

Scripture Against Custom: Women's Rights and the Politics of Religious Interpretation in Pakistan

Saima Yasmin¹, Syed Tahir Abbas², Hina Sattar³, Muhammad Waqas⁴

¹School of History and Culture, Southwest University, China, Email: saimayasmin2023@outlook.com

²School of History and Culture, Southwest University, China, Email: syedtahirabbasshah46@gmail.com

³Government College University Faisalabad, Email: hinasattar300@gmail.com

⁴Department of Pakistan Studies, Government College University Faisalabad, Email: Waqasminhas076@gmail.com

Abstract

Pakistan is one of the hardest cases anywhere for thinking about religion, culture, and women's rights together. A state founded on Islamic identity, and layered over centuries of South Asian patriarchal custom, it has moved forward and backward on women's status often within the same decade. This paper argues that the marginalization Pakistani women experience is not what Islamic doctrine actually teaches, but what patriarchal culture has done with Islamic language once it had the power of the state behind it. Working from primary legal texts, historical records, sociological data, and Islamic feminist scholarship, the paper moves through five connected problems: what early Islamic teaching actually established for women; how colonial and postcolonial law reshaped gender norms in the region that became Pakistan; the specific legal architecture Zia-ul-Haq built in the name of Islam and what it cost women; the social and cultural barriers that persist regardless of what any given law says; and the reform movements that have pushed back against both. The conclusion is that equality for Pakistani women depends on separating what Islam actually says from what has been said in its name — and doing that work simultaneously in law, education, religious interpretation, and everyday culture.

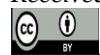
Keywords: Pakistan, Women's Rights, Islam, Hudood Ordinances, Gender Discrimination, Patriarchy, Islamization, South Asia, Religious Doctrine, Cultural Norms

Introduction

What Pakistan is, as a state, and what kind of Islam it practises are not separable questions — and neither is separable from the question of what happens to Pakistani women. Pakistan was founded in 1947 as a homeland for South Asian Muslims, with Islamic identity as the basis of political community. What that identity actually implied for women's legal and social status, though, has never been settled; it has been fought over for Pakistan's entire history. The result is a country where Islamic doctrine's own commitments to women's dignity and spiritual equality sit uneasily beside patriarchal structures that constrain what women can do in law, in public, and at home.

This is not a Pakistan-specific problem. Feminist scholars of Islam have argued for decades that the distance between Islamic doctrine and Muslim practice on gender reflects a long history of patriarchal interpretation — one that has consistently pushed the Quran's more egalitarian con-

Received 03 March 2026; Revised 22 March 2026; Accepted 02 April 2026; Published (online) 07 April 2026



Attribution 4.0 International ([CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/))

Corresponding Email: Waqasminhas076@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.69671/socialprism.3.2.2026.72>

tent to the margins (Ahmed, 1992; Wadud, 1999; Mernissi, 1991). What is distinctive about Pakistan is how far that interpretive drift has been written into state law. The Hudood Ordinances of 1979 are the most notorious example, but the deeper problem is that once patriarchal interpretation becomes statute, it creates obstacles to reform that no amount of individual goodwill or shifting local custom can, by itself, remove.

Making sense of where Pakistani women stand today means following several histories at once: what early Islamic teaching on gender actually reformed; how centuries of South Asian social practice reworked Muslim gender norms afterward; how colonial and then postcolonial law codified the patriarchal readings that resulted; the particular political choices Zia-ul-Haq made in the late 1970s; and the sustained work of Pakistani women's movements, which has produced real if partial change. The argument that runs through all of this is that the way forward lies in recovering what Islamic teaching actually says, rather than continuing to accept cultural distortion dressed up as divine command.

Doctrinal Foundations: Women's Rights in Early Islam

The Quranic Vision of Gender Equality

Read in its own historical moment, the Quran's treatment of women was a set of genuinely radical reforms. Pre-Islamic Arabia — the Jahiliya, the "Age of Ignorance" — was a society that did real, severe harm to women as a matter of course. Female infanticide was practised widely. Women held no independent legal status: they could not own property, could not inherit, could not consent to their own marriages. A widow could herself be inherited, treated as part of a dead man's estate along with his other property. The Quran addressed these practices head-on (Esposito, 1982).

