

Final Review Report

The Impact of the Waqf Act, 1995 (as amended in 2025) on the Empowerment of Muslim Women: A Comparative Study of Punjab and Haryana

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Overall Assessment

[Regenerate Review](#)

65.1% (45.6 / 70)



Sections

7

Strengths

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Executive Summary

This proposal addresses a research question of exceptional timeliness and high policy relevance, aligning perfectly with the funding agency's mandate. The conceptual framework, outlined in a compelling Abstract and Introduction, proposes a robust comparative study of the gendered impact of a significant legal reform. The project's potential to generate valuable, actionable insights for policymakers and civil society is undeniable. However, this high potential is critically undermined by severe and foundational weaknesses in the proposal's operational sections. The literature review is profoundly inadequate, failing to establish the scholarly context or justify the research design. The methodology contains a fundamental contradiction in its sampling strategy that invalidates its quantitative claims, and the budget is illogical, incomplete, and raises significant concerns about the applicant's capacity for effective project management.

While the research idea is strong, the proposal in its current form demonstrates a critical disconnect between a well-conceived concept and a feasible, rigorous, and verifiable

research plan. The weaknesses are not superficial; they penetrate the core academic and administrative foundations of the project. Consequently, the proposal is not recommended for funding in its present state and would require a comprehensive and substantial revision to be reconsidered.

Major Strengths

- ✓ Highly Relevant and Timely Research Problem
- ✓ Strong Comparative Framework
- ✓ Clear and Logical Structure of Objectives
- ✓ High Potential for Real-World Impact

Major Weaknesses

- ✗ Critically Deficient Literature Review
- ✗ Fundamentally Flawed Sampling Methodology
- ✗ Unsound and Poorly Justified Budget
- ✗ Lack of Operational Specificity and Measurability
- ✗ Severe Inconsistency Across Sections

Cross-Sectional Recommendations

- {"recommendation":"Recommendation 1: Overhaul the Literature Review to Provide a Scholarly Foundation.,"actionable_steps":"The literature review must be completely rewritten to critically synthesize existing scholarship, not merely list legal texts. It must explicitly address three domains: 1) Theoretical and empirical studies on Muslim women's empowerment in India; 2) The socio-legal and administrative context of Waqf boards in Punjab and Haryana; 3) Methodological precedents in similar socio-legal impact evaluations. A strong review will properly establish the research gap mentioned in the Introduction and provide the justification for the specific variables and questions proposed in the Methodology."}
- {"recommendation":"Recommendation 2: Reconcile the Sampling Strategy with the Research Objectives.,"actionable_steps":"The PI must resolve the central contradiction in the Methodology. The PI should either: a) Design a true probability sampling plan, detailing the sampling frame and randomization process, to support claims of generalizability. Or, b) Explicitly adopt a non-probability, purposive sampling design for an in-depth qualitative study. If choosing option (b), the Objectives and Expected Outcomes must be rewritten to reflect an exploratory, rather than a representative, goal (e.g., change 'measure the impact' to 'explore perceptions of impact among selected beneficiaries')."}}

- {"recommendation":"Recommendation 3: Rebuild the Budget to Reflect a Viable and Well-Managed Project.","actionable_steps":"The budget requires a complete, zero-based reconstruction. Every line item must be justified with a clear calculation linked directly to the activities described in the Methodology. For example: 'Travel: 20 field days x 2 states for PI and RA for 120 interviews. Estimated cost per day (travel + accommodation) = ₹X. Total = Y.' Crucially, the budget must include omitted costs like transcription (e.g., '100 hours of interviews @ ₹Z/hour') and institutional overheads as per funding agency norms. The dissemination budget must be increased and itemized to align with the policy workshop mentioned in the Expected Outcomes."}
- {"recommendation":"Recommendation 4: Operationalize All Key Concepts for Rigorous Measurement.","actionable_steps":"A new subsection, 'Operationalization of Key Concepts,' must be added to the Methodology. In this section, the abstract concept of 'empowerment' must be broken down into concrete, measurable indicators (e.g., Economic: change in personal savings; Social: self-reported confidence in community meetings; Legal: knowledge of specific provisions of the Act). These precise indicators must then be woven back into the specific Objectives and the survey/interview instruments to ensure the research is verifiable and rigorous. For example, Objective 3 should be rephrased from 'To analyze the socio-economic outcomes' to 'To measure changes in income, asset ownership, and educational expenditure for children among beneficiaries.'"
- {"recommendation":"Recommendation 5: Develop a Concrete Dissemination and Impact Strategy.","actionable_steps":"The vague list in 'Expected Outcomes' should be replaced with a detailed Dissemination and Impact Plan. This plan should identify specific target audiences (e.g., Punjab Waqf Board, Haryana Waqf Board, women's NGOs), outline the tailored outputs for each (e.g., a 2-page policy brief for government officials, a community-friendly report in local languages), and provide a timeline for these activities. This will not only strengthen the impact case but also provide a clear justification for a more realistic and detailed dissemination budget."}

