

## The Patriarchal Barriers for Women Empowerment in Pakistan and Islamic Teachings: A Review of Published Literature

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### Abstract

This research analyzes the life of women in Pakistan. It will explain how Pakistani women deprive of their basic rights. Many women become victims of violence in Pakistan each year. These crimes include Honor Killing, kidnapping, rape, sexual assault, and murder. The main reason for this is the patriarchal mindset, this is the idea that women are weaker than men and men have a right to rule over women. When she raises her voice, she is often suppressed and restricted. She is unable to get a proper education and live a life according to her will. First, she lives her life according to her father's wishes and after marriage, according to her husband's desire. Many laws were made for these women, but sadly, those laws are not obligated. Women are not treated fairly in Pakistan, and they do not get equal rights either. This paper uses, descriptive, qualitative methods and studies in which authentic studies are used.

**Keywords:** Honor killing, Patriarchal mindset, Rights

### I. Introduction

A woman may represent unconditional love, respect, affection, and resilience. The status of Pakistani women varies from family to family, region to region, and rural to urban divide. Although Pakistani culture is 98 percent Muslim, when it comes to women's rights, our society follows customary rules that discriminate against women. She is often treated properly and seen as a

blessing to a family, but at certain times she is regarded as the cause of the majority of society's problems. A woman is someone's mother, sister, daughter, or wife. Because Islam is the basis of Pakistan, and it informs us that paradise is under the mother's feet, the Pakistani mother has the ultimate status. To send a parent to the old homes is assumed a bad and unacceptable step in society.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ جَاءَ رَجُلٌ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، قَالَ مَنْ أَحَقُّ النَّاسِ بِحُسْنِ صَحَابَتِي قَالَ  
أُمُّكَ. قَالَ ثُمَّ مَنْ! قَالَ ثُمَّ أُمُّكَ. قَالَ ثُمَّ مَنْ! قَالَ ثُمَّ مَنْ! قَالَ ثُمَّ أَبُوكَ

*“A man approached Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and said, O Messenger of Allah, which among us is the most deserving of my good company? Your mother, the Prophet (PBUH) said. Then who else, questioned the man: Your mother, the Prophet (PBUH) said. Then who else? the man questioned. The Prophet (PBUH) just then said, Your father.”*<sup>1</sup>

In the current era, Pakistani woman is more aware of her fundamental rights, and she is raising her voice for constitutional rights at every responsible forum. However, on the other hand, the incidents of Honor killings<sup>2</sup>, domestic violence against women, sexual harassment, limited opportunities for education and job, forced marriages, dowry killings, gender inequalities are enough to show the dark side of the story.

وعنه قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: " أكمل المؤمنين إيماناً أحسنهم خلقاً وخياركم خياركم لنسائهم"

*“The finest in behavior are the most complete believers, and the greatest among you are those who are best to your wives.”*<sup>3</sup>

The World Economic Forum (WEF) published the Global Gender Parity Index Report-2021<sup>4</sup> that places Pakistan 153rd out of 156 nations in terms of gender inequality, describing the current status of Pakistani women. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) reported that approximately 1000 women are assassinated in Pakistan every year under the guise of 'honor.' These incidents are indicated the uneven socio-economic status, unseen cultural barriers, inhuman traditions and customs, and feudal practices like *jirga* and *panchayat* (*parallel justice system*) which creates hurdles in the way of woman empowerment.

## II. Discussion

When we look at Pakistani society, we can see that a girl's servitude begins even before she is born, because of girl child is rarely the 'favored' offspring.

وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُم بِالْأُنثَىٰ ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ. يَتَوَارَىٰ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ مِنْ سُوءِ مَا بُشِّرَ بِهِ أَيُمْسِكُهُ عَلَىٰ هُونٍ أَمْ يَدُسُّهُ فِي التُّرَابِ أَلَا سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ

*"When one of them learns of [the birth of] a female, his expression darkens and he hides his sadness. Because of the illness about which he has been informed, he hides himself from the public. Should he preserve it as a source of embarrassment or bury it? Without a doubt, they choose to be bad."*<sup>5</sup>

Many women are subjected to torture as a result of giving birth to a female child. When she is young, her father determines her fate in all key areas, such as schooling, profession, and wedding. In her most significant life decisions, a girl's permission is not appreciated. However, Islam makes it explicit that both the boy and the girl must be asked before they marry.

