



Why Women Don't use Public Toilets

A study with special reference to
Twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad



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Conducted for, and Under the Guidance of
GMR Varalakshmi Foundation

By

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Acknowledgements

GMR Varalakshmi Foundation, in partnership with Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad, is building several Pay-and-Use toilets in the city.

With the view to creating very high quality public sanitation facilities, GMRVF is involved in understanding various aspects of functioning of public toilets. One key aspect was felt to be the use of such facilities by women. The general perception is that only a very small percentage of the users of such facilities are women. This was felt to be a matter of concern, because, if anything, women need these facilities more. Hence, a study on women's usage of public pay-and-use toilets in the twin cities was undertaken. The purpose of the study was to understand the situation, so as to create facilities which are used by more women

The study was designed and supervised by GMR Varalakshmi Foundation, and carried out by students of Department of Social Work, Osmania University.

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WHY WOMEN DON'T USE PUBLIC TOILETS – A STUDY

INTRODUCTION

According to the preliminary survey of GMRVF, it was found that public conveniences are majorly being used by men rather than women. In spite of public conveniences having stipulated minimum number of units for women (as per Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad norms), these are not utilized by women. A preliminary survey indicated that only 3-5% of users of Public Conveniences are women.

GMR Varalakshmi Foundation took up a research study to find the reasons for this, as this would help the Foundation to create facilities which are more women-friendly.

DEFINITIONS

PUBLIC CONVENIENCE – Toilet for use by public i.e. a toilet in a public place for use by members of the public.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this research study undertaken with women in Hyderabad and Secunderabad, were:

- To explore the reasons behind their use / non-use of public convenience.
- To understand their perceptions and opinions regarding public conveniences.
- To analyze the problems faced with regard to these, and the facilities required in public convenience, to increase usage by women
- To suggest measures for increasing usage by women.

HYPOTHESES

- Perception of poor hygienic conditions and feeling of insecurity may be the main reasons behind women not using public pay-and-use facilities.
- The lack of awareness about availability of facilities for women may be a reason for non-use.
- There is a correlation between economic status of women and their use of public convenience.
- There is a correlation between the occupation of women and their use of public toilets.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

Research Design - For this study, descriptive research design has been used, mainly to describe opinions of the women respondents about using public convenience and also to describe the reasons behind less utilization of public conveniences.

Area of Study - The study has been done in various parts of the twin Cities of Hyderabad & Secunderabad covering respondents from different sectors like Working Women (Formal and Informal Sector), Students & Non-Working women.

Sampling Procedure - Accidental and Purposive sampling have been used to collect the primary data for this study.

Methods & Tools of Data Collection - The Questionnaire Method has been used for Primary data collection. The Questionnaire schedule comprehensively incorporated the objectives and hypotheses of this research study. Closed ended and contingency questions have been used in the questionnaire. Focused group meetings were also done.

Data Processing & Analysis - The Primary data collected from the respondents was statistically processed, tabulated for the purpose of drawing inferences. The code book and master sheet were prepared for the same.

Data Coding - In order to process and analyze the data, the responses were coded into numerical form.

Master Sheet - After coding, the data was transferred into a master sheet.

DATA ANALYSIS – HIGHLIGHTS

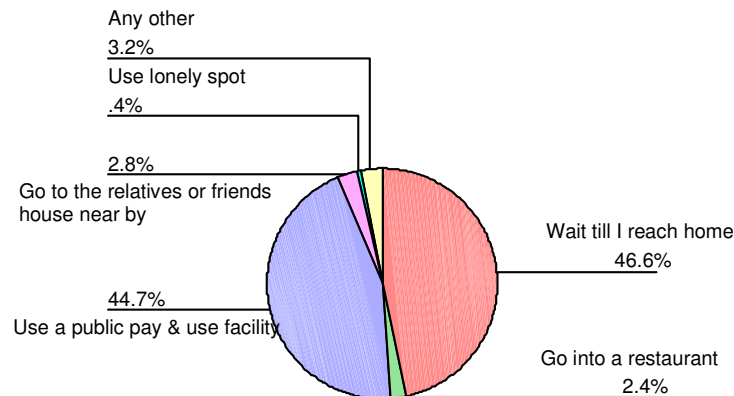
The analysis of the data was done with the help of statistical techniques and the following points emerged:

- About 27% of the respondents were not aware that there are Pay-and-Use toilet facilities for women.
- 46.6% of the respondents wait till they reach home even if they feel the need to use a toilet when they are out. 44.7% respondents use a public Pay-and-Use facility
- 64.2% of those respondents who used public convenience had a bad experience, whereas only 24.2% respondents reported a good experience.
- Reasons for women not using Public Facilities

Reason	Percentage
1. Unhygienic Conditions	92.5
2. Insufficient water availability	69.2
3. Bad smell	62.8
4. Caretaker being male	57
5. Joint infrastructure (both male and female facilities in one building, with a partition)	53
6. Feeling of insecurity	36.4

- Women in higher economic strata, non-working women and students use these facilities significantly less than women from lower economic strata and working women.