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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	9.4/10	★★★★☆	v1
Introduction	9.2/10	★★★★☆	v1
Objectives	8.0/10	★★★★☆	v1
Literature Review	3.0/10	★☆☆☆☆	v1
Methodology	6.0/10	★★★☆☆	v1
Budget Justification	4.0/10	★★☆☆☆	v1
Expected Outcomes	6.0/10	★★★☆☆	v1
Overall	45.6/70	★★★☆☆	65.1%

Abstract

Score: 9.4/10

Section Content

Version 1

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Summary

This is a compelling and well-conceived abstract for a study of significant policy relevance. The proposal identifies a clear and critical research problem—the gap between the legal intent of the (hypothetical) 2025 Waqf Act amendment and its practical impact on Muslim women's empowerment. The proposed mixed-methods, comparative design is robust and appropriate for addressing the research questions. The project is exceptionally well-aligned with the ICSSR's mandate to support empirical research that informs social policy and contributes to understanding contemporary Indian society. The project's potential for impact is high, with clearly identified stakeholders and tangible expected outcomes. While the abstract is strong, the full proposal will need to provide greater detail on the operationalization of key concepts and the specific logic of the sampling strategy to fully substantiate the claims made here. Overall, this represents a high-priority candidate for funding, pending a detailed review of the full proposal.

Strengths

- **Clear and Timely Problem Statement:** The focus on the implementation gap of a recent, gender-focused legal reform is highly relevant and addresses a critical knowledge deficit.
- **Robust Methodological Design:** The integration of quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, and doctrinal analysis within a comparative framework is a significant strength, allowing for a nuanced and comprehensive investigation.
- **Strong Justification for Case Selection:** The choice of Punjab and Haryana is well-justified, providing a solid basis for a comparative analysis of how varying institutional and demographic contexts affect policy implementation.
- **High Potential for Impact:** The project clearly outlines its potential to generate evidence-based policy recommendations for key governmental and civil society stakeholders, ensuring the research has practical value.
- **Excellent Alignment with Funder Priorities:** The project directly addresses core ICSSR themes, including social justice, gender, minority welfare, and the evaluation of public policy, making it an ideal fit for the funding call.

Weaknesses

- **Ambiguity in Key Concepts:** The term 'empowerment' is used effectively but remains broad. The abstract does not specify the precise indicators that will be used to measure its components (e.g., 'leadership participation', 'socio-economic benefits'), which is crucial for assessing methodological rigor.
- **Insufficient Detail on Sampling Criteria:** While 'purposive selection' of districts is mentioned, the specific comparative logic is underdeveloped. It is unclear if the design compares high vs. low concentration of Waqf properties or some other variable, which is essential for the validity of the comparison.
- **Undefined Scope of Doctrinal Analysis:** The abstract mentions 'doctrinal legal analysis' but does not specify its components beyond the Act itself (e.g., analysis of case law, state-level rules, board resolutions), leaving a key part of the methodology partially undefined.

! Recommendations

- **Operationalize Key Variables:** In the full proposal, provide a clear operational definition of 'empowerment' and its constituent parts. For example, specify that 'leadership participation' will be measured through metrics like the number of women on boards, their speaking time in meetings (if observable/reportable), and their self-reported influence on key decisions. *Reason: This enhances methodological clarity and demonstrates to the review panel that the research design is precise and feasible.*
- **Refine and Justify the Comparative Logic:** Elaborate on the purposive sampling strategy. Clearly state the criteria for selecting the two districts in each state and how they enable a rigorous comparison (e.g., 'District A in Punjab (high Waqf asset value, low female literacy) will be compared with District B in Haryana (similar asset value, higher female literacy)'). *Reason: This strengthens the scientific validity of the comparative design, which is central to the project's claims of innovation.*
- **Detail the Scope of Legal Analysis:** Specify the sources for the doctrinal analysis. For instance, state: 'The doctrinal analysis will review (i) the text and legislative history of the 2025 Amendment, (ii) state-level rules framed by Punjab and Haryana, and (iii) relevant High Court and Supreme Court judgments pertaining to women's rights under Waqf law since 2025.' *Reason: This provides a more complete picture of the research activities and assures the panel of the comprehensive nature of the legal scholarship component.*

