

**A STUDY ON VARIOUS PROBLEMS FACED BY
WOMEN IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ERNAKULAM
DISTRICT, KERALA**

MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT

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PREFACE

Kerala has drawn considerable attention for its paradoxical pattern of growth with high social development indicators, often referred to as the 'Kerala model of development'. In terms of sex ratio, literacy, life expectancy and mean age at marriage women in Kerala score higher than any other state in the country.

But there is a growing uneasiness with Kerala's social development outcomes linked to non conventional indicators as in the rising visibility of gender based violence and related crimes. Be it day or night, women in God's Own Country no longer feel safe whether they walk on the streets or use the public transport.

Despite all the hue and cry regarding women's safety, women in Kerala continue to live a nightmare. Whether you are married or single, young or old, every woman in Kerala who are out on the streets has a daunting tale to tell.

Cities should be spaces for opportunity and personal growth. But going by the experiences of women across the world, they are more often than not sites of exclusion, harassment and assault. Today, there is a growing realisation that if our urban centres are to be made safe for everyone living within their peripheries, they have to first be made safe for the most marginalised among those who live, work and commute in them: Women.

INTRODUCTION

Public transport is a shared passenger transport service which is available for use by the general public, as distinct from modes such as taxicab, car pooling or hired buses which are not shared by strangers without private arrangement.

Public transport modes include buses, trolley buses, trams, rapid transit (metro/subways/ undergrounds etc.) and ferries. Public transport between cities is dominated by airlines, coaches, and intercity rail. High speed rail networks are being developed in many parts of the world.

Most public transport runs to a scheduled timetable with the most frequent services running to headway. Share taxi offers on – demand services in many parts of the world, and some services will wait until the vehicle is full before it starts. Para transit is sometimes used in areas of low – demand and for people who need a door – to – door service.

There are distinct differences in urban public transit between Asia, North America, and Europe. In Asia, mass transit operations are predominantly run by profit – driven privately owned and publicly traded mass transit and real estate conglomerates. In North America, mass transit operations are predominantly run by municipal transit authorities. In Europe, mass transit operations are predominantly run by outsourced private transport operators.

Public transport services can be profit – driven by use of pay – by – the – distance fares or funded by Government subsidies in which flat rate fares are charged to each passenger. Services can be fully profitable through high ridership numbers and high fare box recovery ratios, or can be regulated and possibly subsidised from local or national tax revenue. Fully subsidised, zero – fare (free) services operate in some towns and cities.

Some historical forms of public transport are the stagecoach, travelling a fixed route from coaching inn to coaching inn, and the horse – drawn boat carrying paying passengers, which was a feature of European canals from their 17th – century origins.

The following are the main modes of transport system: -

1. Airlines
2. Railways

3. Waterways
4. Road transport system

An airline provides scheduled services with aircraft between airports. Air travel has high up to very high speeds, but incurs large waiting times prior and after travel, and is therefore often only feasible over longer distances or in areas where lack of ground infrastructure makes other modes of transport impossible. Bush airlines work more similar to bus stops, an aircraft waits for passengers and takes off when the aircraft is full of luggage.

Passenger rail transport is the conveyance of passengers by means of wheeled vehicles specially designed to run on railways. Railways allow high capacity on short or long distance, but require track, signalling, infrastructure and stations to be built and maintained. Urban rail transit consists of trams, light rail, rapid transit, people movers, commuter rail, monorail suspension railways and funiculars.

India has about 14,500 km of navigable waterways which comprises rivers, canals, backwaters, creeks, etc. About 50 million tonnes of cargo corresponding to 2.82 billion tonne km was transported in 2006-06 by Inland Water Transport (IWT). Its operations are currently restricted to a few stretches in the Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly Rivers, The Brahmaputra, the Barak River, the rivers in Goa, the backwaters in Kerala, inland waters in Mumbai and the deltaic regions of the Godavari-Krishna rivers. Besides the organised operations by mechanised vessels, country boats of various capacities also operate in various rivers and canals. About 50 million tonnes of cargo corresponding to 2.82 billion tonne km was transported in 2006-06 by Inland Water Transport (IWT).

