

Final  
Review  
Report

Navigating  
Parenthood in  
Contemporary  
India:  
Examining  
Parenting  
Practices and  
Post-  
Separation  
Parenting  
Dynamics

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Executive Summary

The proposal addresses a topic of significant and timely social importance—post-separation parenting in contemporary India—that aligns well with the funding agency's priorities. The conceptual focus on Punjab as a case study and the ambition to generate policy-relevant outcomes are commendable starting points. However, the proposal is fundamentally undermined by severe and pervasive weaknesses across nearly every section, rendering it non-competitive and not recommended for funding in its current form. The document suffers from a critical lack of scholarly rigor, evidenced by poor citation practices and unsubstantiated claims, and is riddled with internal inconsistencies that call the entire research design into question.

Major contradictions in scope, sampling, and methodology, combined with a profoundly underdeveloped budget and timeline, demonstrate a lack of careful planning and a potential misunderstanding of the requirements for a viable research project. While the applicant's intent to address an important social gap is clear, the execution is critically flawed. The proposal lacks the coherence, specificity, and methodological credibility necessary to

inspire confidence in its successful completion or its ability to generate meaningful, robust findings. A complete and fundamental revision is required before this project could be reconsidered for funding.

## Major Strengths

- ✓ **High Topical Relevance and Societal Impact:** The research topic addresses a critical and under-examined social issue in India, with clear potential for informing policy, legal practice, and social support systems.
- ✓ **Strong Alignment with Funder's Mission:** The project's stated aim to produce socially relevant knowledge and practical interventions aligns directly with the core mission of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR).
- ✓ **Thoughtful Geographic Justification:** The rationale for selecting Punjab as a specific case study, as mentioned in the abstract, demonstrates a consideration for regional socio-cultural dynamics that strengthens the potential research design.
- ✓ **Ambitious and Applied Dissemination Goals:** The inclusion of outputs beyond academic publications, such as policy briefs and intervention toolkits, shows a laudable commitment to ensuring the research has a tangible, real-world impact.

## Major Weaknesses

- ✗ **Pervasive Internal Inconsistencies:** The proposal is plagued by contradictions across sections, including a shifting geographic scope (India vs. Punjab), a mathematically incoherent sampling plan, and a severe misalignment between the proposed activities and the allocated budget and timeline.
- ✗ **Critical Lack of Scholarly and Methodological Rigor:** The introduction and literature review are built on unsubstantiated claims and highly unprofessional citations. The methodology lacks essential operational detail, rendering it unreproducible and unconvincing.
- ✗ **Fundamentally Flawed Project Planning:** The timeline and budget are exceptionally weak, suggesting a misunderstanding of the grant project lifecycle. The inclusion of 'Proposal Development' post-award and the absence of justification for lump-sum costs are serious red flags regarding project management capability.
- ✗ **Vague and Imprecise Language:** Key terms in the objectives ('effectiveness', 'diverse contexts') are left undefined, and the expected outcomes are described in unmeasurable terms, making it impossible to assess the project's specific goals or success criteria.
- ✗ **Poor Structural Integrity and Coherence:** The proposal fails to function as an integrated whole. Sections like the introduction inappropriately contain methodological details, while the literature review fails to build a coherent argument that justifies the research questions, demonstrating a poor grasp of standard proposal structure.

## Cross-Sectional Recommendations

- {"details":"The applicant must first resolve the fundamental contradiction regarding the project's geographic scope. The proposal must commit to either a national-level study (which would require a vastly different methodology and budget) or a focused case study of Punjab. This decision must then be consistently applied across the Title, Abstract, Objectives, Methodology, Budget, and Timeline. All subsequent design choices, particularly the sampling strategy, must be logically and mathematically sound. For instance, clearly state: 'This study will be conducted in two districts of Punjab: Ludhiana (representing an urban industrial hub) and Hoshiarpur (representing a semi-rural context). A total of N=80 participants will be recruited...' This clarity must then inform the entire proposal.","recommendation":"Recommendation 1: Establish a Single, Coherent Project Scope and Design."}
- {"details":"The Introduction and Literature Review require a complete overhaul. All assertions must be supported by peer-reviewed, academic sources using a consistent citation style (e.g., APA 7th ed.). The use of non-academic sources, broken links, and future-dated publications is unacceptable and must be rectified. The literature review must be rewritten to provide a critical synthesis of existing knowledge, moving beyond a simple descriptive list to build a compelling and evidence-based argument that clearly identifies the specific research gap the project intends to fill.","recommendation":"Recommendation 2: Rebuild the Scholarly Foundation with Academic Integrity."}
- {"details":"The Methodology section must be expanded to provide a step-by-step 'how-to' guide for the research. This includes: a) A precise and justified sampling strategy (e.g., purposive sampling with clear inclusion/exclusion criteria); b) A detailed description of each data collection instrument (e.g., provide sample questions for the semi-structured interviews); c) A clear plan for data analysis (e.g., 'Thematic analysis using NVivo software will be employed...'); and d) A dedicated and realistic 'Limitations' section. Repetitive statements on ethics should be consolidated into a single, comprehensive subsection that details the specific procedures for obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and managing data securely.","recommendation":"Recommendation 3: Develop a Detailed, Operational, and Feasible Methodology."}
- {"details":"The budget and timeline must be completely redrafted to align directly with the revised methodology. The timeline must be presented as a detailed Gantt chart with specific, measurable milestones and deliverables for each phase (e.g., 'Month 6: Completion of 50% of interviews'; 'Month 18: First draft of policy brief submitted for internal review'). The budget must provide a detailed narrative justification for every line item. For example, 'Manpower: Research Assistant (1 position x 18 months x Rs. 20,000/month) = Rs. 3,60,000. The RA will be responsible for participant recruitment, interview transcription, and preliminary data coding.' Lump sums are not acceptable.","recommendation":"Recommendation 4: Construct an Integrated and Justified Budget and Timeline."}
- {"details":"The 'Expected Outcomes' section should be restructured to distinguish clearly between these three concepts. Define Outputs as the direct, tangible products of the