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Introduction

Score: 9.2/10

Section Content

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Summary

This is a compelling and exceptionally well-structured introduction to a timely and significant research project. The proposal clearly articulates a critical research problem at the intersection of law, gender, and institutional reform in India, aligning perfectly with the ICSSR's mandate for policy-relevant social science research. The applicant demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the subject by grounding the study in a robust comparative framework and a well-integrated theoretical lens. The justification for the research is strong, identifying a clear gap between the progressive legal intent of the hypothetical 2025 Waqf amendment and its on-ground implementation. While the overall quality is very high, the proposal could be marginally strengthened by providing more specific evidentiary support for the preliminary claims made in the problem statement and by offering a more precise operational definition of 'empowerment' at this early stage. Nevertheless, the project is logically conceived, methodologically sound, and promises to generate valuable insights for both academia and policymaking. It is highly recommended for funding consideration.

Strengths

- **Clear and Specific Problem Statement:** The proposal excels at defining the core problem—the gap between the legal provisions of the 2025 amendment and the tangible empowerment of Muslim women. It is effectively broken down into five distinct, researchable sub-problems.
- **Strong Justification for Comparative Design:** The selection of Punjab and Haryana is well-justified based on their contrasting demographic, socio-economic, and institutional contexts. This comparative approach significantly enhances the potential for generating nuanced and generalizable findings.
- **Robust and Integrated Theoretical Framework:** The use of Feminist Legal Theory, Social Justice Theory, and Institutional Governance Theory is highly appropriate. The applicant skillfully explains how these theories will be synthesized to provide a multi-dimensional analysis, moving beyond simple doctrinal or empirical assessment.
- **High Policy Relevance:** The research directly addresses issues of gender justice, minority welfare, and governance effectiveness, making its potential findings highly relevant for State Waqf Boards, the Central Waqf Council, and ministries involved in social justice and minority affairs.
- **Excellent Structure and Clarity:** The introduction is logically structured, moving from the


broad context of the law to the specific research gap, theoretical underpinnings, and scope. The language is precise, academic, and persuasive.

Weaknesses

- **Lack of Specific Citations for Problem Claims:** The 'Statement of the Problem' makes several assertions (e.g., "early evidence shows," "beneficiary lists are often urban-centric") that, while plausible, are not substantiated with specific preliminary data, pilot studies, or even media/NGO reports. This slightly weakens the evidentiary foundation of the problem.
- **Ambiguity in the Definition of 'Empowerment':** While linked to concepts like decision-making and financial independence, the central concept of 'empowerment' is not explicitly operationalized. A clearer definition would strengthen the conceptual rigor from the outset.
- **Vague Phrasing on Methodological Detail:** The term 'Doctrinal analysis' is used but not fully elaborated. It is unclear if this is limited to a textual reading of the Act or a more comprehensive analysis including legislative history, committee reports, and judicial interpretations.
- **Assumed Causality:** The introduction implicitly assumes that the 2025 Act is the primary driver of change (or lack thereof). It could briefly acknowledge other confounding socio-economic variables that might also influence women's empowerment in the chosen regions.

! Recommendations

- **Strengthen Evidentiary Claims:** To enhance credibility, bolster the assertions in the 'Statement of the Problem' with specific, albeit preliminary, evidence. For instance, instead of "early evidence shows," write: "Preliminary analysis of reports from NGOs like [Example NGO] and media coverage in [Example Newspaper] suggests that women's participation remains consultative..."
- **Provide an Operational Definition of Empowerment:** In the introduction, briefly state the conceptual framework for 'empowerment' that will be used. For example: "This study adopts Naila Kabeer's (1999) framework, defining empowerment as the interplay of resources (pre-conditions), agency (process), and achievements (outcomes). This will allow for a nuanced measurement of the Act's impact beyond mere representation."
- **Elaborate on Methodological Scope:** Refine the description of the mixed-methods approach. For 'Doctrinal analysis,' specify its components: "Doctrinal analysis will involve a textual examination of the 2025 Act, its accompanying rules, relevant parliamentary debates, and any emergent High Court or Supreme Court jurisprudence to map its legal architecture."
- **Acknowledge Confounding Factors:** Add a brief sentence to acknowledge the complexity of the issue. For example: "While this study focuses on the impact of the 2025 Amendment, it will also remain attentive to the mediating role of external factors, such as



state-specific economic development programs and the activities of local civil society organizations, in shaping outcomes for Muslim women."