Surah An-Nisa (4:7) grants women a share of inheritance directly: "For men is a share of what the parents and close relatives leave, and for women is a share of what the parents and close relatives leave." Surah An-Nisa (4:19) forbids treating women as inheritable property and forbids husbands from inheriting their wives against their will. Surah Al-Baqarah (2:229) establishes a woman's right to divorce. And Surah An-Nahl (16:97) states the spiritual equality of men and women without qualification: "Whoever does good, whether male or female, and is a believer — those will enter Paradise and will not be wronged, even as much as the speck on a date seed." None of this is marginal or contested text; these are among the clearest statements the Quran makes about anything (Barlas, 2002).

The Prophet Muhammad's own life reinforced the same vision. Khadijah, his first wife, was a successful, independent merchant who proposed marriage to him and whose judgment he relied on. Aisha became one of the most prolific and authoritative transmitters of hadith in Islamic history — her testimony underlies rulings that range from how to pray to how to conduct oneself at home. And the Prophet is reported to have said that "the most perfect of believers in faith are those who are best in moral character, and the best of you are those who are best to their wives" — making the treatment of women, explicitly, a measure of religious excellence (Al-Tirmidhi, hadith 1162).

Early Islamic Legal Reforms and Women's Social Position

The early Islamic legal tradition built on these Quranic foundations into a framework that, while not egalitarian by today's standards, was a real advance on what existed elsewhere in the ancient world. Women held the mahr — the marriage gift paid by the husband — as their own exclusive property. They could conduct business, sign contracts, and hold property in their own names, independent of their husbands. They could seek divorce through the courts, appear as witnesses, and claim custody of young children after divorce (Esposito & DeLong-Bas, 2001).

Set against contemporary legal systems, the significance of this is easy to lose. Byzantine law gave married women no right to independent property. Roman law kept women as legal minors under male guardianship for life. Sassanid Persian law — Islam's other great contemporary civilization — gave women barely more standing. Early Islamic law treated women as legal persons in their own right, a status European women would not gain until the nineteenth century (Tucker, 2008).

Nor was this confined to legal texts. Women among the Companions of the Prophet were recognized religious authorities. Women took part in mosque life, asked the Prophet questions directly, and had those answers become part of the normative tradition. The historical record of women's public participation in the earliest Muslim community is extensive — and stands in sharp contrast to what later cultural formations would impose (Mernissi, 1991).

Historical Evolution of Gender Norms in the Pakistani Context

The South Asian Patriarchal Formation

The region that became Pakistan carries several thousand years of social formation in which patriarchal structures ran deep well before Islam arrived. The Indus Valley civilization, Vedic society, the Maurya and Gupta empires, the Sultanate period, the Mughal empire — each produced its own version of gender hierarchy, but all of them kept women subordinate in public life while confining their authority to the household. Caste added another layer: upper-caste women faced the strictest seclusion and the tightest restrictions on movement, while lower-caste women, freer to move, bore the harshest economic exploitation (Papanek, 1982).

When Islam reached the subcontinent from the eighth century onward, it met these structures rather than replacing them. In real terms, Islamic teaching offered women advantages they had not had — property rights, the right to consent to marriage, the right to divorce. But the institutions through which Islam was actually transmitted — mosques led by men, scholarly establishments dominated by men, courts controlled by men — were themselves built inside patriarchal society. Over time, Islamic teaching was read selectively to accommodate the patriarchal norms already there, while its more egalitarian content was pushed aside or reinterpreted away (Metcalf, 1982).

The Colonial Reshaping of Muslim Gender Norms

British colonial rule left a genuinely paradoxical mark on the gender norms of South Asian Muslim communities. It introduced legal reforms that improved women's formal position in specific ways — the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act of 1937, the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act of 1939. At the same time, colonial rule changed, at a much deeper level, how Islamic law itself got interpreted and applied.

