

## Islam and Women Parliamentary Representation in Pakistan

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### Abstract

*There are various perspectives and interpretations regarding an interaction of religion and women's parliamentary Representation. In Pakistan, the religious debate started since its inception in 1947. The religious debates translated into objectives resolution and were adopted by the constituent assembly in 1949. Women parliamentary Representation remained a complex phenomenon due to the religiously dominated cultural sphere. However, the initiatives towards women's Representation started in the 1920s passed through different challenges and opportunities. The constitutions of Pakistan from 1956 to 1973 have also incorporated relevant sections regarding women's Representation. A significant issue merged in the 1990s in Pakistan when the constitutional mechanism regarding women's Representation lapsed. The global initiatives on women's political Representation were the major milestone that influenced Pakistan politics in 2000. During this period, gender-equal participation in the decision-making process was brought at the center of political debate. During the Musharraf regime, women parliamentary share increased up to 20% on reserved seats. This paper is an attempt to explore women's Representation in Islamic perspectives and their contributions to women. The result of this qualitative research shows that women parliamentarians are primarily representing their own political parties and class in decision-making bodies.*

### Key Words:

Islam, Women, Representation, Parliament, Legislation, Pakistan

## Introduction

Quran, a sacred book, provides a foundation to Islamic jurisprudence. It was Islamic jurisprudence that structured a central tone of institutions in the early phase

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of Islamic history. Islamic jurisprudence translated the text of the Quran in formulating a structure of society. In different parts of the world, Quranic teachings influenced Muslim's thoughts. Therefore, the changing circumstances like women's politics and engagements with the public sphere attained severe complexities. In the presence of early Islamic jurisprudence, women have rendered significant contributions to social development. Women's contributions were acknowledged in every sphere of life. Women were allowed to participate in the social sphere on an equal basis with men. Islam specifically provides a peaceful environment for all gender to contribute to the prosperity of society. Islamic teachings also provide a conducive environment to Muslim society towards inclusive governance. The concept of inclusiveness incorporates all gender, including women. Women have a right to participate in the public sphere. According to Muslim scholars, women are allowed to adopt different occupations except for certain jobs like religious leadership and judgeship. Regarding judgeship, there are some conflicting debates amongst scholars.

### **Significance of Women Representation**

Women Parliamentarians in Pakistan have a key role in legislation. Exploring the role of women in Islamic legislation is critical to understand. Having so many legal opportunities, the voices of women parliamentarians are not up to the mark due to their low participation in politics, along with other cultural hindrances. On the other hand, International, local and regional treatise are perceived as instruments of "Western" norms and values and hence both religiously and culturally unknown.

"At the governmental level, the degree of opposition to international human rights is determined to a large extent by the ideological orientation of the particular Muslim State as expressed by the government in power, that may or may not be representative of the people's view on Islam." (An-Na'im, A. A. (2015). An-Naim (2015) states that legislation and procedural activities are important, but the most important factor is social norms and political consciousness of the society regarding gender equality. In Pakistan's recent women's political history, Asma Jehangir has played an active role as human rights activist. She elaborated the comparison of women's rights and their role in decision-making bodies in a comparative perspective. She described those countries like Turkey, Indonesia, and Tunis have adopted international human rights for women, but many other Muslim countries are reluctant to ratify women's international conventions due to the secularization of women's political rights. (Asma Jehangir, 2014).

There is no comprehensive law in Sharia. On the nature of Sharia, N. Naimhas explored the verities of interpretations and opinions of different jurists on the issue of women's politics. She further explained that all matters of interpretive conflicts should be referred to Quran then. It has been claimed that Quran is for all time and ages. Therefore it is flexible in nature. (An-Na'im, A. A.1990). The spirit of the

Sharia is brought out by Parwezis more flexibly. According to his interpretation, Sharia is a straightforward path and just like a watering stream where everyone take water from this flowing stream. (Parwez, G. A. 1968).

