



ROLE OF KSRTC SHAKTHI SCHEME ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT – A STUDY

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Abstract: Public transit is a crucial part of contemporary urban infrastructure that has a big influence on how people live their everyday lives. Offering fair and accessible travel alternatives has received more attention in recent years, particularly for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups like women commuters. The aim, of this research is to study the influence of demographic and women empowerment factors on satisfaction of women travelers with reference to Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC'S) Shakti scheme. The quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire among 308 women and girls, who were randomly selected from the passengers of the free public bus service from the main routes in the Shivamogga District of Karnataka. Regression and descriptive statistics and ANOVA was used for the data analysis. It is found that, The unique contribution for the 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, education qualification of U.G Level, Unmarried category, Monthly Income of Less than Rs. 20,000, 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.

Keywords: KSRTC, Shakti Scheme, Women Empowerment, Demographic Profile, Karnataka

1. INTRODUCTION

In order to improve the safety, comfort, and convenience of women commuters, one such effort that has gained notoriety is the establishment of government-operated buses that are exclusively for women commuters in various locations. By creating government-operated buses that are just for women commuters, Karnataka, a progressive state in southern India, has taken a proactive effort to address concerns about women commuters' safety and mobility. The introduction of women commuters-only buses demonstrate the government's dedication to fostering a more welcoming and safe transportation environment for women commuters while also addressing the particular difficulties they encounter when travelling. Empowerment of women is basically based upon their economic and socio development. Individual or self-development is difficult for poor people, due to lack of socio-financial assistance. It is the responsibility of the government to help them out in this regard. For the Empowerment of women, Karnataka government has come up with many schemes. Among those, Shakti Scheme is found to be the strongest route. Karnataka Shakti Scheme is

flagship scheme of Government of Karnataka. It was launched in June 11th2023. Along with the rapid progress of Karnataka in all spheres of activity, KSRTC has emerged as the best organisation in meeting the aspirations of Kannadigas and the people of neighboring states of Karnataka. Karnataka government introduced the 'Shakti Scheme' free travel initiative for women in Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC). The government authorities also gave away some free passes to women during the program's debut so they could ride for free on KSRTC and BMTC buses as part of the "Shakti Scheme." The main objective behind launching Shakti Scheme is to empower women financially by providing them free of cost bus service. Under Karnataka Shakti Scheme, Free of Cost Bus Ride across Karnataka will be provided to all women beneficiary of Karnataka State. Free Travel from one place to another place is only applicable within the boundary of Karnataka State. Women Beneficiary can avail the free of cost ride under Shakti Scheme only in Ordinary, Urban Transport, Express and Regular Transport Buses. Women Beneficiary can travel anywhere from one place to other, there is no minimum kilometer limit applicable. Zero Sum Tickets will be provided to women beneficiary at the time of travelling. Shakti scheme by the Karnataka government on 11th June 2023 for women there has been a boost in religious tourism. On average, 54 lakh women travel daily in the four states road transport corporation buses under the Shakti scheme. Their free tickets cost around Rs 11-12 crore per day. About Rs 300 crore per month and will cost around Rs 3,600 crore a year. This money has to be given to corporations by the government in the form of subsidies or grants.

Free of Cost Bus Service under Shakti Scheme will only provide in the below mentioned transport corporation buses :-

1. Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation. (KSRTC)
2. Bangalore Maha Nagar Transport Corporation. (BMNTC)
3. North West Karnataka Road Transport Corporation. (NWKRTC)
4. Kalyan Karnataka Road Transport Corporation. (KKRTC)

Details: Before Shakti Scheme:

Buses: The four RTC's operate 23,389 buses across the state with an average run of 65.02 lakh kilometers per day.

Rounds: activities have urged the RTC's to increase frequency while also receiving routes according to the demand.

Average passengers: The daily ridership of the four RTC's was Rs 82.51 lakh.

Average revenue: The daily revenue before shakti was Rs 24.48crore.

After Shakti Scheme:

Buses: RCT's to procure 1894 buses to meet shakti scheme.

Rounds: RTC's to increase frequency while also revising routes according to demand but frequently the buses have decreased during the shakti scheme.

Average passengers: the daily ridership has now increased to 1.09 crore.

