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“WOMEN AND GENDER BUDGETING IN INDIA: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS”

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ABSTRACT

Gender budgeting has emerged as an important policy instrument for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in India. It refers to the process of analysing government budgets to ensure that public expenditure addresses gender disparities and promotes equitable development. Since its formal introduction in India in 2005–06, gender budgeting has been integrated into the Union Budget and various state budgets to highlight allocations for women-oriented programs and schemes. The initiative aims to evaluate how fiscal policies impact women and men differently and to ensure that gender commitments are reflected in budgetary priorities. This study examines women's awareness and perceptions of gender budgeting through a primary data approach. Data were collected from a sample of women respondents through questionnaires and interviews to understand their knowledge of government schemes, budget allocations, and the role of gender-responsive policies in improving their socio-economic conditions. The research focuses on key aspects such as access to welfare programs, participation in decision-making, and the effectiveness of budget provisions intended for women. The findings reveal that while gender budgeting has increased the visibility of women's issues in policy planning, many women remain unaware of specific budgetary provisions designed for their welfare. Challenges such as lack of awareness, insufficient data on gender-disaggregated beneficiaries, and weak implementation mechanisms reduce the effectiveness of gender-responsive budgeting. Moreover, disparities exist between policy intentions and ground-level outcomes due to administrative limitations and social barriers. The study concludes that gender budgeting has significant potential to enhance women's empowerment if implemented effectively. Strengthening institutional mechanisms, increasing transparency in budget allocations, and improving awareness among women are essential steps toward achieving gender equality in India. The research also highlights the importance of continuous monitoring and evaluation of gender-focused expenditure to ensure that resources reach the intended beneficiaries and contribute to inclusive development.



KEYWORDS: *Gender Budgeting, Women Empowerment, Patriarchy, Social Inequality, Public Policy, Fiscal Policy, India, Development, public finance, gender equality.*

INTRODUCTION:

Gender inequality continues to be a significant socio-economic issue in India, affecting women's access to education, employment, healthcare, and political participation. To address these disparities, governments around the world have adopted gender-responsive budgeting as a strategy to integrate gender considerations into fiscal policy. Gender budgeting does not mean a separate budget for women;

rather, it is a method of examining how government expenditures and revenues influence gender equality. In India, gender budgeting was introduced in the Union Budget for the financial year 2005–06. Since then, the government has presented a **Gender Budget Statement (GBS)** every year to identify allocations for programs benefiting women and girls. Over time, the gender budget has expanded significantly, covering multiple ministries such as rural development, health, education, and women and child development. The main objective of gender budgeting is to ensure that government spending contributes to reducing gender disparities and improving women’s socio-economic status. However, despite progress, the share of gender budgeting in total government expenditure remains relatively small and challenges in implementation persist. This study aims to analyse women’s perspectives on gender budgeting and examine whether budget allocations are effectively reaching the intended beneficiaries. By collecting primary data from women respondents, the study seeks to understand the level of awareness and the perceived impact of gender-responsive policies in India.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- 1.To analyse the concept and evolution of gender budgeting in India
- 2.To examine awareness levels among women regarding gender budgeting
- 3.To assess the socio-economic impact of gender budgeting
- 4.To evaluate the effectiveness of government schemes
- 5.To identify sociological barriers affecting implementation

HYPOTHESIS:

The study is based on the following hypotheses:

1. Gender budgeting contributes positively to women’s socio-economic empowerment in India.
2. Gender budgeting has no significant impact on women’s socio-economic empowerment in India.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This study is based on Primary and Secondary data.

Primary Data: Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires and interviews with women respondents from urban and rural areas. The questionnaire included questions related to awareness of government schemes, access to benefits, and perceptions of gender budgeting. Secondary Data, Secondary data were collected from government reports, research articles, policy documents, and academic studies on gender budgeting in India. Sample Size and Sampling Method, for the purpose of this study, a sample of 200 women respondents was selected from different socio-economic backgrounds. From Dharwad District Shivagiri, urban area. Amminabhai rural area Karnataka. Sampling Method: A simple random sampling method was used to select respondents.