To govern a society they found bewilderingly diverse, colonial administrators worked with male religious scholars to produce a codified “Muslim personal law” that colonial courts could apply consistently. That codification did several things to women’s position at once. It favoured the most conservative readings of classical jurisprudence, since those were the easiest to codify and the least likely to provoke resistance from male religious establishments. It froze interpretations that had once been contested and variable into fixed rules. And it drew a hard line between “religious” personal law and “secular” criminal and commercial law — a division whose consequences Pakistani women would live with long after independence (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987).

The same period produced reformist Muslim movements, the Deobandi movement founded in 1867 chief among them, aimed at purifying Islamic practice of what its founders saw as corrupting accretions. These movements were, in some ways, genuinely progressive — their emphasis on education and rigorous engagement with the tradition was real. But their position on gender was deeply conservative: Deobandi scholars developed extensive rules for women’s seclusion that were presented as authentic Islamic teaching but in fact reflected the specific anxieties of a Muslim community living under colonial rule (Zaman, 2002).

Post-Independence Pakistan and Early Women’s Activism

Pakistani women had real reason for optimism in the years right after 1947. Women had been active in the Pakistan Movement itself — Fatima Jinnah, the founder’s sister, became a widely celebrated symbol of what Muslim women could do in public life. The new constitution affirmed equality regardless of gender. The All-Pakistan Women’s Association, founded in 1949, worked to improve women’s legal and social standing within a framework that combined Islamic values with reformist principles (Weiss, 1986).

That early promise did not hold. Military coups in 1958, 1969, and 1977 produced decades of political instability in which women’s rights were routinely set aside for other priorities. Military governments depended on the support of conservative religious establishments and had little reason to challenge patriarchal norms; the civilian governments that periodically returned to power came, themselves, from elite families with their own patriarchal assumptions about women’s place. The reformist momentum of the independence years eroded gradually, but steadily (Jalal, 1991).

The Zia Era: Islamization, Law, and Women’s Rights

The Political Context of Islamization

The military coup of July 1977, which brought General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq to power, opened the most consequential chapter in the history of Pakistani women’s rights. To legitimize his regime and build a base among conservative religious forces, Zia launched a comprehensive “Islamization” programme — restructuring Pakistani law and public life according to his own reading of Islamic principles. The consequences for women were profound and long-lasting (Jalal, 1991).

It is worth being clear from the outset that Islamization was a political project dressed as a theological one. Zia’s reading of Islamic law did not come from a disinterested engagement with primary sources; it was shaped by his political alliances, his social conservatism, and his need to

distinguish his government from the ones before it. The ulama who advised the process were themselves a socially conservative constituency with a long history of reading Islamic law in ways that served patriarchal interests. What resulted was legislation that presented itself as divine command while actually reflecting one regime's political calculations (Mayer, 1999).

The Hudood Ordinances: A Theological and Legal Analysis

Promulgated in February 1979, the Hudood Ordinances were the centrepiece of Zia's Islamization programme. They established criminal penalties — flogging, amputation, stoning — for a category of offences classified as hudood crimes under classical Islamic jurisprudence. For women, the most damaging provisions concerned zina: sexual relations outside marriage, covering adultery, fornication, and rape alike.

The Zina Ordinance set a trap. To convict her attacker, a rape victim needed four male Muslim witnesses of good character who had directly observed the act of penetration — an evidentiary standard drawn from a Quranic verse (An-Nur, 24:4) that classical scholars had always read as addressing false accusations of adultery, not the prosecution of rape. In practice, this standard was applied as though the victim herself had to prove her innocence. Failing to produce four witnesses — essentially guaranteed in any real rape case — meant a woman's own account of the assault could be treated as a confession to fornication, for which she herself could then be prosecuted (Jahangir & Jilani, 1990).

The scale of harm this produced is hard to overstate. Within a decade, thousands of women were imprisoned on zina charges — most of them women who had reported a rape or become pregnant outside marriage. A 1988 report from the Women's Division of the Government of Pakistan put the figure at 72 percent of the female prison population held under Hudood charges, many of them poor, rural women without family support or legal representation (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987).