Average revenue: The daily revenue has risen to 28.89 crore.

**Table 1.1 Number of Travelled Women Passengers and Its Value
(Shakti Scheme Guarantee from 11.06.2023 to 09.06.2024 (In Cr.)**

| Corporations | Total No. of Travelled Passengers | Total No. of Travelled Women Passengers | Value of Total No. of Travelled Women Passengers (In Rs.) |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| KSRTC | 117.64 | 69.9 | 2111.14 |
| BMTC | 124.5 | 71.46 | 937.01 |
| NWKRTC | 86.84 | 52.12 | 1352.68 |
| KKRTC | 61.58 | 33.47 | 1125.81 |
| Total | 390.56 | 226.95 | 5526.64 |

Sources: Advertisement given by GOK on 11th June 2024 Prajavani News Paper

Table 1.1 explains that, as increasing trend of income from year 2016 to year 2019 and KSRTC had got less income of Rs.1569 Crs due to Covid pandemic situation in year 2020. Here Karnataka Road Transport Corporation is having highest income of Rs.3930 Crs after implementation Shakti Scheme. In 'New Indian Express' Daily Newspaper Anbu Kumar, KSRTC Managing Director gave his statement that when a female

passenger uses KSRTC buses, she is not alone all the time, she is accompanied by her husband or children, thereby increasing the non-Shakti revenue.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

To conduct this study, it was referred various relevant newspaper articles, journals and publications for the topic in focus. Due to the debut nature of the scheme benefit in the Karnataka state, it was not possible to identify the data and journals previously published on this topic in the state. Hence, this can be considered as the first and the original work on the topic of free KSRTC bus travel service benefit for women in Karnataka. However, similar benefits were also provided by other state governments such as Telangana, Tamil Nadu among other states providing the free bus facility. The following articles and publications were reviewed. (Kanakamalini M.A. & Pratheeksha Gopinath 2003) This paper analyzes the socio-economic impact of the Shakti system against the background of various critical comments received since its launch. It examines the decline in female labor force participation in Karnataka and the factors contributing to it. The nature of women's unpaid housekeeping is also taken into account. It looks at two main factors i.e. financial dependence and financial security. It highlights various factors that prevent women from moving in public places. (S. Preethika, 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. (S. Kiruthika and G. Ravi 2022) The objectives of this study were to analyse the performance of women free bus operation, to examine the complications faced by women and to find out the satisfaction level of women passengers. The study discovers that the facility was very useful to the students and employees, especially low wage workers and those who are financially dependent on their husbands and family.

(Rajeshwari M. Shettar 2023) 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, which can help lift them and their families out of poverty. The crowd of women availing the opportunity to travel free of cost in KRCTC buses under the new govt Shakti scheme were witnessed in large numbers at various holy places. (Joel Premkumar, J. P., M.S., S. B., & J. M. 2023). This article studies the benefits and the impact of the free bus rides women with reference to the Sustainable Development Goals and also to find out the challenges women faced to benefit from the scheme. The study discovered that the scheme had a good effect on women by assisting them in meeting their practical needs and the study suggested the government to increase the access and availability of buses. (Jilly Philippa Joel Premkumar, Sameem Banu, Meenal J 2023) This paper analyzes the benefits and effects of the program "Free bus rides for women in public transport for women to achieve several relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as (access to basic services), (equal access to more high education), (violence against women to eliminate in the public and private sectors), (decent work) and (safe public transport) and find out the problems that women face while benefiting from the system. On average, 54 lakh women travel daily in the four states road transport corporation buses under the Shakti scheme. Their free tickets cost around Rs 11-12 crore per day. About Rs 300 crore per month and will cost around Rs 3,600 crore a year. This money has to be given to corporations by the government in the form of subsidies or grants. (M. Kalimuthu and S. Preethika 2023) The objectives of the article were to know the awareness level of women free bus operation in Coimbatore city, to know the impact of free buses in Coimbatore city, to examine the problems faced by the women passengers, to find out the satisfaction level of women passengers. The study finds out that the free buses have helped women passengers to save money, and is used in household expenses of the women passengers' family and also the facility was beneficial for the students and working women. (S. Kiruthika, Dr.G. Ravi 2022) This research paper described the impact of running free buses for women in the Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (TNSTC) in Tamil Nadu. After the government announced free bus rides for all women, most female passengers are likely to switch from private buses to government buses. Women who travel by other means of

transport may also prefer to travel by government buses.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

