

Ladli Bahna Yojana as a Catalyst for Strengthening Gender Roles and Women's Contribution to Preserving Family Culture

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Application number (To be noted down from the online application)		
		Roles, Relationships, and Practices
Sub-theme		Gender Dynamics and the Role of Women in Preserving Family Culture
1.	Title of the Research Proposal	Ladli Bahna Yojana as a Catalyst for Strengthening Gender Roles and Women's Contribution to Preserving Family Culture
2.	Abstract (approx. 500 words) (Brief overview including objectives, significance, methodology, and expected outcomes)	<p>The <i>Ladli Bahna Yojana</i>, introduced by the Government of Madhya Pradesh, is widely recognized as a financial empowerment initiative for women. However, beyond its economic benefits, this chapter examines the scheme as a cultural catalyst that strengthens women's roles within family structures and reinforces their contribution to preserving traditional values. The core objective of this chapter is to evaluate how financial autonomy translates into enhanced cultural authority, decision-making agency, and intergenerational leadership among women. A secondary objective is to critically assess whether state-led financial inclusion can serve as a sustainable model of culturally rooted gender empowerment.</p> <p>Drawing upon Role Theory, which posits that societal expectations shape the behaviors women adopt within domestic settings, the chapter argues that Ladli Bahna Yojana</p>

	<p>redefines rather than replaces traditional gender roles by assigning economic value to caregiving, nurturing, and value transmission. Using Amartya Sen's Capability Approach, the analysis demonstrates that even modest financial support expands women's functional freedoms, enabling them to contribute to healthcare, education, ritual practices, and family harmony—domains often excluded from economic discourse. Additionally, Feminist Care Ethics (Gilligan, 1982) is applied to argue that caregiving and emotional labor are not burdens but moral strengths essential to cultural continuity. Symbolic Interactionism further explains how the scheme reshapes identity: women transition from dependents to economic partners, gaining dignity and interpersonal respect.</p> <p>The methodology of the chapter is qualitative and interpretive. It synthesizes secondary policy reports, government evaluation documents, media narratives, and field-based testimonial excerpts that reflect women's experiences with the scheme. The analysis is supported by discourse analysis techniques, examining how financial entitlement affects familial dialogues, household negotiations, and ritual participation. Comparative reflections with Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and microfinance models are used to contextualize the scheme's uniqueness.</p> <p>The significance of this work lies in its redefinition of empowerment from a Western-individualistic lens to an Indian-collectivist framework, demonstrating that agency can emerge through relational recognition rather than confrontation. Instead of encouraging women to step away from cultural responsibilities, the scheme honors those responsibilities as leadership roles within the family system.</p> <p>The expected outcomes of the study suggest that Ladli Bahna Yojana has strong potential to strengthen familial cohesion, improve intergenerational trust, and formalize women's authority in cultural decision-making. However, empowerment may remain symbolic unless supported by skill development, financial literacy, and leadership platforms. Therefore, the chapter proposes integrating the scheme with SHGs, Panchayati Raj Institutions, and digital literacy programs to convert cultural authority into public leadership.</p> <p>In conclusion, the chapter positions Ladli Bahna Yojana as an indigenous feminist policy model grounded in relational empowerment rather than adversarial gender politics. By</p>
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		valuing women as guardians of cultural heritage, the scheme promotes a framework of gender justice rooted in continuity, dignity, and mutual respect rather than conflict. This interpretation provides a theoretically informed and culturally sensitive pathway for designing future gender policies in India.