عَائِشَةُ سَمِعَتْ ، تَقُولُ سَأَلْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنِ الْجَارِيَةِ يُنْكَحُهَا أَهْلُهَا أَدُسْتَأْمَرُ أَمْ لَا فَقَالَ لَهَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " نَعَمْ تُسْتَأْمَرُ " . فَقَالَتْ عَائِشَةُ فَقُلْتُ لَهُ فَإِنَّهَا تَسْتَحْيِي . فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " فَذَلِكَ إِذْ يُنْكَحُهَا إِذَا هِيَ سَكَتَتْ " .

*"Yes, she should be consulted," said Allah's Messenger (PBUH). I informed him she was bashful, and Allah's Messenger (PBUH) remarked, "Her silence suggests her permission," according to A'isha."*<sup>6</sup>

In most cases, however, the Islamic tradition is not observed in a daughter's marriage. The majority of cases of forced marriage treated in the United Kingdom (UK), as per the Forced Marriage Unit Statistics<sup>7</sup>, came from Pakistan. The narrative does not end here; she is still reliant on her husband's promises after marrying. She is unable to defy her husband's demands. The phrase 'qawwamun 'ala,' as according Wadud, alludes to the husband's duty as a caregiver, not to men's responsibility and authority over women. Her husband and in-laws have absolute control over her decisions, such as when she will have a kid and whether or not she is capable of working. When she approaches old age and her husband gets frail, she must rely completely on her sons to make judgments. Because a Pakistani female is stuck in our society, it is impossible to say that women in Pakistan are treated decently.

Prosecutors, political parties, civic society, the media, and government-run shelters all have an effect on society. Women comprise 50% of the population, however they do not have the same rights as males. Women are often perceived as inferior to males and live in an atmosphere of fear and violence in order to comply with social norms. Most Pakistani women belong to the tribal, feudal, clan, and kinship system and are bound to spend her life according to their desires. Due to different forms of patriarchal standards and concepts of honor women are forced to follow social norms and customs of society.

Because of the discriminatory and patriarchal attitude of Pakistani culture, females are denied their basic constitutional rights. In Pakistan, it is often held that a woman is solely fit for housekeeping and bearing children. If some females defy these belief systems, they are seen as violating societal standards and cultural values. It is also often seen as a non-Islamic act. The Human Rights Watch (HRW)<sup>8</sup> reported that out from a total of 22.5 million out-of-school children, girls represent to 32% and boys' figure as 21%. The situation is even more alarming in Baluchistan, wherein 70 % still limited access to a formal schooling. Lack of good women 's education is a key barrier to women's empowerment in Pakistan, because they're unable to obtain employment without it. This also portrays a bleak image of widespread breaches of women's basic rights in our community, as well as how Pakistani culture has crushed these privileges.

Domestic violence is also regarded as a family affair, which is a terrible reality in our culture. Battling, slapping, torturing, and even murdering of females is fairly typical in lower-class homes. Men were not allowed to punish their wives in the early Islamic period, according to a tradition pertaining to Umm Kalsoom, Abu Bakr's daughter, but when they started complaining to the Prophet, he (PBUH) provided his permission with the caveat, "Albeit the best of you would not hit their wives (wa lan yadrib khiyarukum)." It can also be a harsh fact that in Pakistani culture, women are either uneducated of domestic violence laws or believe that raising their voices against their spouses is a highly dishonorable deed. This kind of woman is deemed disobedient,

and the marriage may end up divorcing. A woman's entire life is spent under continual threat and terror in such conditions, and she must be resilient with her spouse. This is certainly relevant in households when the husband's family is far more financially secure than his wife. This really is the dark aspect of Pakistani society's treatment of women.

