

Impact of Tamil Nadu Free Bus Travel Scheme for Women on Workforce Participation and Economic Empowerment

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Abstract: *The Free Bus Travel Scheme for Women, introduced by the Tamil Nadu government in 2021, aims to empower women by providing cost free transportation. This initiative alleviates the financial burden of daily commuting, especially for working women and students, improving access to jobs and education. The schemes broader objective is to increase female workforce participation and encourage the use of public transport. This study evaluates the schemes impact on women in Cuddalore, analyzing data collected through surveys. The results indicate that the initiative significantly benefits working women, enhancing their socioeconomic status and mobility, while addressing key challenges related to gender equality and economic growth.*

Keywords: free bus travel, women empowerment, public transport, workforce participation, Tamil Nadu

1. Experience of Some Precedents:

Fare - free public transport (FFPT) has been implemented in various countries with varying degrees of success. While it aims to reduce traffic congestion, pollution, and promote

social inclusion, the actual outcomes have been mixed. Some argue that FFPT is economically unsustainable and can lead to increased mobility without a corresponding decrease in private vehicle use.



Tamil Nadu Scheme Facilitating Free Bus Travel for Women:

After being sworn in as Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu on May 7, 2021, M. K. Stalin introduced a scheme allowing all working women to travel for free on government - run

buses. The lack of a specific definition for "working women" means that nearly all women can benefit from this initiative. The primary goal is to enhance women's participation in the workforce and encourage the use of public transportation.



With no limits on the number of trips, the scheme offers an open - ended subsidy for women's travel. The state government has allocated an annual subsidy of ₹1, 200

crore, based on the assumption that women account for 40% of the ₹3, 000 crore annual ticket revenue from city and town buses.

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In contrast, the previous AIADMK government's initiative focused on women's empowerment through direct subsidies for two - wheelers, which faced criticism for potentially increasing traffic congestion and pollution. While that program aimed at personal mobility, the current

administration promotes public transport as a means to empower women, considering the associated social costs. This new scheme seeks financial sustainability and effectiveness while providing alternatives to achieve its objectives.



A Way for Bringing More Economic Opportunities for Women:

Women in Tamil Nadu have less access to personal vehicles and rely more on public transport. Free public transport can empower them, providing better access to jobs and education, particularly for those in the unorganized sector who often find travel costs prohibitive.

Currently, working women make up only 31.8% of the workforce, compared to 59.3% for men, according to the 2011 census. The free travel initiative, costing the state ₹1, 200 crore, is expected to benefit around 40% of bus riders—working women and students. Experts believe this measure will boost women's participation in the workforce, enhancing economic growth and uplifting their socio - economic status.



The Tamil Nadu Government will go a Long Way in Bringing More Economic Opportunities for Women:

The free bus travel scheme for women, introduced by Chief Minister M. K. Stalin in Tamil Nadu, is gaining attention for its potential to enhance ridership, transform women's lives, and strengthen the state's economy. This initiative has received praise from many, particularly working women who often rely on public transport due to limited access to private vehicles.

A 2020 study by the Institute for Transport and Development Policy (ITDP) highlighted affordability and safety as major concerns for women commuters in Chennai. By offering free bus services, the scheme empowers women, improving their access to jobs and education. For those from

economically disadvantaged backgrounds, this initiative significantly enhances mobility and accessibility, benefiting approximately 2.8 million women in Tamil Nadu.

Analysis Table

Name of the Scheme	Free Bus Service Scheme for Women
Launching Date	May 7, 2021
Launched By	Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu
Managed By	Tamil Nadu Government
For Whom it is launched	Women
Survey	Data collected by 40 forms.

Model Form**Passenger's satisfaction survey on free bus scheme for working women****Free bus service for working women**

- 1) Name _____
- 2) Age
 - a) Below 20 years b) 20 - 30 years c) 30 - 40 years d) Above 40 years
- 3) Marital status
 - a) Married b) Unmarried
- 4) Name of the working place _____
- 5) How many trips do you used per day?
 - a) 1 - 2 trips b) 2 - 3 trips c) 3 - 4 trips d) 4 - 5 trips
- 6) How far is your home from the work place?
 - a) 1 - 2 km b) 2 - 3 km c) 3 - 4 km d) 4 - 5 km
- 7) How much money do you spend per month?
 - a) Below Rs.500 b) Rs.500 - Rs.1000 c) Rs.1000 - Rs.1500 d) Rs.1500 above
- 8) How much money do you saved per month?
 - a) Below Rs.500 b) Rs.500 - Rs.1000 c) Rs.1000 - Rs.1500 d) Rs.1500 above
- 9) Is this scheme useful for you?
 - a) Yes b) No
- 10) Please state how you would rate the FBSWW scheme during (COVID) pandemic period?
 - a) Very Good b) Good c) Neutral d) Bad
- 11) Please state how you would rate the FBSWW scheme after pandemic period?
 - a) Very Good b) Good c) Neutral d) Bad
- 12) This scheme will benefit the working women. Do you agree?
 - a) Yes b) No

Information's from the Collected Form's:

As discussed throughout this work, the purpose of this research was to analyze the impact of the 'Free Bus Travel for Women' scheme, particularly for working women in Cuddalore.

A conceptual framework was designed as a tool for this study, consisting of 12 independent variables representing the influence of various factors through multiple variables. Some working women in Cuddalore were selected as the target population, and the sample was derived from this population using a simple random sampling method.

