and remarks of the driver and passengers, 'verbal altercations between drivers and passengers that ultimately result in aggressive driving or skipping stops, drivers not providing change or passengers trying to pay less than the fare' (Natarajan et al., 2015, p. 5). In these instances, the stress levels of the commuter are heightened by the experience. Apart from the expected pushing and shoving by commuters, vulnerable groups, women in particular, are weary of the safety of their person and possession. Natarajan (2016) and Cheng (2010) mentioned similar concerns of commuters in India and Taiwan that felt that public transport did raise concerns of safety. These are concerns that emanate from overcrowding in addition to the presence of individuals with criminal intent, as Natarajan et al. (2015) revealed in the findings of a study conducted in El Salvador. Commuter experiences of similar situations are worrying as they are routinely faced with these interactions to and from work. Clark (2001) in an Irish study stated that rush hour travel contributed 45% to workplace stress, whereas in a United Kingdom (UK) study individuals that experience long hours of commute show as Durham (2017) stated:

...signs of increased anger and resentment at work, absenteeism, lateness, and an ability to concentrate and perform to the same standards as those who live in much closer proximity to the workplace. (p. 2)

Subsequently, respondents in a South African study conducted by Luke and Heyns (2013) reiterated these concerns.

Overcrowding, delays and unpredictability

Overcrowding, delays and unpredictability, also mentioned by Cheng (2010), are factors that cause commuters to stress. Carrel and Walker (2015, p. 12) agree with Cheng (2010) that among other 'specific reasons mentioned, the most important ones were overall unreliability, crowding levels, wait time

unreliability and unreliability of in-vehicle travel times' (Carrel & Walker, 2015, p. 12). While a United Kingdom report conducted by Passenger focus (2013) notes that:

Some participants gave examples of delayed bus journeys resulting in important appointments being missed, such as medical appointments or lateness to work, which at best reflects badly on the individual. Others talked about being late to meet friends/relatives, which ranges from inconvenient to very stressful. (p. 8)

Lateness to work is a concern for most commuters relying on public transport. Sullivan (2015) notes that lateness for work has proven to impact employee retention, as the stressors of travelling longer distances to work have resulted in employees opting for positions closer home. Studies according to Sullivan (2015, p. 1) have shown that employees living closer to their employ 'remain at work 20 percent longer'. Sullivan further mentions that stressors relating to commute and lateness for work has an impact on work performance.

Work performance

Workplace related performance is seen as competencies that are expected of an employee within the workplace fulfilment of these competences used to measure work performance. The inability to reasonably perform may raise concern for poor performance. Workplace stress and various forms of anxiety may influence workplace performance. For example, stressors relating to transport often manifest in anxiety; the experience of overcrowding during the commute, delays in arriving at work, unpredictability and unreliability of public transport are factors that impact the performance of employees who rely on public transport (Durham, 2017). In South Africa, continuous lateness to work, for instance, is a dismissible offence (Israelstam, n.d.) and may be seen as an example of misconduct. Employees who are familiar with late coming policy are aware of the consequence. Being aware of the sanction and not being able to control or prevent delays can be stressful.

Organisations are aware of the costs that emanated from loss in production and negative staff morale as employees compare their punctuality with others. Gottholmseder, Nowotny, Pruckner and Theurl (2009, p. 559) concur that stress levels not only effect 'employee health and well-being but also an organisation's bottom line'. Customer dissatisfaction and the constant policing and managing of repeat offenders are taxing on the organisation, and therefore, repeat offenders are dealt with accordingly (Israelstam, n.d.). According to Zamora (n.d., p. 1), unrealistic or excessive worry can result in jitteriness, fatigue, racing or pounding heart. Zamora (n.d., p. 1) add that these signs of worry may suggest the inability of working in teams or focusing on work. Employees may focus on revisiting their travel, the worry and fear of revisiting the overcrowding, delays and arriving at their destination at unsafe hours or later than usual. Lateness at work may also result in overtime which in turn results in a late commute home, which may be just

as stressful. Studies have unequivocally shown that commuting does play an indispensable role in perpetuating workplace stress (Gottholmseder et al., 2009, p. 572).

Anxiety and poor work performance

Numerous articles have been written on anxiety and work performance; one such group of authors have concluded that workplace anxiety is a serious concern (McCarthy, Trougakos, & Cheng, 2015), whereas Martin, Goryakin and Suhrcke (2014) and Gottholmseder et al. (2009, p. 559) agree that 'perceived stress level of workers with a special focus on the effects of commuting' was an impediment to employee performance. Anxiety and/or depressive disorders (ADDs), according to Bokma, Batelaan, van Balkom and Penninx (2017), 'cause substantial disability, work absenteeism and presenteeism'; however, the effect of ADDs far exceeds that of other diseases such as chronic somatic diseases (CSDs). Anxiety resulting from a stressful commute according to the above-mentioned authors has clearly pointed to poor work performance; Martin et al. (2014, p. 301) reiterate that there is a 'statistically significant negative associations between commuting, stress and work performance'. Findings in this article point to similar suggestions, which are discussed next.