"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 primary objective of Shakti Scheme is to empower women by providing them free bus transport. 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 Scheme launched by the Karnataka government. The researchers also used a structured questionnaire to find out how the system was financially profitable using basic data. There is no much study was done on demographic analysis such as Purpose of Travel, Education Qualification, Marital status, Monthly Income, Work Experience and Religion which influence on satisfaction of women travelers by the Shakti scheme introduced by KSRTC. So that the following objectives have been drawn.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the significant influence of determinants of women empowerment on satisfaction with shakti scheme by the women commuters in Shivamogga District.
2. To find out the influence of demographic characteristics of women travelers on satisfaction with Shakti scheme introduced by KSRTC.

5. HYPOTHESES

H01: There is no significant influence of determinants of women empowerment on satisfaction with shakti scheme by the women commuters in Shivamogga District.

H1: There is a significant influence of determinants of women empowerment on satisfaction with shakti scheme by the women commuters in Shivamogga District.

H02: There is no significant influence of demographic characteristics of women travelers on satisfaction with Shakti scheme introduced by KSRTC.

H2: There is a significant influence of influence of demographic characteristics of women travelers on satisfaction with Shakti scheme introduced by KSRTC.

6. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study is confined with examine the determinants of women empowerment and demographic characteristics of women travelers on satisfaction with Shakti scheme introduced by KSRTC in Shivamogga District.

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Shakti Scheme, initiated by the Government of Karnataka in 2023, offers free bus transportation to women in the state. In the present study the researcher has collected data using a structured questionnaire which was designed after having a proper review of literature. This study adopted a mixed-methods design with a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews which were conducted during June and July 2024. The survey links were sent via email, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter. In the process of survey, 308 responses were received. The collected data from the survey were analysed for further insights using regression analysis. Participants represented various demographics in terms of age, educational background, working status and working sectors, ability status, marital status, and different community and religious backgrounds. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: socio-demographic and determinants of women empowerment. The data was analysed using SPSS version 22 with Descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations and ANOVA were used.

8. POPULATION, SAMPLING METHOD AND SAMPLE SIZE

Table 1.1 Samples Selected for the Study

| SL. No | Avg. Daily woman Travelers per Day in Shivamogga District | Number of Women Travelers Targeted | Number of Women Travelers Responded | Percentage of Response |
|--------|---|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | 125000 | 512 | 308 | 60% |

Source: <https://www.surveyking.com/help/sample-size-calculator>

With help of www.surveyking.com, for the large scale population, the sample size is being determined for the survey at the confidence level and margin of error of 4%, was 255, the researcher was able to collect the 308 responses from the women respondents which is sufficient for the further analysis.

9. RESPONDENTS

The quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire among 308 women and girls, who were randomly selected from the passengers of the free public bus service from the main routes in the Shivamogga District of Karnataka: These women included those who were waiting for the bus as well as those who were coming home from work and interested in giving time for the interview. The structured question was distributed in google forms to collect the required data. These questionnaires were distributed to students, working women, and girls at bus stops who regularly use buses for travel in Shivamogga District.

10. DATA COLLECTION

Primary data

The first time data has been through a self-administered structured questionnaire, which was developed and asked to be filled out. Personal interviews were also done with respondents. A structured questionnaire was prepared containing the "5-point Likert scale." A semi-structured interview with open-ended discussion was conducted in the Kannada language, which is the official language of Karnataka state.

Secondary Data

The following are the sources from which the secondary data was collected, such as information that has been gathered from selected peer-reviewed articles from bibliographic databases (Emerald, Sage journals online, Science Direct, Scopus, Taylor & Francis online, Web of Science, and Wiley (online library). Peer-reviewed journals were considered based on their knowledge validity and their highest impact on the research field. The required information has been collected from other secondary sources such as Online E-Sources, KSRTC annual reports, journals, theses, magazines, research articles, newspapers, etc.