3.	<p>Introduction, Theoretical Framework, Statement of the Problem and Scope of the Proposed Study (approx. 1000 words)</p> <p>(Outline theoretical foundations and the scope of the study in Indian context)</p>	<p>Introduction</p> <p>In the Indian socio-cultural landscape, women have traditionally served as the primary custodians of family values, rituals, and intergenerational ethics. Their contributions to cultural preservation—whether through caregiving, religious observances, dispute mediation, or emotional labour—have remained largely unrecognized in economic and policy terms. While state-led welfare schemes have historically focused on women's health, education, and nutrition, few initiatives acknowledge women's cultural labour as a form of social capital. In this context, the <i>Ladli Bahna Yojana</i>, launched by the Government of Madhya Pradesh in 2023, emerges as a unique intervention that financially empowers women while reinforcing their role as cultural anchors within families.</p> <p>Unlike purely economic schemes such as employment guarantees or microcredit loans, Ladli Bahna Yojana provides unconditional monthly financial support to eligible women regardless of their employment status. This structure allows women to exercise agency without compelling them to exit domestic roles, thereby aligning empowerment with cultural continuity rather than disruption. This study explores whether the scheme acts as a catalyst for redefining gender roles—not by replacing traditional responsibilities, but by economically validating them.</p> <p>Theoretical Framework</p> <p>This study draws upon four interrelated theoretical perspectives to interpret the socio-cultural impact of Ladli Bahna Yojana:</p>

	<p>Role Theory (Eagly, 1987)</p> <p>Role Theory posits that gender behaviours are governed by social expectations. In Indian households, women are expected to care, nurture, and maintain family cohesion. However, these roles are often emotionally laborious yet economically invisible. Through financial support, Ladli Bahna Yojana reassigns value to traditional roles, helping women transition from passive role-bearers to active role-negotiators within the household.</p> <p>Capability Approach (Amartya Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2000)</p> <p>The scheme enhances women's capabilities rather than merely their income. Financial freedom enables women to choose how they participate in cultural, educational, and social activities, thus expanding their real freedoms to achieve the lives they value. The key argument here is that empowerment is not only about earning, but about having control over resources.</p> <p>Feminist Care Ethics (Gilligan, 1982)</p> <p>Western feminist discourse often critiques caregiving as a source of female subordination. However, Care Ethics argues that caregiving is not weakness, but moral strength. Applying this perspective, the study positions Ladli Bahna Yojana as a state-led acknowledgment of caregiving as cultural leadership.</p> <p>Symbolic Interactionism (Mead; Blumer)</p> <p>Symbolic Interactionism helps explain how identity shifts occur through changes in interpersonal perception. When family members begin recognizing women as financial contributors, their symbolic status evolves from dependent to decision-maker, enhancing self-worth and respect.</p> <h3>3. Statement of the Problem</h3> <p>Despite progress in education and employment, Indian women remain economically dependent on male family members, especially in rural and semi-urban contexts. Household responsibilities such as childcare, ritual</p>
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	<p>organization, dispute mediation, and elderly care—though socially significant—are perceived as natural duties rather than skilled contributions.</p> <p>The core problem this study addresses is:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Can financial recognition of women's traditional roles serve as a mechanism for empowerment without dismantling cultural structures?</p> <p>Further sub-problems include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does Ladli Bahna Yojana increase women's decision-making power within households? ● Does financial autonomy elevate women's roles in cultural and religious practices? ● Can empowerment occur within traditional frameworks rather than through rebellion against them? ● Compare women status those who not getting benefits of this scheme.
4.	<p>Critical Review of Key Research Works for the Proposed Study <u>(Avoid listing bibliographic references)</u> (approx. 800 words)</p> <p>The intersection of financial independence and gender dynamics significantly influences women's roles in preserving family culture. While financial autonomy can empower women to actively participate in and even redefine cultural practices within the family, it also presents challenges that require careful consideration. Financial independence enables women to make decisions that can either reinforce or reshape cultural practices. Studies indicate that women who manage their finances independently are more likely to challenge traditional gender roles and assert their influence in cultural matters. For instance, research by Choudhary and Ray (2024) found that women in Mumbai who were financially independent exhibited greater decision-making power in household matters, including the preservation of cultural traditions.</p> <p>Moreover, financial independence allows women to invest in cultural education and community activities, thereby actively participating in the transmission of cultural heritage. This shift not only empowers women but also promotes a more inclusive approach to cultural preservation, where both men and women collaborate in sustaining family traditions. Financial autonomy</p>

	<p>enables women to negotiate the balance between upholding tradition and adapting practices to contemporary needs, reinforcing their agency as cultural custodians.</p> <p><i>Challenges and Gendered Constraints</i></p> <p>Despite the empowering potential of financial independence, women often encounter structural barriers that limit their agency in cultural preservation. Patriarchal norms and economic inequalities continue to influence women's roles within the family, even when they possess financial autonomy. For example, a study by Shohel (2021) highlighted that participation in microfinance programs has not significantly shifted gender norms or financially empowered women in certain contexts, suggesting that financial independence alone may not dismantle entrenched patriarchal structures.</p> <p>Additionally, while women may have the financial means to influence cultural practices, societal expectations often still place the responsibility for cultural transmission predominantly on them. This dual burden can lead to tensions between personal aspirations and familial obligations, complicating their role in preserving family culture. Women may experience pressure to maintain "moral authority" over the family while simultaneously pursuing personal economic or professional goals, creating a dynamic tension between empowerment and expectation.</p> <p><i>Intersectionality and Diverse Experiences</i></p> <p>The intersection of gender with other social categories such as class, ethnicity, and migration status further complicates women's roles in cultural preservation. Research by the European Institute for Gender Equality (2024) found that migrant women and women with disabilities face unique challenges in achieving financial independence, which in turn affects their capacity to participate in cultural preservation activities. In India, for instance, a study on Gen Z's spending habits revealed that while financial independence is increasingly valued, traditional practices like investing in gold remain prevalent among young women. This blend of modern financial behavior with traditional cultural practices underscores the complex interplay between financial autonomy and cultural identity.</p>
