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IMPACT OF THE SHAKTI SCHEME ON WOMENS EMPOWERMENT IN KARNATAKA

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Abstract

The Shakti Scheme, launched by the Government of Karnataka in June 2023, is a significant welfare initiative aimed at enhancing women's mobility by providing free travel on state-run non-premium bus services. This study examines the impact of the scheme on women's empowerment in Karnataka, with a focus on mobility, economic independence, access to education, healthcare, and participation in public life. The scheme has substantially increased women's use of public transport, particularly among low-income and rural populations, thereby reducing transportation costs and improving access to essential services and opportunities. Evidence indicates that increased mobility has contributed to greater independence, confidence, and social participation among women. However, challenges such as overcrowding, infrastructure limitations, and financial sustainability of transport services remain important concerns. The study also highlights that while the scheme has positively influenced women's empowerment, its long-term effectiveness depends on complementary measures such as improved transport infrastructure, safety enhancements, and expanded employment opportunities. Overall, the Shakti Scheme represents a transformative policy intervention that strengthens women's empowerment through improved mobility in Karnataka.

Introduction:

Women empowerment is an important part of social and economic development. Part to support women and improve their independence, the 'Government of Karnataka' introduced the shakti Free Bus scheme on 11 June 2023 under the leadership of "Siddaramaiah". The scheme was implemented with the support of Transport Minister "Ramalinga Reddy".

Under this scheme, women can travel free of cost in government buses across Karnataka. The main aim of the scheme is to reduce travel expenses, increase women's mobility and provide better access to education, employment, healthcare and other opportunities. The scheme has become an important step toward strengthening the social and economic position of women in Karnataka.

Objective

- To identify the obstacles and challenges in the effective implementation of the Shakti Scheme.

To understand the socio-economic impact of the Shakti Scheme.

- To assess the coverage, accessibility, availability, and reliability of bus services for female beneficiaries under the Shakti Scheme.
- “It is necessary to analyze whether Shakti schemes contribute to real economic progress.”

Hypothesis

- The scheme gives women a sense of freedom and independence.
- The scheme increases women's participation in education and employment activities.
- Free bus facilities improve women's access to healthcare and government services.
- The scheme encourages safe and affordable travel for women in Karnataka.
- The Stree Shakti scheme strengthens the social and economic empowerment of women.
- The scheme increases confidence and mobility among rural and urban women.
- The scheme also contributes to rural development and helps in controlling pollution in our country.

Review of Literature

1)C.M Siddaramaiah

According to, the scheme helps women save money, travel freely for education and work, and become more independent. He mentioned that the scheme increased women's participation in social and economic activities and improved their confidence and mobility.

2)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 and a descriptive analysis of the impact of free buses in Tamil Nadu.

3)Government of Karnataka – Department of Women and Child Development

Various government reports highlight that better mobility can support women's participation in **education, employment, healthcare, and other social activities**. The Shakti Scheme is therefore considered an important measure for improving women's access to opportunities.

4)**Studies on economic empowerment** indicate that savings on daily transportation expenses can increase the disposable income of women and their families. The reduction in travel costs may allow women to spend more on education, healthcare, household needs, and other productive activities.

5) KSRTC and BMTC Reports

Reports from Karnataka's state transport corporations indicate a significant increase in women passengers after the introduction of the scheme. The increased use of public transport suggests that free bus travel has improved women's ability to travel for work, education, healthcare, shopping, and other purposes.

