

GENDER, MOBILITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES ON MUMBAI'S SUBURBAN RAILWAY

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ABSTRACT

In the urban landscape of Mumbai, women commuters navigate a complex interplay of gender, mobility, and sustainability within the suburban railway system. Often balancing multifaceted domestic and professional roles, women's experiences and perceptions of mobility are uniquely shaped by societal structures and personal safety concerns, leading to a phenomenon known as transit captivity. This study employs a qualitative approach, conducting in-depth semi-structured ethnographic interviews with both daily and occasional women travelers on Mumbai's local trains. Through thematic analysis, we uncover the nuanced mental models and information systems that govern women's mobility decisions, revealing their travel experiences, preferences, and constraints. Our findings highlight the layered complexities of women's mobility needs and the inherent shortcomings of current urban transport systems in addressing these needs, particularly in terms of safety, accessibility, and inclusivity. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on urban mobility, gender equity, and sustainable transportation. By centering the experiences of women commuters, we advocate for a more holistic approach to urban planning in densely populated and developing contexts, emphasizing the imperative of inclusive transport policies that cater to the diverse needs of all urban residents.

Keywords: Public transport, Transit Captivity, Megacity, Suburban Trains, India

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