Road transport use buses on conventional roads to carry numerous passengers on shorter journeys. Buses operate with low capacity (i.e., compared with trams or trains), and can operate on conventional roads, with relatively inexpensive bus stops to serve passengers. Therefore buses are commonly used in smaller cities, towns, and rural areas, as well for shuttle services supplementing other means of transit in large cities. Bus rapid transit is an ambiguous term used for buses operating on dedicated right – of – way, much like a light rail. Trolley buses are electric buses that employ overhead wires to get power for traction. Online Electric Vehicles are buses that run on a conventional battery, but are recharged frequently at certain points via underground wires.

Coach services use coaches (long – distance buses) for suburb – to – CBD or longer – distance transportation. The vehicles are normally equipped with more comfortable

seating, a separate luggage compartment, video and possibly also a toilet. They have higher standards than city buses, but a limited stopping pattern.

Public transport allows transport at an economy of scale not available through private transport. Advocates of public transport claim that investing in mass transit will ultimately reduce the total transport cost for the public. Time saved can also be significant, as less cars can translate to less congestion, and faster speeds for remaining motorists. Transit – oriented development can both improve the usefulness and efficiency of the public transit system as well as result in increased business for commercial developments.

An important social role played by public transport is to ensure that all members of society are able to travel, not just those with a driving license and access to an automobile – which include groups such as the young, the old, the poor, those with medical conditions, and people banned from driving. Automobile dependency is a name given by policy makers to places where those without access to a private vehicle do not have access to independent mobility.

Above that, public transportation opens to its users the possibility of meeting other people, as no concentration is diverted from interacting with fellow – travellers due to any steering activities. Adding to the above – said, public transport becomes a location of inter – social encounters across all boundaries of social, ethnic and other types of affiliation.

In the contemporary world women no longer lag behind in terms of career they are keeping themselves shoulder to shoulder with opposite sex. However even today they are expected to do multitasking they have to take care of family and household even if they are working. Working women refer to those unpaid employment. They works as lawyer, nurse, doctor, teacher etc., women have to face problem by virtue of their sex. For centuries women have been subjected to exploitation and torture physically, mentally and sexually. There are innumerable challenges and problems faced by them both at home and work place.

The women in modern world has a changing perspective . Many women are working outside the homes to support their families and using the local transport to reach destinations. Travelling becomes a painful experience for them because of stares from both the drivers and the passengers. Women feel unsafe while travelling by public transport. The World Health Organization estimates up to 69 percent of

women have been physically hit or harmed by a male partner at some point in their lives, and approximately one in five women experiences rape or attempted rape during her lifetime.

While the local transport system facilitates the people, especially women, it has many drawbacks that need serious attention.

International status:

The problem of violence against women is international in scope. A similar incident took place in neighboring Nepal's hilly region in May 2012, where a 21-year-old Buddhist nun was gang raped in a public bus by five men including the driver and his staff. Incidents of sexual harassment and assault in public transport are part of everyday life in Nepal although, like India, most of them remain unreported.

Nearly half of all Japanese women report at least one experience of being harassed on public transportation. The problem has also been reported in Hong Kong, Jakarta, and, not surprisingly, India, where nearly two-thirds of women reported having been the victims. Research conducted by one of the authors in Kathmandu, Nepal, found sexual harassment in public transport is experienced by the vast majority of women: Women in Islamabad have stressed on the need for a new women-public transport system, where they would not have to commute with men.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

Women who commute via public transport urged the government to focus on the issue of harassment and to launch a proper transport facility for the public in general and female commuters in particular, so that they may travel with dignity. So this study is intended to bring out the general challenges faced by the women sector before the public authorities .

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Today Kerala is facing several issues regarding women. Women are subjected too much harassment especially in public transport system. Ernakulum is one of the districts which witness the similar problems in public transport.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To study the various problems faced by the women in road transport system – bus.
- To find out the reasons behind women preferring private transport system than public transport system.
- To assess the preference of women to work in public transport system.
- To come up with valuable suggestions to the Government and the transport authorities in order to make concrete changes in the transport system to safeguard the interest of women.

METHODOLOGY:

The present study is to make an intensive inquiry of various challenges of women in public transport system by the use of empirical approach.

Methods:- Both primary and secondary data was used for the research. The primary Information about the research has been collected through interview with women through distribution of questionnaires. Secondary information was gathered from various books, journals, newspapers and websites.

Sample: For the convenience of collecting data and ensuring the representativeness of the sample, convenient sampling technique was used. In these study 300 samples has been selected from the Ernakulum district.

