



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Passenger Satisfaction On Zero Ticket Bus Travel Scheme

A TAMIL NADU GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

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Abstract: Women empowerment in India focuses on improving women's social, economic, and political status to achieve equality and dignity. In Tamil Nadu the Government has initiated various programs for enabling women empowerment such as Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammaiyar Ninaivu Higher Education Assurance Scheme, Sathiyavanimuthu Ammaiyar Ninaivu Free Supply of Sewing Machine Scheme, marriage assistance schemes etc., The new innovative schemes for the women in state are Puthumai pen Thittam and Zero Bus ticket travel scheme for women in government buses.

The Zero Bus Ticket Travel Scheme, also known as Vidiyal Payanam, is a Tamil Nadu Government initiative that provides free bus travel for all the women passengers in the city buses. This scheme aims to promote women's mobility and participation in the workforce, especially for those in the informal economy. Besides helping them to save on travel expenses, the Zero-Ticket Bus Travel (ZTBT) scheme for women in Tamil Nadu has enabled them to indulge in leisure activities such as visiting temples, beaches and parks besides meeting friends and relatives.

This study aims to understand the passenger satisfaction and the impact that the scheme has created among the beneficiaries. The researcher has applied mixed methodology (qualitative and quantitative) in this study. Purposive sampling method was used to obtain the needed number of samples from the universe. The sample size is 150 respondents hailing from Coimbatore District. Case study was also carried out to understand various qualitative views of the respondents. The major findings of the study indicates that the Zero Bus Ticket Travel scheme has a positive impact on passenger satisfaction. The elimination of fare-related barriers has led to increased ridership, particularly among low-income groups, students, and senior citizens.

Index Terms - passenger satisfaction, the Zero-Ticket Bus Travel (ZTBT) scheme

Introduction

Women empowerment focuses on improving women's social, economic, and political status to achieve equality and dignity. This involves promoting education, healthcare, and economic independence, along with addressing gender-based violence and inequality. The government of Tamil Nadu under the Department of Social Welfare and Women Empowerment announced a scheme whereby women travelers can travel without paying any fare in government-run normal-fare buses (for short distances of up to 30 kilometers) in cities and towns in the state. Women are issued zero tickets (a fareless ticket) when they travel in these buses. The Zero-Ticket Bus Travel Scheme for women was launched in 2021. This is one of the social welfare schemes that encourage women to participate more actively in work and reduce their dependency on private mobility.

The Zero Ticket Bus Travel Scheme, also known as Vidiyal Payanam, is a Tamil Nadu government initiative that provides free bus travel for women in ordinary city buses. This scheme aims to promote women's mobility and participation in the workforce, especially for those in the informal economy. Besides helping them to save on travel expenses, the Zero-Ticket Bus Travel (ZTBT) scheme for women in Tamil Nadu has enabled them

to indulge in leisure activities such as visiting temples, beaches and parks besides meeting friends and relatives. That the scheme would be used for travel not related to work was one of the concerns opponents raised when the Tamil Nadu government announced the scheme but the survey shows it helped women enjoy their time out and also break restrictive patriarchal norms around travelling and engaging in leisure activities. The recent statistics of Government of Tamil Nadu reveals that the women passengers save about Rs.888 every month through the ZTBT scheme. Savings across different occupational categories of women passengers range from Rs. 756 to Rs. 1012 per month.

The primary objectives of the Zero Ticket Bus Travel Scheme are to increase the accessibility of transportation for individuals who may be excluded due to financial constraints, enhance public transit usage, and reduce reliance on private cars to alleviate traffic congestion and environmental pollution. One of the key aims is to provide an equitable and inclusive means of transportation for all members of society, particularly vulnerable and marginalized populations such as the elderly, students, and persons with disabilities. These groups often face challenges in accessing reliable and affordable transport.

The scheme also contributes to reducing environmental pollution by encouraging more people to use buses instead of private vehicles. Public buses, especially electric ones, tend to produce fewer emissions per capita compared to individual cars, making it a cleaner alternative for daily commuting. Moreover, by improving access to public transportation, the scheme aims to promote social equity by offering equal opportunities to all residents, regardless of their income level or socioeconomic background. Another important objective is to provide relief to those who might be struggling with the economic burdens of daily commuting costs, making essential travel more feasible for people without financial stability. In Tamil Nadu, Coimbatore city is a recently developing city and employment-generating hub, that provides various job opportunities and higher education platform. This study aims to understand the passenger satisfaction and the impact that the scheme has created among the beneficiaries.

