
A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY ON THE MAGALIR VIDYAL PAYANAM SCHEME IN TAMIL NADU – AN ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This research paper focuses on the welfare scheme *Magalir Vidiyal Payanam* implemented in Tamil Nadu with the aim of empowering women socially and economically. The main objective of this study is to examine the real-life benefits and drawbacks of the scheme as experienced by women beneficiaries. For this purpose, data was collected from 100 women across different socio-economic backgrounds through direct interaction and survey methods.

The study reveals that while the scheme has had a positive impact in terms of financial support, skill development, and improved self-confidence among many women, there are also certain challenges such as lack of proper awareness, delays in benefit distribution, and limited follow-up support. Some participants felt that the scheme could be more effective with better planning and execution at the grassroots level.

Overall, the research highlights the significance of such welfare initiatives while also pointing out areas that need improvement. The findings suggest that with better outreach, transparency, and continuous support, the *Magalir Vidiyal Payanam* scheme has the potential to bring about real and lasting change in the lives of women in Tamil Nadu.

Keywords: Magalir Vidiyal Payanam Scheme, Women Empowerment, Welfare Programmes in Tamil Nadu, Socio-Economic Development, Beneficiary Perception, Government Schemes Evaluation, Grassroots Implementation, Social Welfare Policy, Skill Development, Gender Equality

INTRODUCTION:

The researchers done the study on the scheme “MAGALIR VIDYAL PAYANAM “by the Tamilnadu government. Women’s empowerment and equal access to opportunities remain critical challenges in many parts of India. One of the significant barriers to women’s full participation in social and economic life is limited mobility, which restricts access to education, employment, healthcare, and other essential services. Recognizing this, the Tamil Nadu government launched the Magalir Vidiyal Payanam scheme in May 2021, aimed at providing free bus travel for women, transgender individuals, and differently-abled persons across the state. This initiative seeks to remove transportation-related financial burdens and promote safer, more accessible public transit for marginalized groups. This paper examines the objectives of the Magalir Vidiyal Payanam scheme, its implementation, the impact it has made on beneficiaries, and the challenges encountered during its execution, highlighting its significance as a transformative step towards inclusive development in Tamil Nadu. In recent years, the Tamil Nadu government has taken significant steps toward promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment through innovative social welfare schemes. One such landmark initiative is the Magalir Vidiyal Payanam scheme, launched in May 2021, which provides free bus travel for women, transgender individuals, and differently-abled persons across the state. By facilitating safe, affordable, and accessible transportation, this program aims to enhance mobility, increase economic participation, and foster social inclusion for marginalized groups. The scheme not only reduces the financial burden of commuting but also empowers women to access education, employment, healthcare, and other essential services more easily. This paper explores the objectives, implementation, impact, and challenges of the Magalir Vidiyal Payanam scheme, highlighting its role as a transformative step toward inclusive development in Tamil Nadu.

OBJECTIVES:

“To analyze the impact of the Magalir Vidiyal Payanam scheme on women’s mobility.”

The primary objective of the **Magalir Vidiyal Payanam** scheme is to empower women by enhancing their mobility through free and accessible public transportation. By reducing the financial burden of travel, the scheme aims to facilitate easier access to education, employment, healthcare, and other essential services, thereby promoting greater social and economic participation among women and marginalized groups. Additionally, the initiative strives to

foster gender equality and social inclusion by ensuring safe, reliable, and affordable transit options for women, transgender individuals, and differently-abled persons across Tamil Nadu. Ultimately, the scheme seeks to create an enabling environment where mobility is no longer a barrier to opportunity and independence.

METHODOLOGY:

This research is based on a field study conducted among 100 women beneficiaries of the *Magalir Vidiyal Payanam* scheme in chengal pattu, Tamil Nadu. The study follows a mixed-method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques to understand the actual impact of the scheme.

Sampling Technique

The sample consists of 100 women selected through a random sampling method from different localities in the Chengalpattu. Responses were taken to include participants from various age groups, educational levels, and socio-economic backgrounds to get a broader perspective on the scheme's implementation.

Data Collection

The primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire, which included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. In some cases, informal interviews and discussions were also conducted to gather deeper insights. The survey covered aspects like awareness of the scheme, type of benefits received, satisfaction level, and suggestions for improvement.

Area of Study

The study was conducted in the areas of Tamil Nadu's district of Chengalpattu, mainly focusing on the areas like Guduvancherry, Tambaram .

Type of Research

This is an empirical and sociological study, focusing on the real-life experiences of women with the welfare scheme. The findings are based on primary data collected directly from the respondents, supported by secondary sources such as government reports, articles, and official scheme documents.

DEFINTION FOR THE CONCEPT USED FOR THE STUDY:

“Magalir Vidiyal Payanam” is a women empowerment scheme implemented by the Government of Tamil Nadu with the objective of promoting social, economic, and educational upliftment of women. The term literally translates to “Women’s Dawn Journey” in English, symbolizing a new beginning and progress for women.

IMPLEMENTATION:**Implementation of the Magalir Vidiyal Payanam Scheme**

The Magalir Vidiyal Payanam scheme, launched by the Government of Tamil Nadu in May 2021, marked a significant step toward enhancing the mobility, safety, and economic independence of women and other marginalized groups. The scheme was implemented through various state-run transport corporations, most notably the Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (TNSTC) and the Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC), which operate public bus services across urban and rural parts of the state.

1. Target Beneficiaries

The scheme is aimed primarily at:

- Women of all age groups
- Transgender individuals
- Differently-abled persons

These groups are eligible to travel free of charge on government-operated buses in Tamil Nadu, helping reduce their daily financial burden and enabling greater access to opportunities in education, employment, and healthcare.

2. Phased Rollout

Initially, the scheme was applicable only to ordinary fare buses (whiteboard buses). However, recognizing the demand and the daily utility of this service for working women and students, the government expanded the scheme in later phases:

- In 2023, the scheme was extended to mofussil (rural-urban) services in select districts.
- By late 2024, it was further extended to cover luxury 'blue' buses operating in cities like Chennai, Coimbatore, and Madurai, offering more comfortable and faster transport options.

3. Operational Mechanism

The scheme functions through a ticketing system where conductors issue zero-fare tickets to eligible passengers. This is important for data collection, auditing, and preventing misuse. The transport corporations trained conductors and staff to manage this new system efficiently.