Hassan expressed that idea of mobility and changing nature of meaning depends on phenomenology and hermeneutics of Sharia. The closure of Ijtihad literal meanings of the religious texts caused unrest in many Muslim societies. (Rahim, A. 1911).

## **Constitutional Guarantees**

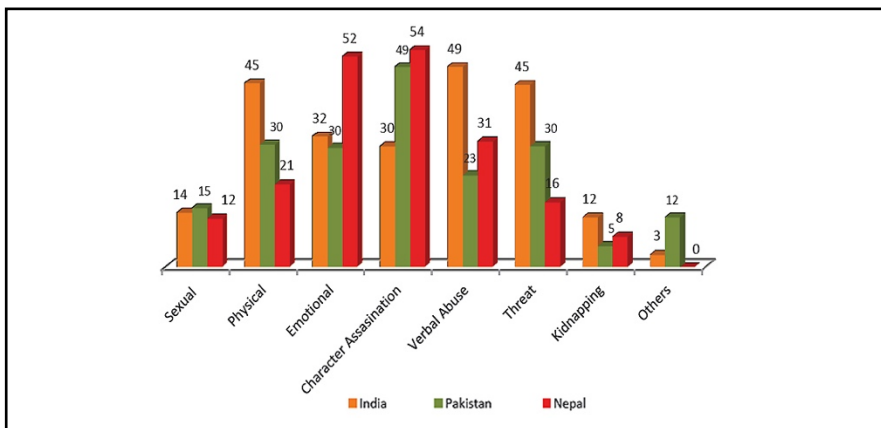
Pakistan as a state continues to formulate laws for the protection of women in order to grant them security and to address their grievances of insecurities. At the time of inception of the country, there were legal distinctions between both genders; means men and women. The constitution is a part of a superstructural formation that formulates the tone of state for the protection of citizens' rights. The constitution of authoritarian and semi authoritarian regimes seems as an extension of colonial patterns, and these constitutions seem as the prime example of neo-colonialism. (Robertson, A. H., & Merrills, J. G. 1989). Constitution has two major aspects; one is global, and the other is local. The global perspectives are interlinked with international accords and convene, whereas the local aspects deal with the state and society relationship. The "Universal Declaration for Human Rights" 1949 is an important document to understand women's political rights of African, Middle Eastern, and Asian countries, including the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The Constitution of Pakistan provides complete equality to both women and men in the section of Fundamental Rights and Principles of Policy. Constitutional Article 25 is a primary constitutional provision equality before the law. This article clearly states that there will be no discrimination based on gender and that all citizens are equal. (Constitution of Pakistan, 1973). The constitutional guarantees regarding equality of gender is not compatible with social behavior aspects of society. Gender unevenness is embedded in the cultural and social life of society. Article 25 of the constitution elaborated gendered equality in the public sphere. The areas in which principle of legal equality are the right to vote, right to property, and further employment and education. This provision is not extended to the private sphere, which includes *ibadaat* (spiritual) dimensions. The incompatibility between the private sphere and the public sphere (*muamlaat*) is a challenging factor that is affecting equality between men and women.

## **Islam and Women: Theoretical Explanation**

Islam and the question of women is deeply connected with social ethics. Islam provides an ethical foundation for running a family and society. A difference in gender is like a diversity and plurality. It is diversity and plurality that lead towards

peace and prosperity, and these principles are directly linked with Islam. Gender diversity and plurality is a beauty of society depending on their acknowledgment on equal ground. Islam provides equal rights to women as a human being. A woman has a right to choice, consent, and establish her own family. Marriage is a reflection of the public sphere, and women have a right to accept or reject marriage proposals. Women's consent in marriages and family affairs is necessary. She can retain her family name after marriage. She has a right of the separate home, right to her *Mehr*, a marriage gift. "There is no difference between men and women" in terms of religious obligations. The holy Quran guides us and says, "And whoever does deeds of righteousness, whether male or female, and have faith, they will enter paradise and not the least injustice will be done to them." (Quran 4:124)

