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AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF SHAKTI YOJANA ON EDUCATION IN KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how Shakti Yojana, a free bus travel program that offers bus services to women in Karnataka, has helped women in educational access and empowerment. The study uses the results of primary data consisting of 200 respondents who are distributed in rural, urban, and semi-urban regions to evaluate awareness, beneficiary coverage, and educational outcomes using the percentage and Chi-square analysis. The results of awareness (92.5%) and coverage of the beneficiaries (85%) are high, and access to educational institutions, regular attendance, and mobility of women have increased significantly. Statistical outcomes verify that there is a close relationship between the status of beneficiaries and improvement of attendance. The research puts a conclusion that Shakti Yojana is a major boost to education continuity and social-economic empowerment of women.

KEYWORDS: *Women's, Education, Shakti Yojana, Access and Empowerment.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is an important aspect of human life, social change and economic growth. Although access to education is affected by institutional factors like the avenues of school and teachers, social-economic factors, mobility issues, and gender disparities also play a role in influencing accessibility. Transportation cost and access in developing countries is also a great major inhibitor in the pursuit of education among students particularly for girls and women in furthering their education in developing countries. In the realization of such challenges, governments are increasingly initiated several developing welfare schemes that will enhances mobility and social inclusion. The Shakti Yojana that has been introduced by the Government of Karnataka is one of such a venture. Theflagship Shakti Yojana welfare programme is initiative is the Shakti Yojana, a welfare scheme that started on June 11, 2023, which gives women and girl students free access to state-owned non-AC buses in Karnataka. The scheme includes services that run on Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC), Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC), North Western Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (NWKRTC) and Kalyana Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (KKRTC). Its core mandate will be to empower, economically engage and socially mobilize women through ensuring that the costs of travelling diminish and that opportunities that access women like education, jobs, health, and government services are easily accessible.

It has been identified that transportation is a significant factor of accessing education. High commuting costs and unavailability of cheap transport means make many students especially those of rural and poor backgrounds to struggle with attending schools and colleges. The female students are especially vulnerable since when it comes to deciding whether a girl will receive higher education, the families tend to focus on the issues of safety and costs. Removing the cost of travelling will help the Shakti Yojana break a significant financial barrier that could limit the access to education in women. Since its adoption, the scheme has experienced enormous usage by women. It is reported that at the state level women have made cores of free trips within the state which proved an important influx of mobility and the use of mass transport. In the initial year alone, women had taken more than 226 crore free bus rides which means that the scheme is highly accepted and used. Women have been able to travel further in the name of education, work, and basic services due to increased mobility, which has the wider societal and economic effects.

In educational terms, mobility is also directly related with enrolment, attendance and continuation rates. A good number of students in Karnataka do live in villages where the higher secondary schools, colleges or even professional institutions are situated several kilometres far. The cost of transport may tend to deter daily commuting which may cause absenteeism or dropout especially in girls. The Shakti Yojana alleviates this limit by enabling female learners to commute at no cost thus motivating them to attend on a regular basis and to attend higher education facilities outside their local community. The results of the initial evaluation indicate that enhanced mobility has increased the opportunities of women and young girls. Research has also cited higher frequency of travel and commute distances since the implementation of the scheme and this has allowed women to attain education and jobs that they had thought were not accessible. The employment of women in other urban areas rose remarkably after the implementation implying that women were now able to participate more in economic as well as social activities, which they could easily

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access due to the affordability of transport. These reforms have an indirect impact on education, by making households more income-stable and making them willing to spend more on education. The other significant aspect of the scheme is that it assists in household financial relief. The saved daily traveling costs of several hundred to a few thousand rupees a month to most beneficiaries could be channelled back to their education needs including books, tuition, digital learning, and hostel costs. Therefore, it is clear that the Shakti Yojana is not just a mobilizing program but also a social welfare interventions programme that contributes to the formation of human capital. The scheme is also in line with the larger policy goals like gender equality, inclusive growth and social justice. Mobility empowers women through the autonomy, confidence and involvement in the public space. When women become more visible in the public transport networks, it leads to the normalization of female mobility and enhances a desire to learn among the younger generations. The policy enhances the connection between the transport infrastructure and education development by improving its accessibility. In spite of its possible advantages, the scheme has also sparked controversies on sustainability in the financial sense, congestion in the buses and operational inconvenience. The growth in ridership has exerted a strain on transport corporations by creating the need to increase fleet capacity and enhance service management. The opponents assert that the scheme is desirable in terms of the social welfare, but its long-term fiscal impacts should be evaluated. But its proponents see it as a social investment that will improve the economic activity and human development outcomes. It becomes necessary in the context of education to examine whether free mobility can in reality translate to quantifiable benefits in form of increased enrolment of female students, lower rates of dropouts, better attendance, and accessibility of higher education institutes. Although preliminary evidence shows that there are positive social impacts, a systematic study in the academic field is needed to determine the magnitude and the character of an educational impact. Thus, the current research project will be called An Analytical Study of the Impact of Shakti Yojana on Education in Karnataka as it aims at discussing the role of the scheme on the accessibility and participation of students in education, especially women and girls. The research will examine the correlation of free transportation and educational performance by evaluating variables (commuting patterns, savings of the economy, attendance behaviour, and access to education).