In these male-dominant societies across the world, men are usually not blamed for any undesirable act, instead, all faults lie on the shoulders of the woman. The same is true in Pakistani society where patriarchy has deep roots. There is a feudal concept that three things “**Zan, Zar, Zameen**” (**woman, money, land**) are responsible for all the evils in human societies. It is widely believed in Pakistan that the motive of murder in most cases is either Zan (woman), Zar (money), or Zameen (land). This discriminatory concept provides ways to put all blame on a woman even in such cases when there is no fault of the woman. Women are inextricably linked with immortality and are considered the reason for moral deprivation of the young population. Woman becomes immediately suspicious and victim of such cases. "Women in Pakistan experience disturbingly high rates of rape, sexual assault, domestic abuse, and honor killing while their accusers usually go unpunished owing to corruption and prejudices towards women through the use of the judicial process," according to Human Right Watch (1999). According to Pakistan's Human Rights Commission<sup>9</sup>, "at least 565 females are killed in Pakistan every year as a result of honor killings." This custom enables a male guardian to murder a female who is having an unlawful relationship with another man in order to preserve the family's dignity. These murders are against the law. Whenever it concerns to inherited property rights, a woman's narrative in Pakistan becomes even more bleak. Despite the fact that Article 23 of Pakistan's constitution explicitly specifies that "Every citizen shall have a right to acquire, own, and transfer of property in any area of Pakistan," several women continue to be denied their constitutional and legal property rights. Article 25 of Pakistan's constitution<sup>10</sup> of 1973 ensures the preservation of all people' rights, regardless of gender, color, or religion.

يُوصِيكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي أَوْلَادِكُمْ لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأُنثَيَيْنِ ۚ فَإِن كُنَّ نِسَاءً فَوْقَ اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُنَّ ثُلُثَا مَا تَرَكَ ۚ وَإِن كَانَتْ وَاحِدَةً فَلَهَا النِّصْفُ ۚ وَلَا بَوَاقٍ لِّكَ لِوَالِدَيْكَ مِمَّا تَرَكَ إِن كَانَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ ۚ فَإِن لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَوَرِثَتُهُ أَبُوهُ فَلِأُمِّهِ الثُّلُثُ ۚ فَإِن كَانَ لَهُ إِخْوَةٌ فَلِأُمِّهِ السُّدُسُ ۚ مِن بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوصِي بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ ۚ وَأَبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ ۚ لَا تَدْرُونَ أَيُّهُمْ أَقْرَبُ لَكُمْ نَفَعًا ۚ فَرِيضَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

*“As a result, Allah has given you a directive about your children: the male's portion is equal to that of two females. If there are more than two daughters among the deceased's heirs, they will get two-thirds of the property; if there is only one daughter, she will receive half of the inheritance. If the dead had children, each of his parents will get a sixth of the inheritance; if the deceased has no children and his parents inherit him alone, one-third of the inheritance will go to his mother; and if the deceased has brothers and sisters, one-sixth will go to his mother. All of these shares will be handed after he has paid off any bequests he may have made, as well as any remaining obligations.”<sup>11</sup>*

Mernissi<sup>12</sup> interprets this Quranic verse in her book ‘Women in Islam’ stating, the verse hit the male populace of Medina like a bombshell, because women were awarded inheritance. In Arabia before this passage, only men were guaranteed inheritance rights, and women were frequently included in the inherited assets. includes new inheritance rules, and "woman" might no longer be "inherited" like camels and palm fields, but would be "inherited" by herself. But despite all legal, constitutional, and religious guarantees, in most cases, women have not given their due property rights. An immoral act is presumed if a woman asks for her inherited property right. The case becomes even more severe when it comes to the rural areas where girls are either forced to quit their property rights or sometimes even killed for asking to claim their hereditary property rights.

