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***Dheni Indra Kusuma[1], Baldric Siregar[2],**
Maria Pampa Kumalaningrum[3]

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IMPLEMENTATION: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW OF DETERMINANTS, IMPACTS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

ABSTRACT: Demands regarding transparency, accountability, and public participation in the management of public finances have increased over the past decade. This trend has driven the implementation of participatory budgeting (PB) to enhance the efficiency of public budget utilisation and boost public trust in government, particularly regarding the budget allocation process. The effectiveness of PB varies across different countries. This study aims to identify the determinants of PB implementation, analyse the impact of its implementation, and map the future direction of PB research. The study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) using the PRISMA Model, analysing 173 Scopus-indexed journal articles from the period 2001-2025. VOSviewer was used to map the relationships between research topics and future research directions. The results indicate that the determinants of PB implementation include political commitment, institutional capacity, public participation, and effective digitalisation, whilst its main impacts concern transparency, accountability, legitimacy, and public service quality. VOSviewer identified three interconnected research clusters concerning implementation, governance and outcomes, and methodological approaches. Building on these clusters and the temporal development of the literature, the review proposes four priorities for future research: comparative and multilevel analysis of PB effectiveness, digital and hybrid participatory architecture, causal mechanisms linking participation to governance and fiscal outcomes, and methodological innovation in measuring participation quality and long-term effects. These priorities provide a structured agenda for moving PB research from documenting participatory practices towards explaining how, under what conditions, and through which mechanisms PB generates sustainable public value.

KEYWORDS: *Participatory budgeting*, *government*, *Systematic Literature Review*

[1] *Dheni Indra Kusuma, Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi YKPN. Corresponding author. Email: dheni@stieykpn.ac.id.
[2] Baldric Siregar, Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi YKPN.
[3] Maria Pampa Kumalaningrum, Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi YKPN.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, public sector governance reforms have emphasised transparency, accountability and public participation in budgetary decision-making, in response to declining public trust, socio-economic pressures and the need for efficient budget management (Avritzer, 2010). Public participation in the budget cycle, through Participatory Budgeting (PB), is regarded as a governance innovation that strengthens government–society relations, policy legitimacy, and social control over public budgets (Abbott et al., 2024; Wampler, 2012).

The implementation of PB varies regionally: in Latin America, PB has evolved from grassroots initiatives into institutional policies for social inclusivity and redistribution (Avritzer, 2012), whilst in Eastern Europe and Asia, PB is increasingly linked to governance innovation and digitalisation, including electronic PB (Abdel-Monem et al., 2016; Bardovič & Gašparík, 2021). The effectiveness of PB is influenced by the political context, institutional capacity, government administrative capabilities, and levels of citizen participation (Barros & Sampaio, 2016).

Theoretically, PB is explained through participatory democracy, collaborative governance, and institutional theory, which emphasise deliberation, collaboration between actors, and the role of institutions in improving the quality of public decision-making. From a New Public Management perspective, PB is also regarded as a managerial innovation to enhance the efficiency and responsiveness of public services (Becerra Vásquez et al., 2023). However, research on PB remains fragmented, with findings regarding success factors, governance impacts, and policy outcomes yet to be systematically synthesised; thus, further studies are required to explore the determinants of success and the future direction of PB research.

1.1 Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

This study aims to provide a systematic literature review of participatory budgeting research by examining its determinants, impacts, and future research agenda. Specifically, it analyses 173 Scopus-indexed journal articles published between 2001 and 2025 using the PRISMA model and VOSviewer to identify the key factors shaping PB implementation, assess its governance outcomes, and map emerging research directions.

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Through a systematic literature review approach, we answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What determinants of participatory budgeting implementation?

RQ2: What impacts does participatory budgeting generate for public governance?

RQ3: What future research agenda can be proposed for participatory budgeting studies?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Participatory budgeting (PB) emerged as a local democratic innovation and subsequently developed into an important form of participatory governance. Early studies largely approached PB from the perspective of participatory democracy, particularly its capacity to expand citizen involvement and redistribute decision-making authority (Wampler, 2007). Evidence from Brazil further shows that PB was closely associated with attempts to improve the participation and living conditions of disadvantaged communities (Avritzer, 2010). As PB expanded into different administrative settings, the literature also began to address institutional design and administrative capacity (Mattei et al., 2022; Pulkkinen et al., 2024b), public financial management and government performance (Oh et al., 2019), and digital participation (Coleman & Cardoso Sampaio, 2017; Santolamazza et al., 2024). More recent studies have therefore treated PB not only as a democratic mechanism but also as an institutional, managerial, and technological innovation.

2.1 The Institutional Design and Sustainability of Participatory Budgeting

Institutional design has become a central concern in explaining the effectiveness and continuity of PB. Evidence from Brazil shows that political and institutional arrangements influence the capacity of participatory institutions to remain effective over time (Goldfrank & Schneider, 2006). In China, different administrative and political logics shape the degree of citizen influence within PB processes (He, 2011). Research in Italy highlights the importance of process design in determining whether citizens become substantive participants rather than merely consultees (Mattei et al., 2022). In Taipei, the translation of PB into administrative routines demonstrates the importance of integrating participation into formal government procedures (Fu, 2023). Finnish evidence further links PB sustainability to

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collaborative innovation capacity within local government (Pulkkinen et al., 2024), whilst studies from Slovakia underline the importance of political, institutional, and organisational support for the continuity of PB (Bardovič & Gašparík, 2021; Svidroňová et al., 2024).