The research is important in that its linkages intervention in policy by the government and the outcome of educational development. It also has a role in the disciplines of public economics, development economics, gender studies and education policy in assessing whether or not welfare programmes designed to achieve mobility can be effective instruments in enhancing the formation of human capital. This research could inform the policy makers about the wider socio-economic impacts of transport subsidies and the future reforms with the goal of ensuring an inclusive and equitable development of education.

Conceptual Framework

Women empowerment is a concept that is multidimensional, therefore it consists of education access, economic independency, mobility, decision and social participation power. Mobility is a significant enabling condition that has a direct impact on continuity in education and the likelihood of finding a job. The Shakti Yojana is an enabling policy in the sense that it reduces the transportation costs as well as improves the spatial access to the institutions, and consequently, has an indirect impact on human capital formation amongst women.

Impact on Education: An Analytical Perspective

Transportation cost is a significant educational aspect that determines the school and college dropout among girls particularly in the rural and the poor society. The Shakti Yojana comes out of this limitation by saving money on the daily commuting. This intervention has led to high enrolment and attendance and retention of female students in both the secondary and higher education. Theoretically, the scheme happens to be linked to the human capital theory concentrating on the investment in education as the driver of the economical growth in the long run. The accessibility of education institutions through high frequency of access helps to consolidate the education performance of the women, acquisition of skills and employability through the Shakti Yojana. Moreover, people will experience intergenerational benefits such as improved health and education aspirations by the future generations due to increased education.

The Shakti Yojana enhances the mobility of the women a lot which is one of the fundamental aspects of empowerment. The free transport services will improve the availability of women in the labour market because they can travel and seek employment as well as other activities that would enable them earn money. The plan has a direct impact on the economic self-sufficiency and bargaining power of women at the home level in a socio-economic aspect and is indicative of the patriarchal principles of excluding women to enter into the social arena. Instead, there is also the improvement of access to healthcare, government welfare offices, self-help group meetings, and skill-development programs since it makes women more socially and institutionally powerful as a result of increased mobility.

Economic and Policy Implications

Although the Shakti Yojana imposes financial pressure on the state transport corporations, the socio-economic release of the plan is worth the short-term financial costs. The increase in education and involvement of greater proportions of female in the working force would result in economic productivity, less poverty, and inclusive development. The scheme also conforms with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) namely SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). Considering the scheme through the prism of policy analysis, one can say that it is the shift of direct financial assistance and service provision of welfare. This will minimize leakages and ensure targeted benefits that will make the scheme more effective and comprehensive.

Challenges and Limitations

Despite the good impacts, the scheme is characterized by issues of implementation in the form of bus overcrowding, stretching transport systems as well as service distribution to the rural areas. Moreover, the possibility to determine the long-term

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outcomes correctly is denied due to the absence of the systematic data collection. The solutions to these issues imply additional financial resources in the budget, development of infrastructure, and continuous monitoring and evaluation.

REVIEWS OF LITERATURE

Umakanth S. et al. (2024), The research paper, *"Empowering Women's Mobility and Financial Independence: A Comprehensive Study of the Karnataka Shakthi Scheme,"* explores how this government initiative has influenced the socio-economic standing of women. By focusing on the lived experiences of beneficiaries, the study sought to determine how the program affected financial autonomy and physical mobility while also noting any implementation obstacles. The authors utilized a descriptive research design, gathering primary data from 203 students, professionals, and homemakers in Bengaluru through structured surveys. After analyzing the data with statistical tools, the results demonstrated that the scheme successfully lowered transit costs and expanded access to jobs and schooling. However, while generally praised, the program faces significant hurdles involving bus overcrowding, management inefficiencies, and concerns over its future financial stability.