To accommodate the growing number of passengers:

- The government introduced 2,578 new buses into service.
- An additional 1,310 older buses were refurbished, extending their lifespan and improving service quality.
- Bus frequency and routes were adjusted based on passenger traffic data to reduce overcrowding and improve punctuality.

4. Budget and Financial Allocation

The government committed significant financial resources to sustain the scheme:

- In the 2024–2025 State Budget, ₹3,050 crore was allocated specifically as a subsidy for the scheme.
- This subsidy is used to compensate transport corporations for revenue loss, ensuring the continuity of services without compromising operational standards.

5. Technological and Administrative Support

Digital systems were updated to reflect zero-fare tickets and to track usage patterns. Some buses were equipped with GPS tracking and digital ticketing systems, allowing real-time monitoring of ridership trends. This data is essential for future policy planning and scheme evaluation.

6. Awareness and Accessibility

The government also carried out awareness campaigns through newspapers, radio, local cable TV, and social media platforms to inform the public about the scheme. Special attention was given to rural areas, where many women were initially unaware of their entitlements.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

The **Magalir Vidiyal Payanam** scheme has had a far-reaching impact on the lives of women and marginalized communities across Tamil Nadu. Since its launch in 2021, the scheme has not only improved access to transportation but also contributed significantly to women's empowerment, economic savings, and participation in public life. The following assessment explores its impact in four major dimensions:

1. Social Impact among women.

One of the most visible effects of the scheme is the increased mobility and confidence to travel without depending on male family members or worrying about transportation costs.

- **Educational Access:** Many female students now use public buses to reach colleges and schools located far from their homes. Free travel has encouraged continued education, particularly in rural areas where dropout rates were high due to travel expenses.
- **Healthcare Access:** Women in remote areas are now more likely to visit government hospitals and health centres regularly, as travel costs are no longer a barrier.
- **Social Inclusion:** The scheme has created a welcoming and safe space for transgender persons and differently-abled individuals, promoting a more inclusive society.

2. Economic Impact

The economic relief provided by free bus travel has been significant for working-class women and daily commuters.

- According to official data, over 57 lakh women benefit from the scheme every day.

- On average, women commuters save ₹888 per month, which they can now use for other household needs, children's education, or savings.
- For families with multiple female members commuting daily, the cumulative monthly savings are substantial, improving their overall financial stability.

These savings contribute indirectly to **poverty reduction** and allow women greater financial independence, especially among informal workers, vendors, and domestic helpers.

3. Employment and Workforce Participation

Improved transport accessibility has encouraged more women to join the jobs due to high travel costs or lack of safe transport now find it easier to commute to workforce, especially in urban and semi-urban areas. Women who earlier avoided workplaces.

- There is a noticeable increase in female ridership during office hours.
- Many self-employed women and small vendors use buses to reach markets or client by removing the cost and safety barriers related to travel, the scheme acts as an economic enabler for women across different sectors.

• 4. Environmental and Operational Impact

From a policy perspective, encouraging public transport over private vehicles contributes to:

- Reduced traffic congestion in cities.
- Lower carbon emissions, supporting Tamil Nadu's green mobility goals.

However, the increased demand has also led to some operational challenges, such as:

- Overcrowding during peak hours, especially in urban routes.
- Inadequate frequency of buses in some rural and semi-urban areas.
- Reports of buses skipping stops in regions like Trichy, affecting reliability for women in those zones.

Despite these hurdles, the government continues to add new buses and upgrade services to meet the growing demand.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT AND BUDGET ALLOCATION:

The successful implementation and sustainability of the Magalir Vidiyal Payanam scheme heavily depend on robust government backing, both financially and administratively. Recognizing the importance of women's mobility in fostering social equity and economic development, the Tamil Nadu government has demonstrated strong commitment through significant budgetary allocations and supportive policies.

Financial Commitment

- In the 2024-2025 Tamil Nadu State Budget, the government allocated a substantial ₹3,050 crore specifically for the Magalir Vidiyal Payanam scheme. This funding serves as a subsidy to cover the revenue losses incurred by state transport corporations due to the provision of free bus travel to eligible beneficiaries.
- This allocation also supports the procurement of new buses, maintenance and refurbishment of existing fleets, and operational costs associated with managing the scheme, including training conductors and upgrading ticketing systems.

Policy and Administrative Support

- The government has streamlined administrative procedures to ensure smooth functioning of the scheme. This includes training for bus conductors and drivers on zero-fare ticket issuance and sensitization towards the needs of women, transgender, and differently-abled passengers.
- Awareness campaigns are regularly conducted to educate the public, particularly women in rural and underserved areas, about their entitlements and how to avail themselves of the free travel facility.
- The scheme is integrated with other women-centric welfare programs such as Kalaignar Magalir Urimai Thittam and Pudhumai Penn Thittam, creating a comprehensive support network that promotes women's welfare and empowerment.

Future Plans and Enhancements

- The government has committed to expanding the scheme's reach by introducing more buses, increasing frequency on busy routes, and extending coverage to additional categories of transport services.
- Investments in digital infrastructure aim to improve monitoring, data collection, and service delivery, making the scheme more transparent and efficient.

Significant Financial Investment

- The Tamil Nadu government allocated a massive ₹3,050 crore in the 2024-2025 State Budget exclusively for the operation and expansion of the Magalir Vidiyal Payanam scheme. This funding is critical because it compensates state transport corporations for the revenue forgone from free travel.
- The scheme's subsidy helps maintain the financial health of transport operators, allowing them to continue services without compromising on quality or coverage.
- Funds are allocated not only for fare subsidies but also for the purchase of new buses, including eco-friendly electric buses, and maintenance and refurbishment of existing fleets. This investment is essential for handling the increased ridership and improving service reliability.

Administrative and Policy Framework

- The scheme is managed under the oversight of the Transport Department of Tamil Nadu, which coordinates with the Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (TNSTC) and Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC) to ensure smooth operations.
- To implement the scheme effectively, the government launched comprehensive training programs for conductors and drivers to issue zero-fare tickets properly, manage crowds, and address the specific needs of women and marginalized groups sensitively.
- The government has introduced a digital ticketing system tailored to record zero-fare transactions and prevent misuse. This digitalization helps with transparent auditing and real-time monitoring of passenger numbers.