Taken together, these studies suggest that formal regulation alone does not ensure sustainable PB. Political commitment, administrative capacity, organisational resources, and meaningful citizen involvement need to operate together. By contrast, weak administrative support, political instability, or limited institutional commitment can reduce PB to a largely symbolic process. An important gap therefore lies in explaining how these conditions interact and why comparable PB arrangements generate different outcomes across jurisdictions.

2.2 Governance and Public Financial Performance Results

A second major stream of research examines whether PB produces measurable governance and public financial outcomes. In Brazil, Gonçalves (2014) found that PB was associated with changes in municipal expenditure priorities, particularly in health and sanitation. Evidence from South Korea links PB with government efficiency and fiscal outcomes, although the effects are not uniform across performance dimensions (Oh et al., 2019; H. Park et al., 2024). In Indonesia, Musadat (2023) reports evidence linking PB with local public service delivery. Broader comparative evidence also indicates that PB can improve basic service provision when citizen priorities are effectively incorporated into municipal decisions (Cabannes, 2015).

Nevertheless, the mechanisms connecting participation with these outcomes remain insufficiently explained. Much of the empirical literature examines direct relationships between PB and governance or fiscal indicators, while giving less attention to intermediate processes such as deliberative quality, budget literacy, bureaucratic responsiveness, transparency, and citizen monitoring. This gap is important because similar PB arrangements may produce different results when implemented under different political and administrative conditions.

2.3 Digital Transformation and the Inclusion of Citizens

More recent PB research has shifted attention from the quantity of participation towards its quality and inclusiveness. Kim (2025) for example, shows that participation costs and informational barriers influence citizens' willingness to engage in budgeting processes.

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Experimental evidence from China indicates that participatory decision-making can also encourage broader civic engagement beyond the immediate budgeting process (Wu et al., 2024).

Digitalisation has added another dimension to this debate. In Belo Horizonte, Coleman & Cardoso Sampaio (2017) show that the sustainability of electronic PB cannot be separated from the broader quality of democratic participation. The Rome experience demonstrates that digital tools may support citizen participation and public value creation, but their contribution depends on how citizens are incorporated into the process (Santolamazza et al., 2024). Evidence from Estonia highlights the institutional diffusion of PB across local governments (Krenjova & Raudla, 2018), while Does & Bos (2021) show in The Hague that online platforms require deliberate design if they are to remain inclusive and deliberative. These studies suggest that technology alone does not guarantee better participation. Communication quality, institutional responsiveness, accessibility, and opportunities for deliberation remain central to effective digital PB.

The PB literature has developed considerably, however there are certain key gaps. First, available studies tend to lack theoretical integration and follow various disciplinary traditions such as participatory democracy, public administration, public financial management, and digital governance. Second, the majority of empirical evidence comes from single-country or single-city research, which constrain a larger comparative knowledge across institutional and political contexts. Third, PB performance is still mostly judged by participation rates, project implementation or funding allocations, with fewer research looking at substantial citizen influence, deliberative quality or long-term governance transformation. Lastly, digital PB research has been mostly focused on technology accessibility and transparency, but the consequences for discussion, representativeness, institutional trust, and policy responsiveness are largely unexplored.

These constraints point to the necessity for a comprehensive systematic literature review that integrates fragmented material across the governance, institutional, budgetary, and technology perspectives. Such synthesis can offer a more holistic understanding of how institutional arrangements, citizen participation, administrative capacity, and digital innovation together influence the effectiveness and sustainability of participatory budgeting and suggest future research directions for comparative and interdisciplinary studies.

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3. METHOD

The study used the principles of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) to conduct a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to achieve a transparent and repeatable article selection procedure. Only literature from the Scopus database was collected using the search string: "participatory budgeting" OR "participative budgeting" OR "citizen budgeting" OR "initiative budgeting" AND "government". The search identified 358 records at first.

The selection process followed four stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. During the identification stage, the Scopus search retrieved 358 records. In the identification phase, the records were restricted to publications from 2001 to 2025. Two articles published before 2001 were excluded because they examined early and highly localised experiences of participatory budgeting in Brazil, when PB was still largely characterised by experimental and context-specific implementation. The year 2001 was therefore adopted as the starting point of the review to capture the period in which PB research began to develop into a broader and more sustained international body of literature across different institutional and national contexts. Following this temporal restriction, 356 records remained for further review.