Saraswati H. Bammanal (2025), The research paper, *"Shakti Yojane in Karnataka: Empowering Women through Free Bus Travel – A Field-Based Assessment,"* investigates the role of Karnataka's fare-free transit program in fostering gender-inclusive mobility. The author's primary goal was to measure how the initiative influenced women's movement patterns, domestic financial savings, and access to essential public services, as well as its effect on their sense of dignity and safety. To achieve this, a mixed-methods approach was applied across the Dharwad and Haveri districts, utilizing structured surveys from 240 female participants alongside 12 interviews with transportation authorities.The results highlighted a marked increase in daily bus ridership and expanded opportunities for women in both the workforce and education, leading to tangible economic benefits for lower-income families. However, the study also identified critical drawbacks, including vehicle overcrowding, a lack of consistent service in rural regions, and poor infrastructure. Ultimately, while the research confirms the scheme's success in driving female empowerment, it emphasizes that long-term effectiveness depends on improved operational management and continued policy backing.

Kanakamalini M.A. and Pratheeksha Gopinath (2023), The research paper, *"Karnataka's Shakti Scheme: Women Reclaiming Public Spaces and Mobility,"* explores the underlying necessity and the resulting influence of the Shakti program. In addition to evaluating this transit initiative, the authors investigated the requirement for the Gruhalakshmi guarantee scheme, providing a comprehensive look at women's welfare policies in the state. The study specifically addressed the socio-economic effects of the Shakti scheme against a backdrop of public criticism, while also investigating the causes behind the dwindling number of women in Karnataka's workforce. By maintaining a neutral and objective perspective, the authors highlighted how both the Shakti and Gruhalakshmi initiatives serve as critical interventions for female empowerment and financial stability.

Poornima V and Mohan P. Philip (2017), In the research paper, **"***Glimpses into Government of Karnataka's Initiatives towards Women Empowerment – Stree Shakthi Programme,"* the authors evaluate the Stree Shakthi Programme (SSP) managed by the Department of Women and Child Development. The study focuses on how this initiative serves to uplift marginalized women both socially and financially. By analyzing secondary data, the researchers investigated the program's operational framework and the specific financial support it provides to its target demographic. The findings suggest that while the SSP has gained significant momentum in Karnataka's rural regions since it began, its overall impact is still limited by persistent obstacles, including a general lack of public awareness and deep-seated social hurdles.

RESEARCH GAP

The current body of research on Shakti Yojana in Karnataka is mostly dedicated to the empowerment of women and socio-economic gains, however, there is no empirical research on the direct influence of Shakti Yojana on education. In particular, the research does not have sufficient evidence on the enrolment, attendance, dropouts and academic performance of students, particularly girls. Majority of the studies are cross-sectional in nature and restricted in scope to particular areas, even though the studies lack comparison and longitudinal analysis. Moreover, the study does not include enough socio-economic mediating variables and the qualitative views of people receiving the benefits. Therefore, the analytical study should be conducted in a comprehensive manner in order to assess the impact of Shakti Yojana on education outcomes in Karnataka.

OBJECTIVES

- To examine the level of awareness and beneficiary coverage of Shakti Yojana among respondents in relation to their educational background.
- To assess the impact of Shakti Yojana on educational outcomes such as access, attendance, expenditure reduction, and dropout rates.
- To evaluate the role of Shakti Yojana in enhancing women's mobility, independence, and overall socio-economic empowerment.

HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1: Awareness and Educational Background

H_{01}: There is no significant association between educational background and awareness of Shakti Yojana.

H_{11}: There is a significant association between educational background and awareness of Shakti Yojana.

Hypothesis 2: Impact on Educational Outcomes

H_{02}: Shakti Yojana has no significant impact on educational outcomes.

H_{12}: Shakti Yojana has a significant impact on educational outcomes.

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Hypothesis 3: Impact on Women Empowerment

H_{03}: Shakti Yojana does not significantly influence women's empowerment.

H_{13}: Shakti Yojana significantly influences women's empowerment.

LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This current paper examines how Shakti Yojana has influenced education and women empowerment in Karnataka through primary data which was collected on 200 respondents in rural, urban and semi-urban locations. It explores the level of awareness, the coverage of beneficiaries, education achievement in form of access, attendance, expenditure decrease, and dropout rates, and the measure of women movement and self-reliance through statistical methods of percentages and chi-square methods. The study is however constrained by the relatively small sample size used and cross-sectional nature, which might not present long-term effects. The results are based on self-reporting data, which can be biased in terms of responses, and the paper does not elaborate on the financial or administrative side of the scheme.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The research design used in the study is descriptive and analytical research design to investigate the effects of Shakti Yojana on education and empowerment of women. The primary data were collected due to a sample size of 200 respondents picked in the random and purposive sampling methods, who represented women students, workers as well as women at rural, urban and semi-urban regions. Structured questionnaires, interview schedules, and observation were used to collect the data. The data collected were analysed with the help of percentage analysis, tabulation, graphical representation and simple statistical means like mean and Chi-square tests to study the associations and test statistical significance.

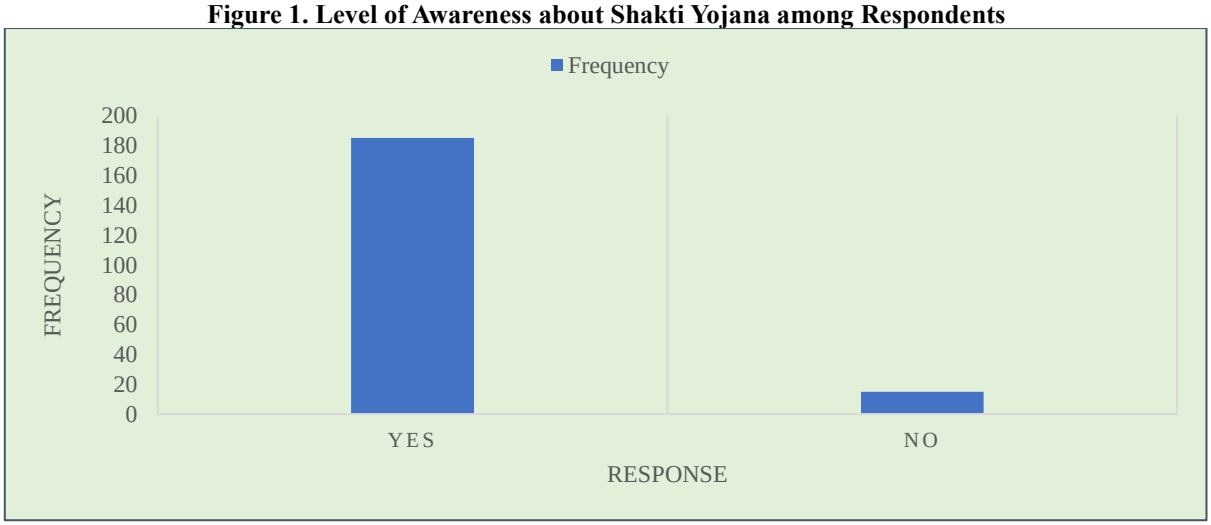
DATA AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1. Level of Awareness about Shakti Yojana among Respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	185	92.5
No	15	7.5
Total	**200**	**100.0**

(Source: Primary Data)

Figure 1. Level of Awareness about Shakti Yojana among Respondents



The table shows that a vast majority of respondents (92.5%) are aware of Shakti Yojana, while only 7.5% are unaware of it. This indicates effective dissemination of information and strong public outreach regarding the scheme. The high level of awareness suggests that government communication strategies, media coverage, and word-of-mouth promotion have successfully reached the target population. Such widespread awareness is essential for ensuring maximum participation and utilization of the scheme's benefits. Overall, the data reflects strong visibility and public recognition of the scheme among women.