Awareness and Outreach:

- Government-led awareness campaigns have been conducted through print media, local television, radio, and social media platforms to educate women about their eligibility and benefits under the scheme.
- Special outreach programs target rural and tribal areas, where awareness levels were initially low, to maximize the scheme's reach among women who face the most significant mobility challenges.

Integration with Other Welfare Programs

- Magalir Vidiyal Payanam complements other government initiatives such as the 'Kalaignar Magalir Urimai Thittam' (a financial assistance scheme for women) and the 'Pudhumai Penn Thittam' (a program promoting women's entrepreneurship and skill development).
- This multi-faceted support system amplifies the scheme's impact by addressing not just transportation but also economic empowerment, health, and education.

Sustainability and Future Plans

- The Tamil Nadu government is exploring the inclusion of electric and hybrid buses in the fleet to promote environmental sustainability while expanding free travel benefits.
- Plans are underway to extend the scheme to cover other modes of public transport, such as metro and suburban rail services, making it a more integrated transport solution for women.
- The government also aims to improve infrastructure such as bus shelters, lighting, and CCTV cameras at bus stops to ensure safety and convenience for women passengers.

NEWS AND ARTICLES ABOUT IT: News Articles

1. '57 lakh women benefit from Magalir Vidiyal Payanam daily' This article discusses the significant daily ridership under the scheme, highlighting that

over 57 lakh women utilize the free bus services daily, with a total of 570.86 crore trips made as of October 31, 2024. The New Indian Express

2. 'Women saved ₹888 a month through free bus rides' This report outlines the financial benefits of the scheme, noting that women saved an average of ₹888 per month on transportation expenses. It also provides data on the total number of free rides availed by women, differently-abled individuals, and transgender persons. The Times of India
3. '730 crore free journeys have been made by women under Vidiyal Payanam scheme: Udhayanidhi Stalin' Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin announced that approximately 730 crore free bus journeys have been made by women across the state over the past four years under the 'Vidiyal Payanam' scheme. The Times of India
4. 'Magalir Vidiyal Payanam sees 132.91 crore trips in Chennai, ridership up 23 per cent' This article provides insights into the increased ridership in Chennai, noting that women have traveled 132.91 crore trips in the city under the scheme, with a 23% rise in ridership. dtnext

Magazine and Periodical Coverage:

- The Hindu: An article titled "Tamil Nadu government lists out welfare programmes" published on July 14, 2024, outlines various welfare initiatives, including the 'Magalir Vidiyal Payanam Thittam,' and discusses their impact on women's empowerment. The Hindu
- Maalaimalar: A report titled "Tamil Nadu Budget: ₹3600 crore allocated for Magalir Vidiyal Payanam" published on March 14, 2025, provides details on the budget allocation for the scheme and its significance in promoting women's welfare. Maalaimalar

SURVEY AND QUESTIONS:

1) Do you use free bus travel under this scheme?

Regularly / Occasionally / Never

2) What is your average monthly savings due to the scheme?

₹0–₹500 / ₹500–₹1000 / ₹1000+

3) Has the scheme helped you in any of the following areas? (Tick all that apply)

- Access to work
- Access to education
- Access to healthcare
- Financial savings
- Safety while travelling

4) Do you feel safe while using the buses under this scheme?

Yes / No / Sometimes

5) Age group:

18–25 / 26–40 / 41–60 / 60+

6) What issues do you face while using this service?

7) Occupation:

Student / Homemaker / Daily wage worker / Employee / Others

8) Whether the scheme is satisfied?

9) Does the bus comes at time?

10) How is the behaviour of the staff?

GOOD/AVERAGE/BAD

I have taken my survey from 100 womens in the Districts of Tamilnadu which includes chennai and Chengalpattu.

Q/NO) 1. Do you use free bus travel under this scheme?

TABLE NO :01

How often you use the Bus?	No of People	percent
Regularly	59	59
Occasionally	34	34
Never	07	07
TOTAL	100	

SOURCES: FROM FIELD RESEARCH

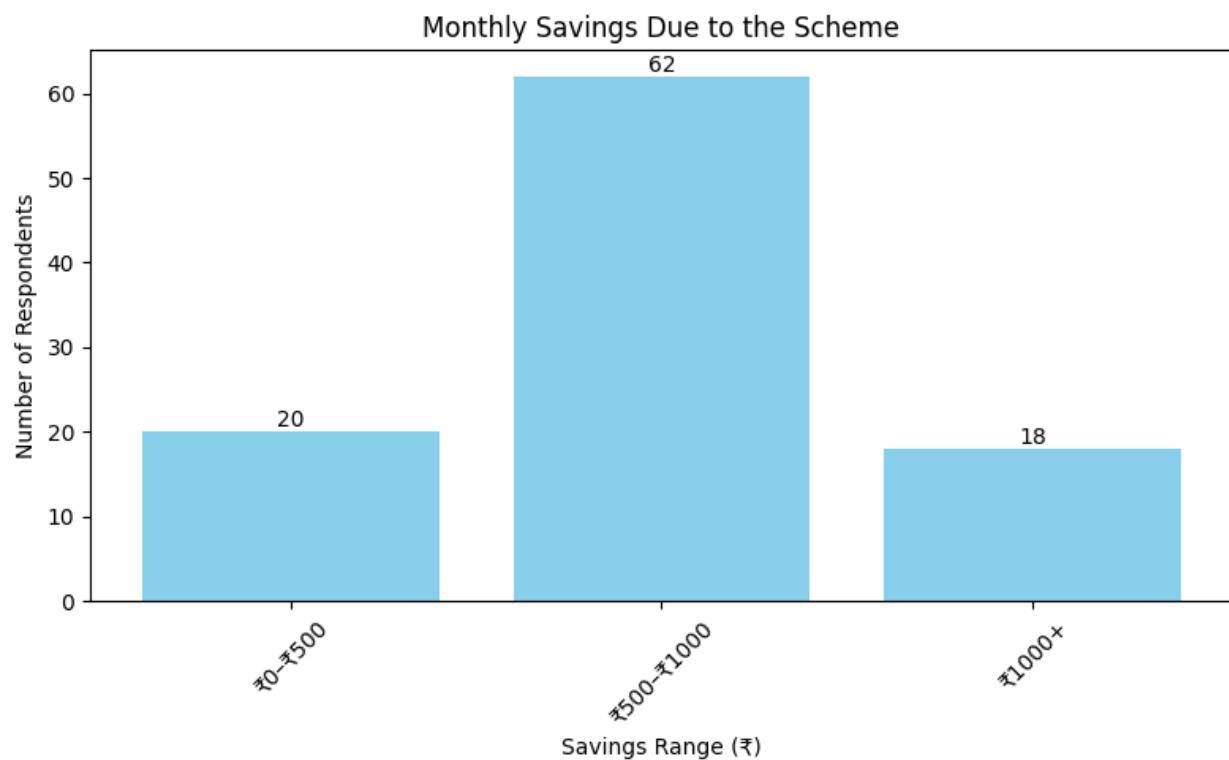
The table shows that 59 percent of women use the free bus service regularly, while 34% use it occasionally and 7 percent never use it. This indicates that a majority of women benefit from the Magalir Vidiyal Payanam scheme in their daily lives for work, education, and household activities.