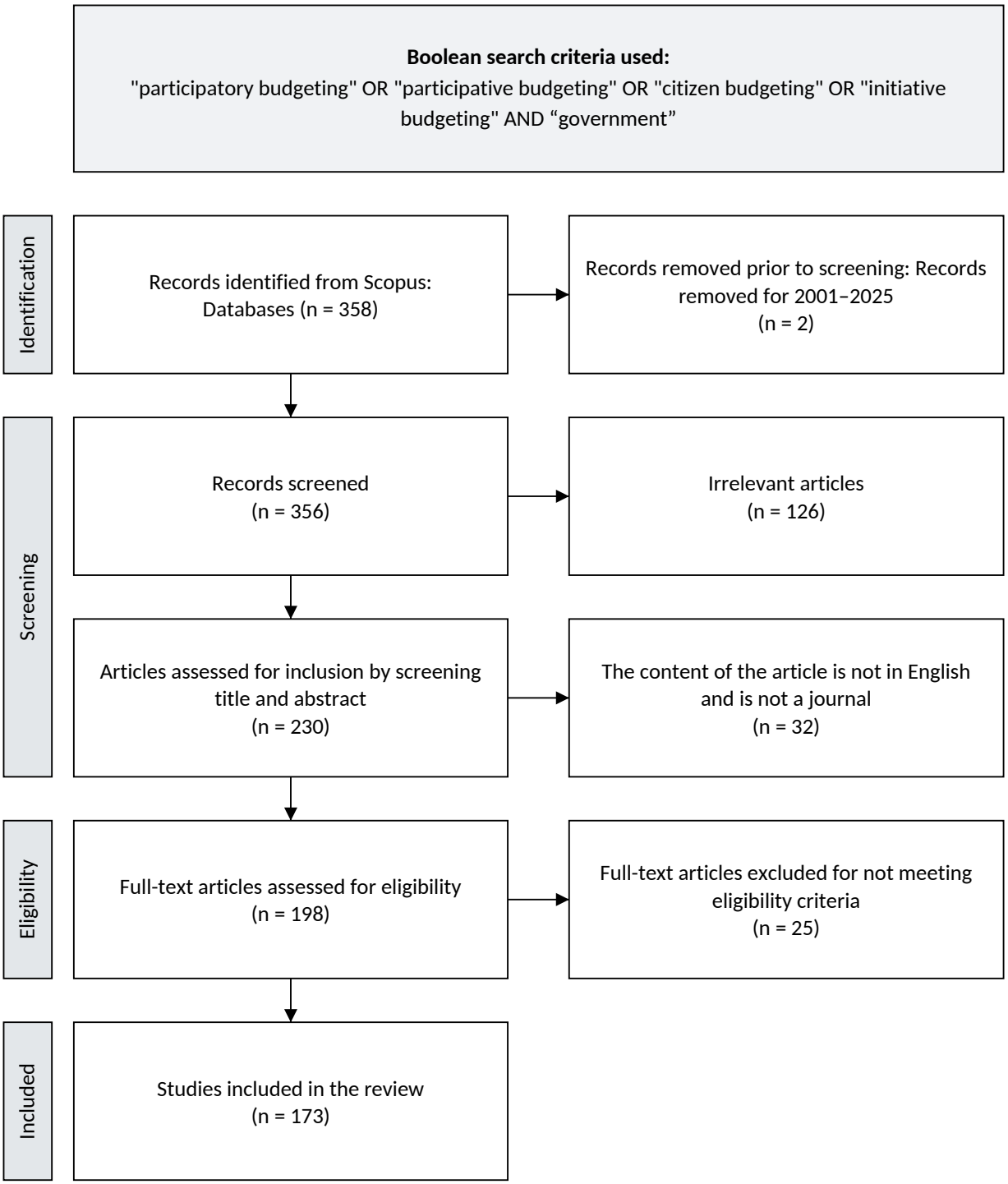
During the screening stage, the titles and abstracts of 356 records were reviewed for relevance to PB within the context of public governance. Studies addressing participative budgeting in private organisations, public participation without a budgeting component, or PB only as a peripheral issue were excluded. This screening removed 126 records, leaving 230 articles. The remaining records were then restricted to journal articles published in English. This step excluded a further 32 records, resulting in 198 articles for full-text assessment.

During the eligibility stage, the full text of these 198 articles was examined against the predetermined inclusion criteria. Twenty-five articles were excluded because PB was not the main focus, the study was unrelated to public-sector budgeting, insufficient information was available for data extraction, or the study did not contribute to understanding determinants of PB implementation, or impacts. Consequently, 173 articles were retained for the final synthesis and analysis.

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This rigorous selection technique ensured that only studies directly related to the research aims were included, thus enhancing the transparency, uniformity and scientific rigour of the review.

Figure 1: PRISMA Framework



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4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research on PB shows substantial variation across regions. In Latin America, early PB practices were closely associated with democratic participation, social inclusion, and redistribution, particularly in Brazil (Avritzer, 2010; Souza, 2001). In Central and Eastern Europe, research increasingly focuses on the institutionalisation of PB, administrative capacity, and the conditions required for its continuity, as illustrated by evidence from Slovakia (Balážová et al., 2022; Bardovič & Gašparík, 2021). In Asia, PB has developed within different governance settings. Research from China highlights the interaction between participatory mechanisms and technocratic governance (Abbott et al., 2024), while the Taipei experience shows how PB can be incorporated into formal administrative processes (Fu, 2023).

Digital participation has become another important strand of the literature. Barros & Sampaio (2016) show that trust and public expression are important issues in electronic PB, while Santolamazza et al. (2024) demonstrate that digitalisation can contribute to public value when citizens retain a meaningful role in the process. At the same time, digital participation raises concerns regarding access, inclusion, and the quality of deliberation.

Research has also moved towards institutional and managerial questions. Bartocci et al. (2019) interpret PB through competing and hybrid institutional logics, whereas (Becerra Vásquez et al., 2023) emphasise its role in improving the management of basic public services. This development suggests that PB is increasingly examined not only as a democratic innovation but also as an administrative and governance mechanism whose outcomes depend on institutional design and implementation capacity.

4.1 Determinants of PB Implementation

The literature indicates that the success of participatory budgeting (PB) is determined by a combination of political, institutional, social, digital and fiscal factors, rather than by a single variable. The most dominant factors are political commitment, local leadership, and support from local government, particularly when backed by credible rules, clear procedures, and adequate administrative capacity (Balážová et al., 2022; Bardovič & Gašparík, 2021; Koltun, 2017)

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Beyond this, the strength of civil society, budget literacy, procedural justice, and inclusive calls for participation also reinforce PB, although their influence may weaken when institutional trust is low, digital literacy gaps are high, and the burden of participation is too great (Murdayanti et al., 2020; Plaček et al., 2023). The positive effects of participation will fade if barriers such as distrust in institutions, low digital/budget literacy, or the burden of participation are not properly and seriously addressed. In other words, a strong civil society is not merely the presence of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), but the capacity for intermediation and consistent outreach to marginalised groups.