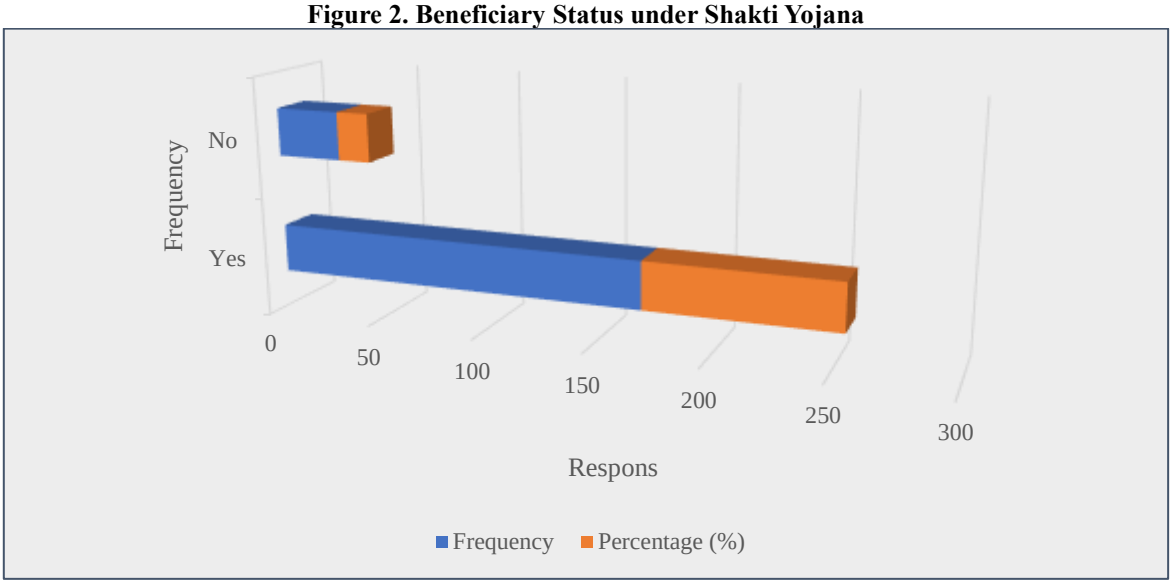
Table 2. Beneficiary Status under Shakti Yojana

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	170	85.0
No	30	15.0
Total	**200**	**100.0**

(Source: Primary Data)

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Figure 2. Beneficiary Status under Shakti Yojana



(Source: Primary Data)

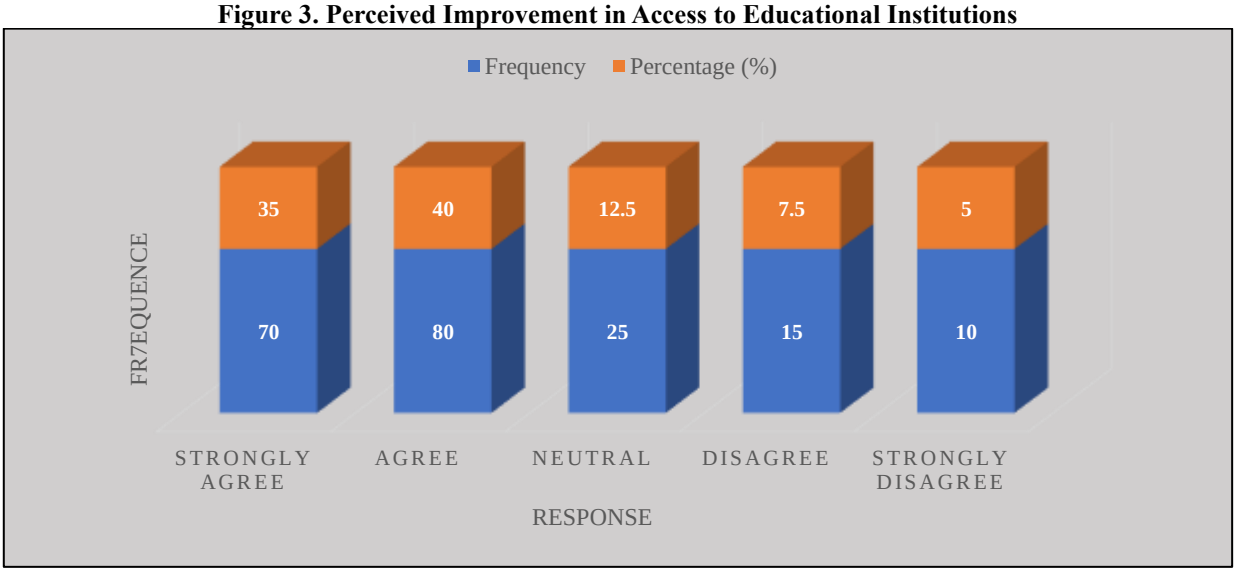
The table indicates that 85% of respondents are beneficiaries of Shakti Yojana, while 15% have not availed its benefits. This high beneficiary rate suggests that the scheme is widely utilized and effectively implemented among the target population. The small proportion of non-beneficiaries may be due to personal, occupational, or accessibility factors. Overall, the data reflects strong participation and successful coverage of the scheme, indicating that awareness has translated into actual utilization of benefits.