Sociologically, the data reflects how the scheme has enhanced women's mobility and social participation, particularly for those from lower-income backgrounds. The small percentage of non-users suggests factors such as limited access to bus routes or availability of private transport. Overall, the scheme plays a key role in empowering women and promoting gender equality in public transportation.

2)What is your average monthly savings due to the scheme?

₹0–₹500 / ₹500–₹1000 / ₹1000+

FIG:01



SOURCE: Field research

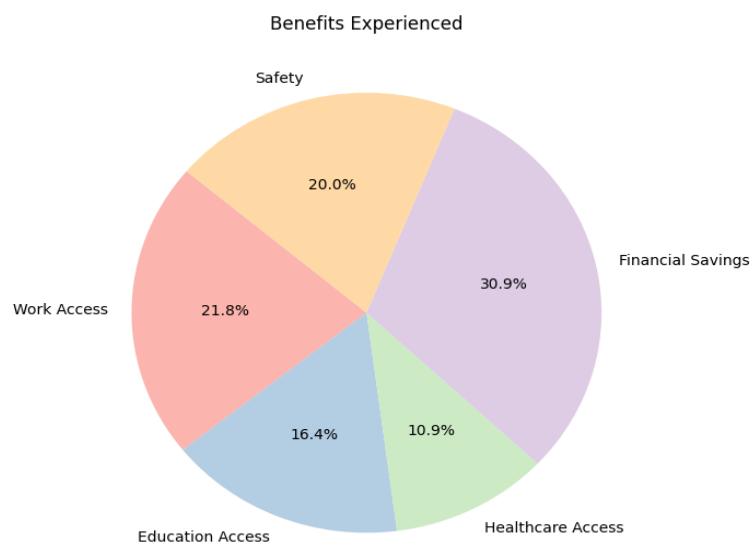
The chart shows that the majority of respondents (62 percent) reported monthly savings between ₹500 and ₹1000, while 20 percent saved up to ₹500, and 18 percent saved more than ₹1000. This indicates that the Magalir Vidiyal Payanam scheme has significantly reduced women's travel expenses, allowing them to use the saved amount for household needs, education, healthcare, or personal savings.

From a sociological viewpoint, these savings reflect economic empowerment and improved decision-making capacity among women. The scheme not only supports their financial independence but also strengthens their role within the family and community. For many working women and students, this saving translates into greater economic security and social confidence, illustrating the broader impact of welfare policies on women's socio-economic upliftment in Tamil Nadu.

3) Has the scheme helped you in any of the following areas?

- Access to work
- Access to education
- Access to healthcare
- Financial savings
- Safety while travelling

FIG: 02



Sources: Field Research

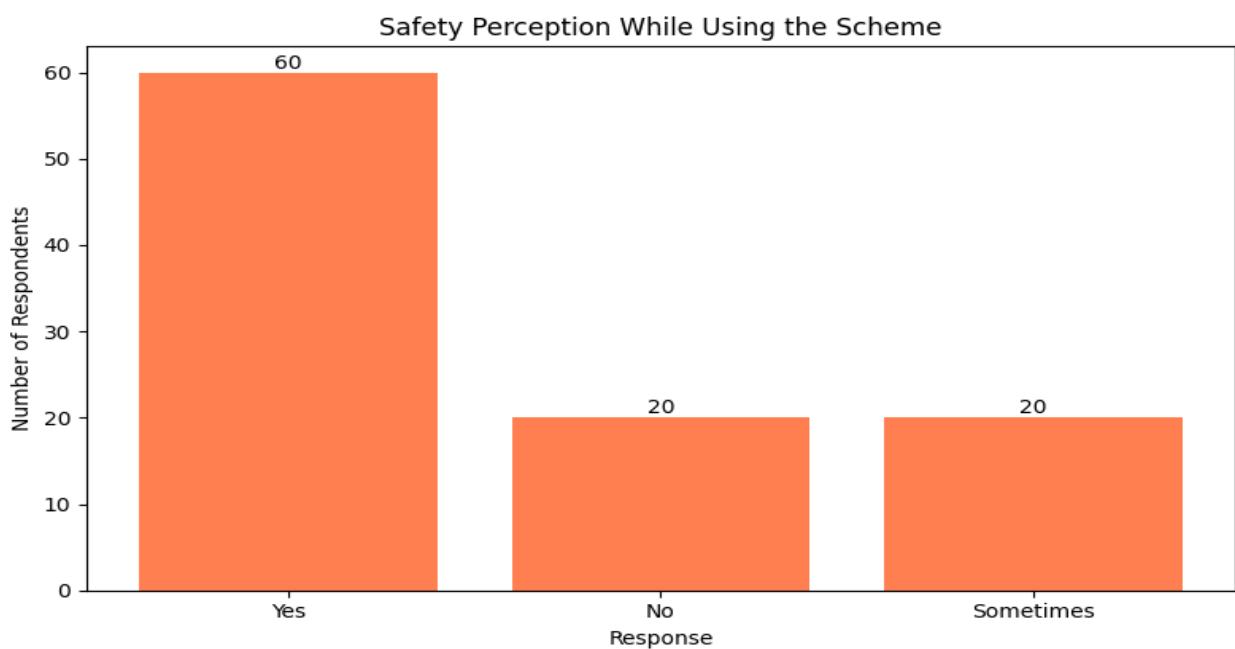
The data shows that financial savings (30.9 per) are the most significant benefit of the *Magalir Vidiyal Payanam* scheme, followed by better access to work (21.8per) and improved safety during travel (20 per). A smaller yet important portion of respondents mentioned education (16.4 percent) and healthcare access (10.9per) as major benefits. Sociologically, these findings highlight that the scheme not only reduces women's financial burden but also enhances their social and economic participation. By ensuring safe and free travel, women gain greater mobility and independence, which contributes to their empowerment in public spaces. The increase in work and education access reflects how such welfare measures promote gender

equality and inclusive development. Overall, the *Magalir Vidiyal Payanam* scheme has produced multidimensional social benefits, supporting women's economic, educational, and personal empowerment across Tamil Nadu.