Digitalisation and platforms demonstrate the positive potential of digital channels to expand reach and reduce the cost of participation (De Blasio et al., 2020; Loeber, 2018; Santolamazza et al., 2024). However, this topic also contains a significant proportion of negative findings: the digital divide, disparities in literacy and access, lockdowns and restrictions that reduce in-person deliberation, and the prevalence of social media activity that does not always lead to quality participation (Jayasinghe et al., 2020; Schiuma, 2024; Timmons & Garfias, 2015).

Table 1: Determinants of PB Implementation

No.	Determinant	Finding	Authors
1	Digitalisation and online participation enablers	Positive	(Bardovič & Gašparík, 2021; Chikerema et al., 2024)
2	Digitalisation and online participation constraints	Negative	(Coleman & Cardoso Sampaio, 2017; Lim & Oh, 2016)
3	Digitalisation and online participation	NS	(Kukučková et al., 2025)
4	Political and executive support enablers	Positive	(Bardovič & Gašparík, 2021; Bland, 2011)
5	Political will and symbolic adoption barriers	Negative	(Balážová et al., 2022; Milosavljević et al., 2020)
6	Party-political and electoral change enablers	Positive	(de Azevedo et al., 2022; Jacquet et al., 2024)
7	Party-political and electoral change barriers	Negative	(de Azevedo et al., 2022; Lüchmann & Bogo, 2022)
8	Civil society and stakeholder mobilisation enablers	Positive	(Bardovič & Gašparík, 2021; Garcia, 2024;)

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Table 1: Determinants of PB Implementation (continued)

No.	Determinant	Finding	Authors
9	Advocacy roles with mixed effects	Positive	(Wampler, 2009)
10	Participatory and procedural design enablers	Positive	(Bednarska-Olejniczak et al., 2021; Derbeneva et al., 2024)
11	Participatory and procedural design constraints	Negative	(Lüchmann & Bogo, 2022; Manes-Rossi et al., 2024)
12	Institutional and regulatory arrangements	Positive	(Bardovič & Gašparík, 2021; Bartocci et al., 2019)
13	Institutional trust and corruption barriers	Negative	(De Blasio et al., 2020; Timmons & Garfias, 2015)
14	Organisational and managerial capability	Positive	(Ewens & van der Voet, 2019; Pulkkinen et al., 2024b; Usman et al., 2024)
15	Organisational and knowledge capacity barriers	Negative	(Soukop et al., 2021; Uddin et al., 2019)
16	Financial resources and budgetary capacity	Positive	(Balážová et al., 2022; Bernaciak & Kopczyński, 2019)
17	Financial and budgetary constraints	Negative	(Chovanecek et al., 2024; Soukop et al., 2021)
18	Policy learning, diffusion and local choice	Positive	(Krenjova & Raudla, 2018; Krueger & Park, 2020)
19	Decentralised governance arrangements	Positive	(Onyalo, 2024)
20	Pandemic and restrictive conditions	Negative	(Chikerema et al., 2024; Mukushwa et al., 2021)
21	Citizen capability, trust and perceptions	Positive	(Lassou et al., 2024; J. Lee et al., 2022)

4.2 PB Impact

The impact of PB in the literature is primarily concentrated on five dimensions: governance quality, public performance and value, social capital, services and infrastructure, and the quality of participatory democracy. The most consistent findings are improvements in accountability, transparency and legitimacy, as citizen involvement makes the budgeting process more open, documented and accountable (Carvalho et al., 2025; Centner, 2012; Ruesch & Märker, 2012). In terms of performance, effectiveness is more frequently reported

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positively than efficiency. This makes sense as citizen participation typically improves the targeting of programmes to local needs, but does not always reduce coordination costs (Ibrahim, 2011; Oh et al., 2019; Postigo, 2011). The impact on trust, empowerment, and social capital also tends to vary. PB can strengthen state-society relations when participation genuinely influences decisions, but can foster cynicism when participation is merely symbolic or not followed by adequate implementation. In terms of services and infrastructure, the benefits of PB tend to be positive as citizens' preferences help select programmes better suited to local needs, although these outcomes are highly dependent on the quality of forum design, implementation capacity, and guarantees of inclusivity, including in digital participation (Plaček et al., 2023; Sinervo & Laihonen, 2024).

Table 2: Impact

No.	Impact	Findings	Authors
1	Accountability, Transparency and Anti-Corruption	Positive	(Brun-Martos & Lapsley, 2017; Franklin & Ebdon, 2020)
2	Accountability, Transparency and Anti-Corruption	Negative	(Goldfrank & Schneider, 2006)
3	Civic Participation and Engagement	Positive	(Almansi, 2009; Bocatto & Perez-De-Toledo, 2020)
4	Civic Participation and Engagement	Negative	(Kim, 2025; Pozzebon et al., 2016)
5	Citizen Empowerment and Inclusion	Positive	(He, 2011; Maravilla & Grayman, 2020;)
6	Citizen Empowerment and Inclusion	Negative	(Wampler, 2012)
7	Democratic Governance and Deliberation	Positive	(Avritzer, 2012; Cabannes, 2004)
8	Democratic Governance and Deliberation	Negative	(Centner, 2012)
9	Democratic Governance and Deliberation	NS	(Davidson, 2023)
10	Trust, Legitimacy and Satisfaction	Positive	(Abdel-Monem et al., 2016; Barros & Sampaio, 2016;)
11	Trust, Legitimacy and Satisfaction	Negative	(Buele, Vidueira, & Guevara, 2020; Mundt, 2019)
12	Policy Responsiveness and Decision Quality	Positive	(Becerra Vásquez et al., 2023; Damayanti et al., 2025)