Table 3. Perceived Improvement in Access to Educational Institutions

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	70	35.0
Agree	80	40.0
Neutral	25	12.5
Disagree	15	7.5
Strongly Disagree	10	5.0
Total	**200**	**100.0**

(Source: Primary Data)

Figure 3. Perceived Improvement in Access to Educational Institutions



(Source: Primary Data)

The table shows that 35% of respondents strongly agree and 40% agree that access to educational institutions has improved due to Shakti Yojana. Thus, a significant majority (75%) express a positive perception. About 12.5% remain neutral, while only 12.5% disagree or strongly disagree. This indicates that the scheme has substantially reduced transportation barriers, enabling better access to schools and colleges. Overall, the findings suggest that free bus travel has played an important role in enhancing educational accessibility for women and students.

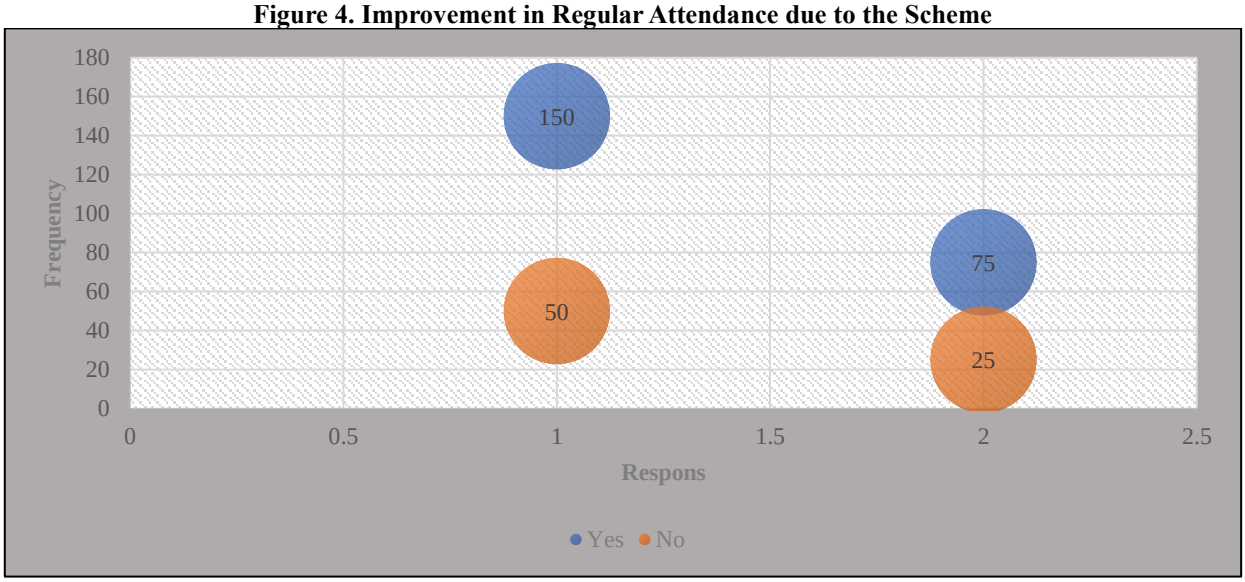
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Table 4. Improvement in Regular Attendance due to the Scheme

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	150	75.0
No	50	25.0
Total	**200**	**100.0**

(Source: Primary Data)

Figure 4. Improvement in Regular Attendance due to the Scheme



(Source: Primary Data)