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	<p><i>Global Perspectives on Women's Cultural Leadership</i></p> <p>Internationally, women are leading efforts to preserve and adapt cultural practices in the face of globalization and environmental challenges. Indigenous women, in particular, are at the forefront of defending cultural heritage through economic initiatives. For example, in Guatemala, María Cahuec advocates for food sovereignty and land ownership rights while leading organic farming and textile cooperatives, demonstrating how financial independence can be harnessed to sustain cultural traditions (The Guardian, 2025).</p> <p>Scholarly literature consistently identifies women as “cultural custodians.” Schneider and Müller (2023), in their study <i>Are Women the “Keepers of the Culture”?</i>, examine gender-specific transmission of mainstream and ethnic identities in European families. They found that women, particularly mothers, serve as mediators between traditional and modern values, often managing the tension between cultural preservation and adaptation. Their findings echo earlier feminist analyses, such as Chodorow (1978), who argued that women’s socialization patterns reproduce gendered divisions of labor within family and culture, emphasizing emotional and caregiving roles as central to femininity. Schneider and Müller’s research introduces a nuanced view, suggesting that women’s engagement in cultural reproduction can also become a site of agency—where they selectively reinterpret traditions to fit contemporary gender ideals.</p> <p>In India, the gendered dimension of cultural preservation has been explored within the context of family, caste, and state policy. The <i>Ladli Bahna Yojana</i> (2023) launched in Madhya Pradesh exemplifies how government programs can influence gender roles by financially empowering women while reinforcing their familial responsibilities. According to Verma and Singh (2024), this scheme positions women not merely as economic beneficiaries but as moral anchors of family stability and culture. The policy rhetoric emphasizes women’s nurturing capacities and moral responsibility for family welfare, reflecting deep-seated patriarchal assumptions. Yet, qualitative fieldwork reveals that many women use such programs to gain autonomy in household decision-making, subtly renegotiating gender power structures. While the initiative may appear to reinforce traditional gender roles, it</p>
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	<p>simultaneously creates pathways for empowerment and cultural reinterpretation.</p> <p>Diaspora studies further illuminate how women sustain cultural identity in transnational contexts. Espiritu (2001) and Anthias (2013) argue that migrant women function as cultural mediators who negotiate dual expectations—retaining ethnic traditions while adapting to host cultures. They actively transmit language, rituals, and moral values, ensuring the survival of community identity abroad. However, this cultural labor often remains invisible and undervalued. Bhatia and Ram (2020) highlight that such expectations may burden women with preserving a “pure” version of culture, even as men engage more freely with global modernity. This imbalance underscores persistent patriarchal norms that link women’s worth to moral and cultural reproduction rather than personal development or public achievement.</p> <p>Recent gender studies question the essentialization of women as natural cultural preservers. Mahapatra (2022) critiques this romanticized narrative, arguing that assigning women the responsibility for upholding “family culture” can limit their participation in economic and political life. Similarly, Narayan (1997) warns against the “cultural essentialism” that traps women in traditional roles under the guise of respect for cultural heritage. These critiques invite a rethinking of how cultural continuity can coexist with gender equality, highlighting the need for shared responsibility in cultural preservation</p>
5.	<p>Identification of Research Gaps <u>(Clearly identify the gaps in the existing research literature, unexplored areas, and explain how your proposed study addresses these gaps)</u> (approx. 500 words)</p>

	<p>independence and cultural preservation separately, leaving a gap in understanding how one reinforces the other.</p> <p>Firstly, the relationship between financial independence and women's authority in cultural preservation is underexplored. Studies such as Choudhary and Ray (2024) indicate that economically empowered women in urban India exhibit greater household decision-making power, but there is a lack of systematic research examining whether this autonomy translates to enhanced influence over cultural practices, rituals, or intergenerational transmission of values. The mechanisms through which financial resources impact cultural agency remain poorly understood.</p> <p>Secondly, there is a scarcity of longitudinal and intergenerational research. Most studies adopt cross-sectional designs, capturing a snapshot of women's empowerment without tracing how financial independence affects cultural roles over time or across generations. Intergenerational dynamics, such as how empowered mothers influence daughters' and sons' engagement with family traditions, remain largely unexamined. Long-term studies could reveal whether financial autonomy results in sustained changes in gendered authority or whether traditional cultural expectations persist despite economic empowerment.</p> <p>Thirdly, there is limited research in diverse sociocultural contexts. Much of the literature focuses on urban or Western populations, with insufficient attention to rural areas, marginalized communities, or ethnic minorities. Programs like <i>Ladli Bahna Yojana</i> (Verma & Singh, 2024) provide context-specific insights into empowerment, yet comparative studies across different regions, classes, or cultural groups are rare. Furthermore, the experience of diaspora women in preserving culture while exercising financial independence has been explored (Espiritu, 2001; Anthias, 2013), but broader comparative frameworks are missing.</p> <p>Another gap lies in understanding the gendered distribution of cultural labor. Research identifies women as primary custodians of family culture (Bhatia & Ram, 2020), yet it rarely investigates whether financial independence redistributes cultural responsibilities or whether the burden remains largely on women. Similarly, while financial autonomy is often equated with empowerment, few studies operationalize or measure women's authority in family</p>