Islam ensures a right of existence to women. Their independence and individual liberty are protected under Islam, along with property and inheritance rights. The process of gender discrimination in Islamic history started along empire building and concentration of power in kingdoms. The expression of power turned into gender discrimination, inequalities, and gendered violence. These indicators exist in Pakistani society. Existence customary laws have a major influence over gender relations. The amalgamation of Islamic laws and customary laws affected the nature of gender relations in different parts of the world. The idea of the true nature of religion became blurred due to the interaction of local cultural interaction with Islam. In Pakistan, religion is under a lamination of cultural and traditional colours. The true essence of Islam is compromised in Pakistani society. The trends in violence against women is reflected in a survey conducted by UN women.



Source: Daily Dawn, May 01, 2014

The early jurists in Islamic history came from 7<sup>th</sup>-century Arab society; therefore, Arab customary laws became part of Shariah. In non-Arab societies, jurists' interpretation became permanent principles for legal proceedings, and Quranic

injustices on gendered-related affairs were diluted. (Engineer, 2011). Furthermore, gender discrimination was also a result of fabrication of Hadith. The patriarchal social structure does not tolerate the equal status of women as reflected in Quran. The idea of equality challenged the authority of patriarchy. (Engineer, 2011). The problem with gender equality is more relevant to cultural aspects rather than religious ones. In patriarchal culture, it is a dominant factor that religious authority also protects the interest of patriarchy and causes to effect women social status. Share of women parliamentarians in other parts of the world areas:

Country	Percentage of Women	Year of Election
Rwanda	56.3	2008
Sweden	47.0	2006
South Africa	44.5	2009
Cuba	43.2	2008
Iceland	42.9	2009
Finland	41.5	2007
Netherlands	41.3	2006
Argentina	40.0	2007
Denmark	38.0	2007
Angola	37.3	2008
Costa Rica	36.8	2006
Spain	36.3	2008
Norway	36.1	2005
Andorra	35.7	2009
Belgium	35.3	2007
Mozambique	34.8	2004
New Zealand	33.6	2008
Nepal	33.2	2008
Ecuador	32.3	2009
Germany	32.2	2005

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments: Situation as of 31 July 2009," <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> (accessed August 8 2009).

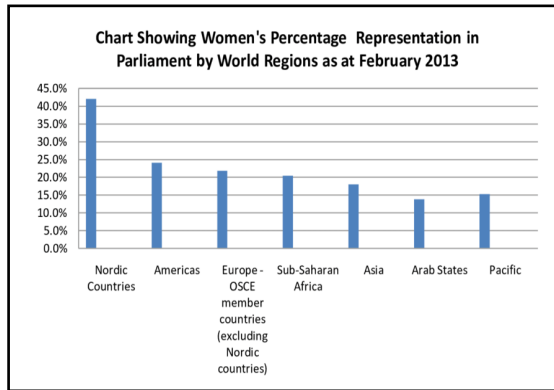
Women parliamentarians and their role in legislative processes in Pakistan can be understood with in the broader framework of women, Islam, and Pakistan. In this connection, there is a need to explore the political and legislative rights of female parliamentarians rights of a woman parliamentarians within the perspectives of Islamic practices in Pakistan, further, there is a need to find women status in the political domain within a limits set by religion, law, class, and society that form complex layers of women identity and include women from the moment they are born. "Since the Islamic world holds an overwhelming concentration of social forms and cultural ways, the diversity in sexual, behavioral patterns is mammoth." (I. Nicolaison, 1983). Women in Muslim societies, particularly in Pakistan, "live under different circumstances and their rights and responsibilities and the impact they can exert over their own lives change considerably from one part of the Muslim societies to another". (I. Nicolaison, 1983). The cultural sphere and economic structure of society are major determining factors that define women's space in a society. Therefore, while exploring the nature of the human rights situation and women's participation in politics, there is a need to understand social relations of mode and means of production. Pakistan is an important case