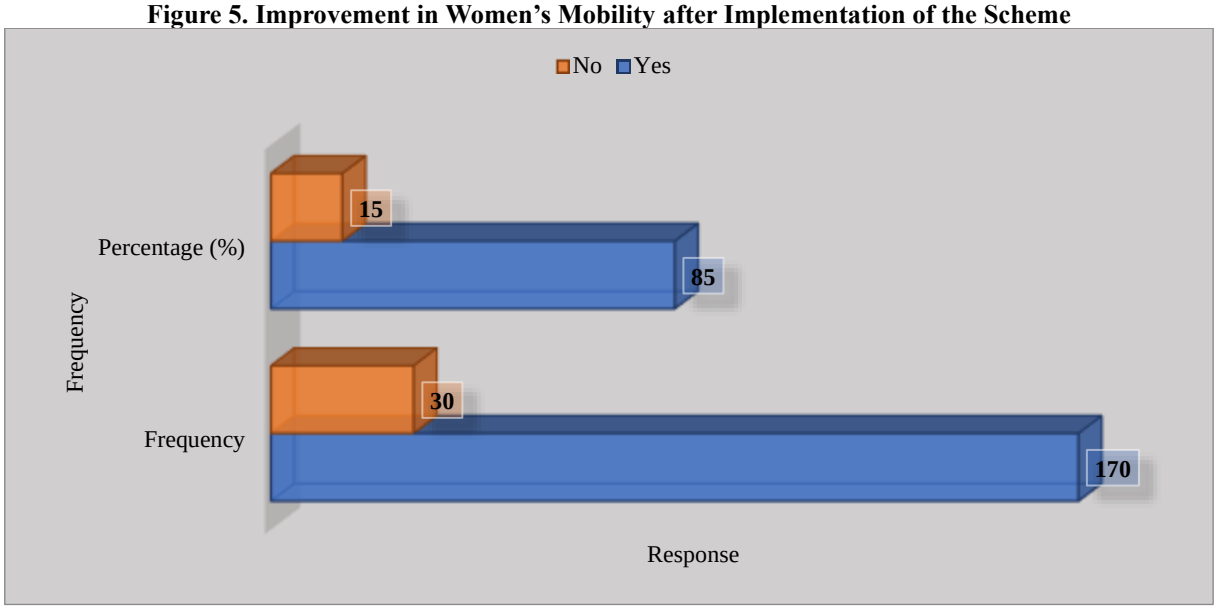
The table shows that 75% of respondents report improved regular attendance as a result of Shakti Yojana, while 25% do not observe such improvement. The majority response indicates that free bus travel has reduced transportation barriers such as cost and accessibility, enabling students and women to attend educational institutions more consistently. Improved attendance is an important indicator of academic continuity and performance. Overall, the findings suggest that the scheme has played a significant role in enhancing regular participation in education.

Table 5. Improvement in Women's Mobility after Implementation of the Scheme

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	170	85.0
No	30	15.0
Total	**200**	**100.0**

(Source: Primary Data)

Figure 5. Improvement in Women's Mobility after Implementation of the Scheme



(Source: Primary Data)

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The table shows that 85% of respondents report an improvement in mobility after the implementation of Shakti Yojana, while only 15% do not perceive such change. This overwhelming majority indicates that the scheme has significantly enhanced women's freedom of movement by removing transportation cost barriers. Improved mobility enables women to access education, employment, healthcare, and social activities more easily. Overall, the findings suggest that the scheme has played a crucial role in strengthening women's physical mobility and social participation.

Table 6. Association between Beneficiary Status and Improvement in Regular Attendance (Chi-Square Test)

Beneficiary Status	Attendance Improved (Yes)	Attendance Not Improved (No)	Total
Beneficiary (Yes)	140 (82.4%)	30 (17.6%)	170
Non-Beneficiary (No)	10 (33.3%)	20 (66.7%)	30
Total	150 (75.0%)	50 (25.0%)	200
Chi-Square Test (Pearson)	**$\chi^2 = 32.68$**	**df = 1**	**p < 0.001 (Significant)**

Source: Author concluded.

The Pearson Chi-Square value ($\chi^2 = 32.68$, df = 1, $p < 0.001$) indicates a statistically significant association between beneficiary status and improvement in regular attendance. A higher proportion of beneficiaries (82.4%) reported improved attendance compared to non-beneficiaries (33.3%), demonstrating the positive impact of the scheme on regular attendance.

Table 7. Association between Educational Qualification and Awareness of the Scheme (Chi-Square Test):

Education Level	Aware (Yes)	Not Aware (No)	Total
Illiterate	10 (66.7%)	5 (33.3%)	15
Primary	20 (80.0%)	5 (20.0%)	25
Secondary	42 (93.3%)	3 (6.7%)	45
Higher Secondary	48 (96.0%)	2 (4.0%)	50
Graduate	45 (100%)	0 (0%)	45
Postgraduate	20 (100%)	0 (0%)	20
Total	185 (92.5%)	15 (7.5%)	200
Chi-Square Test (Pearson)	**$\chi^2 = 18.74$**	**df = 5**	**p = 0.002 (Significant)**