research (e.g., 'Two peer-reviewed journal articles,' 'One toolkit for family court counselors'). Define Outcomes as the changes in knowledge, attitude, or practice resulting from the outputs (e.g., 'Increased awareness among judges of the psychosocial needs of children in separation cases'). Define Impact as the broader, long-term societal benefit. This structure will provide a clearer, more credible 'pathway to impact' and allow for a more realistic assessment of the project's feasibility and value.","recommendation": "Recommendation 5: Clearly Differentiate between Outputs, Outcomes, and Impact."}

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### Section Score Legend:

80-100% - Excellent  
60-79% - Good  
40-59% - Needs Improvement  
0-39% - Inadequate

Section Scores

| SECTION              | SCORE   | RATING | VERSION |
|----------------------|---------|--------|---------|
| Abstract             | 7.6/10  | ★★★★☆☆ | v1      |
| Introduction         | 4.5/10  | ★★☆☆☆☆ | v1      |
| Objectives           | 6.0/10  | ★★★★☆☆ | v1      |
| Literature Review    | 4.0/10  | ★★☆☆☆☆ | v1      |
| Methodology          | 4.0/10  | ★★☆☆☆☆ | v1      |
| Budget Justification | 4.0/10  | ★★☆☆☆☆ | v1      |
| Expected Outcomes    | 6.0/10  | ★★★★☆☆ | v1      |
| Project Timeline     | 3.0/10  | ★★☆☆☆☆ | v1      |
| Overall              | 39.1/80 | ★★★★☆☆ | 48.9%   |

## Abstract

Score: 7.6/10

### Section Content

Version 1

The given research explores the changing situation in the realm of parenthood and

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### Summary

The proposal addresses a timely and significant social issue in India, aligning well with the ICSSR's mission. The justification for focusing on Punjab and its specific regions is a notable strength, demonstrating a thoughtful research design. However, the abstract is weakened by imprecise language, the lack of a clear, central research question, and insufficient detail in the methodology section, which raises concerns about feasibility and rigour. The distinction between research objectives and project outcomes is blurred, and the overall presentation lacks the sharpness expected of a highly competitive proposal. While the 'what' (the topic) and 'why' (its significance) are reasonably clear, the 'how' (the specific methods and scope) remains too vague to inspire full confidence in the project's execution. The potential for policy impact is high, but the pathway to achieving it is not yet convincingly articulated.

### Strengths

- Strong alignment with ICSSR's focus on policy-relevant social science research in the Indian context.
- Excellent justification for the geographical focus on Punjab, including a well-considered regional sampling strategy (Majha, Malwa, Doaba) that promises a nuanced analysis.
- Clear articulation of the research gap and the project's potential significance for family welfare policy, child protection, and legal frameworks.
- The interdisciplinary approach (sociological, psychological, legal) is appropriate for the complexity of the topic.

### Weaknesses

- The language is often passive, convoluted, and lacks academic precision (e.g., 'The given research explores', 'It will be done in...'), which undermines the proposal's professionalism.

- The problem is described broadly rather than being distilled into a specific, answerable research question, making the project's focus appear diffuse.
- The methodology section is generic. It lacks critical details such as proposed sample size, recruitment strategy, or the specific age range of child participants, which are essential for evaluating feasibility.
- The 'Expected Outcomes' section conflates research objectives (e.g., 'elucidation of roles') with tangible project outputs, and includes a grammatically confusing statement about evaluating legal mediation.
- The claims about Punjab's 'special sociological-demographic profile' and 'rising percentages of separation' are not substantiated with even a single data point or citation, weakening the empirical basis of the justification.

## ! Recommendations

- {"rationale":"This will immediately clarify the project's core focus, moving it from a general topic to a specific, researchable problem. A sharp question provides a clear anchor for the methodology and objectives, strengthening the proposal's logical coherence.","suggestion":"Introduce a clear, central research question. At the end of the introductory paragraph, state the primary question explicitly. For example: 'This study therefore asks: How do separated parents in urban Punjab negotiate parenting roles and responsibilities, and what are the primary socio-legal factors that facilitate or hinder positive child outcomes post-separation?'"}
- {"rationale":"This demonstrates concrete planning and significantly improves the perceived feasibility of the project. Vague methods are a major red flag for reviewers assessing whether the project can be realistically completed within the proposed budget and timeline.","suggestion":"Quantify the methodology. Provide specific, albeit estimated, numbers. For example: 'The methodology will involve approximately 60 in-depth interviews with separated parents and key caregivers (10 per district) and 6 focus group discussions with adolescent children (aged 13-17) to ensure their perspectives are captured ethically and effectively.'"}
- {"rationale":"This demonstrates a clear understanding of the research lifecycle and a focus on generating concrete, impactful outputs. For a funder like ICSSR, clear deliverables are crucial for assessing value-for-money and potential real-world impact.","suggestion":"Revise the 'Expected Outcomes' to focus on tangible deliverables. Differentiate them from the research objectives. An improved list might include: '1. A comprehensive report detailing post-separation parenting typologies in Punjab. 2. A set of evidence-based policy briefs for state-level family welfare agencies. 3. A validated framework for assessing community support systems for separated families.'"}
- {"rationale":"Professional, precise language is not just about style; it reflects clear thinking. This change will significantly enhance the proposal's credibility and make it easier for reviewers to assess its merits without being distracted by ambiguous phrasing.","suggestion":"Refine the language for academic rigour and clarity. Use active voice and precise terminology. For instance, replace 'Provide in-depth information about' with 'Characterize the psychological and social effects of...' and rewrite the confusing