Statistical Tools: Simple percentage analysis was used for analysing and interpreting the data collected through primary sources.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope is limited to the people of Ernakulum accordingly 300 people are subjected for the study. The subject for the interview was chosen based on convenient sampling. The respondents were interviewed with the help of questionnaire. This study strives to provide vivid picture about awareness of problems faced by women in public transport system.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study is confined to Ernakulum district alone.
- The study was only for a short period of time.

- Lack of response from the respondents.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

1. In the survey conducted 300 females residing in Ernakulum were selected.
2. Majority of the respondents belong to the age group of 20 – 30. Most of the females were aware of this issue.
3. As Ernakulum is a local destination most of the travellers were ordinary people they use public transport system as a medium for travelling. In this a cheaper mode most of them use bus for travelling.
4. While travelling most of the females have to face many problems many of them were even feared to respond for this. This shows the powerlessness of women in the society.
5. Today ill – treatment by males is a major issue faced by females while travelling due to the status they keep in the society and fear of their image most of them were not ready to respond to this question.
6. Apart from the little preference availability of ladies in bus most of them deny the view that women are getting much preference while travelling in general public buses. Even the seats reserved for women are used by men.
7. Night transport creates much fear and tension for most of them. Most of the females consider night travelling as insecure.
8. Even if public transport system provide much job opportunities only minority of females are interested in it. Suppression of men and sexual harassment were the main reason for their disinterest.
9. In Ernakulum most of them were not working in bus transport system. Fear of male subordinate's harassment is one of the main reasons for the decrease of females in bus transport system.

- 10.** As if society spread a general false view that “male is powerful and dominant “most of the females have a fear in travelling alone.
- 11.** Due to their age and beauty mostly teenagers have to face all the violence’s and harassments from the society. Middle agers and children were also becoming a prey for the social violence.
- 12.** The carelessness of public officials, absence of strict rules and absence of any kind of other remedial measures make females to opt for an apt remedy. They consider strict rules without any loop holes as a best remedy for this.
- 13.** In today’s society rules are becoming a shade for crime. So in order to repeal this capital punishment should be the punishment given to such criminals.
- 14.** Public transport system is much beneficial for women.
- 15.** Apart from making women as an object of ridicule they should be given prominent and benevolence by the public officials. Hence they can attain a dominant place in society and even while travelling.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Basic facilities of protection and security should be provided for females in public transport system.
2. Females should be provided adequate attention and priority.
3. Women safety and other needs while travelling must be acknowledged and acted upon as primary objective within the planning and management of public matters by the public officials.
4. Gender equitable environment should be created so that women can attain equal prominence.
5. Recruit more female bus conductors and drivers as well as police through the use of quotas and appropriate training so that they can in act to the issues occurring in the bus.
6. There is a need for basic data and study material on how women make use of transport system. So by analysing this, apt remedies can be opted.
7. Implication of powerful rules by the judiciary. It can be made possible even by upbringing changes in the constitutionary books and law books.
8. Create an interaction of media to this issue by creating awareness and publicity through media.
9. Public officials and women organisations should become much active and vigilant.
10. Women should attain a defence power within themselves. So that they can attain an equal dominity with males.
11. Involving women in creation of justice rule regarding crimes against women.

CONCLUSION

Women's issues are really business issues. Even more so when you operate a public transport system. Smart employers are becoming aware of the fact that they need the skills and perceptions women can bring to their businesses. In order to achieve both economic growth and social equity, businesses need men and women sharing in decision – making. As already stated, the industry holds great potential for women. Yes, it is an industry that is male dominated, but opportunities exist simply because we are under - represented.

Public transport service providers operating in today's competitive environment can no longer afford to ignore women under – utilised skills as employees. By incorporating more women in all areas of transport – provision, it will become easier to communicate the fundamental issues involved and operators will achieve the competitive edge they seek over business rivals. Similarly, it is important that a transport system provides for the whole community but operators can no longer afford to ignore the particular needs of their primary customers.

It is appropriate that women's needs are identified and considered within the overall framework of service delivery. It cannot be stressed sufficiently the importance of women – both as employees and customers of public transport – taking every opportunity to put their views forward, to express their opinion and to make sure that they get what they want and need to make public transport better and more workable for everyone.