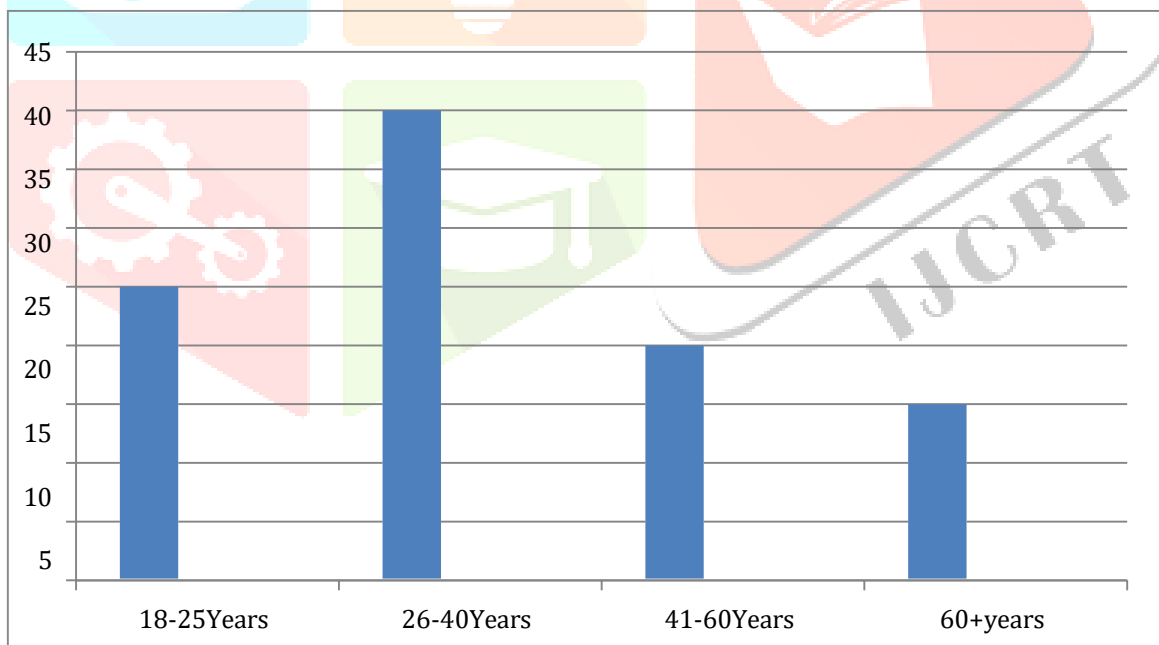
Data Analysis :-

"A survey was conducted in Bidar district, Karnataka, using questionnaires, and a demographic overview was prepared based on the collected data."

"Graph Showing the Impact of the Stree Shakti Scheme on Different Age Groups of Women"

Age	Percentage
18-25 Years	25%
26-40 years	40%
41-60 years	20%
60+ years	15%

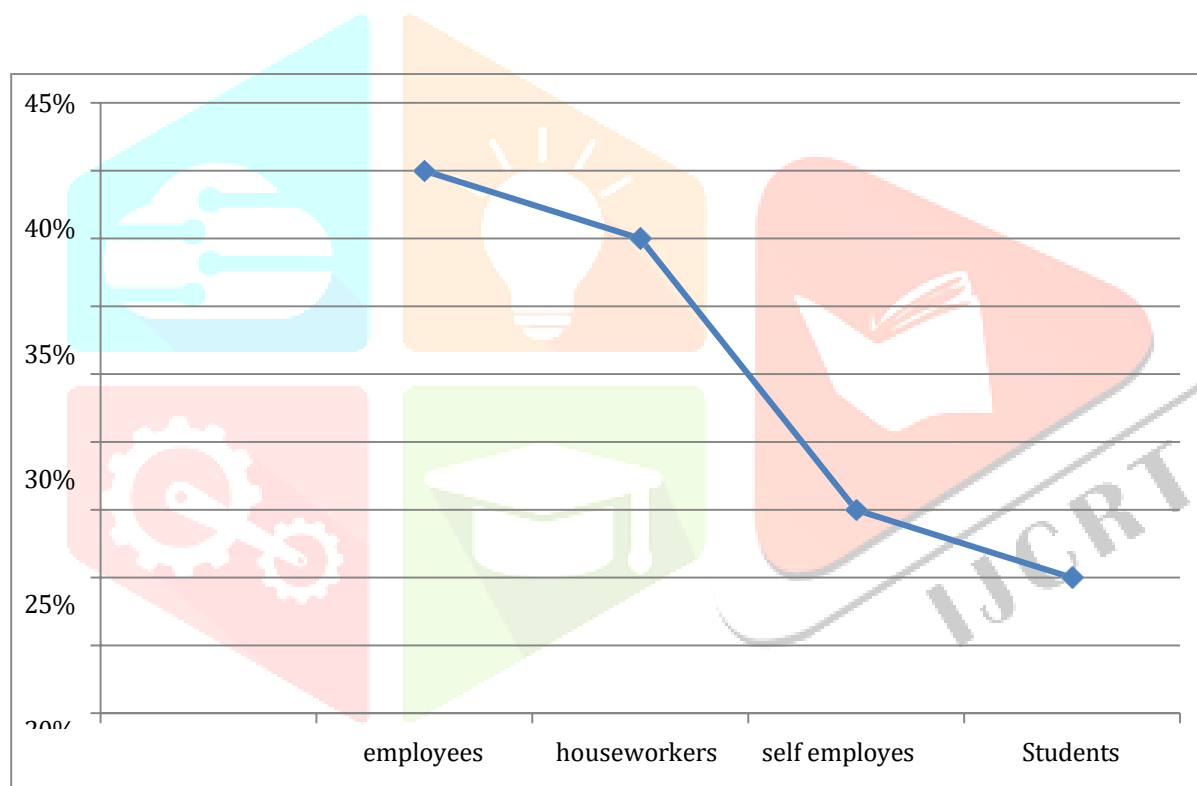
(source:PrimaryData)