Pakistani legal scholars and Islamic jurists were quick to name the theological incoherence at the centre of this system. Classical jurisprudence had never asked rape victims to produce witnesses to their own assault — the four-witness rule applied only to the hadd punishment for consensual adultery. In the Hanafi school, dominant across South Asia, pregnancy from rape was treated as evidence of rape, not evidence of zina. The Prophet's own recorded conduct showed real sensitivity toward women reporting sexual assault. The Hudood Ordinances, on this reading, were not a recovery of Islamic law but a travesty of it (Mir-Hosseini, 1999).

Other Discriminatory Legislation of the Zia Era

The Hudood Ordinances were not the only piece of Zia-era legislation to work against women. The 1984 Law of Evidence proposed, in certain contexts, treating a woman's testimony as worth half a man's — grounded in a contested reading of Surah Al-Baqarah (2:282), a verse actually concerned with documenting financial transactions. That provision never made it into general evidence law, but the debate around it left a chilling effect on women's participation in legal proceedings and reinforced the assumption, well beyond any courtroom, that women's word carried less weight than men's (Weiss, 1986).

Proposals for separate Shari'a courts for women, and the broader shift in legal culture under Zia, socialized judges, prosecutors, and police into a system stacked against women by default. Domestic violence, marital rape, acid attacks — all were investigated poorly and prosecuted rarely. “Honor” as a justification for violence against women gained a legal and social legitimacy under this system that has made it far harder to dislodge since (Human Rights Watch, 1999).

Social and Cultural Barriers to Women's Freedom in Pakistan

Honor-Based Violence

Honor-based violence — killing, maiming, or otherwise abusing women because their conduct is judged to have shamed the family — is among the most severe expressions of patriarchal control in Pakistani society. It is not unique to Pakistan, and no major school of Islamic jurisprudence sanctions it; it has nonetheless proven remarkably durable, claiming hundreds of lives every year across religious, ethnic, and class lines.

The idea of honor at work here is sharply gendered. A family's honor is understood to live, above all, in the sexual conduct of its women; a man's honor is damaged by what his mother, sister, wife, or daughter is perceived to have done. This gives male relatives both a motive and, in many communities, a felt entitlement to kill female relatives whose conduct is judged to have crossed a sexual line — a line that can include seeking divorce, refusing an arranged marriage, or simply being seen in public with a man outside the family (Chesler, 2010).

Pakistani law offered thin protection against this for a long time. Under the qisas and diyat provisions inherited from the colonial-era penal code, a murder victim's legal heirs could pardon the killer or accept blood money instead of prosecution. In honor killings, where the killer and the “legal heirs” were frequently the same family that had sanctioned the killing in the first place, this let perpetrators walk away with impunity. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 2004 made modest improvements; the more consequential change was the Criminal Law (Amendment) (Offences in the Name or Pretext of Honor) Act of 2016, which took away the family's right to pardon in honor killing cases and set mandatory minimum sentences (Khan, 2006).

Even after 2016, honor killings continue at what human rights organizations describe as an epidemic rate. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan recorded 363 honor killings in 2019 alone — almost certainly an undercount, given how much goes unreported. As long as a woman's body is treated as the place where family honor is kept, violence against women judged to have compromised it will keep a kind of social legitimacy that legislation by itself cannot fully remove (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2020).

Acid Attacks and Gender-Based Violence

Acid attacks are a distinctively Pakistani form of gendered violence, used to disfigure or punish women who have refused a man, sought divorce, or otherwise asserted independence. The Acid Survivors Foundation of Pakistan has documented thousands of cases since it was founded in 2006, the overwhelming majority of victims women and girls. The physical damage — blindness, severe disfigurement, lost limbs — comes with psychological trauma that lasts far longer (Nankani, 2011).

For years, the legal response was weak: perpetrators faced minor charges and often escaped prosecution entirely through financial settlements with victims' families. The Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act of 2011 introduced tougher penalties, including life imprisonment, and restricted the sale of acid. That was real progress, but enforcement has stayed inconsistent, and the underlying belief — that men have a right to violently punish women who reject or embarrass them — has not been seriously dislodged.