study for exploring women's rights and the role of parliamentarians in the political domain. Moreover, Pakistan claims to be the only country in the world that came into being on the basis of an Islamic ideology. Pakistan being a post-colonial country, shares the political and historical appearances of the mentioned phenomenon with a number of Muslim worlds. This study provides an insight into women's role in politics and parliamentary affairs. There are multiple areas that are integrated with gender and women's issues. Some important areas are health, education, employment, and leisure. The multiple interpretations over normative issues and varied legal layers and jurisdictions have created a hybrid legal system. Cooperation, contradictions, and duality are the main characteristics that affected the political domain of women's politics in Pakistan. The English secular laws, the customary laws, and Islamic laws interact with each other to provide deceptive regulatory standards in Pakistan. This regulatory standard varies from case to case and time to time. In Pakistan, secular laws govern the public sphere, including financial matters, interstate relations, and administrative mechanisms. On the other side, Islamic laws are being used to govern family affairs and morality. Considering the question of legal pluralism in public and private sphere, Islamic scholars attempted to break barriers of public-private dichotomy. (F. Merniss 1991). Scholars also cite examples and evidence from Prophet (SWS) residential place and architect of mosques in Medina where the door of Prophet house opened in the mosque. From these examples, scholars showed that there was no such difference between public and private. (F. Merniss 1991).

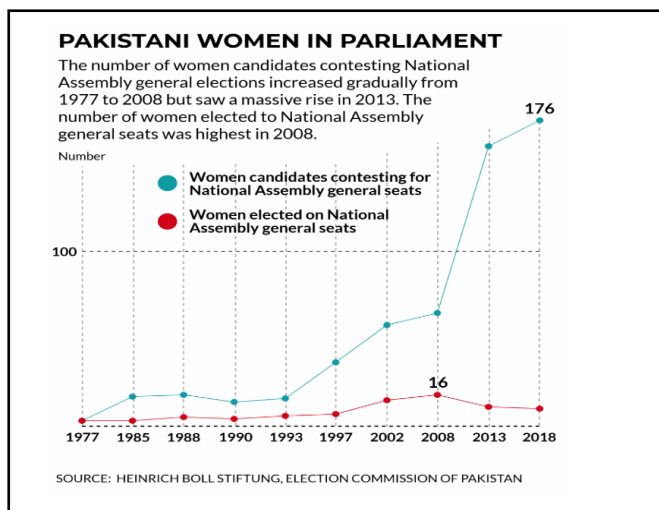
In the modern age, the public and private divide has been sharpened by secular laws, even in countries that claim to be Islamic. Muslim personal laws are also derived from a concept of the private sphere, which is also embedded in secular law. All personal matters, including inheritance, polygamy, marriages, custody, and guardianship are regulated by Muslim personal laws. The private sphere and Muslim identity are guarded by Muslim personal laws and jurisprudence. Islamic law has connected itself with the private domain of society; therefore, it strengthened cultural dominance and reduced women political space in society.

### **Historical background Women Parliamentarians**

There are around 46,552 members of parliaments (MPs) in the global world. Moreover, the international average number of parliamentarians per country is 245. "China has the largest parliament with 3,000 members in the Chinese National People's Congress. The world's smallest parliament is in Micronesia, with just 14 MPs. There are 8,716 women parliamentarians globally, which is 19.25 percent of the total number of MPs". (Union, I. P. 1996).



The main purpose of these reserved seats for women was to give a representation of the vices of women at parliamentary forums. Legislation is the prime function of the women parliamentarians, but the role of women parliamentarians in Islamic legislation is a challenging task. The Women's parliamentary history is given below to understand their role in legislation. The primary objective of women's inclusion in parliamentary affairs is to include women's voices and choices in the decision making process. The biggest expectations from women parliamentarians are to raise the voices and women issues on the floor of parliament. The issues related to gender are linked with other socio-economic aspects and cover all areas, including security issues, foreign affairs, and domestic issues. It means that gender is a cross cutting issue involved all areas and themes. Women parliamentarians must familiarize themselves with the needs and issues of women from all aspects. They must not only be focusing on the issue in-laws and policies but must also push the women's program within their own meetings, their assemblies, and their own political parties.