The age group graph shows that the highest participation is from women aged 26-40 years 40% followed by 18-25 years 25%. The 41-60 years group accounts for 20% while 15% belongs to women above 60 years. This indicates that the Stree Shakti Scheme mainly benefits working-age women, but also includes elderly women showing inclusive participation across all age groups and supporting women empowerment in Karnataka

“Graph B: Distribution of Women by Occupation”

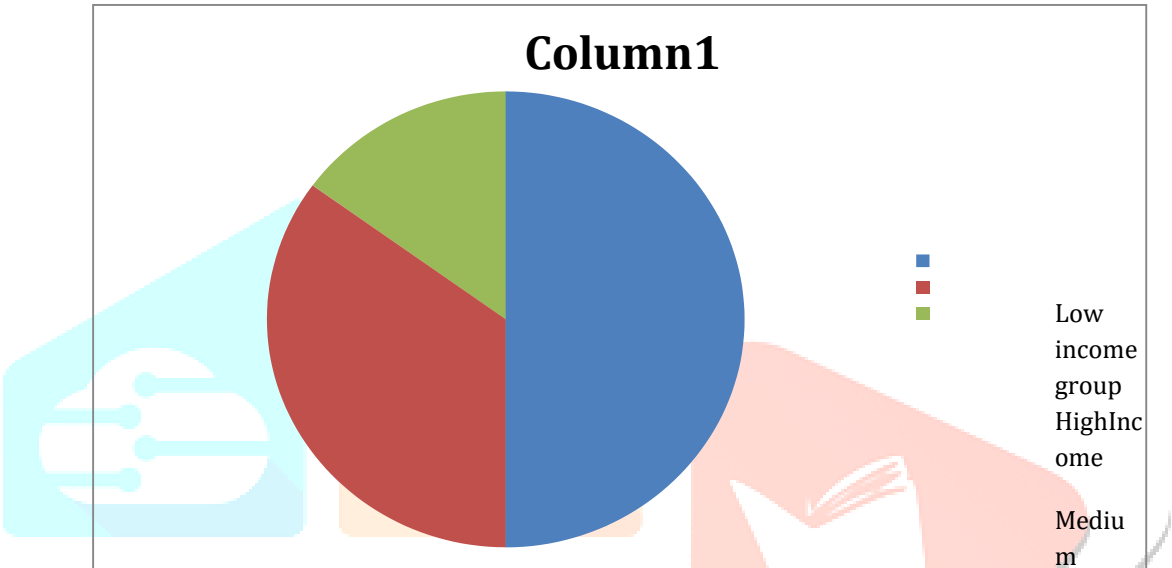
OCCUPATION	PERCENTAGE
House workers	35%
Employees	40%
Self Employment	15%
Students	10%



The graph of occupation distribution under the scheme shows that the highest value is for employees at 40%, followed by house workers at 35%. The line then decreases to 15% for self-employed women and further drops to 10% for students. This trend clearly indicates that the majority of beneficiaries are working and house.