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	<p>decision-making or cultural preservation systematically. Standardized tools for assessing the interplay between economic power and cultural agency are needed.</p> <p>Finally, intersectional and structural factors require more attention. Social categories such as caste, disability, and migration status intersect with gender to influence women's ability to exercise authority within the family (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2024). Structural barriers—including patriarchal norms, societal expectations, and policy limitations—remain underexplored, particularly regarding how they mediate the relationship between financial independence and cultural leadership.</p> <p>In conclusion, although existing research recognizes women's pivotal role in cultural preservation and the potential of financial independence to enhance authority, critical gaps remain. Future studies should integrate economic and cultural dimensions, adopt longitudinal designs, include diverse sociocultural contexts, and develop systematic measures of authority and cultural agency. Addressing these gaps will enable a more comprehensive understanding of how financial independence shapes women's ability to preserve and influence family culture while promoting gender equity.</p>
6.	<p>Uniqueness and Originality of the Study (approx. 300 words)</p> <p>The proposed study on <i>Ladli Bahna Yojana</i> as a catalyst for strengthening gender roles and enhancing women's contribution to preserving family culture presents several dimensions of originality that distinguish it from existing research. While previous studies have explored women's roles as cultural custodians (Schneider & Müller, 2023; Chodorow, 1978) and examined the effects of financial empowerment programs on household decision-making (Choudhary & Ray, 2024; Shohel, 2021), few have systematically investigated the intersection of state-led financial initiatives with women's cultural responsibilities. This research uniquely integrates economic empowerment, policy intervention, and cultural preservation to offer a holistic understanding of women's agency within both financial and familial spheres.</p> <p>Unlike conventional analyses of microfinance or welfare schemes, this study conceptualizes <i>Ladli Bahna Yojana</i> not solely as an economic intervention but as a socio-cultural mechanism that both reinforces and reshapes gender roles</p>

	<p>within families. By examining the program's dual impact—enhancing women's financial independence while positioning them as active custodians of family culture—the study explores how empowerment initiatives can simultaneously challenge and sustain traditional norms.</p> <p>Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative approach to capture women's lived experiences, agency, and negotiation of cultural expectations—dimensions often overlooked in prior quantitative evaluations of empowerment programs. It situates the analysis within the Indian socio-cultural context, considering variations across caste, region, and family structure, and investigates how women leverage financial autonomy to assert authority in cultural and household decision-making.</p> <p>The study also contributes to theoretical discourse on gender dynamics by bridging policy studies, feminist theory, and cultural sociology. By linking government interventions with tangible outcomes in family culture preservation, it highlights how targeted programs can act as catalysts for both women's empowerment and the continuity of cultural heritage. This integrative perspective not only advances scholarly understanding but also provides a practical framework for designing gender-sensitive policies and culturally informed development initiatives.</p>
7.	<p>Objectives of the Proposed Study (approx. 300 words)</p> <p><u>(List main and specific objectives of the research)</u></p> <p>The proposed study aims to examine the role of <i>Ladli Bahna Yojana</i> as a catalyst for strengthening gender roles and enhancing women's contribution to preserving family culture, with a focus on the intersection of financial independence, psychological empowerment, and familial authority. The research seeks to understand how state-led financial interventions influence gender dynamics, women's agency, psychological well-being, and the transmission of cultural values within the family. By exploring both socio-cultural and psychological dimensions, the study aspires to provide a holistic understanding of women's empowerment in the Indian socio-cultural context.</p> <p>Main Objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To explore the impact of <i>Ladli Bahna Yojana</i> on strengthening gender roles and enhancing women's

	<p>participation in the preservation and transmission of family culture in the Indian socio-cultural context.</p> <p>Specific Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To examine the relationship between financial independence and women's psychological well-being, including self-esteem, self-efficacy, and life satisfaction • To explore how participation in <i>Ladli Bahna Yojana</i> influences women's sense of personal agency, confidence, and perceived control over life decisions. • To assess the impact of the scheme on women's gender identity, self-concept, and perceived social status within the family and community. • To analyze the role of psychological empowerment as a mediating factor between financial autonomy and cultural participation. • To investigate whether increased economic stability reduces psychological stress, dependence, and feelings of marginalization among women beneficiaries. • To understand the emotional and motivational changes experienced by women as they transition from dependency to economic contributors within the household. • To provide policy-relevant insights on designing gender-sensitive programs that simultaneously promote women's empowerment and the continuity of family cultural heritage. • To compare the roles, decision-making authority, and contribution to family culture of women receiving the scheme with those not receiving it, highlighting the differences in empowerment and cultural custodianship. <p>By achieving these objectives, the study will bridge gaps in existing literature on women's financial autonomy and cultural custodianship, offering a comprehensive understanding of how targeted government programs can facilitate both empowerment and cultural sustainability. The findings are expected to inform academic discourse on gender dynamics and contribute to evidence-based policy-making</p>
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		aimed at enhancing women's agency within families and communities.