Table-1 Age Group

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage	Marital Status (Majority)	Employment Status (Majority)
18-25	40	20%	Unmarried	Students/Part-time
26-35	60	30%	Married	Employed
36-45	50	25%	Married	Self-employed
46-60	50	25%	Married/Widowed	Unemployed

The above table.no-1, age distribution of respondents shows that the largest proportion (30%) falls within the 26–35 age group, followed by equal representation (25% each) in the 36–45 and 46–60 categories. The 18–25 group constitutes only 20%, indicating relatively lower participation of younger women in the study. From a sociological perspective, this distribution is significant because it reflects the inclusion of women in economically and socially active age groups, particularly those who are likely to interact with government welfare schemes. The dominance of married women across most age groups highlights the influence of family structures in shaping women’s access to resources. In Indian society, married women often experience restricted mobility and decision-making power, which may

affect their awareness and utilization of gender budgeting initiatives. The presence of widowed women in the older age group (46–60) also indicates vulnerability, as such women often depend heavily on state support. Employment patterns across age groups reveal that younger women are more likely to be students or engaged in part-time work, while middle-aged women participate more actively in employment or self-employment. However, a significant portion of older women remains unemployed, reflecting generational disparities in access to education and employment opportunities. This table suggests that age is an important factor influencing women’s socio-economic status and their interaction with gender budgeting policies. Younger women may have better access to education and information, while older women may rely more on welfare schemes, highlighting the need for age-sensitive policy interventions.

Table 2: Educational Qualification

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage	Awareness Level	Scheme Participation
Illiterate	30	15%	Very Low	Very Low
Primary	50	25%	Low	Low
Secondary	70	35%	Moderate	Moderate
Graduate	35	17.5%	High	High
Postgraduate	15	7.5%	Very High	Very High

Table.no -2, Education plays a crucial role in shaping awareness and participation in gender budgeting programs. The table indicates that the majority of respondents (35%) have completed secondary education, followed by 25% with primary education. Only a small proportion (7.5%) have postgraduate qualifications, reflecting the overall educational disparity among women. There is a clear correlation between education level and awareness of gender budgeting. Illiterate women show very low awareness and participation, while women with higher education levels demonstrate significantly greater engagement with government schemes. This highlights the importance of education as a tool for empowerment and access to information. From a sociological perspective, education not only enhances knowledge but also increases women’s confidence and decision-making capacity. Educated women are more likely to question existing norms and seek opportunities for economic independence. In contrast, illiterate women are often confined to traditional roles and remain excluded from policy benefits. The data also reflects structural inequalities in access to education, particularly for women from rural and marginalized backgrounds. These inequalities reinforce gender disparities and limit the effectiveness of gender budgeting initiatives. Without addressing educational gaps, gender budgeting cannot achieve its full potential. Thus, the table underscores the need for integrating education policies with gender budgeting to ensure inclusive development.

Table 3: Awareness of Gender Budgeting

Awareness Level	Frequency	Percentage	Urban	Rural
Fully Aware	40	20%	30	10
Partially Aware	44	22%	25	19
Not Aware	116	58%	45	71

The table.no-3 reveals that a majority of respondents (58%) are not aware of gender budgeting, while only 20% are fully aware. This indicates a significant gap in awareness, which is one of the primary barriers to the success of gender budgeting initiatives. The urban-rural divide is clearly visible, with urban women showing higher levels of awareness compared to rural women. This disparity can be attributed to better access to education, media, and government outreach programs in urban areas. Rural women, on the other hand, often face limitations such as illiteracy, lack of infrastructure, and restricted mobility. From a sociological perspective, the lack of awareness reflects deeper issues of social exclusion and marginalization. Women, particularly in rural areas, are often excluded from decision-making processes and information networks. This limits their ability to access and benefit from government schemes. The presence of partially aware respondents (22%) suggests that some

information is reaching women, but it is insufficient for meaningful participation. This highlights the need for more effective communication strategies, including grassroots campaigns and community-based interventions. The table emphasizes that awareness is a critical factor in the success of gender budgeting. Without adequate knowledge, even well-designed policies fail to achieve their objectives.

Table 4: Source of Awareness

Source	Frequency	Percentage	Effectiveness Level
Television/Media	40	20%	Moderate
Government Programs	30	15%	Low
NGOs	20	10%	Moderate
Social media	10	5%	Emerging
No Awareness	100	50%	—

The table.no-4, indicates that media is the most significant source of awareness (20%), followed by government programs (15%) and NGOs (10%). However, a striking 50% of respondents report no awareness at all, highlighting the limited reach of these channels. The relatively low effectiveness of government programs suggests that official communication strategies are not adequately reaching the target population. This may be due to bureaucratic inefficiencies, lack of outreach in rural areas, and insufficient engagement with local communities. NGOs play an important role in bridging this gap, particularly in rural and marginalized areas. Their community-based approach allows them to reach women who are otherwise excluded from formal communication channels. Social media, although currently a minor source (5%), represents a growing platform for awareness, especially among younger and urban women. Its potential for expanding outreach should be explored further. From a sociological perspective, access to information is shaped by social and economic factors. Women with limited mobility or education are less likely to access media or participate in awareness programs. This reinforces existing inequalities and limits the effectiveness of gender budgeting.