Graph C: Income Group Distribution of Women Using the Stree Shakti Scheme

Income Group	Percentage
Low Income Group	50%
Medium Income Group	35%
High Income Group	15%



The pie chart of income group distribution under the Shakti Scheme shows that the largest share of beneficiaries belongs to the low-income group (50%), followed by the middle-income group (35%), while the high-income group accounts for only 15%. This clearly indicates that the scheme primarily benefits economically weaker and middle-income women.

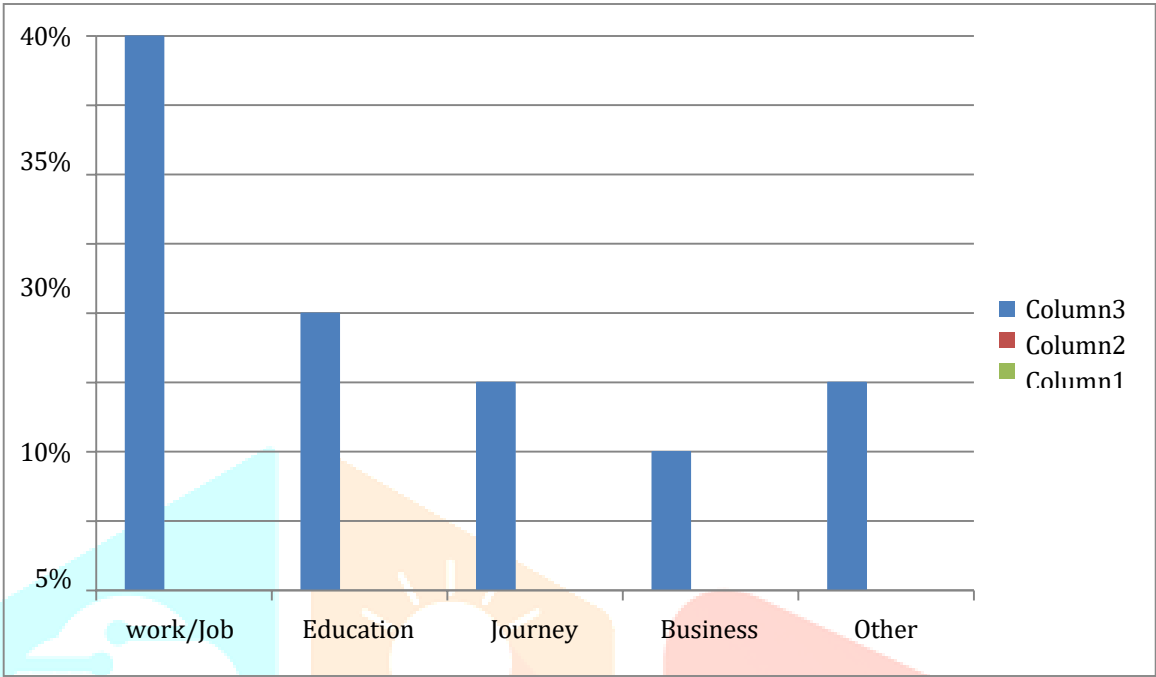
Graph D: Distribution of Women Beneficiaries by Purpose of Travel

Purpose of Travel	Percentage
Work/Job	40%
Education	20%
Journey...../?	15%
Business	10%
Other	15%

The graph of the purpose of Travel under the scheme shows that the highest share of travel 40% is for work/Job.

