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## TRAFFIC CONGESTION & LONG DRIVING HOURS: IMPACT ON STRESS, EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH AMONG DRIVERS IN SHARJAH

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**Background.** The health impacts of traffic congestion and long driving hours have lately grown to become a principal worldwide driving-related concern. Recently, the UAE has been titled 'The most congested country in the Middle East'; and Sharjah, the third largest city in the UAE, is known for its rush-hours; with its residents constantly spending long commuting hours in slow-moving traffic. The purpose of the study was to detect the health effects associated with driving in congested traffic, and long driving hours among Sharjah residents.

**Methods.** The sample was chosen based on convenience among Sharjah residents, specifically drivers (>18 years of age) holding a drivers permit. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed and completed by 414 participants, and a Descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted.

**Results.** Out of 414 participants, 66.7% agreed that they spend way too much time driving, and 86.5% agreed that they suffer from traffic congestion in Sharjah. The average Sharjah resident drives 3 hours and 10 mins per day; significantly higher than the worldwide average ( $p < 0.0005$ ). Traffic congestion lead to greater emotional health effects; mostly stress (80.4%) and aggressiveness (52.2%), whereas long driving hours lead to greater physical health effects; mostly back pain (66.8%) and pain in the legs (56.7%). Limitation of daily activities among Sharjah residents was the main consequence of repeated exposure to traffic congestion (81.2%), and long driving hours (65.7%).

**Conclusion.** Exposure to traffic congestion and long driving hours correlates with a wide range of physical and emotional health distresses; each having its own respective provoking factors.

### Biography

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