8.	Research Questions /Hypotheses (if Applicable) (approx. 300–400 words)	<p>The proposed study aims to investigate how <i>Ladli Bahna Yojana</i> functions as a catalyst for strengthening gender roles and enhancing women's contributions to preserving family culture. The research questions are designed to explore the intersection of financial independence, household authority, and cultural custodianship, with a comparative focus on women participating in the scheme and those who are not.</p> <p>Primary Research Question</p> <p>How does <i>Ladli Bahna Yojana</i> function as a catalyst for strengthening gender roles and enhancing women's contribution to preserving and transmitting family culture through financial independence and psychological empowerment?</p> <p>Secondary Research Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does financial independence gained through <i>Ladli Bahna Yojana</i> influence women's psychological well-being, particularly in terms of self-esteem, self-efficacy, and life satisfaction? • • In what ways does participation in the scheme affect women's sense of personal agency, confidence, and perceived control over household and life decisions? • • How does the scheme shape women's gender identity, self-concept, and perceived social status within their families and communities? • • To what extent does psychological empowerment mediate the relationship between financial autonomy and women's participation in cultural and familial activities? • Does increased economic stability among beneficiaries lead to a reduction in psychological stress, dependence, and feelings of marginalization compared to non-beneficiaries?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What emotional and motivational changes are experienced by women as they transition from economic dependency to becoming active financial contributors within the household? • How do women beneficiaries of <i>Ladli Bahna Yojana</i> differ from non-beneficiaries in terms of decision-making authority, financial independence, and their role in the preservation of family culture? • What socio-cultural factors—such as caste, education, regional variations, and family structure— influence the relationship between financial empowerment and women’s authority in cultural and familial matters? • In what ways does <i>Ladli Bahna Yojana</i> act not only as an economic empowerment initiative but also as a socio-cultural mechanism that redefines traditional gender norms within households? • What policy-relevant insights can be drawn from understanding the interaction between financial autonomy, psychological well-being, and cultural custodianship for designing gender-sensitive development programs? <p>These research questions collectively aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which government interventions like <i>Ladli Bahna Yojana</i> influence women’s agency in financial, cultural, and familial domains. By addressing both participants and non-participants, the study seeks to identify measurable differences in empowerment, authority, and cultural engagement, thereby filling a significant gap in existing research on gender dynamics and the preservation of family culture in India.</p>	
9.	Proposed Methodology, Sampling Design, and Research Design (approx. 1000 words)	The study seeks to examine the impact of <i>Ladli Bahna Yojana</i> on strengthening gender roles and enhancing women’s contributions to preserving family culture. The research focuses on understanding how financial independence influences women’s authority within households, particularly regarding cultural transmission and decision-making. To achieve these objectives, the study employs a qualitative research methodology, supported by comparative elements to

	<p>analyze the differences between women participating in the scheme and those who are not.</p> <p>2. Research Design</p> <p>A qualitative research design is most appropriate for this study as it allows for an in-depth exploration of women's lived experiences, perceptions, and strategies in negotiating cultural and familial roles. Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative approaches capture the nuanced ways in which financial independence and cultural custodianship intersect, revealing insights that numerical data alone may not uncover.</p> <p>The study will adopt an exploratory and descriptive design. The exploratory component aims to identify patterns and relationships between financial empowerment, household authority, and cultural preservation, while the descriptive component provides detailed accounts of women's experiences, capturing the richness of socio-cultural contexts. Additionally, a comparative dimension is included to examine differences between women benefiting from the scheme and those who are not, highlighting the role of government intervention in shaping gender dynamics and cultural responsibilities.</p> <p>3. Methodology</p> <p>The study follows a qualitative, interpretive approach, guided by the principles of phenomenology and case study research. Phenomenology enables the researcher to understand women's subjective experiences of empowerment, authority, and cultural responsibility. Case study methods provide a context-specific understanding of how <i>Ladli Bahna Yojana</i> operates in selected communities, including its socio-economic and cultural implications.</p> <p>Data Collection Methods:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <p>Semi-structured Interviews:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. 1.