Respondent's reaction- When they go out and need to use a Toilet, what do they do?



TESTING THE HYPOTHESIS

Hypothesis 1 – Perception of poor hygienic conditions and feeling of insecurity may be main reasons behind women not using these.

Analysis shows that 123 (47.4%) respondents are not using public conveniences only due to unhygienic conditions. 111 (52.6%) respondents are using public convenience but also said that problem of unhygienic condition exists at public conveniences. So from the study of this cross tabulation, it proves that poor hygienic conditions are a very significant reason behind less usage of public conveniences.

36.4 % women feel that insecurity is also an important reason for less utilization of public conveniences.

Hypothesis 2 -Economic status of the respondent is correlated to the use of public convenience

50% of respondents with family monthly income of below Rs.10,000/- used public toilets; only 21% of those with income above Rs.10,000/- used such facilities.

This indicates that women from lower economic strata are using such facilities much more than women from higher economic strata.

Hypothesis 3 - The occupation of the respondent is correlated to the use of public toilets

About 33% of working women, whether working in formal or informal sector, had used / used these facilities, while only about 15% of students and non working women interviewed had used / used these facilities. There was no significant difference in usage whether the women were working in formal or non-formal sectors.

SUGGESTIONS FROM THE RESPONDENTS

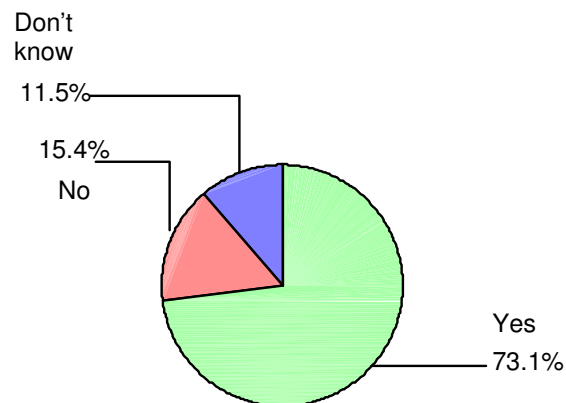
- About 53% women suggested for exclusive toilets for women.
- Around 57% women expressed that the caretaker of the public toilet should be properly trained and should be very gentle and he/she should be educated and middle-aged.
- Respondents also expressed that the following facilities are needed by women in public toilets; dustbins for disposable things; small shelves for women carrying things; mug and bucket provision; mirror for dressing; proper lighting and alternative lighting arrangement in case of power fails.
- It will be very useful, if Indian and western toilets are provided for convenience of various types of users.
- They also have suggested that security and proper maintenance and supervision should be there.
- In some cases, men are passing urine around the premises of the public toilets. This not only leads to bad smell but also a feeling of embarrassment on the part of women who want to enter.
- Proper maintenance and cleaning of the toilets at regular intervals are key.
- In many toilets, there is no proper indication for “gents” and “ladies”, which creates problem for women in using public toilets.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Proper and hygienic maintenance of toilets, adequate availability of water and ensuring that toilets do not smell are key to making these facilities more useful to women.
2. It is also important that women are and feel more secure in these facilities. While separate infrastructure for women may be considered where possible, existing facility managers need to ensure that caretakers are carefully selected and properly trained to be sensitive to women. Also, the surroundings of public conveniences need to be maintained so that men do not create a nuisance, deterring women from approaching the toilets.
3. Clear and prominent signage, indicating the Ladies' and Gents' sides is essential.
4. A significant percentage of women are not aware that such public facilities cater to women, and hence some efforts at awareness creation are required.
5. Women from higher socio-economic strata, students and non-working women are not using these facilities. Communication strategies are needed to reach out to them.

Do Public conveniences have facilities for women?



Appendix A

Questionnaire

A. Profile:

1. Age :
2. Married/Unmarried :
3. Resident of :
4. Education :
 - a) Below Std 7
 - b) Std 7 to Std 10
 - c) Std 10 pass
 - d) Std 12 pass
 - e) Undergraduate (specify)
 - f) Post-graduate (specify)
 - g) Others (Specify)
5. Occupation :
6. a. Salaried : Yes / No
If Yes, Govt. or Pvt. Sector? :
- b. Self employed professional :
- c. Other self-employed (pl specify) :
- d. Other type of employed (pl specify):
- e. Not employed :
6. Family monthly income :
 - a) Below Rs. 2000 per month
 - b) Rs. 2000-5000 per month
 - c) Rs. 5000-10000 per month
 - d) Rs. 10,000-20,000 per month
 - e) Rs. 20,000-50,000 per month
 - f) Above Rs. 50,000 per month

B. Public Toilets:

1. When you go out and need to use a toilet, what do you do?
 - a. Wait till I reach home
 - b. Go into a restaurant or some such place
 - c. Use a public pay and use facility
 - d. Go to the house of a friend who may live nearby
 - e. Use a lonely spot
 - f. Any other (pl specify)
2. Are there any public toilets in Hyderabad?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know
3. Do these have facilities for women:
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Must be having
 - d. Don't know
4. Have you ever used such a facility?