Economic Marginalization and Labour Force Exclusion

Women's economic exclusion in Pakistan is both cause and consequence of their broader subordination. Female labour force participation sits at roughly 22 percent, against a global average near 47 percent (International Labour Organization, 2022). Most economically active women work informally — in agriculture, domestic labour, or home-based piecework — without legal protection, social security, or any real ability to organize.

The causes stack on top of each other. Cultural norms that restrict women's mobility, or require a male relative's permission to work outside the home, are the most immediate barrier. Educational disadvantage compounds it: Pakistan's female literacy rate, around 48 percent, trails the male rate of roughly 71 percent (UNESCO, 2021). Workplace harassment discourages women from pursuing careers at all. And the absence of affordable childcare, paired with the assumption that domestic labour is women's job by default, makes sustaining formal employment structurally difficult.

The costs of this exclusion fall on more than individual women. Economic research consistently finds that raising women's labour force participation is among the most effective available levers for growth and poverty reduction. Pakistan's ranking on the Human Development Index — 161st of 191 countries as of 2021 — reflects, in part, the cost of leaving half the population's productive potential largely untapped (UNDP, 2022).

Political Representation and Civic Participation

Women's political representation in Pakistan has improved substantially since independence, though it remains well short of parity. Reserved seats for women in the National and provincial assemblies have produced female parliamentary representation of about 20.4 percent as of 2023 — below the global average of roughly 26 percent (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2023). Representation at the local level, and in the civil service, judiciary, and military, runs considerably lower still.

Barriers to participation are both formal and informal. In parts of the tribal areas, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Baluchistan, women have historically been kept from voting through social pressure or explicit agreements among male political leaders to exclude them. Electoral fraud involving women's votes — male relatives casting ballots in women's names, without their knowledge or consent — is well documented. Women who run for office face harassment, threats, and violence their male counterparts largely do not (Weiss, 2014).

Cultural and religious framing is regularly invoked to justify all of this. Conservative religious voices argue that women should not hold public leadership positions, citing hadith traditions read as prohibiting female leadership. Islamic feminist scholars have pushed back hard against these

readings, pointing to the Quran's own endorsement of women in authority — the account of the Queen of Sheba in Surah An-Naml (27:23-44) is a favored example — and to the historical record of women in political and religious leadership in early Islam (Barlas, 2002).

Religious Space, Dress, and Women's Participation

Women's access to formal religious life in Pakistan runs through a set of cultural restrictions presented as Islamic requirements that, in many cases, have no clear grounding in Islamic doctrine at all. The near-total exclusion of women from mosque space — or their confinement to separate, poorly maintained areas — reflects patriarchal assumptions about where women belong, not Quranic teaching. One of the best-attested hadith in the entire tradition has the Prophet explicitly instructing that women not be barred from mosques; it is honored far more in the breach than the observance across much of Pakistani Muslim practice (Wadud, 1999).

Dress has become its own battlefield. The expectation that women cover their hair and bodies in public — enforced through social pressure, family coercion, and sometimes formal regulation — draws on selective quotation of Quranic verses and hadith that are, in fact, open to a wide range of readings. Islamic feminist scholars, Pakistani scholars like Riffat Hassan among them, have challenged this, arguing that the Quran's concern for women's dignity and protection does not translate into any single required dress practice (Hassan, 1987).

Pakistan's #MeToo movement, which gained real visibility from 2018 onward, brought sustained public attention to the sexual harassment and violence women face at work and in education. It was met with solidarity from progressive voices and open hostility from conservative ones — some religious authorities framed women's demand to be free from harassment as itself an attack on Islamic values. That a demand for basic safety could be recast as religiously illegitimate says a great deal, on its own, about how patriarchal interest borrows religious authority when it needs to.