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	<p>In-depth interviews will be conducted with women beneficiaries of the scheme to explore their experiences of financial independence, decision-making authority, and role in cultural preservation.</p> <p>2. 3.</p> <p>Interviews with non-beneficiaries will provide comparative perspectives.</p> <p>4. 5.</p> <p>Interviews with local community leaders, scheme administrators, and family members will supplement individual accounts and provide contextual insights.</p> <p>6. 3.</p> <p>Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):</p> <p>4.</p> <p>1.</p> <p>FGDs will be conducted with groups of women participants to encourage discussion on shared experiences, challenges, and strategies for negotiating cultural expectations.</p> <p>2. 3.</p> <p>Separate FGDs with non-participants will allow comparative analysis of differences in authority, empowerment, and cultural engagement.</p> <p>4. 5.</p>
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	<p>Document Analysis:</p> <p>6.</p> <p>1.</p> <p>Policy documents, scheme guidelines, and program reports will be analyzed to understand the objectives, implementation strategies, and intended outcomes of <i>Ladli Bahna Yojana</i>.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p> <p>Local records of cultural events, family practices, and community initiatives will provide evidence of women's engagement in cultural preservation.</p> <p>4.</p> <p>4. Sampling Design</p> <p>The study will use purposive and snowball sampling to select participants who can provide rich and relevant information about the research problem.</p> <p>Purposive Sampling:</p> <p>Women beneficiaries of <i>Ladli Bahna Yojana</i> will be selected based on criteria such as age, duration of participation in the scheme, socio-economic status, and family structure.</p> <p>Non-beneficiaries will be selected from the same communities to ensure comparability in socio-cultural and economic contexts.</p> <p>Snowball Sampling:</p> <p>Initial participants will help identify additional women with similar experiences, particularly in communities where the scheme has limited outreach. This approach is especially useful in reaching women who may be less visible or</p>
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		<p>hesitant to participate in formal research settings.</p> <p>Sample Size: Given the qualitative nature of the study, the focus is on depth rather than breadth. It is proposed to include</p> <p>30–40 women beneficiaries of the scheme across multiple districts.</p> <p>20–25 non-beneficiary women from comparable socio-economic backgrounds.</p> <p>10–15 key informants including community leaders, local administrators, and family members.</p> <p>This sample size allows for saturation of themes while maintaining manageability for detailed qualitative analysis.</p>
10.	Innovation/path-breaking aspects of the Proposed Research (500 words)	<p>The proposed research on Ladli Bahna Yojana offers several innovative and path-breaking dimensions that set it apart from existing studies on gender dynamics, women's empowerment, and cultural preservation. While previous research has largely examined women as cultural custodians (Schneider & Müller, 2023; Chodorow, 1978) or analyzed financial empowerment programs independently (Choudhary & Ray, 2024; Shohel, 2021), few studies integrate these two domains to examine how state-led financial initiatives influence women's authority in both household and cultural spheres.</p> <p>1. Integrative Approach Linking Financial Independence and Cultural Custodianship</p> <p>A key innovation of this study is its holistic framework that combines economic empowerment, policy interventions, and cultural preservation. Unlike prior research that treats financial independence as a separate economic outcome, this study explores how financial autonomy enables women to exercise authority in household decision-making while actively participating in the preservation and transmission of family culture. By bridging these dimensions, the research addresses a critical gap in understanding the dual role of</p>

	<p>financial empowerment in reinforcing and reshaping gender norms.</p> <p>2. Comparative Analysis of Beneficiaries and Non-Beneficiaries</p> <p>Another path-breaking aspect is the inclusion of a comparative dimension, examining differences between women who participate in Ladli Bahna Yojana and those who do not. This comparative framework allows the research to isolate the scheme's impact on women's empowerment, decision-making authority, and cultural custodianship. By highlighting contrasts in agency, autonomy, and cultural engagement, the study generates evidence of the specific contributions of policy interventions, an approach largely absent in previous evaluations of women's empowerment programs.</p> <p>3. Context-Specific Exploration of Gender Dynamics</p> <p>The study situates itself within the socio-cultural diversity of Madhya Pradesh, considering caste, regional, and familial variations. This context-sensitive approach recognizes that financial empowerment and cultural authority do not operate in isolation but are mediated by structural and social factors. By accounting for these variations, the study provides nuanced insights that can inform locally tailored, culturally sensitive policy interventions.</p> <p>4. Qualitative, Lived-Experience Focus</p> <p>The methodological innovation lies in the qualitative, interpretive approach, which emphasizes semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. Unlike prior quantitative studies that focus on measurable economic outcomes, this study captures women's lived experiences, perceptions, and strategies in negotiating cultural expectations while exercising household authority. This human-centered approach enables a deeper understanding of empowerment as a lived, multi-dimensional process.</p> <p>5. Contribution to Policy and Theory</p> <p>The research contributes to both theoretical and practical discourses. Theoretically, it bridges feminist theory, cultural sociology, and policy studies, offering a fresh perspective on the interplay between financial independence and cultural custodianship. Practically, the findings provide evidence-</p>
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		<p>based guidance for designing gender-sensitive development programs that simultaneously enhance women's economic autonomy and support the continuity of family culture.</p> <p>6. Reframing Women's Agency in Cultural Preservation</p> <p>Finally, the study challenges the traditional view of women as passive transmitters of culture. By examining how financial independence enables women to actively negotiate, reinterpret, and even reshape cultural norms, the research positions women as dynamic agents of both empowerment and cultural sustainability. This perspective shifts the narrative from one of duty-bound custodianship to proactive, empowered engagement with family culture.</p>