Discussion and findings

Of the 15 participants that were interviewed, ten were female and five male. More females agreed to be interviewed than males, who in the opinion of the researcher were more reserved than female participants. Majority of the participants worked in and around Melville, Johannesburg, with the most common type of position held by the participants was that of administrator followed by office cleaner. Participants' level of qualification varied from Grade 11 to Diploma; one participant was in the process of completing a Bachelor's degree. Participants indicated that they were concerned about the anxiety experienced because of delay, unreliability and lack of transport, their safety as female commuters and the need to make changes to the transport system and workplace policy pertaining to late coming.

Transport a cause of worry

Participants were asked whether getting transport to work and home caused them to worry. One participant felt that getting transport to work and home in the morning and afternoon was not a concern, particularly because this participant was a male administrator with odd working hours who often relied on private transport. However, remaining participants indicated that they did worry about transport to and from work. As waiting in line and arriving at work and home were a concern. Participants indicated that:

'...there is always a very long queue and I have to wake up very early, like I have to leave home at 5 am and I get home at around 8 pm late. It is tiring and this affects my performance'. (P2, female, 41)

'Yes, it does cause me to worry as I do not want to arrive for work late but, I would like to arrive home before it is too dark'. (P4, female, 26)

'What is it about transport, which causes one to worry?' was posed next. Participants mentioned that they have many concerns regarding transport; many indicated that they had to wake up far earlier than their colleagues (with private transport) in order to get transport to work in the mornings; many complained that public transport was unreliable and limited in certain areas with long queues exacerbating the frustration. Strike action and un-roadworthy vehicles have been identified as a factor that add to the unpredictability of public transport. Traffic congestion was also identified as a concern. As stated by participant 3:

'Sometimes you get to the taxi rank and there are long queues but no taxis and I worry about getting to work on time'. (P3, gender fluid, 32)

'It is not convenient, I get to where I catch that taxi early but sometimes taxis are not there in the morning. In the afternoon it worries me because I have to get home and study at the same time having to sleep early to be able to wake up next morning'. (P3, gender fluid, 32)

Delay and lack of transport

The lack of public transport from historically disadvantaged areas continues to be an issue of discontent, 'there are limited taxis from my area that go to work' (P1, female, 39). Safety is a worry for most commuters, the fear of arriving late to work or walking in the dark: 'safety, because it is not safe walking in the dark especially in the area that I live in' (P5, female, 19). A different type of concern relating to safety is the un-roadworthy vehicles and the reckless driving: 'public transport is unreliable at times, too much traffic and un-roadworthy public transport' (P6, female, 23), and 'drivers never pay attention to the speed limits in the morning due to rush hour' (P1, female, 39).

Transport concerns and how participants work during the day were investigated. Participants indicated that transport concerns were a worry and caused them to leave work early leaving their tasks incomplete. The comments of some participants are given in the following: 'sometimes as I rush to finish my work earlier in order to leave earlier' (P2, female, 41); 'yes, sometimes you get to work tired from the transport stress' (P6, female, 26); 'yes, I have to leave 10 minutes before my knock-off time to catch the early taxi to avoid traffic and the queue' (P5, female, 19); and 'yes, I constantly need to check the time so I can leave on time and lose focus' (P5, female, 19). As a result, participants see a need to leave work early; all except one participant felt that they did not have to leave work in a rush because of transport concerns.

Transport and gender

Female participants revealed that they worried about transport-related issues towards the end of the day. The comments of some female participants are as follows: 'yes, if I go out late to work I will wait for eternity just to go home, simply waiting for transport' (P2, female, 41); 'only when it nears knock-off time' (P4, female, 26); 'no, it only worries me at the end of the day' (P7, female, 34); 'yes, I have to arrive at

the taxi rank before, a certain time to avoid long queue' (P4, female, 26); and 'no, only when it becomes late, and I get home at night. I worry about my safety' (P5, female, 19). Some other female participants shared their thoughts or worries regarding transport getting home. Participants were concerned of their safety, as shown in the following comment: 'when it gets dark, I will still be waiting for transport and that will increase my chances of getting mugged or raped for that matter' (P6, female, 23). Safety and exhaustion, and the inability to cope with a shortened day as home commitments are neglected are some of the other concerns raised by the participants: 'if I can get home late, I will not have enough time to do my work at home' (P6, female, 23) and 'the fact that I need to have time for my books before I sleep every day' (P6, female, 23). The time spent on the road or waiting in line for transport or the lack thereof is burdensome compounded by the unreliability of public transport, 'the long queue', 'traffic and transport breaking down', 'either the bus is late or it is too early or it does not show up or it is stuck on the way before you get home' and 'it rains or having to wait in long queues in taxi ranks because of shortage or delay of taxis' (P2, female, 42).

Many female participants, like most working parents, have children in aftercare. Dropping off and collecting children from aftercare is a concern for most parents who depend on public transport, 'I hate getting home in the dark, fetching the baby from aftercare on time' (P4, female, 26). The fear for one's own safety when travelling in the evening is heightened when parents particularly mothers have to collect their children stand in queues faced by the factors mentioned by previous participants waiting for transport.