Questionnaires were designed to collect quantitative data from the samples. The data collected from the sample was entered into Microsoft software, which was used to perform various statistical analyses.

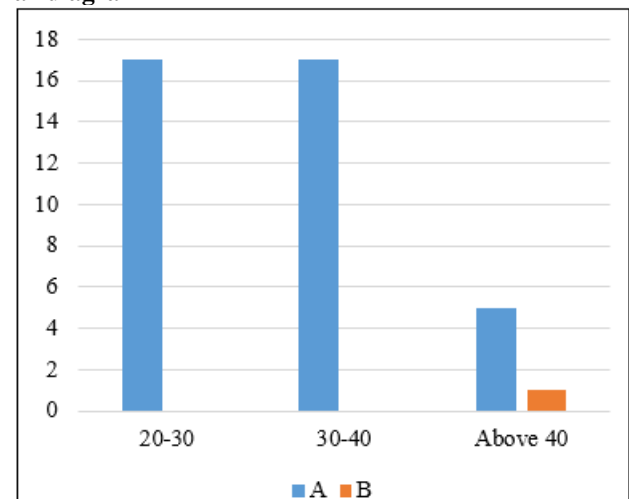
The interpretations of each hypothesis test in relation to all independent variables are detailed below.

S. No	Name	Working Place
1.	G. Vijayalakshmi	Pattampakkam
2.	S. Mullai	Semmandalam
3.	C. Parameswari	Rasapettai
4.	T. Saraswathi	Panruti
5.	R. Punithalakshmi	Panruti
6.	P. Roja	Panruti
7.	S. Subalakshmi	Saavadi
8.	T. Chellammal	Manjakuppam
9.	U. Suguna	Pattampakkam

10.	V. Meena	Thevanampattinam
11.	J. Selvi	Cuddalore
12.	K. Anitha	Semmandalam
13.	L. Revathi	Puducherry
14.	M. Sulochana	Semmandalam
15.	N. Bharathi Thamizh Mullai	Semmandalam
16.	O. Kalpana	Semmandalam
17.	P. Kasthuri	Semmandalam
18.	M. Renuga devi	K. V Tex, Cuddalore
19.	Q. Vasantha	Cuddalore
20.	R. Senthamizh selvi	Semmandalam
21.	S. Rajeswari	Cuddalore
22.	P. Shanthi	Cuddalore
23.	T. Sasikala	Pudhupallayam
24.	U. Nayandhara	Nellikuppam
25.	V. Sudar	Cuddalore
26.	S. Priya	Sumangali silks
27.	N. Udhaya	Nellikuppam
28.	T. Gayathri	Cuddalore
29.	S. Sandhiya	Puducherry
30.	T. Devi	Cuddalore
31.	S. Sumathi	Cuddalore
32.	T. Uma	Saavadi
33.	S. Sowmya	Cuddalore
34.	M. Latha	Cuddalore
35.	D. Roshini	Cuddalore (O. T)
36.	E. Ranjini	Annagramam
37.	S. Vishnupriya	Gunamangalam
38.	N. Saranya	Semmandalam
39.	T. Thanavanthini	Cuddalore
40.	S. Priyanka	Cuddalore (O. T)

For Data: Q.10**Table 1: Scheme Useful**

Age	A - Yes	B - No
20 - 30	17	0
30 - 40	17	0
Above 40	5	1

Bar diagram**Figure 1****2. Result**

From the analysis, reference followed on dichotomous response based Question No.9 reveals 97.5% of the survey replied with option (a). (ie) yes.

Thus, the sample collected states on the scheme is useful

For Data: Q.12

Table 2: The Scheme Before Pandemic Period

Age	A - Agree	B - Disagree
20 - 30	17	0
30 - 40	17	0
Above 40	6	0
Total	40	0

Bar Diagram:

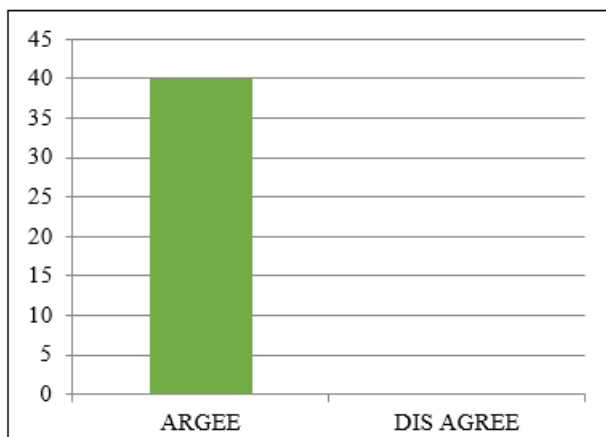


Figure 2

Result

From the analysis, reference followed on dichotomous response based Question No.12 reveals 100% of the survey replied with option (a). (i. e) Agree.

Thus, the sample collected states on the scheme is useful.

3. Conclusion

Tamil Nadu has been a role model for implementing innovative free schemes across India. Other states have adapted this concept to suit their own needs and applied various approaches. Tamil Nadu introduced a plan to assist women by providing free bus travel, which benefits those commuting to schools or workplaces.

The primary goal of this scheme is to increase women's participation in the workforce and to encourage the use of public transportation.

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