11. DATA ANALYSIS

Multiple regression analysis was used as the main statistical tool to find out the significant influence of determinants of women empowerment and satisfaction with Shakti scheme. To analyse significant influence of demographic characteristics of women travelers on satisfaction with Shakti scheme introduced by KSRTC, the descriptive and ANOVA was used as statistical tool. The reliability analysis is used to establish both the consistency and stability of the research instrument before the main survey and the Cronbach alpha showed that 0.796. Consistency shows how well the research instrument measures the model and the conceptual framework.

12. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The survey was conducted in and around of Shivamogga District only. The targeted respondents were women category who are regularly travelling by KSRTC Bus. Since the population is huge, it is very difficult to determine the exact samples to arrive at proper results after analysis. Simple statistical tools such as regression, descriptive statistics, ANOVA, tabulation tables were used. The limitation of expenditure survey is that it tends to underestimate to explore information on expenditures and behavior of women travelers and the availability of their exact list. Moreover, a significant limitation of this study is that all the information was self-reported and was based on subjective perceptions. Advanced statistical tools might have used for the study. The other pertinent variable for the study might have missed. The information given

by the respondents might be biased because some of them might not be interested in giving correct information. The sample selection process might not capture a diverse range of consumers, potentially skewing the results towards specific demographics.

13. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 2: Determinants of women empowerment and satisfaction with shakti scheme

| Model Summary | | | | | | |
|--|---|-----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|---------|-------------------|
| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | | |
| 1 | .853 ^a | .728 | .715 | .56405 | | |
| ANOVA ^b | | | | | | |
| Model | Sum of Squares | | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| 1 | Regression | 249.825 | 14 | 17.845 | 56.089 | .000 ^a |
| | Residual | 93.218 | 293 | .318 | | |
| | Total | 343.043 | 307 | | | |
| b. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction with Shakti Scheme | | | | | | |
| Coefficients ^a | | | | | | |
| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | .730 | .198 | | 3.689 | .000 |
| | Women on small business travel | -.050 | .032 | -.061 | -1.549 | .122 |
| | Save transportation cost | -2.542 | .621 | -3.236 | -4.096 | .000 |
| | Female labor force participation | 2.551 | .627 | 3.262 | 4.068 | .000 |
| | Women's economic independence | -2.791 | .213 | -3.521 | -13.118 | .000 |
| | Better economic opportunities | 3.222 | .287 | 3.728 | 11.237 | .000 |
| | More control over their (women) lives | -.125 | .032 | -.153 | -3.966 | .000 |
| | Women can come out of poverty | -1.086 | .137 | -1.300 | -7.925 | .000 |
| | Financial security | .034 | .155 | .042 | .218 | .828 |
| | Enhanced well-being of women communities | .249 | .118 | .302 | 2.113 | .035 |
| | Encourage participation in self-help groups | -1.753 | .262 | -2.158 | -6.687 | .000 |
| | Enhanced women's autonomy and decision-making power | 2.037 | .198 | 2.552 | 10.308 | .000 |
| | Increased women's physical mobility | -.002 | .035 | -.003 | -.065 | .948 |
| | More employment opportunities | .539 | .053 | .517 | 10.146 | .000 |
| | Boost in religious tourism | .428 | .044 | .539 | 9.783 | .000 |
| a. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction with Shakti Scheme | | | | | | |