Unreliability

Participants indicated that adhering to appointments while relying on transport was a cause to worry. Most participants missed appointments because of transport, resulting in the inconvenience of being at work either very early or late. The comments of some participants are as follows: 'yes, I have missed meetings at work because of transport problems' (P3, gender fluid, 32) and 'no, when I have appointments I use public transport earlier to make sure I arrive 30 minutes before' (P3, gender fluid, 32). Having to justify reason for late coming based on transport is equally frustrating as colleagues are unable to relate to the inconvenience experienced, as many colleagues are not faced with similar challenges relating to transport. One participant commented as follows: 'yes, it does because even if I try to explain the people find it hard to believe' (P3, gender fluid, 32).

The severity of delays resulting from transport may result in warnings and possible dismissal. Two participants have come close to receiving warning, whereas one participant did receive a warning for late coming, as reflected in the following quote: 'yes, I have received a warning for coming late' (P5, female 19). Participants have considered changing jobs because of transport issues. Concerns relating to delays in obtaining transport and the inconvenience experienced with

regard to transport have resulted in participants changing jobs because of transport concerns, whereas others have contemplated a change of job because of the concern. Findings are clear, all participants agreed that they would perform better had they not being concerned about transport. The comments of some participants are as follows: 'yes, because I would stay longer at work and complete my work than rushing to find a taxi' (P8, male, 45) and 'I would perform the same but I might just perform far better because of being relaxed about transport' (P8, male, 45).

Participants were asked if they were concerned about using a taxi; two participants stated that using a taxi or a bus was not a concern. However, the remaining participants disagreed. Participants complained about three distinctive themes: the expense of using a taxi, the reliability and roadworthiness of taxis and the lack of driver attention to abiding to the rules of the road. Some participants' responses are as follows: 'bus is not reliable, taxi is too expensive' (P9, female, 61); 'some of these taxis and busses are not well maintained' (P3, male 32); 'yes, when the taxi breaks down in the free-way' (P2, female, 41); 'yes, because some of the taxis are very poor in terms of quality and waiting in the line for the taxi to get full' (P6, female, 23); and 'yes, some drivers are irresponsible' (P5, female, 19).

Need for change

Lastly, participants were asked what they would like to change about their current transport arrangement. Two participants were complacent about making changes, whereas the remaining participants mentioned that they would like to change the long queues and the time taken to travel to and from work, and they commented as follows: 'the long queues and minutes wasted waiting for taxis, like I have to wake up early just to make sure I arrive early and dodge the traffic' (P10, male, 21). Participants also indicated that employers should accommodate late coming until changes are made to the public transport system. While other participants made recommendations, two participants wanted to add more taxis and busses: 'I would like them to add more taxis' (P6, female, 23) and 'there should be more busses' (P9, female, 61). Another participant wanted to include public transport to and from the area that they reside in, and he added as follows: 'there are no busses in the area and the train is too far, I would like to change the quality of the taxi and to find them near to where I work' (P4, female, 26). Safety remained a concern for commuters; one participant added that: 'I would like it to be more safe and roadworthy' (P3, gender fluid, 32) and 'it would be better to get transport that would take me from home to work in that way I would feel much safer' (P3, gender fluid, 32).

Limitations and recommendations

This study focused on a qualitative study. As per the methodology, the findings were based on a small sample. It would be valuable to gather the responses of a larger sample

or ideally to have compared responses of a quantitative and qualitative sample through a mixed method design. It is further recommended that these findings should be seen as a platform for municipal departments to re-evaluate and review the South African road transport system and infrastructure needs, more importantly for employer to review workplace policy pertaining to late coming.

Conclusion

Transport to and from work, long queues, and unreliable and unpredictable transport are a concern for many commuters who rely on public transport, for their daily commute to and from work. Un-roadworthy vehicles, drivers that disregard traffic regulations and transport strikes are factors that are beyond the control of the daily commuter. This is further exacerbated by poor infrastructure, the lack of transport from historically disadvantaged areas and traffic congestion because of poor town planning. The unpunctuality of the South African transport system and the strain placed on commuters to leave and arrive home at the oddest and unsafe hours have burdened commuters to rush to finish work, constantly check their time and try to maintain appointments, which are stressful factors impacting work performance. Delay, unreliability and lack of transport, and fear for one's safety as a female commuter are constant factors that contribute to commuter workplace performance. Poor work performance because of transport anxiety has resulted in commuters receiving warnings for late coming, being threatened with possible dismissal and forced to change jobs because of transport concerns. The need to effect change to the South African transport system and workplace policy pertaining to late coming are imperative for the safety and well-being of employees who are forced to rely on public transport for their daily commute. Commuters would have performed better if transport was not a concern. It, therefore, can be said that anxiety associated with the use of public transport has a negative impact on South African workers, of which the South African employer needs to be cognitive of when considering a sanction for poor performance.

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Competing interests

The author declare that she has no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced her in writing this article.

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