Legal Reforms and the Pakistani Women's Movement

The Women's Action Forum and Civil Society Advocacy

The most sustained and effective pushback against the discriminatory legal and cultural order Zia left behind has come from the women's movement itself. The Women's Action Forum (WAF), founded in 1981 directly in response to the Hudood Ordinances, became the central vehicle for women's rights advocacy in Pakistan through the 1980s and after — bringing together professional women, lawyers, academics, and activists behind a combination of legal advocacy, public protest, and serious engagement with Islamic jurisprudence itself (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987).

What distinguished WAF's approach was its refusal to dismiss the religious framework its opponents relied on. WAF activists and the scholars who worked alongside them built detailed arguments showing that the Hudood Ordinances were not, in fact, consistent with authentic Islamic jurisprudence — that Islamic commitments to justice, compassion, and protection of the vulnerable actually demanded their repeal. This was not simply strategic. It reflected a genuine conviction that Islamic teaching, properly understood, was a resource for women's liberation rather than an obstacle to it.

Legislative Reforms: Progress and Limitations

Sustained WAF advocacy, together with pressure from international human rights bodies, eventually produced real legislative change. The Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act of 2006 was the most significant of these: it moved rape out of the Hudood framework and into the Pakistan Penal Code, eliminated the four-witness requirement for rape prosecutions, allowed DNA and forensic evidence, and protected women who reported rape from being prosecuted for zina on the same evidence (Khan, 2006).

The 2006 Act mattered, but it was a partial victory. The Hudood Ordinances themselves were amended, not repealed, and their broader architecture — including the criminalization of consensual sex outside marriage — stayed in place. Further reforms followed in increments: Sindh's Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act of 2012; the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act of 2016; the 2016 honor-killing amendment already discussed; and the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2018. Each represented genuine progress, and each was won against real political resistance from conservative religious forces (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2020).

Islamic Feminist Scholarship and Religious Reform

Alongside legal reform, a growing body of Islamic feminist scholarship has worked to recover the egalitarian content of Islamic teaching and to show that Pakistan's patriarchal legal and cultural interpretations are not theologically required. Riffat Hassan's work on the theological roots of gender hierarchy — tracing misogynist assumptions embedded in widely accepted hadith back to their sources — has been especially influential (Hassan, 1987).

The claim running through this scholarship is that patriarchal interpretation is not Islam itself, but a historically specific reading of Islam that can be challenged on its own terms. The Quran's affirmation of women's spiritual equality, its grant of legal rights to women, its consistent emphasis on justice and compassion — these provide theological ground for a vision of gender equality that comes from within the tradition, not imported from outside it. Recovering that vision takes careful historical and textual work, and it takes courage, given the social and sometimes physical risk that comes with challenging entrenched patriarchal readings (Barlas, 2002).

Conclusion: Religion, Culture, and the Future of Women's Rights in Pakistan

The evidence assembled here points to one clear conclusion: what Pakistani women face — in law, in social life, in religious practice — is not what Islam teaches, but what patriarchal culture has done with Islamic language once it had state power behind it. The Quran affirms women's spiritual equality, their legal rights, their dignity. The Prophet's own conduct shows real regard for women's autonomy and participation. Even the early Islamic legal tradition, limited as it was by the standards of today, marked a genuine advance on what came before it.

The gap between that doctrinal foundation and the lived reality of millions of Pakistani women is a product of history, not theology. It reflects specific decisions by patriarchal rulers — Zia-ul-Haq chief among them — to put religious authority to work in the service of political power. It reflects centuries of Islamic teaching interacting with South Asian social structures that gave pa-

triarchal norms religious cover. And it reflects the continued resistance of conservative religious establishments to the egalitarian implications of their own tradition.

The way forward is the one Pakistan's women's movement has been pointing to for decades: recovering what Islamic teaching actually says, and holding that recovery apart, rigorously, from the cultural prejudice that has been presented as divine command. That work has to happen at once in law — finishing the reform of discriminatory legislation and actually enforcing the protections already on the books; in education — building curricula that expose students to the full range of Islamic scholarship on gender rather than one narrow reading of it; and in culture — giving space to women religious scholars, opening religious life to women's full participation, and confronting the honor-based logic that turns women's bodies into something the family and community feel entitled to control.