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Introduction

Score: 4.5/10

Section Content

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Summary

The proposal addresses a topic of significant social relevance and aligns well with the thematic priorities of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). The identification of a research gap concerning post-separation parenting dynamics within the specific socio-cultural context of Punjab is a clear strength, and the stated aim to inform policy and family law reform demonstrates a laudable focus on real-world impact. However, the introduction is critically undermined by severe structural weaknesses, a lack of evidentiary support for key claims, and highly problematic scholarly practices. The inclusion of detailed sections on theory and methodology disrupts the narrative flow and suggests a misunderstanding of standard grant proposal structure. More concerning are the unsubstantiated assertions about Punjab's suitability as a case study and the use of non-academic and future-dated citations, which fatally compromises the proposal's credibility at this competitive level. While the core idea is promising, the execution in this section is poor and requires a fundamental revision to be considered for funding.

Strengths

- Strong Alignment with Funding Call: The topic directly addresses social science research priorities relevant to contemporary India, making it a good fit for the ICSSR.
- Clear Identification of Research Gap: The proposal effectively identifies a lack of empirical, context-specific research on post-separation parenting in Punjab, particularly concerning the roles of extended family and regional variations.
- Policy and Impact Orientation: The explicit goal of informing family law reform, support services, and policy frameworks provides a strong justification for the investment of public funds.

Weaknesses

- Illogical Structure and Poor Organization: The introduction is cluttered with detailed sections on Theoretical Framework, Scope, and Methodology that belong in subsequent, dedicated parts of the proposal. This disrupts the narrative and makes the core argument difficult to follow.
- Unsubstantiated Claims: The justification for selecting Punjab as a case study (e.g., high

migration rates, specific inheritance laws) is presented as a series of assertions without any supporting data, statistics, or credible citations to validate them.

- **Serious Citation and Sourcing Issues:** The use of non-academic sources (e.g., 'Keppel Health Review', 'Kidscastle Preschool') and inexplicable future-dated citations ('Majumdar, 2025', 'Nicwa, 2025') is a major red flag that severely damages the scholarly credibility of the entire project.
- **Lack of Precision and Rigor in Theoretical Framing:** The 'Indigenous and Cultural Value Frameworks' section is vague, lacks a clear definition of 'indigenous' in the Punjabi context, and relies on generic statements rather than specific, relevant academic literature.
- **Poor Editing and Unprofessional Tone:** The presence of a duplicated paragraph on Family Systems Theory and self-congratulatory phrases ('This concise problem statement highlights the urgency and relevance...') indicates a lack of thorough proofreading and detracts from the professional, objective tone expected in a competitive grant application.

## ! Recommendations

- **Recommendation 1: Drastically Restructure the Introduction.** The introduction should be a concise, compelling narrative of 2-3 paragraphs. It should (a) set the broad context of changing family structures in India, (b) narrow down to the specific problem of post-separation parenting in Punjab, (c) clearly state the research gap, and (d) conclude with the study's primary aim and significance. Move the detailed discussions of theory, scope, and methodology to their own dedicated sections later in the proposal.
- **Recommendation 2: Substantiate All Justifications with Evidence.** To make the choice of Punjab compelling, you must provide evidence. For example, rewrite the 'Scope' justification as follows: 'Punjab is selected due to its distinct socio-demographic profile. For instance, the state's rate of emigration is X% higher than the national average (Census of India, 2011), directly impacting family support structures. Furthermore, specific customary laws prevalent in the region, such as [mention specific law/custom], create unique challenges in post-separation asset division that require focused investigation (Source, Year).'
- **Recommendation 3: Conduct a Thorough Citation Audit and Overhaul.** Immediately remove all non-academic and future-dated sources. Replace them with peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and official reports. For instance, when discussing cultural values, cite established sociologists or anthropologists specializing in Punjabi or North Indian family studies (e.g., works by Surinder S. Jodhka, Patricia Uberoi, etc.) instead of a preschool website. A citation like 'Majumdar, 2025' must be corrected; if it is a forthcoming publication, cite it as '(in press)' or '(forthcoming)' with the publisher's name.
- **Recommendation 4: Refine the Theoretical Framework Section (in its new location).** Instead of just listing theories, explain precisely how they will be integrated to form a cohesive analytical lens. For the cultural framework, specify the exact cultural constructs you will investigate (e.g., 'izzat' (honour), filial obligations, community mediation roles) and ground them in relevant literature. This demonstrates a deeper theoretical

engagement.

- Recommendation 5: Enhance Professionalism through Rigorous Proofreading. Eliminate all redundant content, such as the repeated paragraph. Rephrase subjective and self-congratulatory sentences into objective, evidence-based statements. A clean, error-free proposal signals competence and attention to detail, which are crucial for securing the panel's confidence.

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Objectives

Score: 6.0/10

Section Content

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Summary

The objectives address a highly relevant and important topic for contemporary India, showing a logical progression from individual impacts to systemic analysis. The focus on policy implications is a notable strength. However, the section is undermined by significant weaknesses, including a critical lack of clarity regarding the geographic scope (the title implies India, while an objective specifies Punjab), the use of vague terminology ('diverse socio-cultural contexts', 'effectiveness'), and an overly ambitious third objective that raises concerns about feasibility and measurability. While the foundation is promising, this lack of precision significantly lowers confidence in the project's design and execution at this competitive stage.