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Objectives

Score: 8.0/10

Section Content

Version 1

Main Objective To critically examine how the Waqf Act, 1995 (as amended by the Waqf

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Summary

The objectives are well-structured, comprehensive, and demonstrate a clear alignment with the project's title and implied research questions. The logical progression from doctrinal analysis (Objective 1) to empirical evaluation (Objectives 2-5) and finally to policy synthesis (Objective 6) is a significant strength. The proposal successfully breaks down a complex main objective into a series of manageable and interconnected specific objectives. However, the proposal's primary weakness lies in its lack of specificity regarding measurement. Several objectives use evaluative terms like 'effectiveness,' 'socio-economic outcomes,' and 'impact' without defining the specific indicators or metrics that will be used for assessment. This vagueness raises concerns about the methodological rigor and the verifiability of the project's findings. While the direction is excellent, the lack of operationalization prevents this section from achieving an exceptional score.

Strengths

- **Excellent Logical Structure:** The objectives follow a coherent and logical sequence, moving from understanding the legal framework to evaluating its implementation, assessing its outcomes, exploring contextual factors, and concluding with policy recommendations. This demonstrates a well-conceived research plan.
- **Strong Alignment with Title:** All specific objectives directly support the main objective and are perfectly aligned with the project's stated scope—the impact of the 2025 Act on Muslim women in Punjab and Haryana.
- **Comprehensive and Multi-dimensional Approach:** The objectives promise a rich, multi-faceted study by combining doctrinal legal analysis with an empirical investigation of institutional functioning, socio-economic outcomes, technological reforms, and socio-cultural perceptions.
- **Policy Relevance and Impact Potential:** The final objective, focused on generating 'actionable policy recommendations,' clearly aligns with the priorities of a funding agency like ICSSR, which values research that can inform governance and social welfare.

Weaknesses

- **Lack of Measurable Indicators:** The proposal fails to operationalize key concepts. Terms such as 'effectiveness' (Objective 2), 'socio-economic outcomes' (Objective 3), and 'impact on women's awareness' (Objective 4) are presented without the specific metrics that will be used to measure them. This is a critical omission that weakens the credibility of the research design.
- **Potential for Over-ambition:** The breadth of the six objectives is substantial. Without seeing the proposed timeline and budget, there is a moderate risk that the project is too ambitious, potentially leading to superficial analysis across too many areas rather than deep insights into a few.
- **Vague Language in Key Areas:** While the structure is strong, the language within some objectives lacks precision. For example, 'factors that influence their reach and inclusivity' (Objective 3) is a generic phrase that could be sharpened to specify the types of factors (e.g., institutional capacity, community outreach strategies, patriarchal norms) to be investigated.

! Recommendations

- **Operationalize Key Concepts with Specific Metrics:** For each objective involving evaluation, explicitly state the indicators you will use. This should be a priority revision. For example:
 - - Model for Objective 2: Rephrase to '...assessing effectiveness through quantifiable indicators such as (a) the ratio of women board members to men, (b) the number of women-led initiatives approved, and (c) a qualitative analysis of women's influence on policy documents and meeting minutes.'
 - - Model for Objective 3: Rephrase to '...to assess and compare socio-economic outcomes by measuring (a) the change in average monthly income of beneficiary households, (b) the percentage of female beneficiaries who report improved housing security, and (c) the enrollment and retention rates of girls in Waqf-supported educational institutions.'
 - - Model for Objective 4: Rephrase to '...evaluating their impact by (a) conducting surveys to measure pre- and post-reform awareness levels of Waqf services, (b) analyzing usage analytics of digital platforms by gender, and (c) case studies on women's ability to access information and lodge grievances through new systems.'
- **Prioritize or Phase the Objectives:** To mitigate the risk of over-ambition, consider framing the objectives in terms of priority or phases. For instance, state that Objectives 1-3 form the core investigation, while 4 and 5 are exploratory, or specify how they will be managed concurrently within the project's timeline to assure the panel of the project's feasibility.
- **Refine Verbs for Greater Precision:** Consider replacing general verbs with more precise ones where possible. For instance, instead of 'explore community-level perceptions' (Objective 5), you could specify 'to identify and categorize community-level

perceptions...'. This small change enhances the sense of a structured analytical process.

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Literature Review

Score: 3.0/10

Section Content

Version 1

1. P.S. Munawar Hussain, Muslim Endowments, Waqf Law and Judicial Response in India

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Summary

The literature review is severely deficient and does not adequately support the proposed research. While it identifies several foundational legal texts on the Waqf Act, it functions as a simple annotated bibliography rather than a critical, analytical review. The section almost completely fails to engage with the core themes of the proposal: the empowerment of Muslim women and the specific socio-legal contexts of Punjab and Haryana. Consequently, it fails to establish the scholarly context, justify the research questions, or identify a clear research gap, significantly weakening the proposal's overall rationale and credibility from a funding perspective.

