

A Gendered Perspective of the Influence of Public Transport Infrastructural Design on Accessibility

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Abstract : In addressing gender and transport, considerations of mobility disparities amongst users are important. Public transport (PT) policy and design do not efficiently account for the varied mobility practices between men and women, with literature only recently showing a movement towards gender inclusion in transport. Arrantly, transport policy and designs remain gender-blind to the variation of mobility needs. The global movement towards sustainability highlights the need for expeditious strategies that could mitigate biases within the existing system. At the forefront of such a plan of action, in part, may be mandated inclusive infrastructural designs that stimulate user engagement with the transport system. Fundamentally access requires a means or an opportunity for the entity, which for PT is an establishment of its physical environment and/or infrastructural design. Its practicality may be utilised with knowledge of shortcomings in tangible or intangible aspects of the service offerings allowing access to opportunities. To inform on existing biases in PT planning and design, this study analyses qualitative data to examine the opinions and lived experiences among transport users in Ireland. Findings show that infrastructural design plays a significant role in users' engagement with the service. Paramount to accessibility are service provisions that cater to both user interactions and those of their dependents. Apprehension to use the service is more so evident in women in comparison to men, particularly while carrying out household duties and caring responsibilities at peak times or dark hours. Furthermore, limitations are apparent with infrastructural service offerings that do not accommodate the physical (dis)ability of users, especially universal design. There are intersecting factors that impinge on accessibility, e.g., safety and security, yet essentially; the infrastructural design is an important influencing parameter to user perceptual conditioning. Additionally, data discloses the need for user intricacies to be factored in transport planning geared towards gender inclusivity, including mobility practices, travel purpose, transit time or location, and system integration.

Keywords : infrastructure design, public transport, accessibility, women, gender

Conference Title : ICPT 2023 : International Conference on Public Transportation

Conference Location : Rome, Italy

Conference Dates : April 13-14, 2023