Strengths

- **Thematic Relevance:** The objectives are well-aligned with the ICSSR's mandate to fund research on pressing social issues in India, addressing family dynamics, child welfare, and policy.
- **Logical Structure:** The objectives are structured logically, progressing from the micro-level (impacts on children) to the meso-level (family roles) and finally to the macro-level (support systems and policy).
- **Impact-Oriented:** The third objective clearly aims to inform policy development, demonstrating a commitment to producing actionable, real-world impact, which is a key consideration for funders.
- **Contextual Sensitivity:** The inclusion of 'extended family members' in the second objective shows a strong understanding of the Indian social fabric and its importance in child-rearing.

Weaknesses

- **Inconsistent Geographic Scope:** There is a major contradiction between the project title's implied national scope ('Contemporary India') and the specific mention of 'Punjab' in the first objective. The scope for the other two objectives is unstated, creating ambiguity about the study's focus and generalizability.
- **Lack of Specificity and Measurability:** Key terms are vague and not operationalized. For

instance, 'diverse socio-cultural contexts', 'positive parenting', and 'child well-being' are not defined. This makes it difficult to assess how these concepts will be measured.

- **Overly Ambitious Phrasing:** Objective 3, to 'evaluate the effectiveness' of entire support systems, is exceptionally ambitious for a typical research project. A full-scale evaluation requires specific methodologies and benchmarks that are not implied here, raising concerns about the project's feasibility.
- **Process-Oriented Verbs:** The use of verbs like 'analyze' and 'examine' describes the research process rather than measurable outcomes. This is a common but weaker way to frame objectives.

## ! Recommendations

- **Suggestion 1: Immediately Clarify and Justify the Geographic Scope.** The proposal must decide on its scope and be consistent. If the study is focused on Punjab, the title should be revised (e.g., '...in Contemporary India: A Study of Parenting Dynamics in Punjab') and a strong justification for selecting Punjab as the case study site must be provided in the introduction/methodology.
- **Suggestion 2: Rephrase Objectives with Outcome-Oriented Verbs and Specificity.** Refine the language to be more precise and measurable. - \*Current Obj 1:\* 'Analyze the psychological, social, and emotional impacts of parental separation on children across diverse socio-cultural contexts in Punjab.' - \*Improved Example:\* 'To identify and compare the primary psychological, social, and emotional impacts of parental separation on children (aged 10-16) across urban and rural settings in Punjab.'
- **Suggestion 3: Calibrate the Ambition of Objective 3.** Reframe the evaluation objective to be more achievable within the project's constraints. Focus on perceived effectiveness or identifying barriers and facilitators. - \*Current Obj 3:\* 'Evaluate the effectiveness of legal, community, and informal support systems...' - \*Improved Example:\* 'To assess the perceived accessibility and utility of legal, community, and informal support systems for separated parents, and to identify key areas for policy and practice enhancement.'
- **Suggestion 4: Define Key Constructs.** For clarity and rigor, briefly operationalize central concepts within the objectives themselves or in a preamble. - \*Example:\* 'For this study, 'diverse socio-cultural contexts' will be defined by distinctions in urban/rural residence, family income level, and caste. 'Child well-being' will be assessed using [mention a specific scale or framework].'

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## Literature Review

Score: 4.0/10

### Section Content

Version 1

The Indian parenting practices have been studied in different dimensions, which have

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### Summary

This literature review identifies several relevant thematic areas for the proposed research, including the tension between traditional and modern parenting in India, the applicability of Western models, and the under-researched area of post-separation parenting. However, the section is fundamentally undermined by a lack of critical synthesis, a disjointed structure, and highly unprofessional and questionable citations. While the applicant correctly identifies potential research gaps in the conclusion, the body of the review fails to build a convincing, scholarly argument to substantiate them. The descriptive, list-like approach and significant citation errors raise serious concerns about the academic rigor and readiness of this project for competitive funding.

### Strengths

- Identifies relevant and timely research themes, including the dynamics of contemporary Indian parenting, post-separation challenges, and the need for culturally-sensitive frameworks.
- Attempts to justify the regional focus on Punjab, which aligns with the funding agency's interest in region-specific research.
- The concluding 'Research Gap and Critical Thematic Synthesis' section clearly articulates the gaps the project aims to address, showing a conceptual understanding of the project's contribution.
- The inclusion of the ICSSR guidelines demonstrates an awareness of the funding context and an attempt to align the project with the agency's priorities.

### Weaknesses

- **\*\*Lack of Critical Synthesis:\*\*** The review is largely descriptive and reads like a series of disconnected summaries rather than a synthesized argument. It fails to place studies in conversation with one another, neglecting to discuss contradictions, debates, or the

evolution of thought in the field.

- **\*\*Poor Structure and Flow:\*\*** The review begins with thematic paragraphs but abruptly shifts to a bulleted-style list of single-study summaries. This 'laundry list' approach is analytically weak and disrupts the narrative, failing to build a cumulative case for the research gap.
- **\*\*Unprofessional and Questionable Citations:\*\*** This is a critical flaw. Citations are incomplete (e.g., titles without authors), non-standard, and include future dates (2024, 2025) without clarification (e.g., 'in press', 'forthcoming'). Citations such as `(Kaur and Singh, 2025)` and `("The challenges of improving parenting practices at scale" (2025))` are unacceptable in a scholarly proposal and severely damage its credibility.
- **\*\*Superficial Justification for Regional Focus:\*\*** The proposal states that Punjab has 'specific demographic factors' and 'gender-related prejudice' but fails to provide specific evidence or literature to substantiate this claim. The justification remains generic and does not convincingly argue why Punjab is a critical or uniquely insightful case study.
- **\*\*Over-reliance on Foundational but Dated Sources:\*\*** While foundational texts like Verma and Saraswathi (2002) are important, the review does not sufficiently bridge their findings with the contemporary literature to show how the field has advanced over the past two decades.