Review of Literature

Manikandan.R, Sowmitha.K, Vidhya.N (2024). This study has investigated women passengers' socio-economic condition and economic benefits through the Zero Ticket Bus Travel Scheme. In Coimbatore District, rural and urban free bus users were selected, and the Snowball sampling techniques were used for selected sample passengers. This study found that the ZTBTS scheme increases employment opportunities through women's mobility. More than 90 per cent of the passengers were working women. The women using this free bus regularly were saving almost Rs. 253 in a month and they spent that money on other purposes (i.e., Food, Cosmetics, travel). Women using this free bus have suggested improving the quality of the free bus, increasing the benefits for women's empowerment.

Gomathi D, Revathy.S (2024), in their study 'A Study on Women Welfare Among Zero Ticket Bus Travel in Coimbatore' aims to assess the impact and effectiveness of the Zero-ticket Travel Scheme for Women Passengers in public buses implemented in Coimbatore. This research focuses on understanding the socio-economic benefits, mobility improvements, and overall satisfaction levels of women beneficiaries under this scheme in Coimbatore. Furthermore, the study evaluates the non-economic effects, including increased accessibility to job opportunities, healthcare, and education, and the enhancement of women's overall quality of life. The primary objective is to identify the challenges faced by the beneficiaries and suggest recommendations to improve the scheme's efficiency, reach, and impact on women's welfare in Coimbatore.

Renugadevi. S, Sudharsan. G (2025), states that the Tamil Nadu's public transportation plays an important role in rendering mobility affordable and accessible, particularly for working women. The Zero Ticket Bus Travel Scheme introduced in 2021 has significantly impacted the labour force participation of women through reduced commuting costs and enhanced accessibility. This study explores working women's perception of the scheme in Coimbatore, with a focus on their satisfaction level, faced challenges, and socio-economic benefits. Based on extensive data analysis, this study explains the impact of the scheme on work, education, and health services and identifies areas of improvement. The findings of the study are intended to provide policymakers with useful data to enhance the scheme's effectiveness, thereby enhancing women's mobility and empowerment in the long run.

Research Methodology

Research methodology is a way of explaining how a researcher intends to carry out their research. It's a logical systematic plan to resolve a research problem. The researcher has applied mixed methodology both the qualitative and quantitative study. Descriptive research design is a type of research that aims to systematically obtain information to describe a phenomenon, situation or population. The researcher used purposive sampling method to obtain the needed number of samples from the universe. The sample size was 150 respondents hailing from Coimbatore District. Case study was also carried out to understand various qualitative aspects of the respondents. The collected data were analyzed using simple percentage analysis.

Objectives of the study:

- To study the socio demographic characteristics of the respondents
- To assess the satisfaction of the respondents availing Zero Ticket bus travel scheme
- To study the economic and social impact of the Zero Ticket bus travel scheme
- To suggest suitable measure to improve the scheme

Case Studies of Zero Ticket Bus Travel Scheme**Case Study of a Nurse**

A nurse saves ₹1,000 a month by availing the Zero ticket bus travel scheme. She travels free for her job every day. She said that she purchases necessities for the home with the money she saves. Her stress and financial burden are lessened by the complimentary trip. She is able to better balance work and life. She feels strong and self-sufficient. Additionally, she assists her younger sibling with school expenses. She can travel safely and independently. She no longer needs to take out loans to pay for her daily commute. She expressed that her life has become better overall and thank the Government for initiating the scheme for the benefit of the women.

Case Study of an Insurance Sector Employee

An insurance worker's monthly transportation expenses are reduced by ₹1,200. Courses for skill development are funded with the additional funds. She is now comfortable moving forward in her career. She is also in favor of her younger sister going to college. Her commute is more comfortable and safer. Instead of spending money on travel she now spends it on nutritious food. Her workplace is now more accessible. The financial relief is greatly appreciated by her family. She hopes that more programs like this will empower working women.

Case Study of a Textile Worker

Through the program, a textile worker saves ₹900 a month. She pays her child's school fees with the money. She is guaranteed to arrive at work on time. She said that she is able to buy her family better groceries. She feels financially secure and thanked the Government for the scheme. She no longer worries about transportation costs every month. She urges other females to join the program. Her attendance at work has also increased. She thinks the program provides women with financial autonomy.