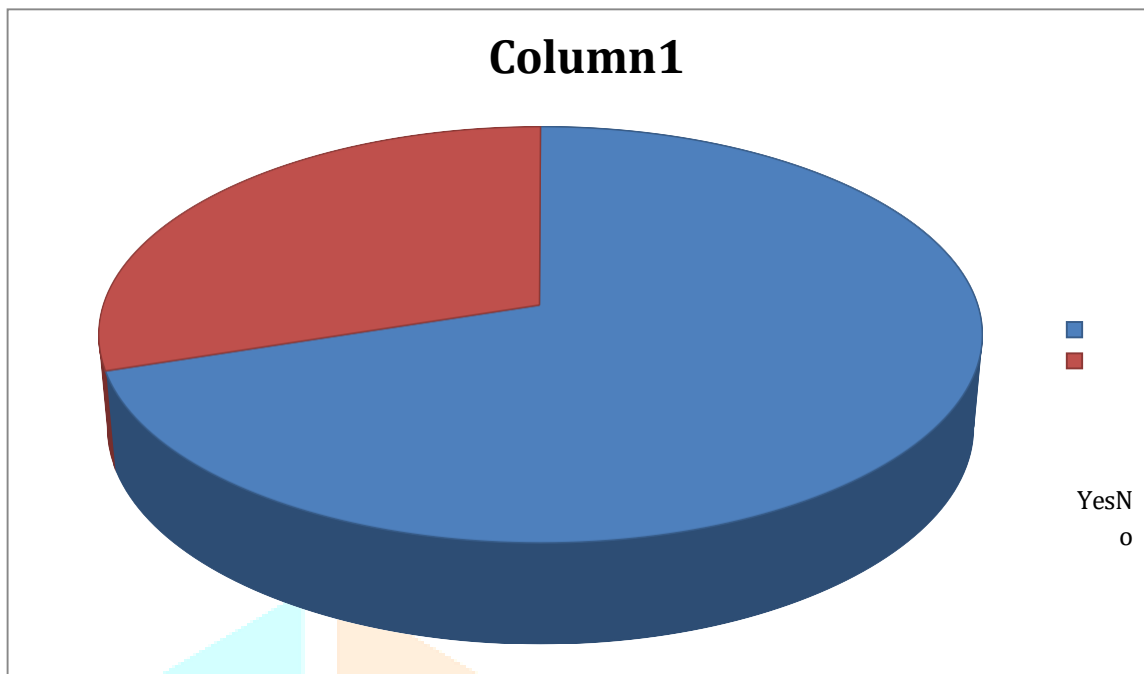
This is followed by 20% for Educationandtrainingpurposes,15%forJourney,10%forBusinessand 15% for others (Personal activities).

Graph E: Views on the Continuation of the Stree Shakti Scheme



Graph E: Views on the Continuation of the Stree Shakti Scheme

Continuation	Percentage
YES	70%
NO	30%



The Pie chart shows that 70% of the respondents support the continuation of the Stree Shakti Scheme, while 30% do not support it. This indicates that the majority of beneficiaries have a favorable opinion about the scheme and believe that it contributes significantly to women empowerment, financial

, and social development in Karnataka

Economic Analysis

- The State Shakti Free Bus Scheme has reduced transportation expenses for women, helping them save money daily.
- The money saved from travel expenses has improved women's purchasing capacity and household economic condition.
- Free bus travel has increased women's participation in education, employment, business and other economic activities.
- Rural and low-income women benefited more because transportation costs were a major financial burden earlier.
- The scheme increased the use of public transport and reduced dependence on private vehicles, indirectly helping in fuel savings and pollution control.
- Economically, the scheme contributed to women empowerment by increasing financial independence and mobility. The scheme has significantly contributed to the growth of Karnataka's tourism sector by promoting tourism and increasing tourist mobility across the state.
- The scheme supports poor and middle-class women and contributes to increased economic activity by improving their mobility and access to employment and markets."

- “The scheme supports women entrepreneurs engaged in small-scale industries and enterprises, thereby contributing to their economic empowerment.”
- Overall, the economic analysis shows that the Stree Shakti Free Bus scheme positively impacted women's financial condition and social development in Karnataka

Limitations

- Over crowding in buses in crease dafter the implementation of the scheme.
- Women passengers sometimes face difficulty getting seats during peak hours.
- The scheme has created an additional financial burden on the Karnataka Government and KSRTC.
- In some rural areas, bus frequency and connectivity are still limited.
- • The scheme has created an additional financial burden on the Karnataka Government and KSRTC.
- Delays in bus timings affect the daily travel of students and working women.
- Male passengers and conductors sometimes face inconvenience due to overcrowding.
- Lack of proper awareness about the rules and eligibility criteria causes confusion among passengers.
- Increased passenger load may affect bus maintenance and service quality.
- The scheme helps the government provide 50% subsidized bus fares for women and reduces transportation costs

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. 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 help the women to empower ever.

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