Strengths

- Identifies several recent (2025) and foundational legal texts related to the Waqf Act, demonstrating a preliminary awareness of the legal landscape.
- Citations include a mix of books and articles, showing an attempt to cover different types of publications.

Weaknesses

- ****Lack of Critical Analysis:**** The review consists of descriptive summaries of individual works without any synthesis, comparison, or critique. It reads as a list rather than an argument, failing to show how these sources inform the proposed study. This is a fundamental flaw; a literature review must analyze, not just list.
- ****Major Thematic Gaps:**** There is a critical omission of literature concerning the central concept of 'women's empowerment'. The review does not engage with scholarship on gender and Islamic law, women's rights in India, or feminist legal studies. This absence makes it impossible to evaluate the novelty or importance of the proposal's core objective.
- ****Absence of Regional Focus:**** The review lacks any literature specific to the socio-

economic or legal contexts of Punjab and Haryana. Without this, the justification for a comparative study between these two states is entirely unsubstantiated and appears arbitrary.

- ****Failure to Identify a Research Gap:**** The section does not culminate in a clear, well-supported statement of the research gap. It is unclear what specific question this study will answer that has not been addressed before, which is a primary requirement for funding.
- ****Poor Structure and Quality Control:**** The format is a simplistic annotated list, not a thematically organized review. The identical descriptions for two separate books (Qureshi and Rahman) indicate a lack of care and professionalism, undermining the reviewer's confidence in the applicant's scholarly diligence.
- ****Over-reliance on Non-Peer-Reviewed Sources:**** The inclusion of multiple SSRN pre-prints, while timely, weakens the scholarly foundation which should be built primarily on peer-reviewed literature. While acceptable for very recent topics, they should complement, not form the core of, the review.

! Recommendations

- {"reasoning":"This thematic structure is crucial for demonstrating analytical depth and building a coherent argument. It allows you to synthesize findings across multiple sources and show the funding committee that you have a sophisticated understanding of the field, not just a reading list.","suggestion":"Re-structure the entire section thematically. Instead of a list of books and articles, organize the review around key conceptual areas. Potential themes could include: 1) The Evolution of Waqf Legislation in India; 2) Scholarship on Waqf and Socio-Economic Development; 3) Gender, Islamic Law, and Empowerment in India; 4) Existing Research on Muslim Communities in Punjab and Haryana."}
- {"reasoning":"This is non-negotiable for aligning the literature review with your project's title and objectives. Without this, the central premise of your research is unsupported by existing scholarship, making the project appear unfocused and its potential impact unclear.","suggestion":"Integrate literature on women's empowerment. Conduct a thorough search for and integrate scholarship on the empowerment of Muslim women in India. This should include works on their economic participation, social status, legal rights, and political agency. You must explicitly connect this body of literature to the potential role (positive or negative) of Waqf institutions."}
- {"reasoning":"This is essential to justify the choice of these two states for a comparative study. It provides the necessary context and demonstrates the feasibility and relevance of your geographical focus to the funding agency.","suggestion":"Incorporate region-specific literature. Identify and discuss studies, government reports, or case law specific to the administration of Waqf and the status of Muslim women in Punjab and Haryana. If such literature is sparse, you must state that explicitly as part of your research gap."}
- {"reasoning":"This analytical approach demonstrates critical thinking and is necessary to build a compelling argument for your study. It shows the reviewer that you are entering into a scholarly conversation, not simply reporting on it.","suggestion":"Shift from

description to critical analysis. For each source, move beyond 'This book is about...' to an analytical statement. For example: 'Hussain (2021) provides a crucial legal foundation for the Waqf Act, but his analysis overlooks the gendered implications of waqf management, a gap which Kumari (2025) begins to address from a constitutional perspective, though without empirical grounding...'"}

- {"reasoning":"This is the logical conclusion of the review and the primary justification for your project. A clear gap statement directly tells the funding committee why this research is necessary and why it represents a valuable investment of public funds.", "suggestion":"Conclude with an explicit and robust gap statement. End the review with a clear, concise paragraph that synthesizes the weaknesses of the existing literature and explicitly states the gap your research will fill. Example: 'Therefore, while the legal framework of the Waqf Act is well-documented, there is a significant scholarly void concerning its tangible, on-the-ground impact on the socio-economic empowerment of Muslim women, particularly through a comparative lens in states with differing minority demographics like Punjab and Haryana.'"} }

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Methodology

Score: 6.0/10

Section Content

Version 1

Research Design The study adopts a comparative mixed-methods research design,

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Summary

The proposed mixed-methods, comparative design is conceptually strong and well-suited to the research question. The justification for selecting Punjab and Haryana is compelling, and the integration of doctrinal and empirical analysis is a key strength. However, the methodology suffers from a critical flaw in its sampling design, where it claims a representative 'stratified' approach but describes non-probability (purposive and snowball) methods. This contradiction significantly undermines the potential generalizability of the quantitative findings. Further weaknesses include a lack of specificity in qualitative sampling procedures and potential feasibility concerns regarding the ambitious scope of data collection. While the data analysis plan and ethical considerations are well-articulated, the core sampling issue requires substantial revision for the methodology to be considered rigorous.

