

ABSTRACT

Climate change is a global challenge demanding immediate and undivided attention of economies around the world. Few of the sectors which possibly contribute to this hike in global greenhouse gas emission are industry, agriculture, transportation, electricity and heat production among others. In 2010, WHO released estimates for the contribution of the transport sector in global carbon dioxide emissions, which was around 23 per cent. In India, the transportation sector stands at the third place in the ranking of sectors by level of greenhouse gas emissions by them, of which road transport is found to play a dominant role.

Empowerment of women does not merely mean the provision of basic human rights to women but creating an environment which secures complete independence in making use of these rights and where there is no discrimination between men and women. This suggests that mobility is pivotal to women's empowerment. It not only helps women in accessing opportunities but also challenges restrictions imposed by all-pervading patriarchy. However, lack of affordable and convenient transport options is a big turn down in achieving these goals. On the other hand, research also demonstrates that gender roles influence mobility. In India, where two-wheelers frame an important constituent of privately owned vehicles, there are far few women users of them. They tend to make shorter trips, get tied to particular localities for work, value safe local streets. Women, around the globe, display a similar low transport demand, given the disaggregated burden of home and off-home, paid and unpaid work responsibilities, and other crucial factors determining their on-street and onboard safety. Gender roles and mobility, therefore, share a bilateral relationship, i.e., gender roles shape mobility and mobility shapes gender roles.

Because empowerment of women and conservation of the environment are both such issues that demand identical and crucial attention of the policy makers, proposing a solution which stands midway is the need of the hour. One most obvious remedy is promotion of such modes of transport which cause

the least damage to the environment while promising minimal or no ugly experiences to the women travelers. Use of non-motorized modes of transport, such as walking and cycling, along with public transport can uncomplicate the severity of this issue to a great extent.

Using primary survey data collected from a rural and urban region in north Indian state of Rajasthan along with secondary data on commuting patterns from Census of India on Indian states and union territories, this study aims to examine the following: (i) to study gender differentials in travel behavior in urban and rural settings in India, (ii) to examine how gender differences in different measures of travel pattern change within and between different socio-economic groups, (iii) to provide policy suggestions for gender-sensitive transport planning by understanding the gender differences in travel patterns.

Descriptive statistics complemented with appropriate research techniques is implemented on the obtained data. Analysis of data suggests the existence of gender differences in different measures of travel behavior. These differences are observed in both urban and rural settings in the country. The study also observes the hat socioeconomic status of individuals along with certain socio-demographic factors like age, marital status, level of education attained, work status of individuals, etc. significantly influences differences in travel behavior between men and women. Because there exist gender differences in measures of travel pattern, the study explored certain policy changes which can be brought about to narrow this gap. Some of the suggestive infrastructural changes include reservation of a selection of seats and modes for women and underprivileged, an increase in the employment of women drivers and conductors which makes the entire journey a safer experience for the group reporting the most experiences of harassment on these modes.

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first time a comparison of travel behavior in rural urban areas of Indian states has been made. Not many studies in India have addressed the issue of influence of socio-demographic and socio-economic factors on travel choices. Limited studies in India have

addressed the issue of discrimination in mobility based on gender and very few of them discuss the policy changes that can be brought about in this respect.

Several existing studies explain the reason for choosing motorized modes of transport to travel to work as time-saving. This study, however, underlines the use of these polluting modes of transport even for non-work/ leisure activities. It is not only the concept of time-saving that calls upon the population to use their private vehicles but also the adaptation of the population to a convenience-loving lifestyle and the inefficiencies in the current transportation system in the city.

With this analysis, the policymakers working in the transportation sector can get a clearer idea of the behavior and demands of different segments of society. The findings of this study demand the evolution of infrastructure of public transportation and non-motorized transportation in the country in such a way which is that efficient and secured so as to enable the goals of sustainability and empowerment of weaker sections, such as the women, from the lower income groups.

This study is at the conjunction of arguments for a safer means of transport (both in personal as well as in public domains) for women on one hand and the need to move towards low carbon transport on the other in a developing country city. It demands such infrastructural improvements in the transportation services which make it more convenient, faster and safer. It also underlines the promotion of such modes of transport which are the least environmentally-damaging.



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