A multiple regression analysis was used to investigate the effect of 14 variables of Determinants of Women Empowerment. From the above table it is understood that, that consumer's Determinants of Women Empowerment ($R = .853^a$) indicating high degree of correlation among the variables, $t = 3.689$, $p < .000$) had a positively significant effect on Satisfaction with Shakti Scheme. Hence, it can be concluded that if the average level of Determinants of Women Empowerment were high, the average level of Satisfaction with Shakti Scheme would also be high. The analysis also reveals that Determinants of Women Empowerment was able to explain the total variation in Satisfaction with Shakti Scheme. By the regression model about R^2 72.8% being high indicating model fits the data well. Thus answering the hypothesis H1: There is a significant Determinants of Women Empowerment on Satisfaction with Shakti Scheme by the Women commuters in Shivamogga District, *posited for this research is accepted*. The coefficient table shows the contribution of each Determinants of Women Empowerment. From the above table the beta values demonstrate the unique contribution for the variables such as Save transportation cost ($\beta = -2.542$, $p < .000$), followed by Female labor force participation ($\beta = 2.551$, $p < .000$), Women's economic independence ($\beta = -2.791$, $p < .000$), Better economic opportunities ($\beta = 3.222$, $p < .000$), More control over their (women) lives ($\beta = -.125$, $p < .000$), Women can come out of poverty ($\beta = -1.086$, $p < .000$), Encourage participation in self-help groups ($\beta = -1.753$, $p < .000$), Enhanced women's autonomy and decision-making power ($\beta = 2.037$, $p < .000$), Increased women's physical mobility ($\beta = -.002$, $p < .000$), More employment opportunities ($\beta = .539$, $p < .000$), Boost in religious tourism ($\beta = .428$, $p < .000$), in predicting satisfaction of women travelers with reference to KSRTC'S Shakti scheme.

Regression equation:

satisfaction of women travelers with reference to KSRTC'S Shakti scheme = $\alpha + \beta_1(stc) + \beta_2(fl) + \beta_3(wei) + \beta_4(bec) + \beta_5(mco) + \beta_6(wcc) + \beta_7(eps) + \beta_8(mep) + \beta_9(brt) + \beta_{10}(brt) + \mu$

Table 3: Influence of demographic characteristics of women travelers on satisfaction with Shakti scheme introduced by KSRTC.

| Women Traveler Demographic analysis | Categories | Satisfaction of women travelers with reference to KSRTC'S Shakti scheme | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|---|-------|-------|-------|------|
| | | Descriptive | | | ANOVA | |
| | | MEAN | N=308 | SD | F | Sig |
| Purpose of Travel | Govt. Employee | 3.291 | 56 | 1.136 | 3.902 | .003 |
| | Private Employee | 3.759 | 89 | 1.089 | | |
| | Daily Wager | 3.332 | 47 | 0.888 | | |
| | Business Travel | 3.643 | 34 | 1.161 | | |
| | Pilgrims Purpose | 3.565 | 26 | 1.012 | | |
| | Family Traveler | 3.212 | 56 | 1.108 | | |
| | Total | | 308 | | | |
| Age | Btw 18 - 30 Years | 3.656 | 106 | 1.084 | 2.217 | .071 |
| | Btw 30 - 50 Years | 3.732 | 98 | 1.129 | | |
| | Above 50 Years | 3.831 | 104 | 1.024 | | |
| | Total | | 308 | | | |
| Education Qualification | Illiterate | 3.656 | 32 | 1.085 | 5.321 | .000 |
| | Primary School | 3.798 | 57 | 0.991 | | |
| | 10 or PUC | 3.612 | 99 | 1.018 | | |
| | U.G Level | 3.832 | 54 | 1.094 | | |
| | P.G Level | 3.582 | 54 | 1.113 | | |
| | Ph.D | 5.194 | 12 | .000 | | |
| | Total | | 308 | | | |
| Marital status | Married | 3.593 | 162 | 1.085 | 5.220 | .000 |
| | Unmarried | 3.748 | 146 | 1.104 | | |
| | Total | | 308 | | | |
| Monthly Income | Less than Rs. 20,000 | 3.618 | 56 | 1.149 | 3.618 | .018 |
| | Btw Rs. 20,000 to 40,000 | 3.548 | 93 | 0.996 | | |
| | Btw Rs. 40,000 to 60,000 | 3.392 | 61 | 1.17 | | |
| | More than Rs. 60,000 | 3.343 | 98 | 1.011 | | |
| | Total | | 308 | | | |
| Work Experience | Less than 5 Years | 3.93 | 78 | 1.074 | 6.333 | .000 |
| | 5 Years To 10 Years | 3.783 | 65 | 1.088 | | |
| | 10 Years to 15 Years | 3.526 | 29 | 1.140 | | |
| | More than 15 Years | 3.499 | 69 | 1.138 | | |
| | More than 20 years | 3.129 | 67 | 0.982 | | |
| | Total | | 308 | | | |
| Religion | Hindu | 3.451 | 109 | 0.991 | 3.256 | .000 |
| | Muslim | 2.697 | 56 | 1.018 | | |
| | Christian | 2.593 | 46 | 1.088 | | |
| | Other | 2.67 | 97 | 1.138 | | |
| | Total | | 308 | | | |

In the Demographic analysis, Purpose of Travel, Private Employee are highly satisfied with the Shakti Scheme by KSRTC (Mean=3.759, SD=1.089) and (F=3.902, P= <0.003).