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Table 2: Impact (continued)

No.	Impact	Findings	Authors
13	Public Service Provision and Neighbourhood Infrastructure	Positive	(Boulding & Wampler, 2010; Cabannes, 2015;)
14	Social Equity and Redistribution	Positive	(Abbott et al., 2024; Goldfrank & Schneider, 2006)
15	Economic Welfare and Household Well-being	Positive	(Abbott et al., 2024; Avritzer, 2010; Kim, 2010)
16	Economic Welfare and Household Well-being	Negative	(Saguin, 2018)
17	Fiscal Outcomes and Financial Management	Positive	(D. Lee & Min, 2023; J. Park et al., 2023)
18	Fiscal Outcomes and Financial Management	Negative	(Goldfrank & Schneider, 2006; D. Lee & Min, 2023)
19	Administrative Modernisation and Institutional Capacity	Positive	(Castillo, 2015; Novy & Leubolt, 2005)
20	Administrative Modernisation and Institutional Capacity	Negative	(Buele, Vidueira, & Guevara, 2020)
21	Administrative Modernisation and Institutional Capacity	NS	(S. J. Wu et al., 2024)
22	Public Sector Performance and Effectiveness	Positive	(Castillo, 2015; He, 2011; Ibrahim, 2011)
23	Public Sector Performance and Effectiveness	Negative	(Buele, Vidueira, Yagüe, et al., 2020; Natsir et al., 2023)
24	Public Sector Performance and Effectiveness	NS	(Oh et al., 2019)
25	Community Development and Social Cohesion	Positive	(Demediuk et al., 2012; Kovács, 2024)
26	Community Development and Social Cohesion	Negative	(Saguin, 2018)
27	Sustainability and Environmental Outcomes	Positive	(Bednarska-Olejniczak et al., 2020; Cohen, 2012;)
28	Political Process and Power Distribution	Positive	(Goldfrank & Schneider, 2006; Holdo, 2016)
29	Political Process and Power Distribution	Negative	(Rodgers, 2010)

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Table 2: Impact (continued)

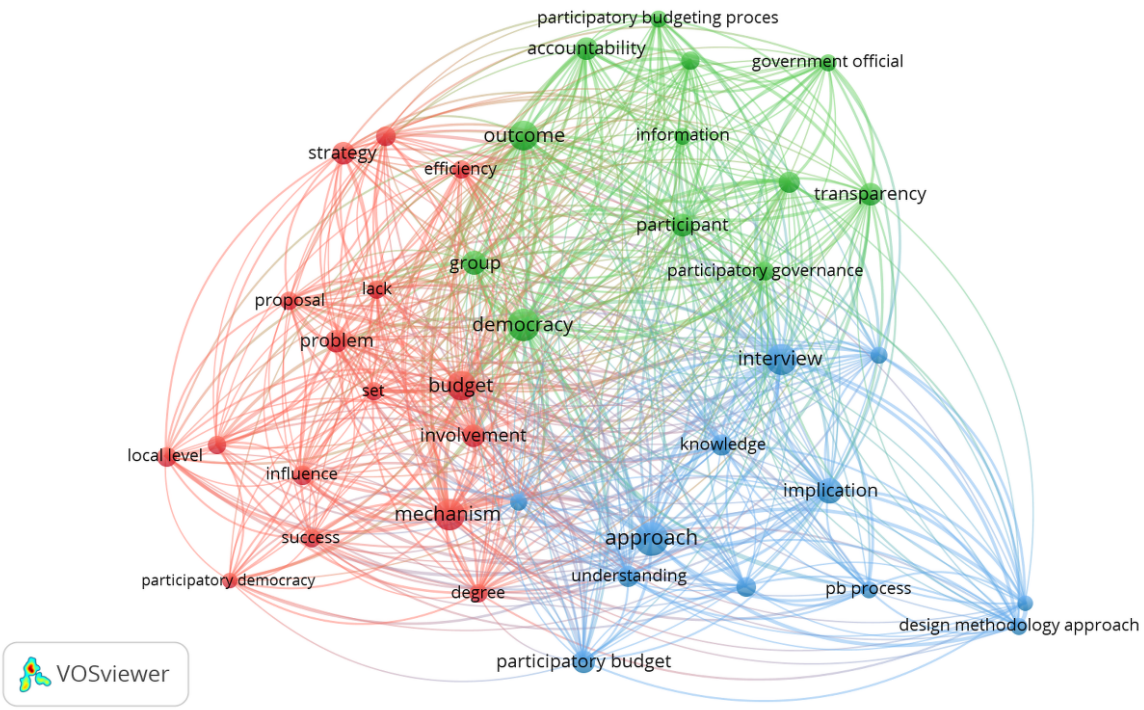
No.	Impact	Findings	Authors
30	Participatory Budgeting Programme Design, Implementation and Continuity	Positive	(Mattei et al., 2022; Murray et al., 2024)
31	Participatory Budgeting Programme Design, Implementation and Continuity	Negative	(Kim, 2010)
32	Digital Participation and E-Governance	Positive	(Kim, 2010)
33	Institutional and Social Risk Effects	Negative	(Mundt, 2019; Ruesch & Märker, 2012)
34	Institutional and Social Risk Effects	NS	(Natsir et al., 2023)

4.3 PB Research Themes

A synthesis was conducted to gain a better understanding of research themes related to participatory budgeting in government. The following is the result of the synthesis using the VosViewer application to illustrate the interrelationships or connections between the themes within this topic.

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Figure 2: Network Visualisation



The thematic synthesis indicates that PB research is developing across three main clusters. The first cluster focuses on the implementation of PB in the field, such as strategies, mechanisms, proposals, and the dynamics of participation at the local level. The second cluster centres on governance and outcomes, particularly the relationship between PB and democracy, transparency, accountability, and governance outcomes. The third cluster emphasises methodological and conceptual dimensions, such as design methodology approaches, knowledge, interviews, and understanding of the PB process. The positioning of keywords such as democracy, budget, and participatory budget indicates that the core of PB literature remains at the intersection of participatory democracy and public budgeting, whilst the strong interconnection between transparency, accountability, and outcomes signals a shift in PB towards an instrument for improving governance, rather than merely a formal participatory procedure (Klimovský et al., 2024). Temporally, PB themes have also shifted from conceptual issues towards more empirical, evaluative, and methodological ones, including the digitalisation of participation and process design.

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4.4 Future Research

The synthesis of the literature and the VOSviewer analysis provides a direct answer to RQ3 by identifying four priority areas for future PB research. These priorities do not simply reflect topics that have received limited attention. Rather, they emerge from the intersection of the three clusters identified in the network visualisation, the temporal shift shown in the overlay visualisation, and the gaps revealed by the review of determinants of PB implementation and impacts. Together, they suggest that future research should move beyond asking whether PB works and focus more explicitly on how, under what conditions, through which mechanisms, and for whom PB produces sustainable governance outcomes.

Priority 1: Comparative and multilevel explanations of PB effectiveness and sustainability. The first priority is to explain why similar PB arrangements produce different outcomes across institutional and territorial contexts. This agenda emerges primarily from the implementation cluster, which connects PB with local-level strategies, mechanisms, proposals, participation, and success. Existing research has identified political commitment, institutional arrangements, administrative capacity, civil society mobilisation, financial resources, and participatory design as important determinants. However, these factors are often examined separately. Future studies should therefore investigate their interaction across municipalities, regions, and countries. Comparative and longitudinal designs would be particularly useful for distinguishing context-specific determinants from conditions that remain important across different governance systems. This leads to a central research question: How do political, institutional, administrative, fiscal, and social conditions interact to explain differences in the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of PB across jurisdictions?

Priority 2: Digital architecture, inclusion, and accountable PB. The second priority concerns the changing role of digitalisation. The review shows that digital participation can widen access and reduce participation costs, but it can also reproduce inequalities associated with digital literacy, internet access, and unequal representation. This tension is consistent with the VOSviewer findings. The network visualisation connects participation with transparency, information, accountability, and governance, whilst the overlay visualisation shows the increasing prominence of process design, knowledge, methodological approaches, and digitalisation. Future research should consequently move beyond comparing online and

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offline participation and examine the architecture of digital PB itself. Relevant dimensions include information quality, accessibility, transparency of proposal selection, traceability of decisions, feedback mechanisms, data integrity, and the inclusion of marginalised groups. A key question is: Under what institutional and design conditions does digital or hybrid PB strengthen inclusion, deliberative quality, transparency, and accountability rather than create new forms of participation inequality?

Priority 3: Causal mechanisms linking participation to governance, fiscal, and social outcomes. The third priority arises from the governance and outcomes cluster. Although the literature frequently associates PB with transparency, accountability, legitimacy, public services, fiscal outcomes, and social equity, the review also identifies negative and non-significant findings. This variation suggests that the relationship between PB and its outcomes cannot be adequately explained by the presence of PB alone. Future research should identify the mechanisms through which participation produces particular outcomes. Actor networks, deliberative quality, government responsiveness, citizen monitoring, institutional trust, and fiscal literacy are promising mediating or moderating mechanisms. Research should also examine who proposes projects, who influences deliberation, whose preferences reach the final budget, and whether approved projects translate into actual expenditure and services. Longitudinal, quasi-experimental, experimental, and process-based designs could provide stronger evidence than simple cross-sectional associations. The corresponding question is: Through which mechanisms does PB affect fiscal performance, accountability, policy responsiveness, public service delivery, social equity, and citizen trust, and what conditions strengthen or weaken these effects?

Priority 4: Measurement and methodological innovation in the evaluation of participation quality. The final priority is closely associated with the methodological and conceptual cluster and with the more recent terms appearing in the overlay visualisation, including interview, knowledge, implication, PB process, and design methodology approach. Future PB research needs to move beyond participation counts, number of submitted proposals, voting rates, and allocated funds as the dominant indicators of success. These measures capture participation volume but provide limited evidence about the quality of participation. Future studies should develop and validate measures of deliberative quality, representativeness, citizen influence, fiscal literacy, government responsiveness, and

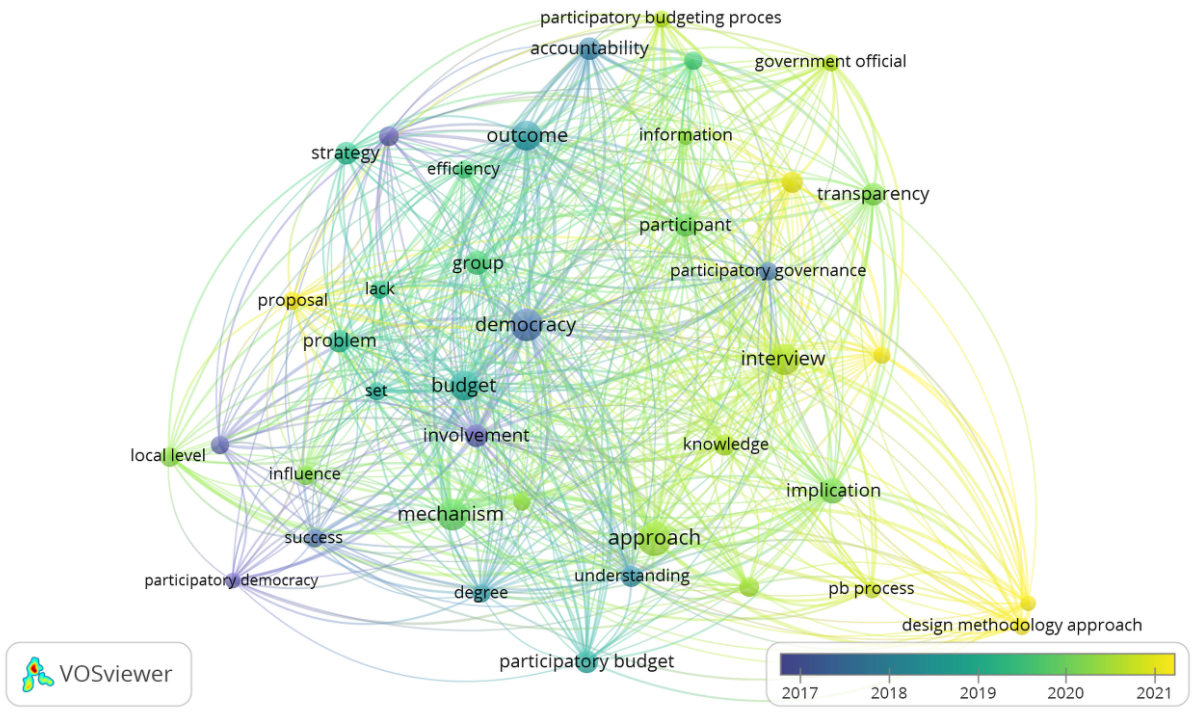
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continuity of participation. Comparative assessment of face-to-face, digital, and hybrid formats, as well as voting-based and deliberative models, could establish which designs work for different groups and institutional settings. Mixed methods, longitudinal studies, pre-post designs, digital trace data, proposal-text analysis, and administrative budget data provide useful methodological avenues. A guiding question is: How can the quality and substantive influence of citizen participation in PB be measured consistently across different institutional, technological, and social contexts?

Taken together, these four priorities provide a structured research agenda that connects the three VOSviewer clusters rather than treating them as separate streams. The first priority extends the implementation cluster by explaining variation in PB sustainability across contexts. The second connects implementation and governance through digital and hybrid participation. The third develops the governance and outcomes cluster by shifting attention from associations to causal mechanisms. The fourth advances the methodological and conceptual cluster by improving how participation quality and PB outcomes are measured. The density visualisation reinforces this direction: although democracy, budget, mechanism, outcome, and approach remain central themes, less densely represented terms such as local level, influence, PB process, and design methodology approach point towards areas that require deeper investigation. Future PB research should therefore integrate context, mechanisms, outcomes, and measurement within the same analytical framework. Such an approach would allow the field to progress from documenting PB practices towards explaining when and how participation produces meaningful and sustainable changes in public governance.

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Figure 3: Overlay Visualisation



This image is a visualisation overlay from VOSviewer showing the timeline of research on Participatory Budgeting (PB) based on the occurrence of keywords in academic publications. The colour of the dots represents the average year of occurrence of the terms: dark blue indicates early terms (2017–2018), whilst yellow denotes the most recent terms (2020–2021).

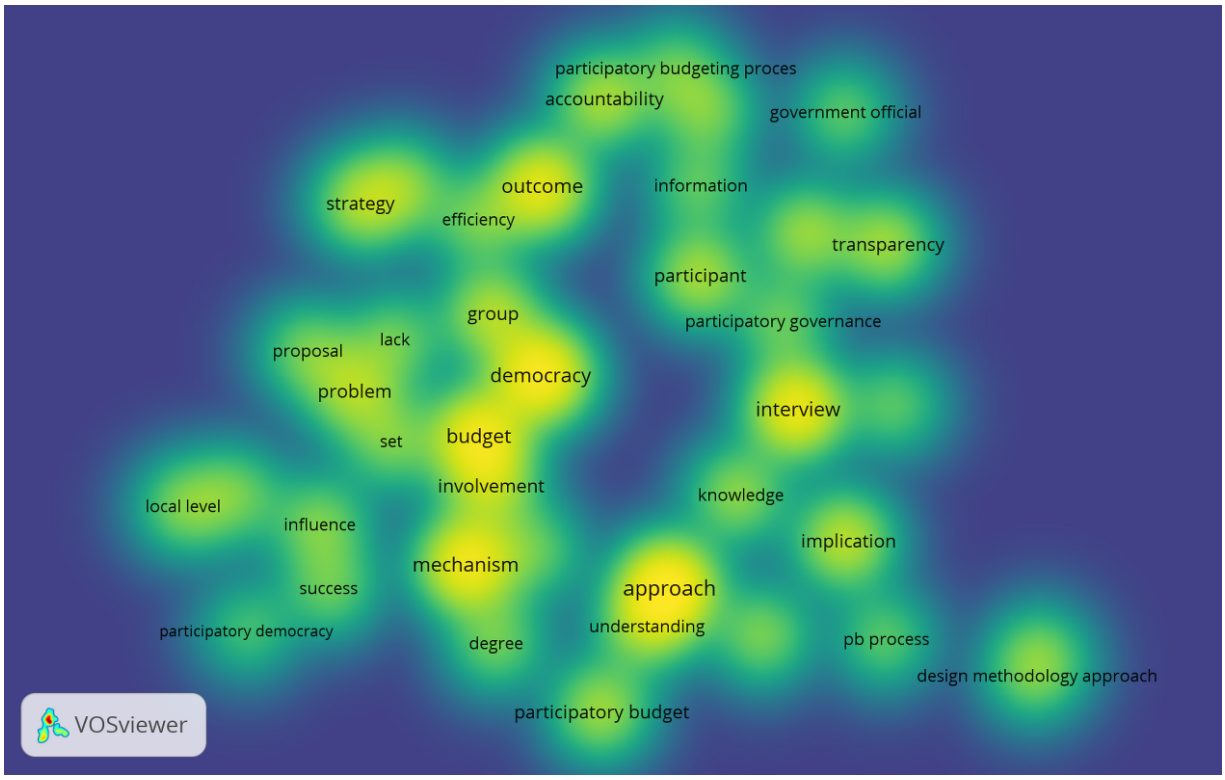
In the early phase (2017–2018), PB research emphasised classic themes such as participatory democracy, the local level, strategies, issues and mechanisms, with a focus on basic concepts, implementation strategies, field challenges and community engagement. In the 2018–2019 period, green dominated, indicating a focus on PB's relationship with principles of good governance, including transparency, accountability, and the effectiveness of policy outcomes, particularly in countries with established PB experience.

Since 2020 (yellow area), research has shifted towards modern conceptual and methodological approaches, including transparency, interviews, PB processes, implications, design methodology approaches, and knowledge, emphasising PB design innovation, digitalisation, and technology integration. This map illustrates the evolution of PB research from a conceptual and normative phase (2017–2018) towards an evaluative and

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methodologically innovative phase (2020–2021), marking academic maturity in the study of PB as an instrument of modern public governance.

Figure 4: Density Visualisation



This image is a density visualisation generated by VOSviewer, illustrating the frequency of keyword occurrences in research on Participatory Budgeting (PB). The colour of the dots indicates the frequency of the word's occurrence: bright yellow denotes frequently occurring words, whilst green to dark blue denotes words that occur less frequently or play a supporting role.

The most prominent core words are 'democracy', 'budget', 'mechanism', 'outcome', and 'approach', indicating the PB research's focus on the application of participatory democracy in budget formulation, implementation mechanisms, the approaches used, and the outcomes achieved regarding governance and public services. The yellow-green area around the words 'accountability', 'transparency', and 'participatory governance' indicates significant attention to the link between citizen participation and the principles of transparent and accountable governance.

Meanwhile, the green-blue edges of the map feature terms such as 'local level', 'influence', 'PB process', and 'design methodology approach', signifying sub-themes and

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research directions, including studies at the regional or city level as well as innovations in participatory design and methodology. Overall, this map confirms that PB research is most heavily concentrated on the relationship between democracy, budgetary mechanisms, and public policy outcomes, with a shift towards more in-depth evaluative and methodological topics as the complexity of PB practices increases across various countries.

5. CONCLUSION

This review shows that participatory budgeting has developed from a mechanism associated primarily with participatory democracy into a broader instrument of public governance that connects citizen participation with budgeting, accountability, public performance, and institutional innovation. Based on 173 Scopus-indexed studies published between 2001 and 2025, the review provides distinct answers to the three research questions.

PB implementation is shaped by interacting political, institutional, administrative, social, fiscal, and technological conditions. Political commitment and credible institutional arrangements provide the basis for continuity, but their effects depend on administrative capacity, financial resources, civil society mobilisation, citizen capability, and the design of participation. Digitalisation can widen access and reduce participation costs, but its contribution is conditional on digital inclusion, information quality, and the ability of participatory processes to maintain meaningful interaction between citizens and government.

PB is associated with a broad range of governance, fiscal, social, and service outcomes. The most consistent benefits concern transparency, accountability, civic engagement, policy responsiveness, public services, and aspects of fiscal management. However, negative and non-significant findings across several outcome categories show that these benefits are not automatic. PB produces stronger outcomes when citizen participation has substantive influence, institutional support is sustained, and governments are capable of translating participatory decisions into budgetary and service outcomes.

The review identifies four priorities for future research. First, comparative and multilevel studies should explain why similar PB arrangements produce different outcomes across institutional and territorial settings. Second, research should examine how digital and

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hybrid PB architectures affect inclusion, deliberation, transparency, and accountability. Third, future studies should identify the causal mechanisms linking participation with fiscal, governance, service, equity, and trust outcomes, particularly through deliberative quality, government responsiveness, citizen monitoring, actor networks, and fiscal literacy. Fourth, methodological research should develop more robust measures of participation quality, representativeness, citizen influence, and long-term outcomes, supported by longitudinal, comparative, experimental, mixed-method, and administrative-data approaches.

These priorities are consistent with the VOSviewer results. The network visualisation identifies three interconnected clusters concerning PB implementation, governance and outcomes, and methodological and conceptual approaches, whilst the overlay visualisation indicates a movement from earlier concerns with participatory democracy and mechanisms towards transparency, process evaluation, knowledge, design, and methodological innovation. The density map further shows that democracy, budget, mechanisms, outcomes, and approaches remain central, whereas local-level influence, PB processes, and methodological design offer room for deeper investigation. Future research should therefore connect these streams rather than examine them independently.

Taken together, the findings suggest that the next stage of PB scholarship should move from establishing whether participatory budgeting works towards explaining how it works, under what conditions, through which mechanisms, and with what consequences for different groups and governance settings. This shift can strengthen the theoretical and empirical foundations of PB research while providing more useful evidence for governments seeking to design participatory budgeting that is inclusive, accountable, sustainable, and capable of producing measurable public value. Therefore, PB is more appropriately positioned as a tool for transformation towards a more open, adaptive, and citizen-oriented government.

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