- a. Yes
 - b. No
- 4 a. If yes, what was your experience?
- a. Good
 - b. Bad
- If Bad because,
- a. It was not clean
 - b. It did not feel safe
 - c. There was no water
 - d. Flush was not working
 - e. There was no place to leave my things
 - f. Poor lighting
 - g. Door latches did not work
 - h. There were no facilities for disposal of sanitary items
 - i. They charged money
 - j. Any other (pl specify)
- 4 b. If no, why have you never used?
- a. Never needed to
 - b. Because I could never find one
 - c. I did not feel like using it because it is not hygienic
 - d. I did not feel like using it because it is not safe
 - e. Any other (pl specify)
5. Though there are many Pay and Use toilets which include facilities for women, they are not much used. Can you rate, on a scale of 1-5, the importance of each?
- a. Women do not know they exist
 - b. Women do not think they are safe
 - c. The caretaker is Man.
 - d. It is a joint infrastructure (it is not exclusively for women)
 - e. They are very dark
 - f. They are smelly
 - g. There is no proper provision for water
 - h. They are unhygienic
 - i. They are not safe
 - j. They are not convenient for use
 - k. All kinds of people are around there, so I would not feel safe entering one
 - l. I don't feel safe with the staff there
 - m. They are expensive
 - n. There are not enough of them
 - o. Other reasons.....
6. Which areas in Hyderabad and Secunderabad do you think such toilets are most needed? Some suggestions:
- a. Busy market places
 - b. Near hospitals
 - c. Near Government offices/ other offices
 - d. Busy bus terminals (city bus) and major bus stops
 - e. Near parks / public recreation centres (Necklace road for example has very few such facilities which is thronged by thousands everyday)
 - f. Near ladies shopping markets
 - g. Others:

Appendix B

FREQUENCY TABLES & CHARTS

Age profile of respondents

		Number	Percent
Valid	15-25	66	26.1
	25-35	93	36.8
	35-45	55	21.7
	45-55	28	11.1
	55-65	9	3.6
	65-75	1	.4
	75-85	1	.4
	Total	253	100.0

Marital status of respondents

		Number	Percent
Valid	Married	175	69.2
	Unmarried	76	30.0
	Widow	2	.8
	Total	253	100.0

Education of respondents

		Number	Percent
Valid	Illiterate	45	17.8
	Below 7th std	34	13.4
	Std 7th- std 10th	11	4.3
	Std 10th pass	25	9.9
	Std 12th pass	23	9.1
	Undergraduate	33	13.0
	Post graduate	52	20.6
	Others	30	11.9
	Total	253	100.0

Occupation of respondents

		Number	Percent
Valid	Formal	67	26.5
	Informal	50	19.8
	Student	60	23.7
	Nonworking	76	30.0
	Total	253	100.0

Occupational details

		Number	Percent
Valid	Non-working	136	53.8
	Government	58	22.9
	Private	19	7.5
	Self employed	26	10.3
	Others	14	5.5
	Total	253	100.0

Family monthly income of respondents

		Number	Percent
Valid	Below 2000 per month	50	19.8
	Rs 2000-5000 per month	75	29.6
	Rs 5000-10,000 per month	59	23.3
	Rs 10,000-20,000 per month	53	20.9
	Rs20,000-50,000 per month	11	4.3
	Above Rs 50,000 per month	5	2.0
	Total	253	100.0

Respondent's reaction- When they go out and need to use a Toilet, what do they do?

		Number	Percent
Valid	Wait till I reach home	118	46.6
	Go into a restaurant or some such place	6	2.4
	Use a public pay & use facility	113	44.7
	Go to the relatives or friends house near by	7	2.8
	Use lonely spot	1	.4
	Any other	8	3.2
	Total	253	100.0

Are there any public toilets in the city

		Number	Percent
Valid	Yes	185	73.1
	No	39	15.4
	Don't know	29	11.5
	Total	253	100.0

Do Public conveniences have facilities for women?