In the case of age of the women travelers, it was found insignificant influence on satisfaction of women travelers in KSRTC buses under Shakti scheme.

In the Demographic analysis, in the Education Qualification category respondents who belong to the education qualification of U.G Level are highly satisfied with the Shakti Scheme by KSRTC (Mean=3.832, SD=1.094) and (F=5.321, P= <.000).

In the Demographic analysis, in the Marital status category respondents who belong to the Unmarried category are highly satisfied with the Shakti Scheme by KSRTC (Mean=3.748, SD=1.085) and (F=5.220, P= <.000).

In the Demographic analysis, 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 (Mean=3.618, SD=1.149) and (F=3.618, P= <.018).

In the Demographic analysis, in the Work Experience respondents who belong to the Work Experience of 5 Years to 10 Years are highly satisfied with the Shakti Scheme by KSRTC (Mean=3.704, SD=1.088) and (F=6.333, P= <0.05). In the Demographic analysis, in the Religion based respondents who belong to the Hindu religion are highly satisfied with the Shakti Scheme by KSRTC (Mean=3.451, SD=0.991) and

$F=3.256, P= <.000$).

From the above table it is understood that, all the demographic characteristics significant values are less than 0.05 except age of the women traveler. Therefore, the hypothesis statement posited in the study, H2: There is a significant influence of influence of demographic characteristics of women travelers on satisfaction with Shakti scheme introduced by KSRTC, is accepted.

14. FINDINGS

The unique contribution for 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. Respondents who belong to the education qualification of U.G Level are highly satisfied with the highly satisfied with the Shakti Scheme by KSRTC. 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. 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.

15. SUGGESTIONS

1. As the growing demand for free bus travel by the women, the government should enhance the number of busses to operate to provide best services for the women category.
2. There is need for interstate free travel facilities based on the type of purpose they visit along with the proof which can enhance the economic sustainability for the state.
3. Boosting the pilgrim tourism will yield good revenue for the government in terms.
4. There should be a reservation for the lower level jobs in private companies for the women who use free transportation services which can trigger the women involvement in getting employment opportunity.
5. This can be one of the poverty elimination source by the government.
6. The bus serviced can be designed based on demographic profile of the women such as education, for example free bus travel facilities even in premium buses for the students etc.
7. There should be an open opportunity for the women travel to pay and travel who always look for self-esteem to pay towards travel expenses leading to revenue for the government as well.

16. CONCLUSIONS

Karnataka has been planning the schemes for enhancing the status of every individual by social, economic, and political phenomenon. But the male centric society dominated in the fields and revokes the status of women and transgender. Indeed, the Central and State Government implementing innovative schemes for women empowerment over the years. On the consequences, the free travel scheme helps the women commuters to frequently mobilize in the Shivamogga district by free travel scheme. This scheme may give lot of opportunities to the women category for enhancing the economic stability and grasping proper education, especially those belongs to the rural background. Thus, the free bus travel scheme helps the women to empower ever. The aim, of this research is to study the influence of demographic and women empowerment factors on satisfaction of women travelers with reference to KSRTC'S Shakti scheme. The quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire among 308 women and girls, who were randomly selected from the passengers of the free public bus service from the main routes in the Shivamogga District of Karnataka. Regression and descriptive statistics and ANOVA was used for the data analysis. It is found that, The unique contribution for the 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, education qualification of U.G Level, Unmarried category, Monthly Income of Less than Rs. 20,000, 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.

17. DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE RESEARCH

Inter-state comparison on free travel facilities and its impact on women empowerment can be done where the similar schemes introduced by the government like Telangana, Tamil Nadu etc. Cost and revenue analysis can be done to know whether the purpose of the scheme has been successful in the long run.

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