Case Study of a Street Vendor

A street vendor in Coimbatore says that she rides the free bus at least fifty times a month. She puts the ₹858 she saves back into her vending business. She is able to grow her store and it is helpful for getting the additional revenue. She now purchases fresh vegetables in larger quantities at a reduced cost. She serves more clients every day. She expressed happily that she need not walk miles to sell her things instead she can avail free bus. She is now able to meet her kids' medical expenses and she also uses the savings to cover household bills. She feels safer and more self-reliant. Her general quality of life has increased as a result of the scheme.

Case Study of a Domestic Worker

In Coimbatore, a domestic worker makes roughly ₹800 a month availing the scheme. She uses the funds to purchase books for her kids. She is no longer required to borrow funds to pay for her bus fare. Her commute to work is now secure and hassle-free. Each month, she experiences less financial stress. She is able to visit her parents often. She hopes that the plan will be carried out for generations to come. She is now more motivated and energetic at work. Her independence serves as an inspiration to her kids.

Case Study of an Agricultural Labor

An agricultural worker saves ₹1020 every month. She invests the money in farming tools. This has improved her crop yield and earnings. The scheme allows her to travel easily to the market. She spends more time with her children. The free travel service helps her reach the agricultural field on time. She has gained more confidence in her abilities. She hopes the government continues supporting women like her. The scheme has truly transformed her life.

Case Study of a Fish Vendor

A fish vendor saves ₹980 a month by using the free scheme to travel every day. She uses the money she saves to purchase fresh seafood. Because her products are of higher quality, her income has increased. She now provides services to more clients in various places. Her business growth has been enhanced by the plan. She uses her savings to pay for her kids' tuition. Taking the bus makes her feel safer. She hopes to see more programs like this for female business owners. She feels that she is financially stable.

Case Study of College Student

Free bus transportation is advantageous to a student in Coimbatore. She sets aside money for exam fees and educational materials. She is now able to go to additional coaching sessions. Less stress has helped her to perform better academically. She now has easier access to education. She doesn't depend on her parents for

her transportation. She gets to college on time in comfortable way. Her aspirations to pursue higher education are supported by the plan.

Case Study of Tailor

A tailor in Coimbatore saves approximately ₹1250 every month. She makes an investment in higher-quality sewing supplies. She has gained more clients as a result of this. She can deliver clothes more quickly. Over the time, her income has grown. She is more assured in her ability to manage her company. She hopes that free travel surely helps more women passengers. Her goal is to grow her tailoring business.

Salient Findings of the study:

More than half of the respondents belong to the age category of 25-40 years. Majority (88%) of the respondents belong to the Hindu religion and they were hailing from rural areas. Sixty two percent of the respondents were married. More than half of the respondent's monthly income was between Rs.1000-Rs.10000. Ninety two percent of the respondents have saving habit. The majority of respondents have expressed that their quality of life has improved after the usage of ZTBT. Nearly sixty percent of the respondents told that the cleanliness of the bus were good. Three forth of the respondents have more access to education and employment through this scheme. Half of the respondents rated the behaviour of conductor and driver was good. Nearly three forth of the respondents have issues with crowding during the peak time. The majority (74%) of the respondents have reduced the usage of two-wheeler after availing ZTBT scheme. Majority of the respondents are able to save Rs.500-1000 by using the ZTBT. Majority of the respondents feel secure in ZTBT because of the closed-door system.

Suggestions and concluding remarks:

The findings of the study indicates that the Zero Ticket scheme has had a positive impact on passenger satisfaction. The elimination of fare-related barriers has led to increased ridership, particularly among low-income groups, working women, students and senior citizens hence creating a social impact. Many passengers reported improved financial relief, enabling them to allocate funds to other essential expenses especially for savings and domestic usage thereby creating an economic impact in the lives of the women. The study reveals that the majority of the respondents are satisfied with the ZTBT scheme and opined that the scheme has created a social and economic impact in the lives of the women.

In terms of service quality, opinions were more diverse. While passengers appreciated the cost savings, concerns were raised about overcrowding, longer wait times, and increased pressure on bus infrastructure. In some cases, the increased demand has led to a decline in service reliability, with passengers experiencing delays and discomfort due to packed buses. Based on the findings the researchers have suggested certain recommendation for the improvement of the scheme.

- The old buses shall be replaced by new buses.
- The fitness and condition of the buses shall be monitored and improved.
- The frequency of the buses shall be increased during the peak hours.
- Increasing the number of buses may reduce the delays and discomforts due to packed buses
- Drivers and conductors may be given training to handle the passengers with receptive manner. Stress buster programs may be organised for the drivers and conductors.

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