

A STUDY ON EFFECTIVENESS OF SHAKTHI SCHEME-A MAJOR POLICY INITIATIVE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT:

The Congress government in Karnataka implemented its flagship guarantee schemes, viz., the 'Shakti Scheme'. The 'Shakti' scheme is the provision for free intra-state transportation in non-premium bus services of Karnataka State, for women (including 'female students, Transgender, and Physical Handicapped) belonging to all domiciles of the state. Its' beneficiaries also include females belonging to the age cohort of '6 -12 years' and 'transgender' of all domiciles of Karnataka. This paper intends to analyse the need for and impact of the 'Shakti' scheme.

This paper analyses the socio-economic impact of the 'Shakti' scheme in the backdrop of the various critical comments received. It examines Karnataka's reducing female labour work force participation and the factors contributing to it. It also makes a note of the nature of women's unpaid household labour. It examines the two major factors, viz. economic dependency and economic security. It underscores the various factors obstructing the mobility of women in public places.

The Public transport in India is essential for the mobility of hundreds of millions of people, especially low-income and middle income households. The economic burden of transport costs, unsafe travel conditions, and unreliable services hinder their basic access to education, employment, and essential services. the "Shakti Scheme" is an imaginative drive sent off by the Public authority of Karnataka in 11 June 2023. Free travel Scheme is the fruitful execution of comparative plans in Delhi, Punjab and Tamil Nadu, the essential goal of Shakti Plan is to engage ladies by giving them free travel transport facilities. It shows that the Shakti plot has brought about a huge expansion in both ridership and income for every one of the four street transport organizations, including KSRTC BMTC NWSRTC, and KKSRTC.

Key Words: Shakthi Scheme, KSRTC, Households, Free Travel, Public Transport

INTRODUCTION:

In the present scenario, women's empowerment and the promotion of women's rights are gaining global significance. Women's empowerment refers to providing women with the rights and capabilities of making their own choices and decisions in all walks of life independently for themselves and their families along with Kids. The role of women in the development of the economy is being highlighted everywhere. As the ideology of women's empowerment gains importance, governments are also bringing in policies and schemes, which mainly have the objective of empowering women. One such scheme is the Karnataka Government's Shakti scheme, it offers **free travel in non-luxury / non-premium state-run buses** for women (and transgender persons domiciled in Karnataka, in the entire state road transport corporation in Karnataka.

The scheme came into force on 11th June, 2023. The scheme is to achieve women's empowerment by offering them freedom of mobility. The scheme also enables the eligible beneficiaries to save on their travelling costs which denote an excess income for them and their families.

CONCEPT OF FREE TRAVEL IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT:

The fare free public transport policy is not a new concept in India. Prior to Karnataka, Delhi primarily implemented through schemes in Delhi's "pink ticket" for women, to empower women by improving their access to jobs, education, and safety, and in Tamil Nadu Governments have implemented this scheme. Punjab has recently adopted the Fare-Free Public Transport policy for women and in Maharashtra, 50% relaxation on travel fares is offered to women passengers.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Bockova (2023) conducted a study to provide Historical evidence of the effect of fare subsidies in the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic Countries. The Researchers investigated the impact of introducing public transport subsidies for socially disadvantaged population groups and identified that there is a significant difference in the travelling of people in Slovak Republic after introducing the Fare-Free Public Transport, whereas a discount of fares proved to be insignificant in the Czech Republic as there was a lesser difference in how people travelled using public transport before and after the implementation of the policy.

Dr. M. Kalimuthu (2023) The purpose of this study is to better understand passenger opinion and female satisfaction about the free bus service provided by the government of Tamil Nadu and to assess the extent to which female passengers use these services. This study includes a detailed research report on the target group and a descriptive analysis of the impact of free buses in Tamil Nadu.