Another barbaric ritual, Ghag (a sort of forced marriage), is still commonly practiced in Pakistan's province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). The 'Elimination of Ritual of Ghag Act 2013<sup>13</sup>, passed by the KPK assembly, outlawed this Ghag custom, although it is still commonly performed in Pakistan's Pushtoon Belt. Ghag is a practice in which a male demand or claims a lady outright. It is carried out without a girl's or her parents' agreement, using either spoken or written remarks. No other man may



propose to that girl in such a situation. This custom is an obvious breach of Islamic injunctions, which specify that permission of girl and a boy is required prior to marriage. Islam does not pressure anyone in any aspect of life, even in the matter of marriage. Islam emphasizes asking a man and woman to choose his/her life partner and it prohibits forced marriage. A woman has the right to refuse or accept the proposal of marriage, even if it's against her parents' wish. Allah says in the Qur'ān:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَجِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَرِثُوا النِّسَاءَ كَرِهًا

*“O you who have believed, it is not lawful for you to inherit women by compulsion”<sup>14</sup>*

Neither girl may be compelled to marry a person she detests, but the harsh fact of Pakistani culture is that, while being a religious nation, women's issues are settled by regional practices and traditions that are incompatible with Islamic beliefs.

Despite claims of equality, women are still treated as a commodity across the world and Pakistan is not an exception. The girls are sold as 'brides' in tribal parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), women are a part of moveable property, and can be sold in the market to the highest bidder regardless of his age, character, or personality. This custom is famously known as **Walwar** in the KPK and Baluchistan provinces of Pakistan. Similarly, another custom of Khoon- Baha (called **Swara** among Pushtuns) is also very common in tribal areas of KPK and Baluchistan. Under the **Swara**, custom girls are presented as blood money to settle and compensate for the murder disputes among tribes. This act is indeed against Islamic Shariah and is illegal according to the law of the land, but the saddest part is that the law has never been implemented in its letter and spirit. Hence, the women are still being deprived of their basic legal, Islamic, and constitutional rights. It depicts the poor state of women's affairs in Pakistani society.

Dowry deaths are another societal disease that plagues the subcontinent. Any property provided to the bride by her parents before or after marriage is referred to as dowry excluding the inheritance property. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) gifted his daughter the things that were of basic use, and the expense

was carried by the groom, Hazrat Ali (R.A). There are no concepts of dowry in Islam, but there is the obligation of Haq Mahar, which is any property that the groom agrees to give the bride when marrying her. Men, on the other hand, frequently demand a large dowry from their wives and regard it as their own property. Whenever a bride fails to deliver enough dowry to meet a husband's expectations, she is mocked, humiliated, mistreated, and in extreme circumstances, killed. The unfortunate fact is that domestic abuse and violence against women are rarely recognized as crimes. The validity of the dowry is the most harmful aspect of it. However, on a practical level, the expectation of a wedding present is far higher, which, if not met, rises to violence towards women.

### **III. Findings**

To conclude, as a mother, sister, daughter, and wife, she performs a variety of essential responsibilities in modern society, her contributions are much respected and acknowledged, and they span from child raising to character development and child teaching. However, it is also true that in Pakistani culture, women's place in relation to males is one of systemic gender subordination. In male-dominant societies, the opinion of a man is more valued than a woman's opinion and the same is the case in Pakistani society. Usually, the father is the head of the family, and the wife cannot act against his wishes. Man has the final say in all the important matters of a family ranging from the marriage of children to their education and job. Sometimes, working women are pressurized to quit their jobs by the male members of a family because women's jobs are not fit in the so-called traditions and customs. For instance, the working of women in shopping malls and media industries is intolerable in Pakistani society. Despite several attempts by successive governments, civil society organizations, and women activists to empower Pakistani women and obtain all of the rights guaranteed by the Pakistani constitution, she remains far from attaining her legal, constitutional, and Islamic rights. The reason for this is because patriarchal mindsets, feudalism, and religious fanaticism in a nation prevent women's legislation from being enforced in their text and spirit. " Honor murders have been



linked to patriarchal society and feminist standards, among other religious practises."<sup>15</sup>. Despite all of the constitutional safeguards, religious injunctions, and human rights action, forced marriages, honor murders, subjugation, and gender inequity in the political, economic, and social arenas remain all too common in Pakistani culture. As a result, a woman may legitimately be said to be considered as a curse in the vast majority of circumstances. Because women's empowerment and national development are intricately linked, it is vital to address and overcome all of Pakistani women's challenges and hurdles on a priority basis if the country desires to improve its social and economic well-being. If we want our Pakistani society to be stable, then gender equality is a vital goal to accomplish. The world is going beyond the imagination, but Pakistani society is still stuck in these abusive norms.

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