Strengths

- The comparative mixed-methods design, integrating doctrinal legal analysis with empirical fieldwork, is highly appropriate for assessing the gap between law and practice.
- The rationale for selecting Punjab and Haryana is clear, well-justified, and provides a strong analytical framework for comparison.
- The data analysis plan is comprehensive, detailing specific statistical tests for quantitative data and a recognized methodology (Thematic Analysis) for qualitative data.
- The inclusion of diverse respondent groups (beneficiaries, officials, community leaders) allows for a multi-perspective analysis.
- Ethical considerations are thoroughly addressed, demonstrating awareness of the sensitivities involved in working with vulnerable populations.

Weaknesses

- There is a fundamental contradiction between the stated 'multi-stage stratified' sampling

design and the described use of 'purposive and snowball sampling,' which are non-probability methods and do not ensure representativeness.

- The procedure for selecting the 400 women beneficiaries lacks detail, making it impossible to assess potential selection bias introduced by relying on partner organizations.
- There is ambiguity in the qualitative sampling numbers; it is unclear how the 40 semi-structured interviews relate to the 60 key informants identified, and the number of Focus Group Discussions is not specified.
- The limitations section fails to acknowledge the most significant methodological weakness: the non-probability sampling's impact on the generalizability of the findings.
- The absence of a plan to pilot the structured questionnaire is a significant omission, given the complexity of the indicators being measured.

! Recommendations

- Revise the sampling design section to resolve the contradiction. Either adopt a true probability sampling method to support claims of representativeness, or explicitly reframe the study's aims around in-depth qualitative exploration rather than generalizable quantitative claims.
- Provide a clear, step-by-step protocol for recruiting the 400 women respondents. Specify how initial contact will be made and what criteria will be used for purposive selection to enhance transparency and replicability.
- Clarify the qualitative sampling numbers. Specify the exact number of interviews to be conducted with each category of key informant and state the planned number of FGDs per district to demonstrate a clear and feasible plan.
- Incorporate a mandatory pilot testing phase for the structured questionnaire. This will help refine questions, check for clarity, and ensure the instrument is culturally appropriate and effective before full-scale deployment.
- Strengthen the limitations section by acknowledging the constraints of the chosen sampling method on the statistical generalizability of the findings and explaining how data triangulation will be used to bolster the validity of the conclusions.

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Budget Justification

Score: 4.0/10

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Summary

The budget justification is assessed as weak. While it presents a standard structure with appropriate budget heads, it is undermined by significant deficiencies in detail, justification, and internal consistency. There are critical alignment issues between the personnel plan and the project timeline, and a major calculation for travel allowances appears illogical and unsubstantiated. The budget omits essential costs such as transcription and institutional overheads, while failing to adequately justify the necessity of other items like new equipment. Furthermore, the allocation for dissemination is inadequately low, which raises serious concerns about the project's potential for generating meaningful impact beyond academic outputs. The overall impression is that of a budget drafted without sufficient attention to detail or strategic resource planning. This lack of rigour significantly reduces confidence in the applicant's capacity to manage the proposed grant of ₹30 lakh effectively and deliver value for money.

Strengths

- The budget is organized using standard, appropriate categories (e.g., Research Personnel, Travel, Equipment), which provides a basic level of clarity.
- The inclusion of specific software licenses (SPSS and NVivo) aligns well with the mixed-methods approach suggested by the project's timeline and activities.
- The allocation of an honorarium for respondents is a commendable ethical consideration that acknowledges the value of participants' contributions to the research.

Weaknesses

- ****Personnel-Timeline Misalignment****: The duration of staff contracts is not aligned with the 24-month project timeline. For instance, the Research Associate is budgeted for 12 months and the Research Assistant for 10 months, leaving a significant gap in research support during the crucial data analysis and report writing phases (Months 17-24).
- ****Illogical Travel Cost Calculation****: The Daily Allowance (DA) calculation ('300 days × ₹900 × 2 persons') is a major flaw. It is unclear who the '2 persons' are when the project proposes hiring one Research Associate and four Field Investigators. This single line item

accounts for ₹5,40,000 and its flawed premise calls the entire travel budget's credibility into question.