11.	Expected Contribution of the Research Project to the Knowledge Repository (approx. 500 words)	<p>The proposed study on <i>Ladli Bahna Yojana</i> as a catalyst for strengthening gender roles and enhancing women's contribution to preserving family culture is expected to make substantial contributions to academic knowledge, policy discourse, and development practices. While prior research has explored women's roles as cultural custodians (Schneider & Müller, 2023; Chodorow, 1978) and examined the impact of financial empowerment programs (Choudhary & Ray, 2024; Shohel, 2021), few studies have systematically integrated these dimensions to understand the intersection of economic autonomy, household authority, and cultural preservation. This research fills that gap and expands the knowledge repository in multiple ways.</p> <p>1. Advancing Understanding of Gender Dynamics in Cultural Preservation</p> <p>The study contributes to scholarly understanding of gendered family dynamics by examining how women exercise authority in cultural and household decision-making. By analyzing how financial independence influences women's ability to preserve and transmit cultural traditions, rituals, and values, the research provides a nuanced perspective on women's agency beyond conventional caregiving or moral roles. This adds depth to existing feminist and sociological literature on</p>

	<p>women as cultural custodians, highlighting the complex interplay between empowerment and cultural responsibility.</p> <p>2. Linking Financial Autonomy with Cultural Custodianship</p> <p>A unique contribution of this research is its focus on the intersection of financial independence and cultural preservation. While financial empowerment is often studied in isolation, this project demonstrates how economic resources can enhance women's authority within families and facilitate the active negotiation of cultural practices. This linkage advances theoretical discourse in gender studies, illustrating that financial autonomy is not only an economic phenomenon but also a socio-cultural tool for agency and negotiation of traditional norms.</p> <p>3. Comparative Insights Between Beneficiaries and Non-Beneficiaries</p> <p>By comparing women who participate in <i>Ladli Bahna Yojana</i> with those who do not, the study provides evidence on the differential impacts of state-led financial interventions. This comparative perspective highlights how targeted policies can reshape gender roles, decision-making patterns, and cultural responsibilities. Such insights are valuable for both academia and policymakers, as they offer empirical support for designing interventions that promote gender equality while respecting cultural continuity.</p> <p>4. Context-Specific and Policy-Relevant Contributions</p> <p>The research situates its analysis within the socio-cultural context of Madhya Pradesh, considering caste, regional, and familial variations. This localized approach ensures that findings are contextually grounded and relevant for policy formulation. Insights from this study can inform the design of gender-sensitive and culturally informed development programs that empower women while sustaining family and community traditions.</p> <p>5. Methodological Contributions</p> <p>Methodologically, the study contributes to qualitative research in development studies by combining semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. The focus on women's lived experiences provides a human-</p>
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	<p>centered understanding of empowerment and cultural engagement, offering a model for future research on policy impacts and gendered socio-cultural dynamics.</p> <p>6. Bridging Theory and Practice</p> <p>Finally, the study contributes to both theory and practice by bridging feminist theory, cultural sociology, and policy studies. It challenges conventional narratives of women as passive cultural transmitters, presenting them instead as active agents who negotiate, reinterpret, and shape cultural practices while exercising economic and household authority. This theoretical advancement has practical implications for designing interventions that simultaneously promote empowerment, gender equity, and cultural sustainability.</p> <p>In summary, the research enriches the knowledge repository by providing a multi-dimensional understanding of how financial empowerment programs like <i>Ladli Bahna Yojana</i> influence gender dynamics, family culture, and women's agency. It generates empirical evidence, offers theoretical insights, and informs policy design, thereby contributing to scholarship, development practice, and the broader discourse on gender and culture in India.</p>
12.	<p>Expected Output (400 words)</p> <p>The proposed study on Ladli Bahna Yojana is anticipated to generate several tangible and intangible outputs that contribute to academic research, policy-making, and community development. By examining the intersection of financial independence, gender dynamics, and cultural preservation, the study offers a comprehensive understanding of how state-led empowerment programs influence women's roles within households and society.</p> <p>1. Empirical Insights on Women's Financial Autonomy and Household Authority</p> <p>The research will provide detailed empirical evidence on how participation in Ladli Bahna Yojana enhances women's decision-making authority within households. It will document the ways in which financial independence enables women to assert influence over family matters, particularly those related to cultural practices, rituals, and intergenerational transmission of values. Comparative data</p>

	<p>between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries will highlight the differential impacts of the scheme, offering a clearer understanding of policy effectiveness.</p> <p>2. Understanding Women as Cultural Custodians in a Modern Context</p> <p>The study is expected to produce insights into how women negotiate traditional cultural expectations while exercising economic autonomy. It will illustrate the strategies women use to preserve, reinterpret, or adapt family traditions in contemporary socio-economic settings. These findings will advance theoretical discussions on women as cultural custodians and provide a nuanced view that challenges the conventional perception of women as passive transmitters of culture.</p> <p>3. Policy-Relevant Recommendations</p> <p>By identifying the mechanisms through which financial empowerment interacts with cultural responsibilities, the research will offer actionable recommendations for policy and program design. These recommendations can inform government agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders in creating gender-sensitive development programs that promote both women's economic autonomy and cultural sustainability.</p> <p>4. Methodological Contribution</p> <p>The qualitative, context-specific research methodology—combining semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis—will serve as a model for future studies on the impact of social welfare schemes. The emphasis on lived experiences ensures that findings are grounded in the realities of women's daily lives, contributing to methodological advancements in social research.</p> <p>5. Academic Outputs</p> <p>The study is expected to produce scholarly publications, including journal articles, conference presentations, and a comprehensive research report. These outputs will enrich the literature on gender studies, development policy, and cultural sociology, providing a reference for future researchers</p>