## ! Recommendations

- {"rationale":"This structural change forces a shift from mere summarization to synthesis and analysis, demonstrating a higher level of intellectual engagement and building a more robust and persuasive argument for your project's necessity. It is a standard expectation for a competitive grant proposal.","suggestion":"\*\*Re-structure for Thematic Synthesis:\*\* Abandon the list-based format and organize the entire review around key themes or debates. For example, create dedicated subsections such as '1. The Collectivist-Individualist Tension in Contemporary Indian Parenting,' '2. Critiques of Western Parenting Models in the Indian Context,' and '3. The Legal and Psychosocial Landscape of Post-Separation Parenting.'"}
- {"rationale":"Credibility is paramount. Sloppy or unverifiable citations suggest a lack of scholarly rigor and attention to detail, which can be a disqualifying factor for reviewers. Accurate referencing is a basic requirement for academic integrity.","suggestion":"\*\*Ensure Professional and Verifiable Citations:\*\* Immediately correct all citations to a single, standard academic format (e.g., APA 7th Ed.). Every source mentioned must be fully and accurately cited. Any works cited with future dates must be justified (e.g., noted as 'in press' with the journal name) or removed. Citations consisting only of a title and year are not permissible."}
- {"rationale":"This provides an evidence-based justification for your methodological choices, demonstrating that the research design is deliberate and well-founded, rather than arbitrary. It significantly strengthens the proposal's feasibility and potential for impact.","suggestion":"\*\*Strengthen the Justification for the Punjab Focus with Literature:\*\* Integrate specific literature and data to bolster the choice of Punjab as a research site. Instead of stating there are 'demographic factors,' cite studies or

government reports on divorce rates, family structures, or migration patterns in Punjab. Discuss literature that specifically addresses 'gender-related prejudice' in the region."}

→ {"rationale":"This technique demonstrates your ability to critically evaluate the existing body of knowledge, identify its specific limitations, and position your own research as a precise and necessary intervention. This is the core function of a literature review in a research proposal.","suggestion":"\*\*Move from Description to Critical Analysis:\*\* For each theme, actively compare and contrast findings from different studies. For instance, after presenting a study's findings, you could write: 'While Nambiar (2024) focuses on the urban legal system's impact, this perspective contrasts with Sangeet and Singh (2022), whose qualitative work highlights the role of informal social stigma in rural settings. This study will bridge these two perspectives by...'"}

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Methodology

Score: 4.0/10

Section Content

Version 1

Research Design This qualitative study investigates changes in parenthood and post-

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Summary

The proposed methodology outlines a conceptually appropriate qualitative study for exploring post-separation parenting in Punjab, with a commendable focus on regional diversity and triangulation of sources. However, the section is severely undermined by significant internal inconsistencies, critical omissions of operational detail, and poor structural organization. Major contradictions in the sampling plan (particularly regarding the inclusion of children and the mathematical distribution of interviews) and a lack of specificity on key data collection methods (FGDs, observations) render the current plan unconvincing and raise serious questions about its feasibility and rigor. While the ethical considerations are noted, their repetitive and disjointed presentation, coupled with the absence of a limitations section, reflects a lack of thoroughness unbecoming of a competitive proposal. In its current state, the methodology lacks the credibility and precision required for funding. A comprehensive revision is necessary to address these fundamental flaws and develop a coherent, viable research plan.

Strengths

- The choice of a qualitative research design is well-justified and appropriate for capturing the subjective, lived experiences central to the research questions.
- The selection of six urban districts across Punjab's three distinct cultural-geographical regions (Majha, Malwa, Doaba) is a significant strength, demonstrating a thoughtful approach to ensuring contextual diversity.
- The plan to include multiple stakeholders (parents, lawyers, counsellors) is methodologically sound, creating a strong basis for data triangulation.
- The identification of a specific data analysis technique (Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis) provides a clear and appropriate analytical pathway.
- The detailed ethical considerations, particularly the inclusion of referral pathways for distressed participants, show awareness of the topic's sensitive nature.

## Weaknesses

- The sampling plan contains a critical contradiction: it states children (10-18 years) will be participants, yet they are completely absent from the sample size breakdown of 40 interviews.
- There is a fundamental mathematical error in the sample distribution plan. It claims 40 total interviews will be distributed with '20 interviews per region,' which would total 60 interviews, not 40.
- The descriptions of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Field Observations are exceptionally vague, lacking crucial details on the number of sessions, participant composition, observation protocols, or strategies for gaining access to sensitive sites like courtrooms.
- A key analytical goal mentioned in the 'Scope and Variables' section—comparing middle-income and lower-income families—is not integrated into the sampling strategy, creating a major disconnect between aims and methods.
- The document's structure is poor, with key sections like 'Ethical Considerations' and 'Rationalization of Qualitative Design' repeated unnecessarily, indicating a lack of careful editing.
- The methodology fails to acknowledge any potential limitations of the chosen approach (e.g., researcher bias, generalizability) or provide contingency plans for foreseeable challenges like recruitment difficulties.
- The inclusion of 'Expected Outcomes' within the methodology section is structurally incorrect and detracts from the section's focus and coherence.