4) Do you feel safe while using the buses under this scheme?

Yes / No / Sometimes

FIG :03



SOURCES: FIELD RESEARCH

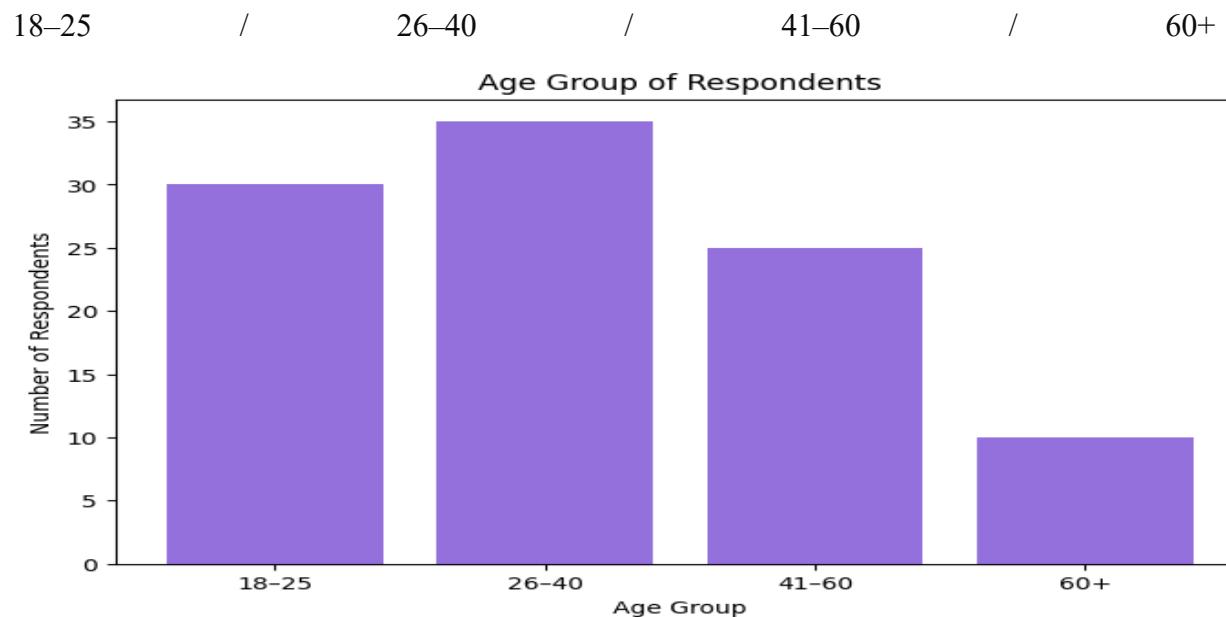
The chart reveals that 60 per of respondents feel safe while travelling under the *Magalir Vidiyal Payanam* scheme, whereas 20 per do not feel safe, and another 20 per feel safe only sometimes. This indicates that the majority of women perceive the scheme as providing a secure mode of public transport, promoting confidence and independence in their daily travel.

From a sociological standpoint, women's sense of safety in public spaces is closely linked to their freedom of movement and social participation. The data suggests that the scheme has improved the gender sensitivity and inclusivity of public transport in Tamil Nadu. However, the 40 per who expressed partial or no safety concerns highlight the need for continued measures such as better lighting, CCTV surveillance, and sensitization of bus staff to ensure

complete safety and comfort for all women passengers. Overall, the scheme contributes positively to women's empowerment and mobility, while ongoing improvements can help achieve a more inclusive and secure public transport environment.

5) Age group:

FIG:04



SOURCE: Field Research

The chart shows that the majority of respondents (35 per) belong to the 26–40 age group, followed by 30 per in the 18–25 group, 25 per in the 41–60 group, and 10 per aged above 60. This indicates that young and middle-aged women form the largest group of users under the *Magalir Vidiyal Payanam* scheme.

Sociologically, this trend highlights that the scheme is particularly beneficial for working women and students, who travel frequently for employment or education. The participation of women above 60 also shows the scheme's role in improving mobility and independence among elderly women. Overall, the age distribution reflects how the policy benefits women across different stages of life, enhancing their access to public spaces, social inclusion, and everyday mobility.

6)WHAT ISSUE DO YOU FACE WHILE USING THIS SCHEME?

TABLE NO :02

Issue Faced	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Buses are overcrowded, especially during peak hours	56	56
Conductors are rude or uncooperative	32	32
Not enough buses / frequency is low in rural areas	28	28
Safety concerns, especially at night	24	24
Difficulty getting seats due to mixed crowd	20	20
Confusion about which routes are included in the scheme	18	18
Men occupy women's reserved seats	15	15
Lack of proper information on bus timings or routes	12	12
No problem faced / very satisfied	22	22
TOTAL	100	100