Source: Author concluded

A Chi-Square test of independence was conducted to examine the relationship between educational qualification and awareness of the scheme. The results indicated a statistically significant association, $\chi^2(5, N = 200) = 18.74$, $p = 0.002$. Awareness levels increase with educational attainment. While only 66.7% of illiterate respondents were aware of the scheme, awareness reached 100% among graduates and postgraduates. This suggests that education plays a crucial role in enhancing awareness and access to welfare schemes.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study concludes that Shakti Yojana has made a significant positive impact on educational access and women's empowerment in Karnataka. The high level of awareness (92.5%) and beneficiary coverage (85%) reflects effective implementation and outreach of the scheme. A substantial majority of respondents reported improved access to educational institutions (75%) and better regular attendance (75%), indicating that removal of transportation costs has directly reduced barriers to education. The Chi-square analysis further confirms a statistically significant association between beneficiary status and attendance improvement, establishing empirical evidence of the scheme's effectiveness. Additionally, enhanced mobility (85%) demonstrates that the scheme has strengthened women's independence, confidence, and participation in socio-economic activities. The significant association between educational qualification and awareness also highlights the role of education in accessing welfare benefits.

However, challenges such as overcrowding, operational strain on transport corporations, and financial sustainability require careful policy attention. Therefore, the government should expand bus fleet capacity, improve service frequency in rural and semi-urban areas, and strengthen awareness campaigns targeting less-educated groups. Periodic impact evaluations and integration with educational support programs such as scholarships and skill development initiatives can further enhance long-term outcomes. Ensuring fiscal sustainability through efficient budgeting and monitoring mechanisms will be crucial for maintaining the scheme as a long-term investment in human capital development and gender-inclusive growth.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A: Personal Profile

1. **Age:**
   - Below 18
   - 18–25
   - 26–35
   - 36–45
   - Above 45
2. **Area of residence:**
   - Rural
   - Urban
   - Semi-urban
3. **Educational qualification:**
   - Illiterate
   - Primary
   - Secondary
   - Higher Secondary
   - Graduate
   - Postgraduate
4. **Occupation:**
   - Student
   - Homemaker

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- Employed
- Self-employed
- Daily wage worker

Section B: Awareness and Usage of Shakti Yojana

5. **Are you aware of the Shakti Yojana?**
   - Yes
   - No
6. **Are you a beneficiary of the Shakti Yojana?**
   - Yes
   - No
7. **How often do you use free bus travel under the Shakti Yojana?**
   - Daily
   - Frequently
   - Occasionally
   - Rarely
8. **What is your primary purpose for using the scheme?**
   - Education
   - Work
   - Healthcare
   - Household purposes
   - Others

Section C: Impact on Education

9. **Has the Shakti Yojana helped you or your family members access educational institutions more easily?**
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neutral
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree
10. **Has free transportation reduced your educational expenses?**
    - Yes
    - No

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11. **Do you think the scheme has helped reduce dropout rates among girls?**
    - Yes
    - No
    - Cannot say
12. **Has the scheme improved regular attendance in schools or colleges?**
    - Yes
    - No
13. **Do you believe the Shakti Yojana encourages girls to pursue higher education?**
    - Strongly Agree
    - Agree
    - Neutral
    - Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree

Section D: Impact on Women Empowerment

14. **Has the Shakti Yojana improved your mobility and freedom of movement?**
    - Yes
    - No
15. **Has the scheme helped you access employment or income-generating opportunities?**
    - Yes
    - No
    - Not applicable
16. **Do you feel more independent due to free transportation facilities?**
    - Strongly Agree
    - Agree
    - Neutral
    - Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree
17. **Has the scheme increased your participation in social or community activities?**
    - Yes
    - No
18. **Has the Shakti Yojana improved your confidence in traveling alone?**

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- Yes
- No

Section E: Challenges and Satisfaction

19. Are you satisfied with the implementation of the Shakti Yojana?

- Highly satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Highly dissatisfied

20. What problems do you face while using the scheme?

- Overcrowding
- Limited bus availability
- Long waiting time
- Safety concerns
- No major problems

21. Do you think the scheme should be continued in the future?

- Yes
- No

22. Do you suggest any improvements for the Shakti Yojana?

- Yes (please specify): _____
- No

Section F: Overall Impact

23. Overall, do you believe the Shakti Yojana has positively impacted women's education and empowerment in Karnataka?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree