

Effectiveness of Gender Responsive Budgeting Schemes in Curbing Domestic Violence in Southern Districts of Kerala - Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam

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ABSTRACT

Women in Kerala, despite performing well in socio-economic indicators such as sex ratio and literacy rate, continue to be dictated by patriarchal norms. Male dominance often manifests as violence, in both domestic and public spheres. Gender-based violence negatively impacts women's wellbeing and consequently, their careers. Alongside the COVID recession, Indian women have been facing a "shadow pandemic of domestic violence". Kerala, an early adopter of Gender Budgeting in India, releases an annual Gender Budget Statement. This paper examines the effectiveness of State Government policies in tackling this issue, with the research question: *'To what extent have the Gender Budgeting Schemes, introduced in the Kerala government's Annual Financial Budget 2021, been effective in reducing the occurrences of gender-based violence in the districts of Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam in Kerala, for the period 2021-2022?'*. Kerala Government's annual overall gender budget allocations and the percentage allocations toward each scheme have been examined. Data was collected from 44 women occupying the Thiruvananthapuram-Kollam region regarding their socio-economic profile, types of harassment experienced, whether they experience domestic violence, awareness of gender budget schemes, experiences with any of those schemes and effectiveness rating for the schemes. The study found that the schemes created some impact, but not enough to significantly reduce gender-based violence in the state. Schemes with the potential to reduce violence receive minimal funding. The paper recommends that greater financial support be provided to POCSO Courts, Bhumika Counselling Centres, Vanitha Commission and other victim relief measures, in order to provide solid support to women experiencing violence.

Background Information

Introduction

Gender-based violence exacerbates gender inequality and prevents women from reaching their full potential, by affecting their mental and physical wellbeing, which in turn affects their careers. The socio-economic situation of women in my state Kerala, shows us a "paradoxical picture"¹. Despite the state's achievements such as favourable sex ratio and the highest levels of literacy in India, women are entrapped in the patriarchal system, which manifests itself in societal evils such as forced marriage, post-marriage unemployment, the dowry system, declining land rights and rigid gender roles.²

¹ Panda, P. K. (2004). *Domestic Violence against Women in Kerala*. Retrieved from www.cds.ac.in/krpcds/publication/downloads/86.pdf.

² UN Women. (2015). *Equal Half: Gender Responsive Budgeting and Planning in India*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oaspHGDnkvs>.

According to my observations, the majority of women around me are not aware of their own rights and how the societal restrictions imposed on them for the sake of tradition, prevent them from achieving their full potential. Culturally imposed taboos have created issues of economic impoverishment, low participation in political activity, malnourishment and low labour force participation rates among women in Kerala.³ I will be examining the effectiveness of gender budgeting schemes in tackling these issues in this essay, with the research question: ‘*To what extent have the Gender Budgeting Schemes, introduced in the Kerala government’s Annual Financial Budget 2021, been effective in reducing the occurrences of gender-based violence in the districts of Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam in Kerala, for the period 2021-2022?*’.

Gender-based violence

Violence against women is a widespread problem all over the world, in developing and industrialized countries alike. According to a discussion paper (Panda, 2004), ever since the widely-reported gang rape on public transport in Delhi in 2012, the issue of gender-based violence and harassment in India has taken on increasing significance. There is greater awareness not only of violence against women and girls perpetrated by males, but of violence perpetrated by female relatives as well, such as by mothers who commit murders against daughters for choosing to get an education instead of getting married—or for marrying the “wrong” person. Although considerably lower than for northern India, the rates of domestic violence remain relatively high by international standards for Kerala and in the urban areas of South India in general.⁴

Domestic violence has high macroeconomic costs in many countries. In Vietnam, the losses represented nearly 1.41 percent of the GDP in 2010. Even in MEDCs (More Economically Developed Countries) such as the United Kingdom, total costs linked to this were estimated at around 10% of GDP.⁵ In a study conducted by (Saji et al., 2020) it was found that there was an increase in the prevalence of domestic violence during the lockdown period,⁶ showing that the COVID-19 pandemic is widening the pre-existing gender gap and threatening to reverse decades of collective effort. This calls for swift government action, by implementing policies focused on improving the conditions for women in relation to domestic violence.

What is Gender Responsive Budgeting?

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) is a fiscal innovation that translates gender-related goals into budgetary commitments⁷. Policymakers use GRBs as an instrument to tackle issues related to gender equality, including gender-based violence. In 1995, the Beijing Platform for action established gender mainstreaming using fiscal policy as a “major global strategy” to advance towards equal rights for women.

³ UN Women. (2015). *Equal Half: Gender Responsive Budgeting and Planning in India*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oaspHGDnkvs>.

⁴ Panda, P. K. (2004). *Domestic Violence against Women in Kerala*. Retrieved from www.cds.ac.in/krpcds/publication/downloads/86.pdf.

⁵ Joseph, G., Javid, S. U., Andres, L. A., Chellaraj, G., Solotaroff, J. L., & Rajan, S. I. (2017). Underreporting of gender-based violence in Kerala, India: An application of the list randomization method. *World Bank Group*. <https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-8044>

⁶ Saji, J. A., Babu, B. P., & Sebastian, S. R. (2020). Social influence of COVID-19: An observational study on the social impact of post-COVID-19 lockdown on everyday life in Kerala from a community perspective. *Journal of education and health promotion*, 9, 360. https://doi.org/10.4103/jehp.jehp_650_20

⁷ Mayvelin U. Caraballo, T. (2016). PH lauded in gender budgeting efforts. Retrieved from <https://www.manilatimes.net/2016/07/29/business/ph-lauded-in-gender-budgeting-efforts/276827>

A budget is the most comprehensive statement of a government's social and economic plans and priorities. Therefore, implementing commitments towards gender equality is an intentional measure to incorporate a gender perspective in planning and budgeting frameworks. Gender-responsive budgeting is not about creating separate budgets for women. Rather, it seeks to ensure that the collection and allocation of public resources is carried out in ways that are effective and contribute to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. UN Women Asia Pacific states, "It is a step not only towards accountability to women's rights, but also towards greater public transparency and can shift economic policies leading to gains across societies."⁸

GRB initiatives are, in most cases, introduced at the national level of government, but there is an increasing global trend to do so at the subnational and local levels(Nair et al., 2018).⁹ Kerala is one of the states in India that has adopted an annual Gender Budget.

Research Methodology

To begin my research, I read academic papers on the topics of Gender Budgeting and Gender-based violence. The review of literature includes a wide range, by scholars from India and abroad including Joseph et al(2017), Panda(2004), Nishanthi(2020), Saji et al(2020), Nair et al(2018), Chakraborty(2013), Vijayan(2010), Anderberg et al(2013), Aizer(2010) and Ahmad et al(2009).

To hypothesise whether the Kerala Budget for 2020 has been effective in reducing gender based violence, I first decided to go through the Gender Budget Statements released for each year by the Kerala Government and gather secondary data regarding the overall amount allocated from the financial year 2017-18 onwards. Amounts from previous years were adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index for each year in India, provided by the World Bank. In addition to this I gathered secondary data regarding the constitution of the gender budget. This was converted to percentage allocations to understand whether there is a sufficient amount allocated to schemes targeted at reducing gender-based violence, and for sectors that are indirectly related to reducing violence as well.

Further, to get direct feedback from women in the Thiruvananthapuram-Kollam region, about whether these schemes are effective in reducing gender-based violence, primary data has been collected for the study, through a survey which was conducted with 44 women who have been living in the districts of Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam, in the 2020-2022 time period. Out of the group, 29 were from urban areas of Thiruvananthapuram, 5 were from rural areas of Thiruvananthapuram and 10 from urban areas of Kollam. The surveyees were chosen by convenience sampling. The survey form was kept anonymous to maintain anonymity and maximise the accuracy of responses. Data was collected from the participants on the types of harassment they had experienced in public, types of harassment experienced at home, whether domestic abuse was experienced in the natal or marital family(for married women), the schemes targeted at women empowerment that they are aware of, their experiences with any of those schemes(if used), rating of their effectiveness and additional comments(if any). The socio-economic profiles of the women were classified according to five indicators: employment status, highest level of formal education, marital status, age, monthly salary band and spouse's monthly salary band. The profiles of the survey population in detail are as follows:

⁸ UN Women – Asia-Pacific. *Gender Responsive Budgeting - UN Women Asia Pacific*. Retrieved from <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/women-poverty-economics/gender-responsive-budgeting>

⁹ Nair, N. V., & Moolakkattu, J. S. (2018). Gender-Responsive Budgeting: The Case of a Rural Local Body in Kerala. SAGE Open. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017751572>

Table 1: Socio-economic profiles of the women who participated in the survey

Socio-economic indicator	Status of the survey participants
Employment status	<u>63.6% in full time employment</u> , 29.5% in full-time education with no part-time employment, 4.5% unemployed and 2.3% are in full time employment and part-time education
Highest level of formal education	<u>55.9% graduated Postgraduate degree</u> , 29.4% graduated Undergraduate degree, 2.9% graduated Doctoral degree, 2.9% did not complete Undergraduate degree, 2.9% graduated Higher-secondary ¹⁰ school, 2.9% did not complete Higher-secondary school, 2.9% graduated High School ¹¹
Marital Status	<u>63.6% married at some point in their lives</u> , 59.1% currently married(within which 2.3% is separated from spouse), 4.5% divorced and unmarried, 36.4% unmarried or below 18
Age	<u>36.4% are 45-55 years old</u> , <u>25.0% are 25-35 years old</u> , 22.7% are below 18 years old, 11.4% are 35-45 years old, 4.5% are 18-25 years old
Range of Salary for employed women^{12 13}	<u>50.0% above or equal to ₹ 20,000 & below ₹ 50,000</u> , 13.3% above or equal to ₹ 1 Lakh & below ₹ 2 Lakh, 10.0% above or equal to ₹ 2 Lakh & below ₹ 3 Lakh, 6.7% above or equal to ₹ 5 Lakh & below ₹ 6 Lakh, 6.7% above or equal to ₹ 50,000 and below ₹ 80,000, 6.7% below ₹ 20,000, 3.3% above or equal to ₹ 3 Lakh & below ₹ 4 Lakh and 3.3% above or equal to ₹80,000 and below ₹ 1 Lakh

¹⁰ 12th Grade Equivalent in India

¹¹ 10th Grade Equivalent in India

¹² 1 United States Dollar equals = 75.21 Indian Rupee (as of 16th February 2022, 5:03 a.m. UTC)

¹³ Lakh(noun, Indian): a hundred thousand ([Google's English Dictionary, provided by Oxford Languages](#))

Preliminary Research and Hypothesising

Analysing the overall allocations of the Gender Budget

Table 2: Allocation of resources for girls/women in the Gender Budgets from financial year 2017-18 to 2020-21

Year	Allocation of resources for girls/women (₹in crore) ¹⁴ <i>Data Source: Kerala Gender Budget 2021</i>	Allocation of resources for girls/women adjusted for inflation (₹in crore) ^{15 16 17} <i>Data source (for annual CPI): World Bank</i>
2020-21	3809.87	2066.88
2019-20	3881.63	2245.30
2018-19	3240.33	1944.13
2017-18	2315.82	1444.25

The data in Table 2 was adjusted for inflation in order to stabilise the variance of random or seasonal fluctuations and highlight cyclical patterns in the data.¹⁸ The inflation-adjusted values were then plotted in the line graph shown in Figure 1.

The trend line in figure 1, as shown below, depicts a clear rise in Gender Budget allocations from financial year 2017-18 to 2019-20. The budget also peaked in 2019-20 with an allocation of ₹2245.30 crore. However, the trend was broken in the 2020-21 when the allocation was ₹2066.88 crore, which was a decrease of ₹178.42 Crore from the previous year. The reasons for this decrease can be alluded to the onset of the devastating floods of 2019. The decrease in allocation cannot be said to be a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, since this budget was prepared prior to the massive public health crisis which also resulted in a global recession.

¹⁴ Finance Department, Government of Kerala. (2021). *Gender Budget 2021-22: Part A and Part B And Child Budget 2021-22*. Kerala Budget. Retrieved from https://budget.kerala.gov.in/keralabudgetdoc/2021_22/GenderBudget.pdf

¹⁵ Inflation, Consumer Prices (Annual %). Retrieved from data.worldbank.org/indicator/FP.CPI.TOTL.ZG.

¹⁶ See Appendix A for inflation adjustment calculations

¹⁷ Data for 2021-'22 was not available at the time this calculation was performed and is also irrelevant considering the investigation time period specified in the research question

¹⁸ Duke Fuqua School of Business. *Inflation adjustment*. Retrieved from https://faculty.fuqua.duke.edu/~rnau/Decision411_2007/411infla.htm

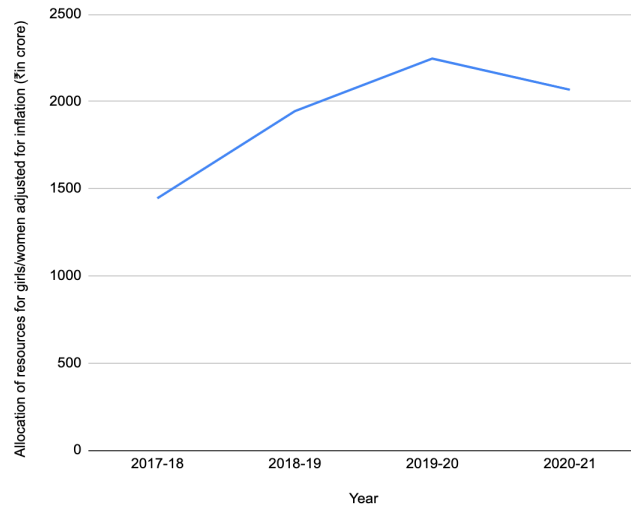


Figure 1: Graphical representation of the trend in allocation of resources for girls/women in the Gender Budgets from financial year 2017-18 to 2020-21

This decrease in overall allocation can be an indicator that the focus on schemes for women has decreased due to the financial crisis and losses incurred by the floods. However, the decrease in allocations alone is not enough to determine whether the gender budgeting schemes have been effective in decreasing domestic violence. Therefore, a detailed analysis of the specific allocations to schemes targeted at reducing violence against women is done.

Analysing the detailed constitution of the Gender Budget

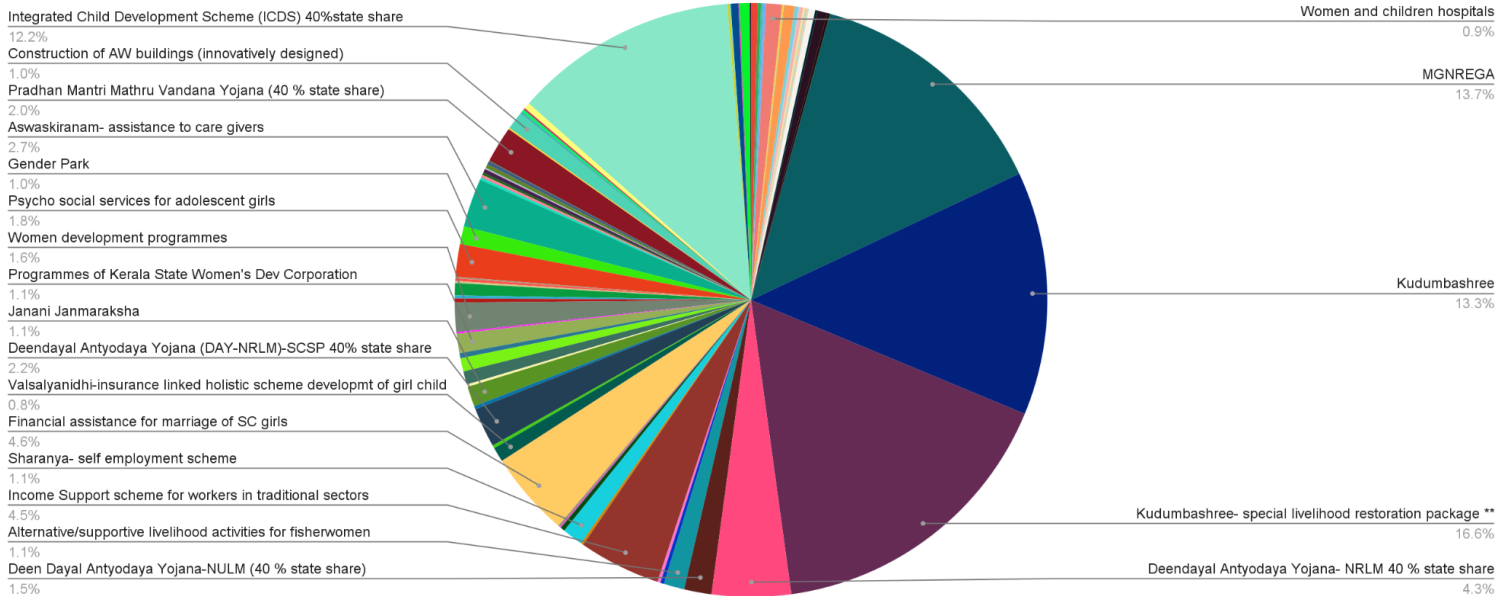


Figure 2: Allocations to Women in the Gender Budget for 2020 in 90-100 per cent schemes¹⁹
Data Source: Kerala Gender Budget 2020

¹⁹ Finance Department, Government of Kerala. (2020). *Gender Budget And Child Budget 2020-21*. Kerala Budget. Retrieved from www.openbudgetsindia.org/dataset/kerala-gender-budget--child-budget-2020-21.

In the context of the Gender Budget, 90-100 per cent scheme refers to a government policy or undertaking within which 90-100 per cent of the budgetary allocation is targeted towards the empowerment of women. The allocations towards these schemes are included in Part A of the Kerala Gender Budget. The pie chart in figure 2 shows the percentage of allocations towards each of the 90-100 per cent schemes that have been declared by the government. It is evident that the majority of the allocations in Part A are directed at the Kudumbashree, a scheme which aims to “eradicate absolute poverty”²⁰ through employment and skill development for women. This receives a total of 29.9% of the allocations in Part A (including a special livelihood restoration package), which was expected since the Kudumbashree is a flagship women empowerment scheme and household name known throughout Kerala, that supports around 5 million women²¹. The other schemes that receive large shares are focused on skill development and employment as well, such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act(13.7%) and the Integrated Child Development Scheme(12.2%) and Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana National Rural Livelihood Mission (6.5% including Scheduled Caste Sub Plan).

Allocations that directly contribute towards reducing gender based violence receive significantly low amounts of the gender budget despite 2020 being observed as ‘Women Safety Year’²² by the Kerala State Police force. The Swadhar Greh scheme which aims to “provide institutional support to women victims of difficult circumstances and rehabilitate them so that they could lead their life with dignity”, receives 0.1% of the budget. 0.4% has been allocated for the setting up of Vanitha Mithra Kendra, which are working women’s hostels for providing safe accommodation close to city workplaces in Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayand and Kannur, mainly targeted at women who have to travel from rural areas.

Similarly low allocations have also been given to POCSO²³ Courts(0.6%), Gender awareness and gender friendly infrastructure facilities in the police department(0.4%), women and children hospitals(0.9%), medical care for victims of violence/social abuse(less than 0.1%), immediate relief fund for victims of violence (0.1%), psycho social services for adolescent girls(1.8%), victim relief fund (0.2%) and Nirbhaya programmes(0.1%).²⁴

²⁰ *Overview*. Kudumbashree. Retrieved from <http://www.kudumbashree.org/pages/7>

²¹ George, V. (2017). Kudumbashree: How Re-Thinking Poverty & Gender Changed 5 Million Lives in Kerala. Retrieved from <https://www.thebetterindia.com/119677/kudumbashree-poverty-gender-5-million-kerala/#:~:text=Today%2C%20nearly%205%20million%20women,world's%20largest%20women%20empowerment%20project>.

²² *Women Safety Year*. Official Website of Kerala Police. Retrieved from <https://keralapolice.gov.in/page/women-saftey-year>

²³ POCSO - Protection of Children from Sexual Offences

²⁴ Percentage allocation is too minute to be labelled in pie chart, values were calculated using Google Sheets. See Appendix B for data.

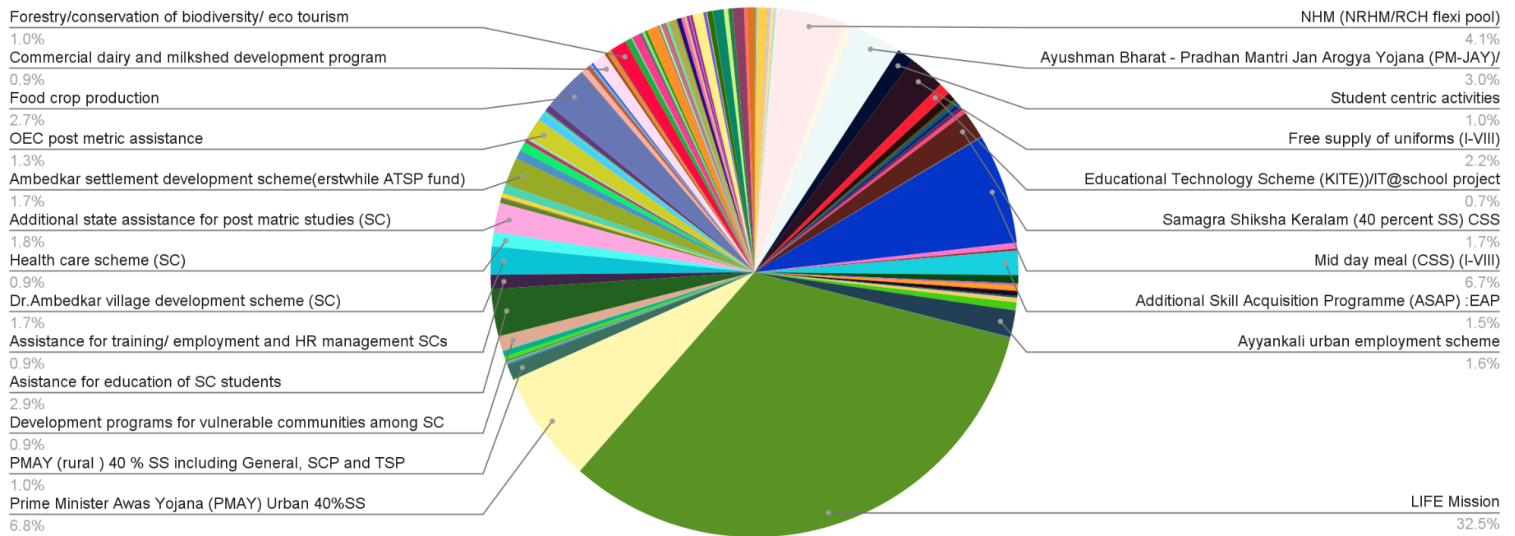


Figure 3: Allocations to Women in the Gender Budget for 2020 in less than 90 per cent schemes²⁵
Data Source: Kerala Gender Budget 2020

Figure 3 represents the composition of Part B of the Gender Budget which deals with less than 90 per cent schemes. These are government policies that are not majorly targeted at women, but consist of a share for women. The majority of Part B is allocated towards the LIFE Mission, which is a scheme which provides housing to people who do not own homes. Most of the allocations in Part B are directed towards employment and education. Schemes that are directly related to gender based violence receive minute shares, such as comprehensive mental health programmes(0.2%), district mental health programmes(0.1%), anti-drug campaigns(less than 0.1%) and community policing(less than 0.1%).²⁶

It is evident from my analysis of the two graphs, that although there is diversification in the number of schemes, with many of them having the potential to tackle gender-based violence, the budgetary allocations towards these schemes are minimal. My claim that the gender budget is not dynamic enough and is concentrated in a few sectors is supported by in a related study(Nishanthi, 2020) regarding budgetary allocations published in 2020 according to which,

“the percentage share of allocation towards the WSS²⁷ always oscillated under one percent in both the periods. The gender budget initiative brought not much change in terms of allocation... Number of schemes and programmes has increased but the percentage share of allocation remained the same for all years.”²⁸

This parallels the allocations of the Union Gender Budget, which concentrates its allocations in certain ministries.²⁹

²⁵ Finance Department, Government of Kerala. (2020). *Gender Budget And Child Budget 2020-21*. Kerala Budget. Retrieved from www.openbudgetsindia.org/dataset/kerala-gender-budget--child-budget-2020-21.

²⁶ Percentage allocation is too minute to be labelled in pie chart, values were calculated using Google Sheets. See Appendix B for data.

²⁷ WSS: Women Specific Schemes

²⁸ Nishanthi, P.U. Reflections of Gender Budget Initiatives in the Budgetary Allocations of Developed State in India: Kerala. *Asian Review of Social Sciences*, 9(1), 48-54. <https://www.trp.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/ARSS-Vol.9-No.1-January-June-2020-pp.-48-54.pdf>

²⁹ Nikore Associates. (2021). *Gender Budget of Union Budget 2021-22 | "Explained" By Mitali Nikore, Economist*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b9EXT0AuQnk>.

The relationship between domestic violence and unemployment

A discussion paper titled ‘Unemployment and Domestic Violence: Theory and Evidence’ (Anderberg et al., 2013) found no evidence to support the hypothesis that domestic violence increases with the overall unemployment rate. However, an increased risk of male unemployment *decreases* the incidence of intimate partner violence, while a rising risk of female unemployment *increases* domestic abuse.

The intuition for why the effects of male and female unemployment are of opposite signs is that when a male with a violent predisposition faces a high unemployment risk, he has an incentive to conceal his true nature by mimicking the behaviour of non-violent men as his spouse, given his low expected future earnings, would have a strong incentive to leave him if she were to learn his violent nature. As a consequence, higher male unemployment is associated with a lower risk of male violence. Conversely, when a female faces a high unemployment risk, her low expected future earnings would make her less inclined to leave her partner even if she were to learn that he has a violent nature. Anticipating this, a male with a violent predisposition has no incentive to conceal his true nature. Thus, high female unemployment leads to an elevated risk of intimate partner violence, therefore implying the positive benefits to society of female employment.³⁰

Figure 4 represents the female unemployment rates in India³¹ for the past 10 years. It is seen that there was a consistent decrease in the female unemployment rates from the 2014-15 financial year to 2019-20. The female unemployment rate increased to 5.3% in early 2020 as a result of the imposition of lockdowns to contain the coronavirus pandemic. The rapid increase in female unemployment highlights the possible risk of an increase in the incidence of domestic violence as well.

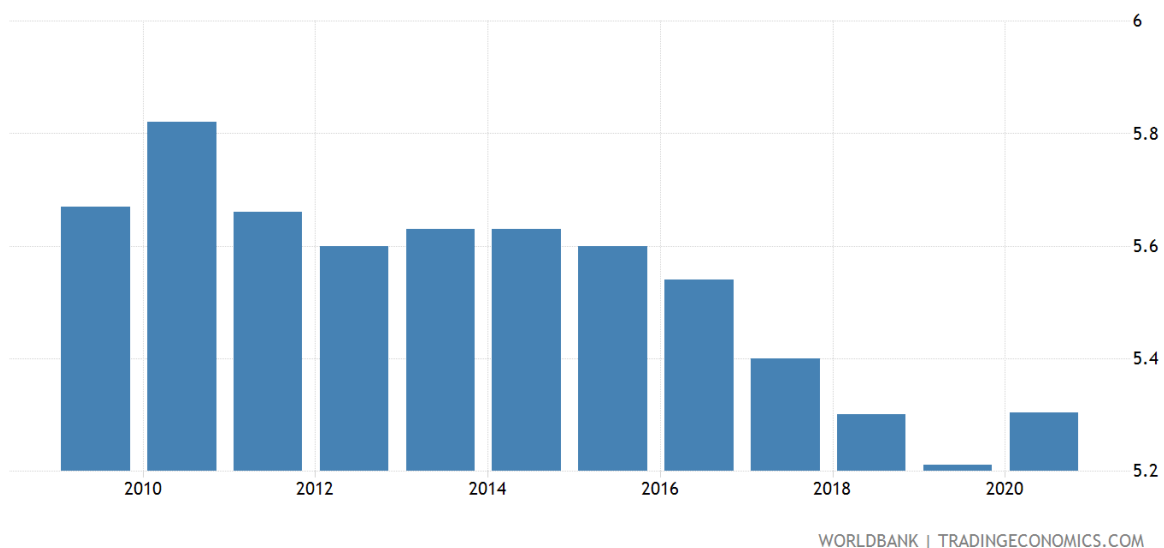


Figure 4: Female unemployment rates in India for 10 years

Image source: Trading Economics, Data Source: World Bank

The previous analysis of Figures 2 and 3 show that the budget provides major allocations to employment schemes such as the Kudumbashree. However, it is important to note that the Kudumbashree is targeted at women from low

³⁰ Anderberg, D., Rainer, H., Wadsworth, J., & Wilson, T. (2015). Unemployment and Domestic Violence: Theory and Evidence. *The Economic Journal*, 126(597), 1947-1979. doi: 10.1111/eoj.12246

³¹ The overall national statistics for female unemployment were used since reliable sources for Kerala’s annual female unemployment statistics were not available

and lower middle income families, with little to no educational background. Therefore, this scheme may not support women from higher income sectors who face unemployment during the pandemic period.

However, this information is not sufficient to come to a prediction of whether domestic violence rates would have increased. According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy³², of the 35 million unemployed who were actively looking for work in December 2021, 23% or 8 million were women. At the same time, of the 17 million who were passively unemployed, 53% or 9 million women were willing to work although they were not actively looking for work. Women who have opted to not be part of the labour force, such as housewives would not be included in the unemployment rate, thus making it another factor that needs to be considered when analysing the unemployment rate with respect to the theory correlating unemployment and domestic violence.

Analysing the effectiveness of the schemes in violence against women

Survey respondents' personal experiences with violence

30 said that they had experienced some form of public harassment and 14 said they had not experienced any, as shown in Figure 5. The most common form of violence inflicted in public is Mental and Emotional Harassment(14). This is followed by belittlement of capabilities on the basis of gender(11), devaluation of opinions(11), discrimination on the basis of gender including lower wages than male counterparts at same career level(9), cyber bullying(8), sexual abuse(7), slut shaming(6), gaslighting(4), gaslighting³³(4) and physical abuse(3). 1 respondent also stated that she faced discrimination based on her ethnicity, since she is not from Kerala.

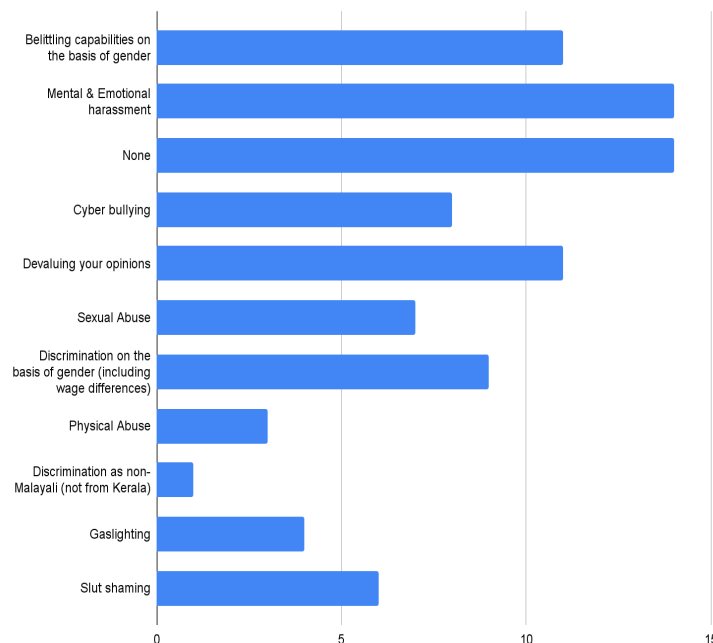


Figure 5: Graphical representation of the count of women who have experienced each type of public harassment

³² Sharma, Y. (2022). India has 53 million unemployed people as of Dec 2021: CMIE. Retrieved from <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/india-has-53-million-unemployed-people-as-of-dec-2021-cmie/articleshow/89016043.cms>

³³ Gaslighting: “loosely defined as making someone question their own reality.” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaslighting>)

Figure 6³⁴ shows that 26 women had experienced some form of domestic violence and 18 have experienced none. The most common type of harassment at home was the devaluing of opinions (16). This was followed by discrimination on the basis of gender (8), mental and emotional harassment(8), gaslighting(6), belittlement of capabilities(6), no help with regards to household chores(5), dowry based harassment(3), physical abuse(3), threats(2), sexual abuse(2), rape(1), slut shaming(1) and forced marriage(1).

It can be derived from the data that the occurrence of gender based violence is quite common. Although the type and gravity of the harassment varies largely, the survey shows that a significantly large percentage of women have experienced mental harassment, discrimination and abuse both at home and outside. Occurrence of domestic violence was found to be more common from the marital family for married women, although violence from the natal family occurs as well.³⁵ Cyber bullying and sexual abuse are quite common as well. Extremely violent crime such as rape were less common but still prevail. The women’s experiences with GRB initiatives are examined next, to understand whether they have played a significant role in preventing crime or providing relief.