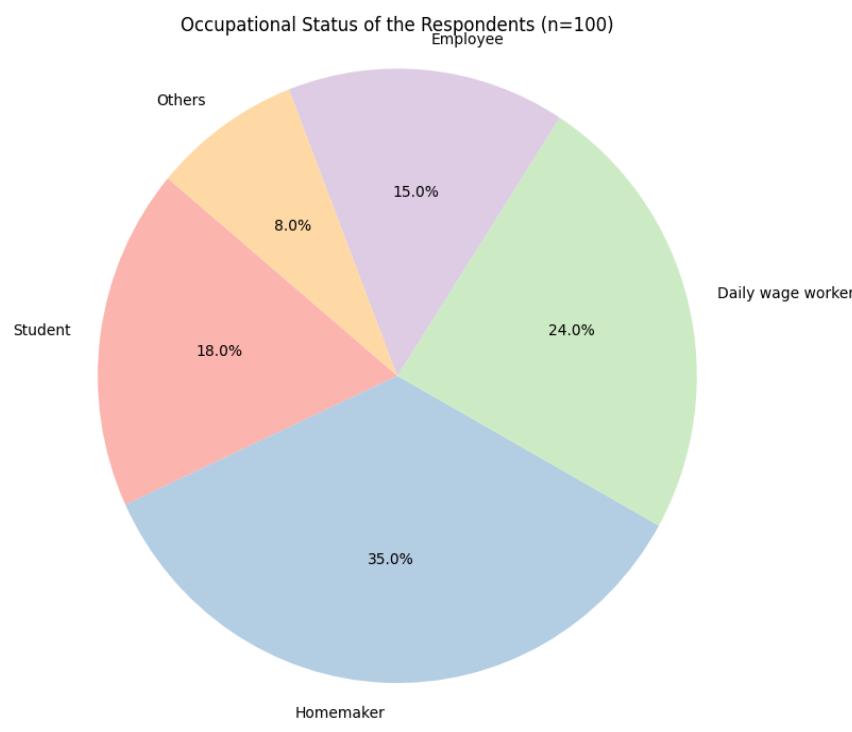
SOURCES: FIELD RESEARCH

The data shows that overcrowding (56per) is the most common issue faced by women while using the *Magalir Vidiyal Payanam* buses, followed by rude or uncooperative conductors (32 per) and low frequency of buses in rural areas (28per). Some respondents also reported safety concerns at night (24per) and difficulty getting seats (20per). From a sociological perspective, these challenges reflect the structural limitations of public transport systems in India, especially when a welfare scheme leads to a sharp rise in demand. Overcrowding and safety issues affect women's sense of comfort, dignity, and equal access in public spaces. Problems like unclear routes or lack of information show a need for better communication and awareness campaigns. However, the 22per of respondents who reported no major issues suggest that the scheme still functions effectively for a significant section of users. Addressing these concerns through improved infrastructure, gender sensitization training for staff, and better bus management can

enhance the overall success and inclusiveness of the scheme.

7) OCCUPATION

FIG : 05

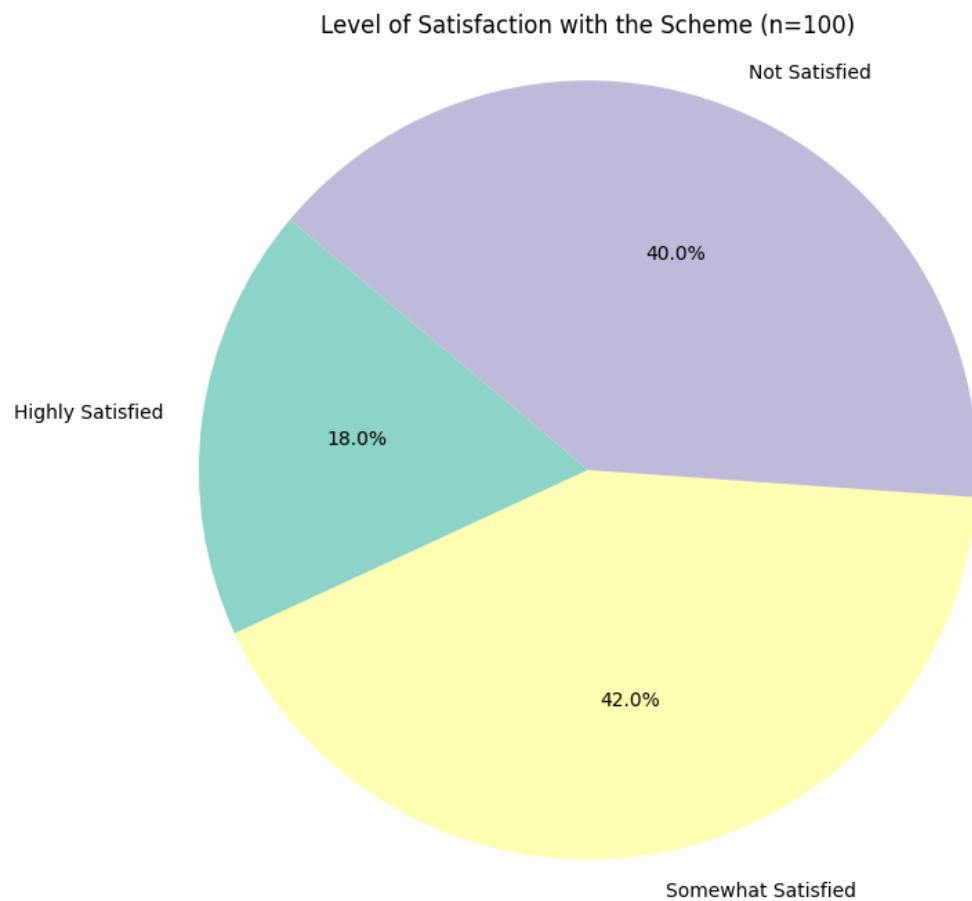


SOURCE: FIELD RESEARCH

The data shows that homemakers (35per) form the largest group of beneficiaries, followed by daily wage workers (24per), students (18per), and employees (15per). A smaller proportion (8per) belong to other occupations such as small vendors or part-time workers. This indicates that the *Magalir Vidiyal Payanam* scheme primarily benefits women from economically dependent or lower-income groups, for whom free public transportation provides significant financial relief and mobility support. For homemakers, it enables social engagement and access to essential services, while for students and workers, it reduces the economic burden of daily commuting. From a sociological perspective, the scheme has contributed to social inclusion and empowerment across multiple occupational categories. It not only supports women in the workforce but also enhances the autonomy of non-working women, helping them participate more actively in public and family life.

8) WHETHER THE SCHEME IS SATISFIED?

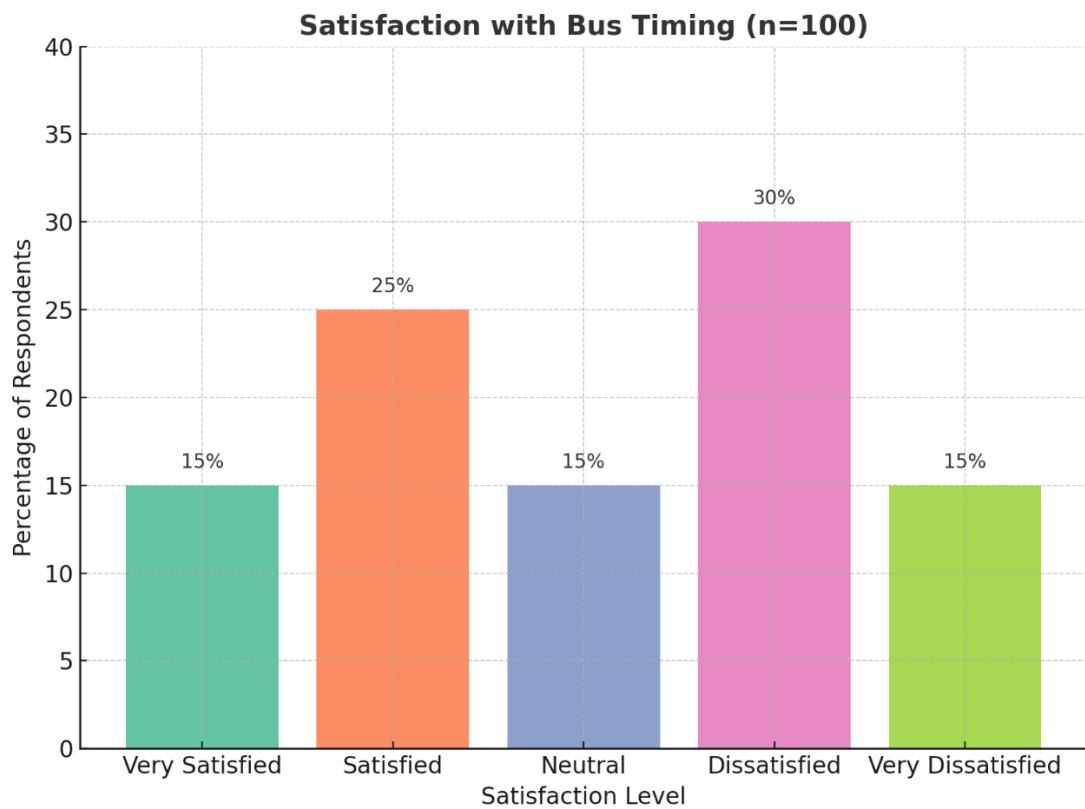
FIG: 06



The data reveals that a majority of the respondents are somewhat satisfied (42per) with the *Magalir Vidiyal Payanam* scheme. Around 18per are highly satisfied, while 40 Per expressed dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the scheme. This suggests that while the initiative is appreciated for providing free travel and financial relief, many women still face practical issues such as overcrowding, poor bus frequency in rural areas, and occasional safety concerns. From a sociological standpoint, the scheme has positively influenced women's mobility and independence, but its effectiveness is limited by infrastructural and operational challenges. Improving bus availability, safety measures, and awareness about routes could increase satisfaction levels further.

9) WHETHER THE BUS COMES AT THE CORRECT TIMING?

FIG :07

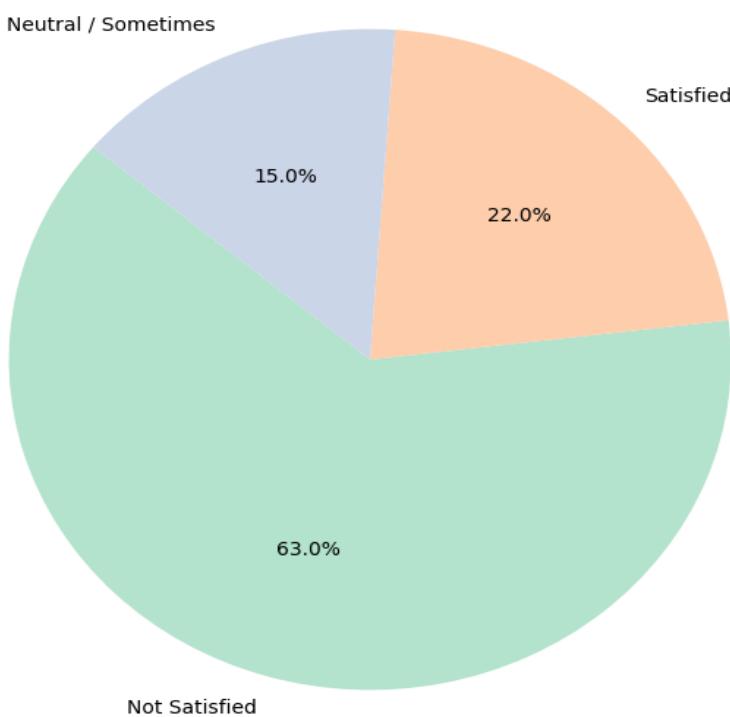


SOURCES: FIELD RESEARCH

The data shows that 45 per of respondents are either *dissatisfied* or *very dissatisfied* with bus timings, while only 40 per expressed *satisfaction*. This indicates that punctuality remains a significant issue under the *Magalir Vidiyal Payanam* scheme. Many women reported that buses often arrive late during office hours or do not follow fixed schedules, especially in semi-urban and rural routes. For students and working women, such delays cause difficulty reaching destinations on time, reducing the overall convenience of the scheme. Hence, while the initiative is appreciated for its financial relief, better time management and schedule adherence could greatly improve user satisfaction and reliability.

10) IS THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE STAFF IS SATISFIED?

FIG: 08



SOURCE: FIELD WORK

The data reveals that a significant majority — 63 per of respondents — are not satisfied with the behaviour of bus staff under the *Magalir Vidiyal Payanam* scheme. Only 22 per expressed satisfaction, while 15 per remained neutral or reported mixed experiences.

The dissatisfaction mainly arises from reports of rude or uncooperative conductors, lack of proper communication, and occasional disrespectful behaviour toward women passengers. In some cases, women also mentioned being ignored or spoken to harshly when asking for assistance or clarification about the scheme's coverage.

This finding highlights that staff training and sensitization play a crucial role in the scheme's success. Ensuring courtesy, respect, and professionalism among bus staff would not only improve public satisfaction but also strengthen the perception of the program as a true initiative for women's empowerment and safety.