Dr. Rajeshwari M. (2024) this study is descriptive in nature and based on secondary data. The study found that women's empowerment can have many positive effects on women's lives, including better economic opportunities, more control over their lives, greater participation in politics and greater gender equality. The study also found that allowing women to participate fully in the economy leads to better-paid work for women, who can help lift them and their families out of poverty.

Jyothi (2025) Explained that the Shakti has brought about a huge expansion in both ridership and income for every one of the four street transport organizations, its included Karnataka State Street Transport Company (KSRTC) and Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Company (BMTC). The information shows that around 36.5% of the respondents concur or firmly concur that the Karnataka Shakti program has urged ladies to partake in the country building process, while 63.5% differ or are nonpartisan about its effect, demonstrating the way that the view of the members of the usefulness of the framework are unique. Around 40.3% of respondents concur or firmly concur that the Shakti framework has altogether added to ladies' financial steadiness, while 59.7% differ or are impartial, reflecting various view of the framework's effect on ladies' monetary dependability.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS:

"Shakti Scheme" is an innovative initiative launched by the Government of Karnataka in 2023. Inspired by the successful implementation of similar schemes in Delhi, Punjab and Tamil Nadu, the Shakti Scheme is to empower women by providing them free bus transport services within the state. Empowering women to improve their work and achieve financial independence is one of the main concerns of every government. The Karnataka government has promised free transport to the people and with the Shakti programme, the Karnataka government is trying to empower women in the state to develop their livelihoods.

In this study, the researchers tried to understand the benefits that women received through the Shakti program launched by the Karnataka government. The researchers also used a structured questionnaire

to find out how the system was financially profitable using basic data (400 responses although the Shakti Scheme provides free bus travel to women across Karnataka).

NEEDS FOR THE STUDY:

The Shakthi scheme launched by the Government of Karnataka in June 2023, offers free bus travel for women across the state in the state run transport corporations such as KSRTC, BMTC, NWRTC and KKRTC. The Scheme empowers women by enhancing their mobility, financial independence and access to opportunities. The Study focuses both Urban and rural Area in Mandya Region. There is a need to evaluate how effectively it has empowered women socially, economically, and in terms of mobility and employment. The study seeks to understand the effectiveness of Shakthi scheme in Mandya Region.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

The scope of our study could include examining the implementation of the scheme, its analyzing the impact on women's access to education, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities, assessing the effectiveness of the scheme in promoting women's financial inclusion, and exploring the challenges and potential solutions for further enhancing women's mobility and financial independence. By conducting a descriptive study, we can provide valuable insights into the empowerment of women through this scheme.

The scope of my study could include examining the implementation of the Shakthi scheme, and analyzing the impact on women's access to education, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities, assessing the effectiveness of the scheme in promoting women's financial inclusion, and exploring the potential solutions for further enhancing women's mobility and financial independence.

OBJECTIVE:

1. To understand the effectiveness of Shakthi scheme in Mandya region.
2. To identify the Mobility of women work force in Mandya region.
3. To Analyse the socio-economic impact of Shakthi scheme in Mandya region.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The Study developed based on the Descriptive methods. The Shakti Scheme, initiated by the Government of Karnataka in 11 June 2023, offers free bus transportation to women in the state. In the present study the data has collected using a structured questionnaire. The structured question was distributed in Google forms to collect the required data. These questionnaires were distributed to students, working women, Transgender and Physically Handicapped Respondents. The survey links were sent through Social Media, such as email, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter. To collect the samples, applied Simple Random Sampling method, the collected data from the survey were analyzed for further insights. Also collected information from secondary sources which includes websites, Annual reports, news papers, and other secondary sources.