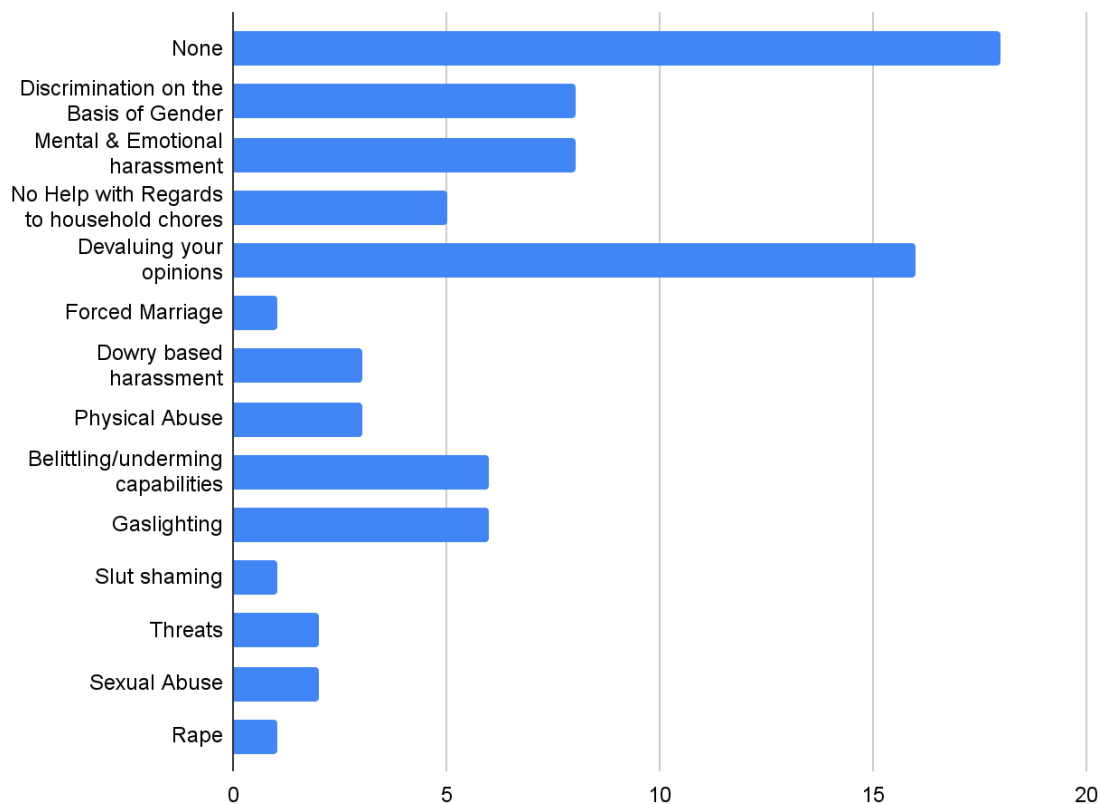


Figure 6: Graphical representation of the count of women who have experienced each type of domestic harassment

³⁴ See Page 10

³⁵ See Appendix C

Survey respondents' personal experiences and opinions regarding GRBs

Figures 7 and 8³⁶ represent the number of women who were aware of each scheme and those who had used each scheme respectively. The Kudumbashree and the Vanitha Commission³⁷ are the ones most discussed and heard about in my personal experiences living in Kerala. This is also reflected in the survey in which 34 women were aware of the Vanitha Commission and 29 were aware of the Kudumbashree. There was little information among the respondents about other schemes. Very few (Kudumbashree: 4, Vanitha Commission: 3, Bhumika Counselling centres: 1 and REACH: 1) had actually approached or used the schemes that they were aware of. Women who had experienced circumstances such as mental harassment and sexual abuse mostly responded that they dealt with it by speaking about it with close family members or seeking professional counselling.

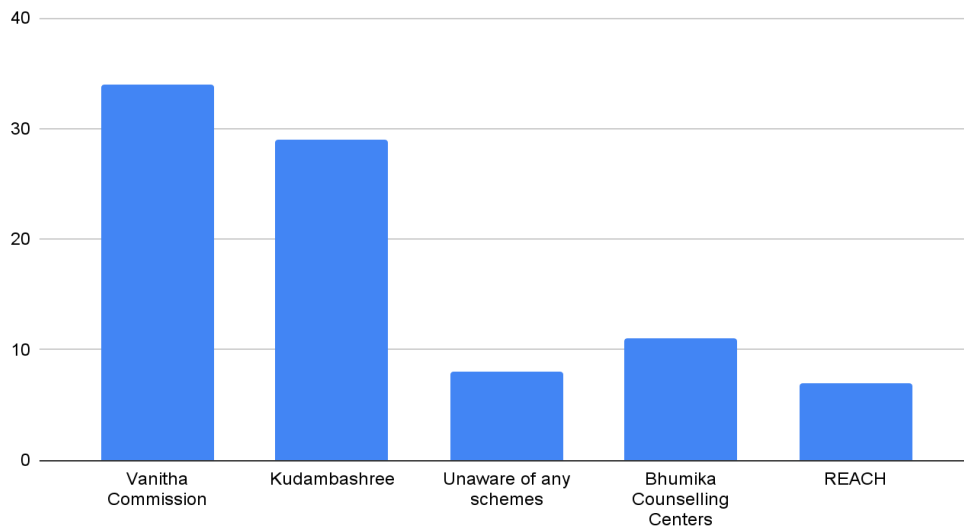


Figure 7: The number of women who were aware of each scheme

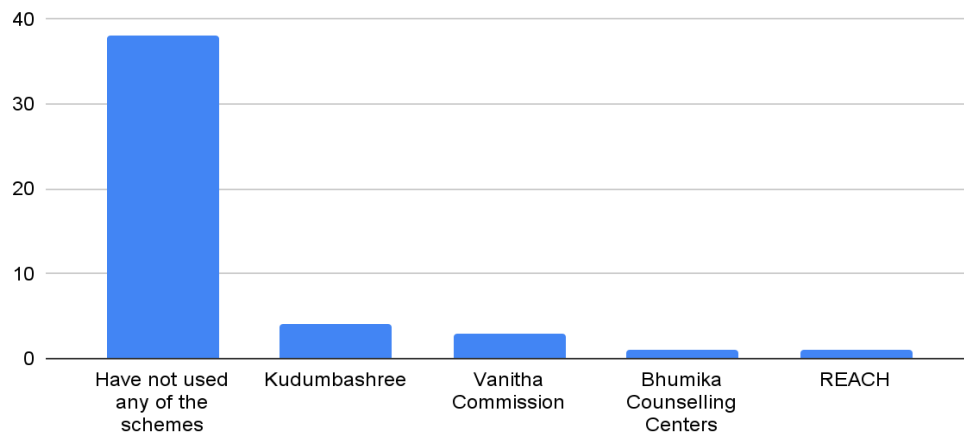


Figure 8: The number of women who had used each scheme that they were aware of

³⁶ See Page 11

³⁷ A statutory body that performs is entitled with the responsibility of taking action on all matters relating to women's problems (keralawomenscommission.gov.in)

In a related study (Ahmed, et al.) in the Hindi language with South Asian immigrant women in Toronto, it was found that three major themes emerged from the discussions: reasons for delayed help-seeking, turning points and talking to professionals. Women expressed that the dominant reasons for delayed help-seeking were social stigma, rigid gender roles, marriage obligations, expected silence, limited knowledge about available resources and myths about partner abuse³⁸ which is similar to the reasons given by women in the survey³⁹. These findings reflect the socio-cultural norms of patriarchy that are embedded in South Asian culture, as seen in Kerala society. The paper also states that prevention approaches to address partner abuse and delayed help-seeking among South Asian women should include tailored community education, social services to reduce vulnerability, and cultural competency of professionals.