## ! Recommendations

- Revise the sampling plan to be logically consistent. Either include children in the sample size table with a clear rationale for their number and age-appropriate interview methods, or remove the reference to them as direct participants. Correct the mathematical error regarding regional distribution to reflect a viable plan for the 40 interviews.
- Provide specific operational details for all data collection methods. For example, state the planned number of FGDs, their size, and composition. For observations, specify the sites, the duration of observation, what will be observed (e.g., interactions, processes), and a concrete plan for securing ethical and practical access.
- Align your sampling technique with your analytical goals. If you intend to compare socio-economic groups, explicitly build this into your purposive sampling criteria. Define what constitutes 'middle-income' and 'lower-income' in this context and stratify your parent sample accordingly (e.g., '5 mothers/5 fathers from each income group').
- Thoroughly edit the section to improve its structure and professionalism. Consolidate the repeated paragraphs on ethics and the qualitative rationale into single, coherent subsections. Move the 'Expected Outcomes' to a more appropriate section of the proposal.
- Introduce a subsection titled 'Limitations and Mitigation Strategies'. Acknowledge the

limitations inherent in a qualitative, purposive sampling approach and outline specific contingency plans for potential challenges, such as slow recruitment or participants becoming distressed. This demonstrates foresight and enhances the project's perceived feasibility.

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Summary

The budget justification presents a basic structure with standard expenditure heads, but it is severely undermined by a lack of narrative justification, questionable cost estimations, and significant internal inconsistencies. Many line items appear inflated or are presented as lump sums without adequate detail, raising serious concerns about value for money and the feasibility of the financial plan. The most critical weakness is the apparent misalignment between the allocated resources (e.g., manpower) and the implied research activities (e.g., participant numbers), making it impossible to assess the budget's coherence and appropriateness without the methodology and timeline sections. As it stands, the budget lacks the rigor and clarity expected of a competitive proposal and requires substantial revision to be considered for funding.

Strengths

- The budget is organized into standard, appropriate categories (e.g., Manpower, Fieldwork, Equipment), which provides a clear, albeit superficial, overview of the planned expenditure.
- The inclusion of specific line items for dissemination (Workshops/Seminars) and participant honoraria demonstrates an awareness of the importance of research impact and ethical considerations.
- The proposal correctly allocates funds for contingency and institutional overheads, adhering to general funding agency practices.

Weaknesses

- **\*\*Absence of Narrative Justification\*\***: The budget is presented as a table of figures with minimal descriptive text. There is no accompanying narrative to explain *\*why\** specific resources are needed, how the amounts were calculated, or how they directly support the research objectives. This is a major deficiency.
- **\*\*Poor Resource-Methodology Alignment\*\***: There is a significant logical gap between the manpower requested and the stated fieldwork outputs. Hiring two Field Investigators for nine months each seems excessive for a study with only 40 participants. This

disconnect suggests either a poorly conceived research design or an improperly justified budget.

- **\*\*Inflated or Poorly Justified Costs\*\***: Several costs appear high without justification. For example, the Research Assistant salary (₹37,000/month) may exceed standard ICSSR norms for this role. The participant honorarium (₹2,000) is exceptionally high for social science research in India and requires strong justification based on the participant profile. The local conveyance rate (₹2,000/day) is also steep and unsubstantiated.
- **\*\*Vague and Unspecified Line Items\*\***: Key items lack necessary detail. 'Travel' is costed per trip without specifying destinations or the basis for the ₹35,000 figure. 'Misc. field expenses' and 'Contingency' are presented as generic lump sums without any illustrative breakdown, hindering a proper assessment of their necessity.
- **\*\*Questionable Equipment and Material Costs\*\***: The request for a three-year NVivo license is inconsistent with the 18-month RA contract, suggesting a potential misalignment with the project timeline. The justification for a new laptop, printer, and scanner is absent; funders typically expect the host institution to provide such basic infrastructure. The allocation for 'Reference Books & Journals' (₹45,000) is high and requires specification.
- **\*\*Inaccurate Overhead Calculation\*\***: While the inclusion of overheads is correct, the amount (₹94,000) appears to be an arbitrary figure rather than one calculated precisely according to the funder's specified percentage and formula.

## ! Recommendations

- {"reason":"This is fundamental for reviewers. It demonstrates that the budget is a well-considered plan directly linked to the research design, not just a list of numbers. It is essential for establishing the **\*\*credibility\*\***, **\*\*feasibility\*\***, and **\*\*value-for-money\*\*** of the proposal.","recommendation":"**\*\*Provide a Comprehensive Narrative Justification\*\***: Immediately following the budget table, add a detailed narrative (approx. 400-500 words) that justifies each major expenditure head. For each category, explain how the requested funds are essential for achieving the project's aims and how the costs were estimated."}
- {"reason":"Internal consistency is a key indicator of a well-planned project. A budget that tells a coherent story gives the funding panel confidence in the PI's ability to manage the project **\*\*effectively and efficiently\*\***","recommendation":"**\*\*Ensure and Demonstrate Internal Consistency\*\***: Revise the budget to create a logical and defensible link between manpower, activities, and timeline. For example, if retaining two Field Investigators for nine months, justify this by mapping their work onto a larger sample size, multiple field sites, or a complex, phased data collection process. If the sample size is indeed 40, the manpower allocation must be scaled down accordingly."}
- {"reason":"Specificity and justification are crucial for demonstrating **\*\*prudence and cost-effectiveness\*\***. Unjustified high costs are a primary reason for budget cuts or outright rejection of a proposal.","recommendation":"**\*\*Revise and Detail Inflated or Vague Costs\*\***: Re-evaluate and provide detailed breakdowns for high-cost or vague items. For example: a) Justify the RA salary by specifying required qualifications (e.g.,

PhD, specific technical skills) or adjust to ICSSR norms. b) Break down the 'Travel' cost into estimated air/train fare, local taxi, etc., based on specific, named field sites. c) Justify the participant honorarium by describing the target demographic (e.g., 'Participants are high-level professionals, and this honorarium is necessary to compensate for their time and ensure recruitment').")}