DATA ANALYSIS:

Table No-01			
EFFECTIVENESS OF SHAKTHI SCHEME IN MANDYA REGION.			
SL. No	Response	NO. of respondents	Percentage
1	Working Women	140	35%
2	House Hold Women	112	28%

3	Students	84	21%
4	Transgender and PH	64	16%
Total		400	100%

Sources: Primary Data

Analysis: From the above table represent that, as per respondent response, 35% respondents are working women's, 28% House hold women respondents expressed opinion on Shakthi Scheme, and 21% respondents are Students expressed opinion, and 16% respondents are transgender and PH respond and expressed their opinion on effectiveness of Shakthi scheme in Mandya region.

Table No-02			
BENEFITS FROM SHAKTHI SCHEMEMANDYA REGION			
SL. No	Response	NO. of respondents	Percentage
1	Financial benefits /Savings	180	45%
2	Mobility to freedom on work	92	23%
3	Households Needs	88	22%
4	Health & Social Empowerment	40	10%
Total		400	100%

Sources: Primary Data

Analysis: From the above table, 45% respondent expressed opinion on financial benefits /Savings have been increasing through Shakthi scheme, and 23% respondent's expressed their feelings on mobility of workforce through the scheme. 22% of the peoples are using free bus to carry groceries, and household materials for their daily life. 10% of the people's are using free buses to health and social empowerment in Mandya Region.

Table No-03			
MOBILITY OF WOMENS THROUGHSHAKTHI SCHEME			
SL. NO	Response	NO. of respondents	Percentage
1	Work	164	41%
2	Tourism Place visit	80	19%
3	Shopping	76	19%
4	Temple	72	18%
5	Occasion Programmes	8	3%

Sources: Primary Data

Analysis:

From the above table represent that 41% respondents responses on mobility on work, 19% respondents expressed opinion on tourism place visiting, 19% respondents responded on shopping purpose, 18% respondents responded on temple visits. And remaining 3% of respondents responded on Occasional programs.

FINDINGS:

The women empowerment variables such as save transportation cost, followed by female labor force participation, women's economic independence, better economic opportunities, more control over their (women) lives, women can come out of poverty, encourage participation in self-help groups,

enhanced women's autonomy and decision-making power, more employment opportunities, boost in religious tourism, in predicting satisfaction of women travelers with reference to KSRTC'S Shakti scheme. In the Demographic analysis, Purpose of Travel, Private Employee, age of the women travelers, it was found insignificant influence on satisfaction of women travelers in KSRTC buses under Shakti scheme.

1. Respondents who belong to the education qualification of U.G Level are highly satisfied with the highly satisfied with the Shakti Scheme by KSRTC.
2. In the Marital status category respondents who belong to the Unmarried category, in the Monthly Income category respondents who belong to the Monthly Income of Less than Rs. 20,000 are highly satisfied with the Shakti Scheme by KSRTC.
3. Respondents who belong to the Work Experience of 5 Years to 10 Years and in the Religion based respondents who belong to the Hindu religion are highly satisfied with the Shakti Scheme by KSRTC.
4. There were also mentions of conflicts between passengers such as arguments over seats or perceived misuse of the scheme.
5. Few respondents concerns about the lack of female staff on buses and at bus stops which could assist women in need.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Empowering women through financial literacy programs has been effective in various regions.
- Scale up the number of buses, especially in corridors where demand increased significantly post scheme.
- Use data to identify peak hours and routes where women usage is high and deploy additional services there.
- Improve readability and last mile connectivity of women in semi-urban and rural areas.
- Enhance CCTV, helpline numbers on buses, better lighting at stops to enhance safety.
- Explore cross-subsidy or alternative revenue to offset cost of scheme.
- Collect periodic feedback from women users to identify pain-points.

CONCLUSION:

The Shakti scheme, implemented by the Karnataka government, has garnered attention due to its provision of free ridership for women on buses operated by various government agencies. While similar schemes have been introduced by other state governments in the past, a comprehensive evaluation of the success of these schemes will take a few years as most of them are recent initiatives. The benefits of such policies can accrue over a long period and extend beyond safety and more employment opportunities to being free, enjoying more leisure time and having the ability to take on more activities.

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