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RESEARCH ARTICLE

**WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH FREE BUS TRAVEL SCHEME IN TAMIL
NADU: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO VILLUPURAM DISTRICT**

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Abstract

This article has mainly focused on the innovative scheme of free bus travel and how it benefited the people and sparked to empower the women in the male centric society. Tamil Nadu is a welfare State which implemented innovative schemes for enhancement of people status gradually. On the consequence, the Government of Tamil Nadu has announced the scheme for women welfare and empowerment named “Free Bus Travel Scheme” which has given the free travel to all women in Tamil Nadu. The intention of the scheme was announced by the Government of Tamil Nadu to increase the mobility of women. This scheme has increased the women’s mobility and their savings. Tamil Nadu, being a role model for implementing the innovative free schemes for entire India. All the state has attributed the concept for their convenience and applied the different phenomenon. Earlier, Tamil Nadu Government has given the doles and freebies to the people, especially those have in the poverty line. Some of the electronic goods also provided to enhance the economic and educational enhancement. Now the tern has changed beyond the stereo type of schemes and programs. Conceptually, the Government has announced the free travel for all women might be stupendous character which directly or indirectly enhance the women status and empower the women in this society.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Innovative schemes, free bus travel, economical enhancement.

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Introduction

Tamil Nadu is a welfare State which implemented innovative schemes for enhancement of people status gradually. On the consequence, the Government of Tamil Nadu has announced the

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scheme for women welfare and empowerment named “Free Bus Travel Scheme” which has given the free travel to all women in Tamil Nadu. The intention of the scheme was announced by the Government of Tamil Nadu to increase the mobility of women. This scheme has increased the women’s mobility and their savings. In Tamil Nadu, more than 7.8 million women were availed of free bus travel on first three days ¹ on average more than 2.8 million women are travelled in this scheme. This is not a first time to announcing the free travel for the people in Tamil Nadu. Former Chief Minister J Jayalalitha has launched the scheme to given the token for the senior citizens for concessional travel.² After Delhi and Punjab, Tamil Nadu had become the third state to make it accessible for women travel on buses which operated by the State Government. Around 1000 buses were operated in the region of Madras Corporation under this scheme.³ This article has mainly focused on the innovative scheme of free bus travel and how it benefited the people and sparked to empower the women in the male centric society.

Election 2021

The DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) has clinched the victory in Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly election - 2021. This election has witnessed that the first in the State where the two towering personalities both M.Karunanidhi and J. Jayalalitha absence for their death. The DMK party has alliance with the national party of Congress, and grasped 150 seats, out of 234 seats. The AIADMK party has clinched (the ruling party) close up with 80 seats ⁴. After the victory, the DMK leader has nominated as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and sworn in May 7, 2021.⁵ After assumed the post of Chief Minister, M.K.Stalin has signed the five important orders. Among them free bus travel for women might prominent as benefitted much. However, the AIADMK has announced the welfare scheme for the women as 50 percent concession on the manifesto.⁶

Nomanclature

This scheme officially termed as “free bus travel for women”. For safeguarding the honour and

prestige’s of women, the Government has also announced the statutory provisions for handled the women passengers who travelled at the free travel. The guidelines were unveiled by the Government for the women welfare on 27.07.2021.⁷ Both driver and conductor must stop the bus in the stopping’s and boarding the passenger without any constrains. If one passenger may stopped at the bus stop, without hesitation they stopped the bus and boarded politely. Bus must stop at the proper stopping, driver cannot stop the bus behind or forward to the bus stop. Conductors should not get off the passengers caused to not have a seat. Moreover, conductors can avail the seat to the elderly women passengers while travelling. Also they were restricted to use the abusive words to the passengers whom were travelling under this scheme. While women passenger get off the bus, conductors may signal the drivers promptly and focusing the women safety always.

Villupuram District

Villupuram district located with coordinates 11° N and 12° S and 78°W 79° E with an area of 3,691.95 sq/km.⁸ It was segregated from the erstwhile south Arcot District on 18.12.1992.⁹ The Villupuram District has a population around 34, 58,054 which possess males account for 17, 40,819 and females account for 17, 18,054. ¹⁰The density of the population includes 481 per sq km. The present Villupuram District has consisted 928 villages, including two revenue divisions, also having 9 administrative Taluks and 13 Panchayat Unions.

Beneficiaries

Being a most backward district in Tamil Nadu which still survived by the people for getting proper welfare. However, the Government of Tamil Nadu has implemented the schemes to enhance the education and economical development to the district always. On the consequences, the Tamil Nadu adopted the scheme for women welfare for providing the bus travel on free cost may helps the women who going to whether colleges or for jobs. The Villupuram District has some technical division on the road transport which categories under below.

