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UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN WHILE TRAVELLING IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN CHENNAI

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ABSTRACT:

This paper investigates the multifaceted challenges faced by women during their travelling in public transportation systems. Additionally, the paper examines the impact of these challenges on women's mobility, economic participation, and overall well-being. This paper states the challenges faced by women such as Harassment which is Physically, Mentally or Verbally. Women are the population that constitutes majority in the transportation worldwide but their journeys are stopped due to many of the unequal access and safety concerns. This paper includes a questionnaire conducted and the case study of a few women in Chennai. How it can be reduced in order to safeguard the women safety. This paper helps transportation authorities, public authorities, policy makers to enhance and ensure the equitable access to public transport.

Keywords - Harassment, Quasi Public Transport, Contemporary, Mobility, Assaults, Palavanthangal Railway Station, Empowerment, Self Defense, Discrimination, Mobility.

Introduction:

Public transport is a shared transport service which is available for use of people, mostly Public Bus, Public Local trains, Etc, and the basic difference between public transport and the services we avail from other apps like Rapido, Uber, Ola are mostly not considered as public transportation and may be considered as Quasi Public Transport.

An important social role played by public transport is to ensure that all members of society are able to travel, which include groups such as the young, the old, the poor, people with medical conditions, etc .

In this contemporary world women no longer lag behind in terms of profession and what not? They are equal to the work done by that of the men. However, even today they are expected to do multitasking they have to take care of family and household even if they are working. For many centuries women are

subjected to harassment, But, many of the women are facing physically or verbally while travelling just because of their gender.

Public Transport is used by people irrespective of the gender, hence used by both males and females. Even though there is a coach reserved for ladies in both Local trains and Metros and Sometimes mentioned in buses as "ladies" too, there is no improvement of women safety in Chennai today. We hear many news here and there stating harassment of a women while walking and New rape cases every single day. So, No one can assure women while travelling in Public Transport, mainly in highly populated cities like Chennai.

Objective of the Research:

- To know what are the difficulties for women in travelling in Public Transport
- To know what are the schemes and acts introduced by the government to



prevent women from any kind of Harassment

Methodology:

This research was conducted in the Palavanthangal Railway Station which is situated in Chennai. The respondents are the women who travel in Public Transport irrespective of the working status. The Women were interviewed and collected data from them questioning them through real time interview. Two People were interviewed and came to know about the difficulties they faced while travelling in local trains. And then Questionnaire was given to some people in which the Questionnaire was filled by the respondents. Here the respondents name had been changed to ensure their privacy in case of Interview.

Review of Literature:

Women and transport in Indian cities, Sonal Shah, Kalpana Viswanath, Sonali Vyas, Shreya Gadepalli, New Delhi, India: ITDP India, 2017

The coming decade will be a defining moment for India as its urban areas are estimated to constitute around 40 per cent or 600 million of its total population by 2030. According to the High Powered Executive Committee (HPEC), around INR 23 lakh crores is required over 2015–2030 for India's urban transport infrastructure. The recently announced Green Urban Mobility Scheme (GUMS) expects to invest around INR 70,000 crores over 2018–2023 on sustainable transport. The national government has initiated missions and schemes to invest in urban transport and infrastructure; and created indicators and service level benchmarks to establish a city's baseline and goal for improvement.

While there is momentum by different levels of government in addressing women's safety in public transport, urban transport investments are largely gender blind with a limited understanding of the interrelationships between gender and transport inequities. Sustainable urban development will remain

elusive without integrating women and girls' safety, comfort, convenience and affordability in urban transport.

Moving Toward Gender-Equitable Transportation in Post-COVID-19 Urban South Asia, 2022

Resource-poor women in urban South Asia, like Delhi, face challenges such as poor bus frequencies, buses not stopping, and limited access to digital tools, hindering their public transport experience

This article examined the impacts of COVID-19 on the mobility of resource-poor women and its linkage with livelihoods in urban South Asia, and how gender-responsive transport measures could be adopted.

Sexual harassment of students on public transport: an exploratory study in Lucknow, India, 2023

Women in India face prevalent sexual harassment on public transport, especially buses, as highlighted in the study. Incidents are common, distressing, and often unnoticed by other passengers.

It was found that the number of incidents experienced as a victim and as a witness were comparable, suggesting events of sexual harassment are not widely noticed by other passengers, perhaps because they are so common place as not to be especially noticed.

Transit Sexual Harassment: A Scuffle for Women Travelers, 2023

Women travellers in India face issues like sexual harassment while using public transport. This research focuses on understanding the prevalence, reactions, and coping mechanisms of women facing transit sexual harassment.