- ****Lack of Justification for Personnel Numbers****: The proposal requests four Field Investigators for eight months each (a total of 32 person-months) but fails to justify this extensive staffing level against the stated fieldwork activities and a target sample of 350 respondents. This appears inefficient and inflates the personnel costs.
- ****Omission of Key Costs****: The budget completely omits critical and foreseeable expenses. There is no allocation for transcription of qualitative interviews and FGDs, a time-consuming and costly necessity for a study using NVivo. Furthermore, mandatory institutional overheads, a standard requirement for most ICSSR grants, are absent.
- ****Inadequate Dissemination Budget****: The ₹1,00,000 lump sum for all dissemination activities (two workshops, two policy briefs, one journal paper) is grossly insufficient. It reflects a lack of serious planning for knowledge translation and stakeholder engagement, which is a key priority for the funding agency.
- ****Unjustified Equipment and Vague Contingency****: The need for a new laptop (₹65,000) is not justified against resources available at the host institution. The contingency fund includes routine operational items like 'communication' and 'internet', which should be itemized separately, making the category appear as a miscellaneous fund rather than a provision for genuinely unforeseen expenses.

! Recommendations

- {"reason":"This revision is necessary to demonstrate logical project management and to assure the review panel that the project is adequately staffed throughout its lifecycle, ensuring its feasibility and successful completion.","suggestion":"Revise and align the personnel plan with the 24-month project timeline. Justify the duration of each role in relation to specific project phases. For example, specify that the Research Associate is required for 20 months to cover fieldwork, data analysis, and initial report drafting. Clearly articulate the division of labour between the Research Assistant and the four Field Investigators to justify the numbers (e.g., 'Two Field Investigators per state, each responsible for conducting 85-90 surveys and recruiting for 3 FGDs over a 6-month fieldwork period')."}
- {"reason":"Correcting this fundamental error is crucial for restoring the credibility of the entire budget. A transparent and accurate travel budget is a prerequisite for demonstrating financial accountability and responsible use of public funds.","suggestion":"Deconstruct and recalculate the travel budget with transparent, logical justifications. The Daily Allowance calculation must be corrected to reflect the actual number of personnel undertaking fieldwork for the exact duration specified in the timeline. For instance: 'DA for 4 Field Investigators + 1 RA in Haryana (Phase II, 90 days): 5 persons × 90 days × ₹900/day = ₹4,05,000'. All inter-state trips must be justified by purpose (e.g., 'PI travel for initial meetings with Waqf Boards')."}
- {"reason":"A complete and detailed budget shows thorough planning and mitigates the risk of project failure due to underfunding. It also demonstrates compliance with the funding agency's guidelines (e.g., on overheads) and a serious commitment to

impact.", "suggestion": "Incorporate all necessary project costs and provide detailed breakdowns for lump-sum figures. Add specific line items for omitted costs, such as 'Transcription Services (est. 40 hours of audio @ ₹1,000/hour = ₹40,000)' and 'Institutional Overheads (@10% of total project cost, as per ICSSR norms)'. The dissemination budget must be itemized to reflect realistic costs for workshops (venue, travel for experts, catering) and publication (e.g., 'Article Processing Charges for one open-access journal: ₹75,000')."}]

- {"reason": "Funding agencies view equipment as a capital expense and require strong justification to ensure it is not a substitute for institutional responsibility. This justification strengthens the case for value-for-money.", "suggestion": "Provide explicit justification for all equipment purchases. For the laptop, state clearly why a new machine is essential for the project's success and why existing institutional resources are unavailable or inadequate (e.g., 'The PI's current institutional desktop lacks the processing power required for handling large qualitative datasets in NVivo and is not portable for fieldwork supervision')."}]

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Expected Outcomes

Score: 6.0/10

Section Content

Version 1

Expected Outcomes The proposed study is expected to produce comprehensive and

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Summary

The 'Expected Outcomes' section is well-structured, ambitious, and demonstrates a clear understanding of the project's potential academic and policy relevance. It successfully categorizes outcomes into empirical, academic, policy, and dissemination outputs, which aligns well with the priorities of a funding agency like ICSSR. However, the section is significantly undermined by a lack of specificity and a tendency to list research activities rather than concrete, measurable deliverables. While the ambition is commendable, this vagueness raises concerns about the project's feasibility and the applicant's ability to translate broad goals into a tangible research plan. Without the accompanying Objectives and Methodology sections, it is impossible to fully assess the alignment and realism of these claims, which represents a critical gap in the evaluation.