		Number	Percent
Valid	Yes	147	58.1
	No	13	5.1
	Must be having	72	28.5
	Don't know	21	8.3
	Total	253	100.0

**Have you ever used such facilities
(Public Toilets)**

		Number	Percent
Valid	Yes	120	47.4
	No	133	52.6
	Total	253	100.0

Experience of users of public conveniences

		Number	Percent
Valid	Good	29	24.2
	Satisfactory	14	11.6
	Bad	77	64.2
	Total	120	100.0

Reasons given by non users for not using public conveniences

	Number	Percent
Valid		
Never needed	38	28.6
Never find one	6	4.5
Not using due to Unhygienic conditions	82	61.7
Feeling insecure	6	4.5
Any other	1	0.7
Total	133	100.0

In the twin cities many pay & use Toilets are there which include facilities for women, but they are not much used. The reasons and opinion of the Respondents for not using them.

Reasons	Respondent's Opinion		
	Agree	May be	Disagree
1. Don't think they are safe	92 (36.4%)	50 (19.8%)	111 (43.9%)
2. The caretaker is man	37 (14.6%)	108 (42.7%)	108 (42.7%)
3. Joint Infrastructure (Both male & female toilets are in same building with single partition)	134 (53%)	94 (42.7%)	25 (9.9%)
4. They are smelly	159 (62.2%)	45 (17.8%)	49 (19.4%)
5. There is no proper provision for water	175 (69.2%)	41 (16.2%)	37 (14.6%)
6. They are unhygienic	234 (92.5%)	17 (6.7%)	2 (0.8%)
7. All kinds of people are around there, so no privacy is there	63 (24.9%)	56 (22.1%)	134 (53%)

Suggested places for construction of Public conveniences

Places suggested by respondents	Number of respondents	Percent %
Busy market place	91	36
Near hospitals	9	3.6
Near Govt. /other offices	5	2
Busy bus terminals & bus stops	56	22.1
Near parks/pub recreation center	4	1.6
Ladies shopping places	74	29.2
Other	14	5.5
Total	253	100

Appendix 3

CROSS TABULATION

Opinion of Users and Non-Users towards Hygiene in Public Facilities

		Problem of unhygienic condition			Total
		Agree	May be	Disagree	
Have u ever used such facilities	Yes	111(47.4%)	8 (47.1%)	1 (50%)	120 (47.4%)
	No	123 (52.6%)	9 (52.9%)	1 (50%)	133 (52.6%)
Total		234 (92.5%)	17 (6.7%)	2 (0.8%)	253 (100%)

Occupation Vs Respondents' reaction

		Respondent's reaction during Nature call						Total
		Wait till reach home	Go into a restaurant or some such place	Use a public pay & use facility	Go to the relatives or friends house near by	Use lonely spot	Any other	
Occupation of Respondent	Formal Sector	24(20.3%)	2 (16.7%)	38 (33.6%)	2 (28.6%)		1 (12.5%)	67 (26.5%)
	Informal sector	8 (6.8%)		41(36.3%)	1 (14.3%)			50 (19.8%)
	Student	32 (27.1%)	2 (16.7%)	18 (15.9%)	3 (42.8%)	1 (100%)	4 (50%)	60 (23.7%)
	Nonworking	54 (45.8%)	2 (16.7%)	16 (14.2%)	1 (14.3%)		3 (37.5%)	76 (30%)
Total		118 (46.6%)	6 (2.3%)	113 (44.7%)	7 (2.8%)	1 (0.4%)	8 (3.2%)	253 (100%)

Income Vs Respondents reaction

		Respondent's reaction during Nature call						Total
		Wait till I reach home	Go into a restaurant or some such place	Use a public pay & use facility	Go to the relatives or friends house near by	Use lonely spot	Any other	
Family monthly Income of Respondents	Below 2000	17 (14.4%)		31 (27.4%)	1 (14.3%)		1 (12.5%)	50 (19.8%)
	Rs 2000-5000	38 (32.2%)		34 (30.1%)	2 (28.6%)	1 (100%)		75 (29.6%)
	Rs 5000-10,000	24 (20.3%)		33 (29.2%)			2 (25%)	59 (23.3%)
	Rs 10,000-20,000	29 (24.6%)	4 (66.7%)	12 (10.6%)	4 (57.1%)		4 (50%)	53 (20.9%)
	Rs20,000-50,000	9 (7.6%)		2 (1.8%)				11 (4.3%)
	Above Rs 50,000	1 (0.9%)	2 (33.3%)	1 (0.9%)			1 (12.5%)	5 (2.0%)
Total		118 (46.6%)	6 (2.4%)	113 (44.7%)	7 (2.8%)	1 (0.4%)	8 (3.2%)	253 (100%)

Are there any public toilets in Hyderabad Vs Have u ever used such facilities

		Have u ever used such facilities (Public Toilets)		Total
		Yes	No	
Are there any public toilets in Hyderabad	Yes	120	65	185
	No	0	68	68
Total		120	133	253