Table 5: Access to Government Schemes

Access Level	Frequency	Percentage	Urban	Rural
Full Access	60	30%	40	20
Partial Access	32	16%	18	14
No Access	108	54%	42	66

The above table.no.5 highlights a critical issue in the implementation of gender budgeting policies—unequal access to government schemes. A majority of respondents (54%) reported having no access to such schemes, while only 30% experienced full access. This indicates a significant gap between policy formulation and actual delivery of benefits. The urban-rural divide is particularly evident, with urban women having relatively better access compared to their rural counterparts. Out of the 60 women who reported full access, 40 are from urban areas, whereas only 20 belong to rural regions. Conversely, rural women dominate the “no access” category, accounting for 66 out of 108 respondents. This disparity reflects structural inequalities in infrastructure, awareness, and administrative outreach. From a sociological perspective, this unequal access can be attributed to multiple factors, including bureaucratic hurdles, lack of documentation, corruption, and social barriers such as caste and gender discrimination. Rural women often face additional challenges such as limited mobility, lack of education, and dependence on male family members, which further restrict their ability to access government benefits. The presence of 16% of respondents with partial access suggests that even when women attempt to engage with these schemes, they encounter obstacles that prevent full utilization. This may include delays in processing applications, inadequate information, or incomplete implementation at the local level. The table underscores the need for strengthening grassroots-level implementation, improving transparency, and ensuring that gender budgeting initiatives reach the most marginalized sections of society.

Table 6: Type of Benefits Received

Benefit Type	Frequency	Percentage
Employment	40	20%
Financial Aid	30	15%
Health	22	11%
Education	10	5%
None	98	49%

The table.no-6 reveals the distribution of benefits received by women under gender budgeting schemes. A striking observation is that nearly half of the respondents (49%) reported receiving no benefits at all. This highlights a major limitation in the effectiveness of gender budgeting initiatives, as a significant portion of the target population remains excluded. Among those who received benefits, employment opportunities (20%) constitute the largest category. This suggests that schemes focusing on livelihood generation, such as rural employment programs, have had some reach. Financial aid (15%) and health services (11%) also contribute to women’s welfare, though their coverage remains limited. Education benefits are the least accessed (5%), indicating insufficient focus on long-term capacity building. From a sociological standpoint, the unequal distribution of benefits reflects systemic inequalities. Women from disadvantaged backgrounds may lack the resources or knowledge required to access these schemes. Additionally, social norms and gender roles often prioritize men’s access to resources, further marginalizing women. The low percentage of education-related benefits is particularly concerning, as education is a key driver of empowerment. Without adequate investment in education, gender budgeting may fail to produce sustainable improvements in women’s socio-economic status. This table suggests that while gender budgeting has made some progress in delivering benefits, it has not achieved universal coverage. There is a need to ensure equitable distribution of resources and to prioritize sectors that contribute to long-term empowerment.

Table 7: Economic Improvement

Level	Frequency	Percentage
High Improvement	30	15%
Moderate Improvement	48	24%
No Improvement	122	61%

Table.no-7 highlights the limited impact of gender budgeting on women’s economic conditions. A majority of respondents (61%) reported no improvement in their economic status, while only 15% experienced significant improvement. This indicates that gender budgeting has not been effective in achieving widespread economic empowerment. The presence of 24% of respondents reporting moderate improvement suggests that some benefits have been realized, but they are not substantial enough to transform women’s economic position. These improvements may include temporary employment or small financial assistance, which do not lead to long-term financial stability. From a sociological perspective, this limited impact can be attributed to structural constraints such as limited access to productive resources, wage disparities, and occupational segregation. Women are often concentrated in low-paying and informal sectors, which restricts their ability to achieve economic independence. Furthermore, economic empowerment is closely linked to social empowerment. Even when women earn income, they may not have control over financial decisions due to patriarchal norms. This reduces the effectiveness of economic interventions. The findings suggest that gender budgeting needs to focus not only on providing financial support but also on creating sustainable livelihood opportunities and addressing systemic barriers to economic participation.