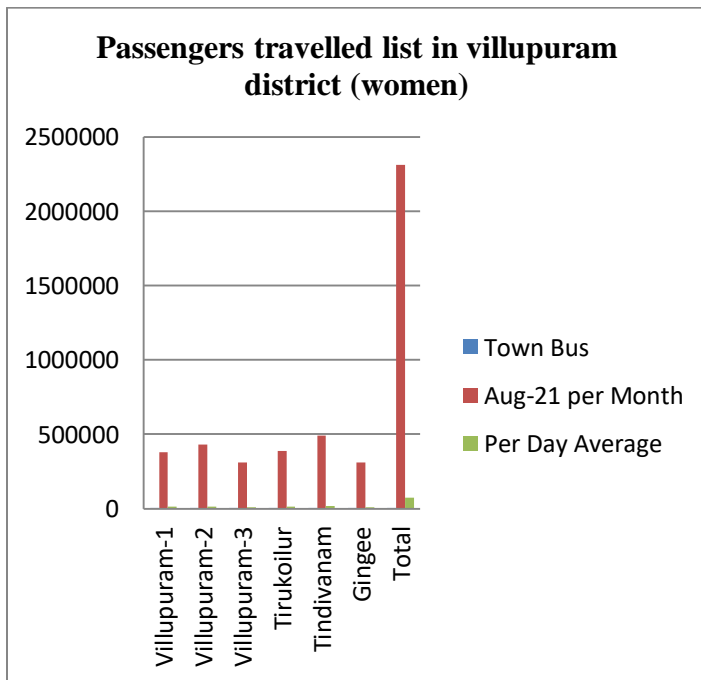
Table No.1: Women passenger travelled in Villupuram district

Branch	Town Bus	Aug-21 per Month	Per Day Average
Villupuram-1	26	380815	12284
Villupuram-2	29	432672	13957
Villupuram-3	22	310361	10012
Tirukoilur	40	386028	12453
Tindivanam	40	490870	15835
Gingee	24	312121	10068
Total	167	2312867	74609

Source¹¹

The data shows that averagely 74609 women passengers were benefitted for every day. Also Government has a motive to enhance women in the fields of education and economy by the free travel.

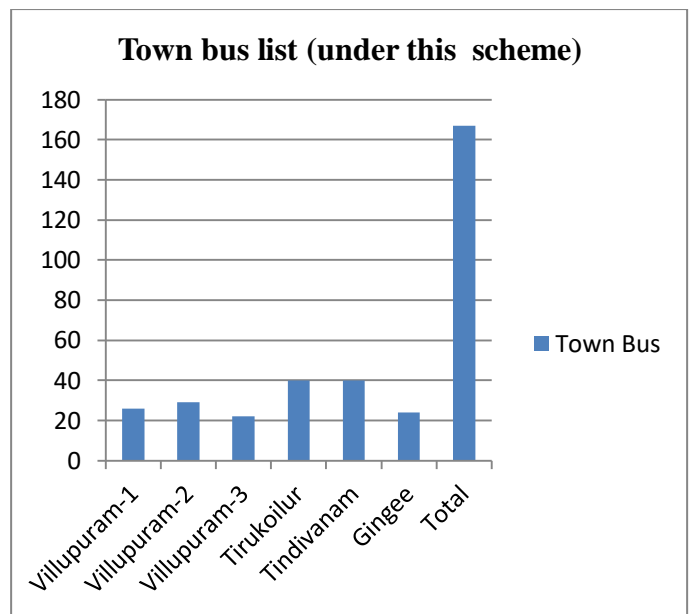
Fig 1: Women passenger travelle villupuram district



Source¹²

Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation has possessed around 9000 buses all over the State. Among them 5600 buses are the ordinary bus services. Apart from this buses are deluxe and air-conditioned buses.¹³ The ordinary fare buses have been pasted with stickers which shown as “free travel for women” both depicted Tamil and English languages.

Fig 2: Town Bus list in Villupuram District



Source¹⁴

Expenses

The Tamil Nadu Government has bared the amount around 1500 crore for the scheme of free bus travel annually. The women were travelled in ordinary bus services on 40 percent. Now, it has gradually risen after the announcement of the scheme which reached around 68 percent. Some of the places in Tamil Nadu benefitted more than 68 percent. The schemes have taken lot of amount for providing the free travel but the results of schemes are positive approach.

Conclusion

Tamil Nadu, being a role model for implementing the innovative free schemes for entire India. All the state has attributed the concept for their convenience and applied the different phenomenon. Earlier, Tamil Nadu Government has given the doles and freebies to the people, especially those have in the poverty line. Some of the electronic goods also provided to enhance the economical and educational enhancement. Now the tern has changed beyond the stereo type of schemes and programmes. Conceptually, the Government has announced the free

travel for all women might be stupendous character which directly or indirectly enhance the women status and empower the women in this society.

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