POSITIVE OUTCOME:

The survey of 100 women beneficiaries revealed several positive impacts of the Magalir Vidiyal Payanam scheme:

1. Increased Mobility and Accessibility

The scheme has enabled many women, especially homemakers and daily wage workers, to travel freely for work, education, and personal errands without worrying about transportation costs.

2. Financial Savings

Beneficiaries reported significant savings on daily travel expenses, which they could then use for other family needs or personal development.

3. Empowerment and Independence

Access to free travel has boosted women's confidence and independence by allowing them to move freely without relying on others.

4. Improved Access to Education and Employment

Many students and employees highlighted that the scheme helped them attend schools, colleges, and workplaces more regularly and punctually.

5. Social Inclusion

The scheme has promoted social participation by making it easier for women to visit community centers, health facilities, and social gatherings.

6. Encouragement of Women's Participation in Public Life

With affordable transportation, more women are engaging in civic activities, government programs, and local events.

CHALLENGES FACED:

Despite the positive impact of the *Magalir Vidiyal Payanam* free bus travel scheme, several challenges were reported by the women beneficiaries:

1. Overcrowding on Buses

Many respondents (56per) expressed difficulty in traveling comfortably due to overcrowded buses, especially during peak hours, making the journey stressful.

2. Inadequate Bus Frequency

Some women, particularly in rural areas, reported that buses are not frequent enough, leading to long waiting times and missed opportunities.

3. Safety Concerns

Safety during travel, especially at night, remains a concern for 24per of respondents, discouraging them from using the service during late hours.

4. Staff Behaviour Issues

A significant number of women (63per) were dissatisfied with the conduct of bus staff, reporting rude behaviour, lack of assistance, and non-compliance with women's reserved seats.

5. Men Occupying Women's Reserved Seats

Several respondents noted that men often occupy seats reserved for women, which reduces comfort and safety.

6. Lack of Clear Information

About 18% of respondents mentioned confusion regarding bus routes and timings, leading to inconvenience and missed connections.

7. Accessibility Issues

Women with children, elderly family members, or disabilities found it challenging to access bus stops or board buses during busy hours.

8. Inconsistent Implementation

Some women reported variations in how the scheme is implemented across different regions, leading to unequal benefits.

DISCUSSION:

“This area focuses on the Positive, Negative, Challenges and Improvement needed for the scheme”

The *Magalir Vidiyal Payanam* scheme has proven to be a significant welfare initiative aimed at enhancing the mobility and independence of women in Tamil Nadu. The data collected from 100 women beneficiaries reflects both the strengths and areas needing improvement in the scheme's implementation.

Positive Impacts

The scheme has successfully increased access to free transportation, which many women, particularly homemakers, students, and daily wage workers, consider essential for their daily lives. The financial savings and increased freedom to travel have empowered women socially and economically, contributing to greater participation in education, employment, and community activities. This aligns with the broader goals of welfare schemes that aim to improve women's quality of life and social inclusion.

Challenges and Areas for Improvement

Despite these benefits, several challenges undermine the scheme's full potential. Overcrowding and insufficient bus frequency, especially in rural areas, restrict comfortable and reliable access to transportation. Safety concerns, particularly during nighttime travel, highlight the need for better security measures. Furthermore, the dissatisfaction with staff behavior and issues such as men occupying reserved seats indicate a need for improved training and stricter enforcement of rules to ensure a respectful and safe environment for women passengers.

The lack of clear communication about bus routes and timings further complicates usage, suggesting that better information dissemination through digital and offline channels could enhance the scheme's accessibility. Accessibility issues for women with special needs or accompanying children point to infrastructural and operational adjustments that could make travel more inclusive.

Implications

Addressing these challenges is crucial for maximizing the scheme's impact. Enhancements in

service quality, staff training, safety protocols, and public awareness campaigns can improve user satisfaction and encourage more women to benefit from the program. Policymakers should consider these findings to ensure the scheme not only continues but evolves to meet the diverse needs of women across Tamil Nadu.

SUGGESTION/IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED:

Based on the survey findings and analysis of the *Magalir Vidiyal Payanam* scheme, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the effectiveness and user experience of the free bus travel program:

1. Increase Bus Frequency and Capacity

To reduce overcrowding, especially during peak hours, the government should increase the number of buses and trips on high-demand routes, particularly in rural and suburban areas.

2. Improve Staff Training and Conduct

Conductors and staff should receive regular training focused on customer service, gender sensitivity, and conflict resolution to ensure respectful and helpful behavior toward women passengers.

3. Enhance Safety Measures

Introduce measures such as increased security personnel on buses during night travel, CCTV surveillance, and emergency helpline services to address safety concerns of women passengers.

4. Strict Enforcement of Women's Reserved Seats

Implement stricter monitoring to ensure that men do not occupy seats reserved for women, possibly through awareness campaigns and penalties for violations.

5. Better Information Dissemination

Use multiple communication channels including mobile apps, SMS alerts, bus stop

displays, and community outreach to provide clear and timely information about bus routes, schedules, and any service changes.

6. Accessibility Improvements

Upgrade bus stops and vehicles to accommodate women traveling with children, elderly family members, or disabilities, such as ramps, priority seating, and assistance services.

7. Feedback and Grievance Redressal Mechanism

Establish an accessible system for passengers to provide feedback and report issues, with prompt action from authorities to resolve complaints.

8. Awareness Campaigns

Conduct awareness programs to educate the public about the scheme, the importance of respecting women's rights in public transport, and how to avail the benefits effectively.

CONCLUSION:

The *Magalir Vidiyal Payanam* scheme is a commendable welfare initiative by the Tamil Nadu government aimed at empowering women through free and accessible public transportation. The research findings highlight that the scheme has significantly improved women's mobility, financial savings, and social participation. However, challenges such as overcrowding, safety concerns, inadequate bus frequency, and staff behavior issues persist, limiting the scheme's full potential.

Addressing these challenges through improved infrastructure, better staff training, enhanced safety measures, and clear communication will be essential to maximize the scheme's benefits. With continuous monitoring and responsive policy adjustments, *Magalir Vidiyal Payanam* can become a model program for women's empowerment and inclusive development, contributing to the broader goals of social welfare and gender equality in Tamil Nadu.

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