In this paper, the prevalence of sexual harassment among women travellers, their reactions, and their coping mechanisms is discussed. But, the authors do not consider the effect of gender-based social issues such as sexual harassment, assaults, bullying, etc



Case Study

Case 1

Ramya, 19 years old who is studying in college who rarely takes Public Transport which is train, once while travelling in train with her mother and sister around 8 o'clock, stood waiting for the train. She was waiting for train and stood in the railway station platform where usually ladies coach stops at. When train came and stood people waiting for the train stood silently until the people in train came out. But, suddenly a blind man came out of the train and soon everyone gave space to let him go but he wantedly came near her and touched her front upper part which is an area no stranger should touch and all of a sudden she felt so bad. She suddenly scolded him but can't take any action and can't do anything. It was something that is new to her as she doesn't take public transport frequently and her parents would take her where ever she wants to. But due to some reasons she was to take public transport. From that day, she felt being woman in local transport is not having any kind of safety in this society. Not all men but it's always a man who is behind these harassment, hence as a whole woman community is afraid of travelling in Public Transport as a whole.

Case 2

Valli, 35 years old who is a working as a coolie tailor in the garments company who has to commute in train daily in order to work. She has to commute from Chengalpattu to Chennai Fort. She says that she has to wait for the train for too long time and her travel is really so far. She has to sometimes get into general coach rather in ladies coach. She also says that getting into ladies coach is also giving her trouble as one day when it was so crowded to get into the train, her money purse fell down in the platform and then in the rush some of the women kicked it into the track which consists of money, her phone and all her identity proof was inside. This made her to get out of the train and wait for the train to move and she finally took the purse but she was running out of time for

her job. Secondly, One day she went in the local train and was actually in the situation of getting into the general compartment, She felt uncomfortable with men, suddenly some of the men in the seat stood up and came near her and started teasing and bullying her with the appearance. They tried to touch her clothes but suddenly few people came in and safeguarded her. She states that this incident was not even shared to her husband who is Alcoholic and he doesn't care about her. She says that it is very difficult to live as a women in this society and she fears here and then to get into the Public Transport. She also says that some of the incidents that happened can't be explained and she can't overcome those incident which is haunting her till today. She is very much worried about the men in this society who is harrasing women in any form. It is really a nightmare for all the women who is undergoing these situations. She ends it as she even sees a lot of women getting into such harassment and not able to tell to anyone and keeping as a secret due to society they live in.

Questionnaire

My Questionnaire has 20 Responses. All those responses are mentioned as Graphs for further clear understanding:

Results and Analysis:

Travelling in public transport poses various challenges for women in India, including safety concerns, harassment, overcrowding, and inadequate facilities.

1. Safety Concerns:

Women often feel unsafe while using public transport due to the risk of harassment, theft, or assault. Incidents of eve-teasing, molestation, and even more serious crimes are reported frequently, leading to fear and anxiety among female passengers.

2. Harassment:

Verbal harassment, staring, and inappropriate touching are prevalent issues faced by women in public



transport. This harassment can occur both inside vehicles and at stations or stops, contributing to discomfort and distress.

3. Overcrowding:

Many public transport systems in India suffer from severe overcrowding, particularly during peak hours. This not only leads to discomfort but also creates opportunities for harassment and theft, as women may find themselves pressed against strangers in tightly packed compartments.

4. Inadequate Facilities:

Public transport often lacks adequate facilities for women, such as separate waiting areas, toilets, and seating. This can exacerbate safety concerns and discomfort, especially during long journeys.

5. Cultural Norms:

Societal attitudes and cultural norms in India sometimes discourage women from using public transport, especially alone or at night. This limits their mobility and independence, reinforcing gender inequalities.

6. Limited Accessibility:

Accessibility issues, including lack of ramps or elevators for disabled passengers, can disproportionately affect women, particularly those with caregiving responsibilities or mobility impairments.

To address these challenges, efforts are needed to improve safety measures, increase awareness about women's rights, and promote gender-sensitive urban planning and transportation policies. This could involve initiatives such as enhanced security measures, sensitization training for transport staff, and the implementation of gender-responsive infrastructure designs.

Conclusion:

Women face various challenges while travelling on public transport, ranging from safety concerns to harassment and

discrimination. These challenges underscore the need for improved safety measures, awareness campaigns, and policy interventions to ensure a safer and more inclusive public transportation system for women. Empowering women with education, self-defense training, and avenues to report incidents can contribute to creating a more supportive environment for female travellers. Additionally, fostering a culture of respect and gender equality is crucial for addressing the underlying societal attitudes that perpetuate these challenges. By collectively addressing these issues, we can strive towards a public transport system that is safe, accessible, and equitable for all passengers, regardless of gender.

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