Table 8: Decision-Making Power

Level	Frequency	Percentage
High Increase	30	15%
Moderate Increase	40	20%

No Change	130	65%
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Table.no-8 examines the impact of gender budgeting on women’s decision-making power, a key indicator of empowerment. The data reveals that a significant majority (65%) of respondents experienced no change in their decision-making capacity, while only 15% reported a high increase. This finding highlights the persistence of patriarchal norms in Indian society. Despite access to financial resources or government schemes, women often remain excluded from decision-making processes within households and communities. This indicates that economic empowerment alone is insufficient to challenge deeply rooted social structures. The moderate increase reported by 20% of respondents suggests that some progress has been made, particularly among women who are educated or economically active. However, these changes are not widespread and remain limited to specific groups. From a sociological perspective, decision-making power is influenced by factors such as education, income, and social status. Women who lack these resources are less likely to assert their autonomy. Additionally, cultural norms that emphasize male authority further restrict women’s participation in decision-making. The table underscores the need for gender budgeting policies to address not only economic issues but also social and cultural barriers. Empowerment requires a holistic approach that includes education, awareness, and social transformation.

Table 9: Employment Status

Status	Frequency	Percentage
Formal Employment	40	20%
Informal Employment	50	25%
Unemployed	110	55%

The table.no-9 the employment status of respondents, as shown in Table 9, reveals significant gender disparities in the labour market. A majority of women (55%) are unemployed, while only 20% are engaged in formal employment. The remaining 25% are employed in the informal sector. The high rate of unemployment among women reflects structural barriers such as limited access to education, lack of skills, and social norms that restrict women’s participation in the workforce. Many women are engaged in unpaid domestic work, which is not recognized in economic statistics. The dominance of informal employment indicates that even when women work, they are often employed in low-paying, insecure jobs without social protection. This limits their economic independence and vulnerability to exploitation. From a sociological perspective, employment is a key determinant of empowerment. Women who are economically active are more likely to participate in decision-making and access resources. However, the data suggests that gender budgeting has not significantly improved employment opportunities for women. The findings highlight the need for policies that promote women’s participation in the formal sector, provide skill development opportunities, and address barriers to employment.

Table 10: Perception of Gender Budgeting

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Very Effective	30	15%
Moderately Effective	50	25%
Not Effective	120	60%
Opinion	Frequency	Percentage

Above table.no-10 reflects women’s perceptions of the effectiveness of gender budgeting. A majority of respondents (60%) consider it ineffective, while only 15% view it as highly effective. This indicates a general dissatisfaction with the outcomes of gender budgeting policies. The moderate response (25%) suggests that some women recognize the benefits of these initiatives but feel that they are insufficient or inconsistently implemented. This aligns with earlier findings that highlight gaps in awareness, access, and impact. From a sociological perspective, perception is shaped by lived

experiences. Women who have not benefited from gender budgeting are more likely to view it negatively. This reflects the importance of ensuring that policies produce tangible results at the grassroots level. The negative perception also points to issues such as lack of transparency, inefficiency, and exclusion. When policies fail to meet expectations, they can lead to distrust in government initiatives. Overall, the table emphasizes the need to improve the effectiveness and visibility of gender budgeting. Building trust requires not only better implementation but also active engagement with beneficiaries.

SUGGESTIONS:

To strengthen gender budgeting in India, the following measures can be considered:

1. Increase Awareness: Government agencies should conduct awareness campaigns to educate women about welfare schemes and budget allocations.
2. Improve Data Collection: Ministries should maintain gender-disaggregated data to better assess policy outcomes.
3. Strengthen Monitoring Mechanisms: Effective monitoring systems should be established to track the utilization of gender budget funds.
4. Capacity Building: Training programs should be organized for policymakers and government officials to enhance their understanding of gender budgeting.
5. Community Participation: Women's participation in local governance and budgeting processes should be encouraged.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The government should allocate a larger share of public expenditure toward women-focused programs.

1. Gender budgeting should be integrated into all sectors, including infrastructure, transportation, and digital development.
2. Regular evaluation of gender-budget schemes should be conducted to measure their effectiveness.
3. Civil society organizations and local institutions should collaborate with the government to improve awareness and implementation.
4. Greater transparency in budget reporting should be ensured to enhance accountability.

CONCLUSION:

Gender budgeting is an important policy tool for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in India. Over the years, it has increased the visibility of women's issues in public finance and policy planning. However, the findings of this study indicate that the effectiveness of gender budgeting depends largely on awareness, implementation, and monitoring mechanisms. The primary data analysis shows that while women benefit from several government schemes, many remain unaware of gender-specific budget provisions. Bridging this information gap and strengthening institutional frameworks are essential for ensuring that budget allocations translate into real improvements in women's lives. By adopting a more inclusive and transparent approach to fiscal planning, gender budgeting can play a crucial role in achieving sustainable development and social justice in India.

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