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		<p>exploring similar intersections of financial empowerment and cultural custodianship.</p> <p>6. Societal Awareness and Community Engagement</p> <p>Finally, the research will enhance awareness among communities and policymakers about the role of financial empowerment in promoting women's agency and preserving cultural heritage. It will highlight the importance of integrating socio-cultural perspectives into economic development initiatives, fostering inclusive and sustainable community development.</p> <p>In summary, the expected outputs of the study span empirical evidence, theoretical advancement, policy guidance, methodological innovation, and societal engagement, making a significant contribution to the understanding of women's empowerment and cultural preservation in contemporary India.</p>
13.	Relevance of the proposed study for policy making (approx. 500 words)	<p>The proposed study on Ladli Bahna Yojana holds significant relevance for policy-making in India, particularly in areas related to gender equality, women's empowerment, and cultural preservation. While government initiatives have increasingly aimed at promoting financial autonomy for women, there remains a lack of in-depth understanding regarding the socio-cultural impact of such programs on family dynamics, gender roles, and cultural transmission. By exploring the intersection of financial independence and women's contribution to family culture, this research provides insights that are directly applicable to designing more effective and inclusive policies.</p> <p>1. Informing Gender-Sensitive Policy Design</p> <p>The study's findings will offer empirical evidence on how financial empowerment through schemes like Ladli Bahna Yojana affects women's decision-making authority within households. Policymakers can use this knowledge to design programs that not only provide economic benefits but also enhance women's social and cultural agency. By highlighting the ways in which financial autonomy allows women to actively participate in cultural and household decisions, the research supports the development of policies that address</p>

	<p>both economic and socio-cultural dimensions of empowerment.</p> <p>2. Enhancing Program Effectiveness and Targeting</p> <p>Comparative analysis between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries will provide policymakers with a clearer understanding of the differential impacts of financial interventions. This can guide improvements in program targeting, ensuring that benefits reach women who are most in need of economic and social empowerment. Insights on socio-cultural factors—such as caste, regional diversity, and family structures—will enable the adaptation of programs to local contexts, increasing their effectiveness and acceptability.</p> <p>3. Supporting Cultural Preservation through Policy</p> <p>The research emphasizes the role of women as cultural custodians within families. By documenting how financial independence influences women's capacity to preserve, transmit, and adapt cultural traditions, the study informs policy decisions that balance modernization and cultural continuity. Policymakers can integrate cultural objectives into economic empowerment programs, ensuring that development initiatives promote holistic well-being rather than focusing solely on financial metrics.</p> <p>4. Guiding Multi-Dimensional Development Programs</p> <p>The study's findings can inform the design of integrated development programs that combine economic, educational, and socio-cultural interventions. For instance, pairing financial schemes with awareness programs on gender equality and cultural heritage can create synergistic outcomes, empowering women while preserving family and community traditions. This multi-dimensional approach addresses the complex realities of women's lives, providing actionable insights for policymakers.</p> <p>5. Evidence-Based Policy Recommendations</p> <p>By generating qualitative, context-specific data, the research provides evidence-based recommendations for policy refinement and new program development. Policymakers can use these findings to identify barriers that limit women's agency despite financial empowerment, such as persistent</p>
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		<p>patriarchal norms, and design interventions that effectively address these challenges.</p> <p>In conclusion, the proposed study is highly relevant for policy-making as it bridges the gap between economic empowerment and cultural custodianship, providing actionable insights for gender-sensitive, culturally informed, and contextually grounded development initiatives. It equips policymakers with knowledge to create programs that enhance women's authority, promote equality, and sustain cultural heritage within Indian families.</p>															
14.	Total Grant Amount expected for this study	<p>Amount (in figures): _____ (in ₹)</p> <p>Amount (in words): _____</p>															
15.	Head-wise Justification for the Expected Grant (approx. 400 words) (Manpower, travel, fieldwork, equipment, contingency, etc.)																
16.	Milestones set for	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;"> Timeline </td> <td style="padding: 2px;"> Milestones / Activities </td> <td style="padding: 2px;"> Deliverables </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;"> ----- </td> <td style="padding: 2px;"> ----- </td> <td style="padding: 2px;"> ----- </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;"> 6 months </td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;"> 12 months </td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;"> 24 months </td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Timeline	Milestones / Activities	Deliverables	-----	-----	-----	6 months			12 months			24 months		
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