Strengths

- ****Clear Thematic Structure:**** The section is logically organized into 'Empirical Assessment,' 'Academic Contributions,' 'Policy Contributions,' and 'Dissemination Plan.' This structure clearly communicates the project's multi-faceted impact and aligns with ICSSR's emphasis on both scholarly rigor and policy relevance.
- ****Strong Policy Orientation:**** The outcomes explicitly target key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Minority Affairs and State Waqf Boards. Deliverables like 'policy briefs' and a 'Gender Inclusion Toolkit' demonstrate a clear pathway to impact.
- ****Specific Publication Goals:**** The commitment to 'at least two research papers in Q1-Q2 Scopus and UGC CARE-listed journals' is a specific, measurable, and credible academic outcome that adds significant weight to the proposal.
- ****Innovative Focus:**** The proposed outcomes address a timely and innovative research area: the gendered impact of a new legal amendment, the role of digitization, and a comparative state-level analysis, which collectively represent a potentially significant contribution to the field.

Weaknesses

- ****Vagueness of Core Outcomes:**** Several key outcomes are described as processes or abstract understandings rather than tangible products. Phrases like 'An in-depth evaluation,' 'A nuanced understanding,' and 'Insights into' are research activities, not measurable outcomes. This lack of precision makes it difficult to assess success.
- ****Ambiguity of Key Deliverables:**** While promising, deliverables like the 'Gender Inclusion Toolkit' and 'training modules' are not defined. The panel cannot assess their scope, content, or feasibility without details on what these items will contain or the resources required to produce them.
- ****Potential Over-promising and Feasibility Concerns:**** The proposal lists a very extensive set of outputs: multiple empirical reports, a comparative framework, policy models, a toolkit, training modules, a digital repository, journal articles, conference papers, policy briefs, and workshops. Without a detailed methodology and timeline, this list appears overly ambitious and raises questions about whether all can be delivered to a high standard within a typical project lifecycle.
- ****Generic Community Outreach Plan:**** The 'Community Outreach' strategy lacks specifics. Mentioning 'collaborations with local NGOs' and 'community media' without naming potential partners or outlets makes this component appear underdeveloped and less credible as a concrete plan.

! Recommendations

- {"example": "Change 'A nuanced understanding of the interplay...' to 'A dedicated chapter in the final report diagnosing the specific socio-cultural norms and administrative hurdles in Punjab and Haryana that facilitate or impede the Act's implementation.'", "justification": "This will enhance clarity and measurability, allowing the review panel to assess precisely what the project will produce. For instance, instead of 'An in-depth evaluation of how the 2025 Amendment's inheritance protection clause has altered property practices,' state: 'A final research report (approx. 150 pages) presenting a comparative analysis of changes in property practices post-amendment, including quantitative data on inheritance claims filed and qualitative case studies of women's experiences.' This reframing demonstrates a clear vision of the final product.", "recommendation": "Rephrase activity-based outcomes into concrete, tangible deliverables."}
- {"example": "Describe the toolkit as: 'A 25-page practical guide for Waqf Board members, comprising: (i) a gender-audit checklist for internal policies, (ii) templates for beneficiary feedback forms, and (iii) three case studies of successful gender-inclusive initiatives from the research.'", "justification": "Specificity increases the credibility and perceived value-for-money of the proposed outputs. A well-defined deliverable is more likely to be seen as a feasible and impactful investment. For the 'Gender Inclusion Toolkit,' specify its components and format.", "recommendation": "Provide specific details for key policy and community-facing deliverables."}
- {"example": "Specify: 'The project will produce a curriculum outline and resource

materials for a one-day training module on gender-sensitive governance for Waqf officials. The 'digital repository' will be a static webpage on the host institution's server containing anonymized interview transcripts (PDF) and the project's key reports.'","justification":"These two deliverables have significant time and budget implications that are currently unaddressed. Clarifying whether 'training modules' means creating a curriculum document or delivering actual training sessions is essential for assessing feasibility. Similarly, the technical requirements and maintenance plan for a 'digital repository' must be outlined.","recommendation":"Clarify the scope and format of the 'training modules' and 'digital repository.'"} }

- {"example":"Instead of 'collaborations with local NGOs,' state: 'We will partner with established organizations like the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) in Haryana and the Punjab Istri Sabha to co-host two community-level dissemination meetings and distribute findings through their local networks.'","justification":"This demonstrates proactive planning and increases the likelihood of achieving the stated broader impacts. A generic plan suggests this aspect has not been fully considered, weakening the overall proposal.","recommendation":"Strengthen the dissemination plan with concrete examples and potential partners."} }

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