- {"reason":"This demonstrates **efficient resource planning** and shows respect for the funder's expectation that institutional resources will be leveraged where possible, thereby improving the **value-for-money** assessment.", "recommendation":"**Align Durations and Justify Equipment**: Adjust the NVivo license duration to match the project's actual data analysis period (e.g., 24 months for a 2-year project). Provide a strong justification for why new computer equipment is essential and cannot be provided by the host institution (e.g., 'A dedicated laptop is required to ensure the security and confidentiality of sensitive participant data, isolated from institutional networks').")}
- {"reason":"Adhering strictly to funder guidelines demonstrates **diligence and professionalism**. It assures the reviewer that the PI understands and will comply with the administrative and financial requirements of the grant.", "recommendation":"**Verify and Apply Funder Norms Precisely**: Consult the latest ICSSR guidelines to confirm the exact percentage and calculation base for Institutional Overheads. Recalculate the amount and state the formula used (e.g., 'Institutional Overheads are calculated at 5% of the total project cost, excluding contingency, as per ICSSR notification no. X').")}

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## Expected Outcomes

Score: 6.0/10

### Section Content

Version 1

It is expected that in the course of this research project, a number of meaningful outputs

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### Summary

This section outlines an ambitious and commendable range of outputs that demonstrate a strong commitment to achieving both academic and societal impact. The inclusion of deliverables such as policy briefs, intervention toolkits, and capacity-building workshops is a significant strength, aligning well with ICSSR's emphasis on socially relevant research. However, the section is fundamentally weakened by a lack of clarity, conflating outputs (tangible products) with outcomes (the resulting changes or new knowledge). Furthermore, several key deliverables are described in vague, unmeasurable terms, and the overall scope raises significant questions about feasibility within a typical project timeline and budget. While the intention is excellent, the lack of specificity and strategic planning undermines the credibility of the proposed impact.

### Strengths

- The proposal clearly aims for impact beyond academia, targeting key stakeholders such as policymakers, legal professionals, and social workers.
- The planned creation of 'Tactical Intervention Toolkits' is an innovative and highly relevant output that addresses a practical need for culturally-sensitive resources in India.
- The commitment to producing at least two peer-reviewed articles in high-impact journals is a specific and appropriate academic goal.
- The range of proposed outputs (report, papers, briefs, toolkits, workshops) demonstrates a comprehensive dissemination strategy, which has the potential to maximize the project's reach and influence.

### Weaknesses

- **\*\*Conceptual Confusion:\*\*** The section fundamentally confuses 'outputs' (e.g., a report, a toolkit) with 'outcomes' (e.g., improved understanding, policy change). The bulleted list under the second 'Expected Outcomes' heading merely restates research topics, not the

new knowledge or insights that will be generated.

- **\*\*Lack of Specificity and Measurability:\*\*** Key outputs like 'Public Awareness Improvement' and 'Capacity Building Sessions' are too vague. The proposal does not specify the number of workshops, the target audience size, the nature of the outreach initiatives, or any metrics to assess their effectiveness. This makes it impossible to evaluate their value or feasibility.
- **\*\*Questionable Feasibility:\*\*** The workload implied by conducting in-depth qualitative research while also developing, piloting, and disseminating multiple high-level outputs (policy briefs, toolkits, workshops) appears overly ambitious. Without a detailed work plan or justification in the methodology/timeline, this raises concerns about the project team's ability to deliver all components to a high standard.
- **\*\*Poor Structure and Formatting:\*\*** The section is disjointed, presenting two separate lists under similar headings. This lack of clear organization makes it difficult for the reviewer to follow the logical flow from research findings to tangible outputs and their intended impact.

## ! Recommendations

- {"rationale":"This demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the research lifecycle and the pathway to impact. It allows the reviewer to clearly see the logical chain from the knowledge you will create to the products you will deliver and the changes you hope to effect, which is a core evaluation criterion for funders.","suggestion":"Restructure the section to clearly distinguish between 'Research Outcomes/Findings', 'Outputs', and 'Potential Impacts'. First, list the expected knowledge contributions (the outcomes of the analysis). Second, list the tangible deliverables (the outputs, e.g., report, 2 journal articles, 1 policy brief). Finally, describe the potential short- and long-term impacts of these outputs."}
- {"rationale":"Adding specific, numerical targets transforms vague promises into a credible, verifiable action plan. It allows reviewers to assess the feasibility, scope, and value-for-money of your dissemination efforts.","suggestion":"Quantify your practitioner-focused outputs. For 'Capacity Building Sessions,' specify: 'We will conduct two one-day workshops for a total of 40-50 family counselors and social workers in Mumbai and Delhi.' For 'Public Awareness,' propose a concrete output, such as: 'We will produce a series of three infographics for social media and write two articles for popular online parenting magazines (e.g., ParentCircle, Momspresso)'."}
- {"rationale":"Toolkit development is a complex process. Providing these details shows foresight and a realistic understanding of the work involved, strengthening the feasibility and perceived value of this innovative output.","suggestion":"Refine the description of the 'Tactical Intervention Toolkits'. Specify the format (e.g., 'a 20-page downloadable PDF guide'), its core modules (e.g., 'Module 1: Communication strategies for co-parents; Module 2: Identifying signs of distress in children'), and the plan for user feedback (e.g., 'The toolkit will be piloted with a focus group of 5 social workers before final release')."}
- {"rationale":"A targeted dissemination plan is far more convincing than a generic one. It shows that you have identified the key actors who can use your research and have a



proactive strategy to engage them, significantly increasing the likelihood of policy impact.", "suggestion": "Elaborate on the dissemination strategy for policy engagement. Instead of just stating policy briefs will be 'circulated,' specify the target. For example: 'The policy brief will be sent directly to the research division of the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights. We will also seek a meeting to present our key findings to relevant officials.'"}]