Pakistan has what it needs for this project — intellectually, legally, spiritually. Its history of women's activism, its tradition of Islamic feminist scholarship, and its own constitutional commitments to equality are all there to build on. What is missing is the political and social will to let the emancipatory vision Islam has always contained actually shape the conditions Pakistani women live under.

References

1. Ahmed, L. (1992). *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*. Yale University Press.
2. Al-Tirmidhi, M. I. I. (Compiler). *Jami' al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 1162. (Translated and edited by A. Khaliyl, 2007). Darussalam.
3. Barlas, A. (2002). *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Quran*. University of Texas Press.
4. Chesler, P. (2010). Worldwide Trends in Honor Killings. *Middle East Quarterly*, 17(2), 3-11.
5. Esposito, J. L. (1982). *Women in Muslim Family Law*. Syracuse University Press.
6. Esposito, J. L., & DeLong-Bas, N. J. (2001). *Women in Muslim Family Law* (2nd ed.). Syracuse University Press.
7. Hassan, R. (1987). Equal Before Allah? Woman-Man Equality in the Islamic Tradition. *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, 17(2), 2-4.
8. Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. (2020). *State of Human Rights in 2019*. Lahore: HRCP.
9. Human Rights Watch. (1999). *Crime or Custom? Violence Against Women in Pakistan*. New York: HRW.
10. Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2023). *Women in Parliament: World Classification*. Geneva: IPU.
11. International Labour Organization. (2022). *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends for Women 2022*. Geneva: ILO.
12. Jahangir, A., & Jilani, H. (1990). *The Hudood Ordinances: A Divine Sanction?* Lahore: Rhotas Books.
13. Jalal, A. (1991). The Convenience of Subservience: Women and the State of Pakistan. In D. Kandiyoti (Ed.), *Women, Islam and the State* (pp. 77-114). Temple University Press.

14. Khan, S. (2006). Zina and the Moral Regulation of Pakistani Women. *Feminist Review*, 75(1), 75-100.
15. Mayer, A. E. (1999). *Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics* (3rd ed.). Westview Press.
16. Mernissi, F. (1991). *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*. Addison-Wesley.
17. Metcalf, B. D. (1982). *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*. Princeton University Press.
18. Mir-Hosseini, Z. (1999). *Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran*. Princeton University Press.
19. Mumtaz, K., & Shaheed, F. (1987). *Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back?* London: Zed Books.
20. Nankani, S. (2011). *Breaking the Silence: Violence Against Women in Pakistan*. Karachi: Oxford University Press.
21. Papanek, H. (1982). Purdah: Separate Worlds and Symbolic Shelter. In H. Papanek & G. Minault (Eds.), *Separate Worlds: Studies of Purdah in South Asia* (pp. 3-53). Chanakya Publications.
22. Tucker, J. E. (2008). *Women, Family, and Gender in Islamic Law*. Cambridge University Press.
23. UNESCO. (2021). *Global Education Monitoring Report 2021/2022: Non-State Actors in Education*. Paris: UNESCO.
24. United Nations Development Programme. (2022). *Human Development Report 2021/2022: Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives*. New York: UNDP.
25. Wadud, A. (1999). *Quran and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*. Oxford University Press.
26. Weiss, A. M. (1986). Implications of the Islamization Program for Women. In A. M. Weiss (Ed.), *Islamic Reassertion in Pakistan* (pp. 97-113). Syracuse University Press.
27. Weiss, A. M. (2014). *Interpreting Islam, Modernity, and Women's Rights in Pakistan*. Palgrave Macmillan.
28. Zaman, M. Q. (2002). *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change*. Princeton University Press.
29. Shirkat Gah Women's Resource Centre. (2018). *Women's Rights in Pakistan: A Status Report*. Lahore: Shirkat Gah.
30. Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Human Rights. (2018). *Pakistan's National Report on the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. Islamabad: MoHR.
31. Acid Survivors Foundation Pakistan. (2019). *Annual Report 2018-2019*. Islamabad: ASFP.