However, the women that have used any of the facilities have had positive experiences. For example, two of the Kudumbashree beneficiaries in the survey commented that it gave them financial stability. However, despite being employed they were still subject to discrimination and harassment at home, although not to a brutal extent. A participant who was a victim to rape and other major forms of domestic abuse from the marital family, stated that “All women should know their legal rights and what supportive acts are already present under law”. This is a relevant point considering that knowledge regarding the schemes were clearly lacking among the participants. Despite being employed full-time and having a salary above or equal to Rs. 5 Lakh and below Rs. 6 Lakh, she was still subjected to violent abuse.

Another aspect of the GRBs that was highlighted by a participant was that “Most of the men are not recognising women’s problems” and that “counselling to men” should be included as part of the Gender Budget, for them to understand women’s issues better. This individual was a victim of mental and emotional harassment in both public and domestic spheres and was harassed by the marital family, despite being in full-time employment.

The women were asked to rate the effectiveness of the schemes in curbing gender-based harassment and thereby improving their quality of life, on a scale⁴⁰ of 1 to 10, to which the average response⁴¹ was 5.7. Therefore, it can be said that the general opinion among the group is that the schemes are somewhat effective in curbing these issues. They were similarly asked to rate to what extent they think that employment, stable wages and independence reduce the occurrence of gender based harassment, to which the average response⁴² was 7.4, indicating that the women’s agreement to this statement was good but not to a very high extent. The most popular policy suggestions⁴³ by the women were (1) strengthen, unify and expand existing resources for women facing violence and abuse, (2) a scheme to promote digital and financial literacy among housewives and unemployed women and (3) a scheme to work towards the welfare of women in corporate environments. This supports the preliminary research finding that the allocations schemes targeted at this issue are significantly low. The women believe that better digital and financial literacy along with career development, may reduce harassment, at least in the domestic sphere.

³⁸ Ahmad, F., Driver, N., McNally, M., & Stewart, D. (2009). “Why doesn't she seek help for partner abuse?” An exploratory study with South Asian immigrant women. *Social Science & Medicine*, 69(4), 613-622. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2009.06.011

³⁹ See Appendix C

⁴⁰ 1: Completely Disagree, 5: Neutral, 10: Completely Agree

⁴¹ Rounded to 1 decimal place

⁴² Rounded to 1 decimal place

⁴³ See Appendix C

Conclusion

In response to the research question, ‘*To what extent have the Gender Budgeting Schemes, introduced in the Kerala government’s Annual Financial Budget 2021, been effective in reducing the occurrences of gender-based violence in the districts of Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam in Kerala, for the period 2021-2022?*’, I conclude that they have created some impact, but not enough to significantly reduce gender-based violence in the state.

Although there are schemes with the potential to tackle these issues, the budgetary allocations towards these schemes that are directly related to reducing gender-based violence are minimal and would benefit from higher commitments in future budgets. This is supported by the primary data collected in which a significant number of women had experienced harassment in some form. In addition to this, it was found there is a lack of awareness regarding these facilities among the women.

Even survey participants with stable employment were victims to domestic violence.^{44 45} However, the majority of women do believe that stable employment would decrease the occurrence of domestic violence⁴⁶. Also, despite the large percentage allocated towards employment schemes, women in higher income sectors and discouraged workers do not benefit from it.

I recommend that greater financial support is provided to POCSO Courts, Bhumika Counselling Centres, Vanitha Commission, Gender awareness and gender friendly infrastructure facilities in the police department, medical care for victims, immediate relief fund victims of violence, psycho-social services for adolescent girls, victim relief fund and Nirbhaya programme, in order to provide better support to women and girls regarding the issue of violence in Kerala, as a step towards allowing them to live happier and more carefree lives.

Evaluation

Through this study I was able to learn the topic of gender responsive budgeting in depth and understand the real-world applications of fiscal policy in tackling social issues. I was able to use macroeconomic concepts such as inflation, unemployment rates and budgetary allocations to analyse the Gender Budget. However, there were many limitations that arose during the research.

A major error is the failure to plan out the data analysis method in detail prior to the data collection. The survey questions could have been more specific and irrelevant information collected in the survey could have been avoided. Systematic sampling could have been done by controlling for socio-economic factors and focusing on a specific demographic of women in Kerala. The research was also inhibited by the fact that there was no control group. It also occurred that I did not have either the mathematical knowledge or relevant survey results required to create a statistical model, therefore limiting the data analysis.

The accuracy of the responses is also limited, since it depends mostly on the cooperation of the respondent. The factor of human error also comes into this limitation. Thus, resulting in possibly inaccurate conclusions. The implications of this issue are mentioned in a World Bank discussion paper (Joseph et al., 2017), which points out how it affects conclusions and recommendations, therefore resulting in wrong policy choices⁴⁷.

⁴⁴ Reference to the relationship between reduced domestic violence and female employment discovered at IZA (Anderberg et al., 2013)

⁴⁵ Anderberg, D., Rainer, H., Wadsworth, J., & Wilson, T. (2015). Unemployment and Domestic Violence: Theory and Evidence. *The Economic Journal*, 126(597), 1947-1979. doi: 10.1111/eoj.12246

⁴⁶ This theory does not have implications on harassment outside the domestic sphere, therefore only its impact on domestic violence has been evaluated.

⁴⁷ Joseph, G., Javaid, S. U., Andres, L. A., Chellaraj, G., Solotaroff, J. L., & Rajan, S. I. (2017). Underreporting of gender-based violence in Kerala, India: An application of the list randomization method. *World Bank Group*. <https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-8044>

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