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## Project Timeline

Score: 3.0/10

### Section Content

Version 1

The project is logically sequenced, showing smooth transitions from conceptual

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### Summary

The proposed project timeline provides a basic, high-level sequence of research activities that is logically ordered. However, it suffers from several critical deficiencies that significantly undermine its credibility and feasibility from a funding perspective. The timeline lacks the necessary detail, specific milestones, and deliverables expected in a competitive research proposal. Most notably, the inclusion of 'Proposal Development' as a post-award activity suggests a fundamental misunderstanding of the grant project lifecycle. The absence of key project management tasks, such as ethics approval and a structured dissemination plan, raises serious concerns about the applicant's preparedness to manage a project of this scope. Overall, the timeline is underdeveloped and does not inspire confidence in the project's successful and timely completion.

### Strengths

- The timeline presents a logical, sequential flow of major research phases, from literature review through to finalization.
- The time allocations for broad phases (e.g., 7 months for data collection, 5 for analysis) are not inherently unrealistic, providing a rudimentary framework for the project's duration.

### Weaknesses

- **\*\*Fundamental Misalignment\*\***: The inclusion of 'Proposal Development' (Jan – Mar 2026) is a critical error. A project timeline for a grant application should commence upon the award of funds, not include the preparation of the proposal itself. This undermines the entire timeline's premise.
- **\*\*Lack of Specificity and Milestones\*\***: The timeline lists broad phases without breaking them down into specific, measurable tasks or milestones. For example, 'Data Collection' should be detailed with sub-tasks like 'Recruitment', 'Pilot Testing', 'Survey

Administration', and 'Qualitative Interviews'. Without these, it is impossible to track progress or assess feasibility.

- **\*\*Absence of Concrete Deliverables\*\***: Each phase should culminate in a clear deliverable (e.g., a finalized literature review document, an ethics board approval certificate, a cleaned dataset, a draft report chapter). The current timeline lacks any such outputs, making it a vague list of activities rather than a management tool.
- **\*\*No Risk Management\*\***: The timeline does not account for potential delays, challenges, or contingencies. A competitive proposal must demonstrate foresight by building in buffer periods or explicitly noting how potential risks (e.g., slow participant recruitment, technology failure) will be managed.
- **\*\*Insufficient Dissemination Planning\*\***: Lumping 'dissemination' into the final two-month 'Finalization' phase is inadequate. A robust project plan integrates dissemination activities throughout or dedicates a significant phase to it, including specific outputs like conference presentations, journal submissions, and policy briefs.
- **\*\*Missing Essential Pre-Data Collection Steps\*\***: The timeline fails to explicitly allocate time for critical prerequisite tasks, most importantly securing institutional ethics board (IRB) approval, which can take several months and must be completed before data collection can begin.

## ! Recommendations

- {"example": "Instead of 'Research Design: Mar 2026 – Jun 2026', create detailed entries: Task 3.1: Finalize interview protocol (Month 3, Deliverable: Protocol Document); Task 3.2: Submit ethics application (Month 3, Deliverable: Submission receipt); Task 3.3: Pilot test survey instrument (Month 4, Deliverable: Pilot test report).", "justification": "To align with funding agency expectations, the timeline must begin from the anticipated project start date (e.g., Month 1). Replace the current list with a detailed work breakdown structure, preferably a Gantt chart or a table with columns for: 'Work Package', 'Specific Task', 'Start Month', 'End Month', 'Deliverable/Milestone', and 'Lead Responsibility'. This demonstrates professional project management capability and enhances clarity.", "recommendation": "\*\*Reframe the Timeline Post-Award and Adopt a Professional Format\*\*"}
- {"example": "Add a dedicated 'Project Set-up and Ethics' phase at the beginning, including tasks like 'Project Kick-off Meeting', 'Hiring of Research Assistant', 'Submission of Ethics Application', and 'Receipt of Ethics Approval'.", "justification": "A feasible plan must account for administrative and ethical overhead. Explicitly including these steps shows the reviewer that the project is grounded in practical reality and that the principal investigator understands the procedural requirements of conducting research.", "recommendation": "\*\*Incorporate Critical Project Management and Ethical Milestones\*\*"}
- {"example": "Break down 'Data Collection' into: 'Recruitment of Cohort 1 (Intact Families)', 'Interviews with Cohort 1', 'Recruitment of Cohort 2 (Separated Parents)', 'Surveys with Cohort 2'. Similarly, detail 'Data Analysis' with 'Transcription of Interviews', 'Qualitative Thematic Analysis', 'Statistical Analysis of Survey Data'.", "justification": "Given the"}

project's focus on two distinct parenting groups (general and post-separation), the methodology is likely complex. The timeline must reflect this. Separating tasks for different participant groups or methods (qualitative/quantitative) provides assurance that the complexity has been considered and planned for.", "recommendation": "\*\*Detail the Data Collection and Analysis Phases\*\*"}]

- {"example": "Replace 'Finalization' with a 'Reporting and Dissemination' work package running for the last 6-9 months. Include milestones such as: 'Draft manuscript for Journal A', 'Present preliminary findings at [Relevant Conference]', 'Develop policy brief for NGOs/family courts', 'Submission of Final Report to ICSSR'.", "justification": "Funding is an investment in generating and sharing new knowledge. The timeline must reflect a clear strategy for impact. Treating dissemination as a final administrative step is a significant weakness. It should be an integrated activity.", "recommendation": "\*\*Develop a Comprehensive Dissemination and Impact Plan\*\*"}]

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