From 2002 to 2013, women entered parliament with an almost high share as compared to early decades. It was counted 3,698 interventions by 58 female legislators. The share of female MNAs in parliamentary proceedings as compared to male parliamentarians during 2002-2007 National Assembly was 27 percent of the total questions, 42 percent of the private member bills, 30 percent of the total calling attention notices, “24 percent of the resolutions and eight percent of the adjournment and privilege motions. The report of Aurat Foundation acknowledges women's persistent, pioneering, and purpose-oriented role, given their limited political and parliamentary experience. There are clear suggestions of women’s growing role and performance during their tenure of the National Assembly, leaving male parliamentarians far behind in terms of legislative exercises. The yearly reports on parliamentary performance issued by the Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT) suggest that female parliamentarians introduced and co-introduced the large numbers of private members' legislative bill”. (PILDAT, 2014).

### Representation of Women in Pakistan’s Legislature

S. No	Legislature	Total Seats	Women Elected Directly	Elected on Reserved Seats	Seats held by women	
					No	Percentage
1	1 <sup>st</sup> Legislature August 10, 1947-1954	30	-	-	2	6.7
2	2 <sup>nd</sup> Legislature May 02, 1955-Oct 07, 1958	80	-	-	-	0
3	3 <sup>rd</sup> Legislature June 08, 1962-June 12, 1965	156	6	-	6	3.8
4	4 <sup>th</sup> Legislature June 12, 1965-March 25, 1969	156	6	-	6	3.8
5	5 <sup>th</sup> Legislature April 14, 1972-Jan 10, 1977	144	6	-	6	3.8
6	6 <sup>th</sup> Legislature March 26, 1977-July 05-1977	210	1	10	11	5.2
7	7 <sup>th</sup> Legislature March 20, 1985-May 29, 1988	217	1	21	22	10.1

*Data compiled by researchers from parliamentary records.*

The parliamentary year 2009 to 2010 was an important year in the parliamentary history of Pakistan. During this period, 607 questions were asked by



women parliamentarians, and 60 were called attention. The number of single members' bills was 26. Historical Representation of women in parliament is given here.

**Representation of Women in Pakistan’s Legislature 1988-2013**

8	8 <sup>th</sup> Legislature Nov 30, 1988-Aug 06, 1990	217	4	20	24	11.1
9	9 <sup>th</sup> Legislature Nov 03, 1990-July 17, 1993	217	2	-	2	0.9
10	10 <sup>th</sup> Legislature Oct 05, 1993-Nov 05, 1996	217	4	-	4	1.8
11	11 <sup>th</sup> Legislature Feb 05, 1997-Oct 12, 1999	217	6	-	6	2.8
412	12 <sup>th</sup> Legislature 2002-2008	342	13	61	74	21.64
13	13 <sup>th</sup> Legislature 2008-2103	342	14	64	78	22.35
14	14 <sup>th</sup> Legislature 2008-2103	342	9	61	70	20.5

*Data compiled by the researchers from National Assembly records.*

Parliament of Pakistan had made significant legislation with the support of women parliamentarians. The major legislation regarding women is, “The Guardians and Wards Act, 1890, The Foreign Marriages Act, 1903, Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, The Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939, The Muslim Family Laws Ordinance, 1961, West Pakistan Rules Under The Muslim Family Laws Ordinance, 1961, West Pakistan Family Court Act, 1964, West Pakistan Family Court Rules, 1965, Dowry and Bridal Gifts (Restriction) Act, 1976, Dowry and Bridal Gifts (Restriction) Rules, 1976, The Hudood Ordinances, 1979. Qanun-e-Shahadat Order, 1984 (Law of Evidence), The Pakistan Citizenship Act, 1951, partially amended in 2001, Amendments in Family Courts Act for khula etc., in 2002. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2004 (on 'honour' crimes)”, Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act, 2006,

“Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2010 (on sexual harassment), The Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010, Prevention of Anti-Women Practices (Criminal Law Amendment) Act, 2011”.

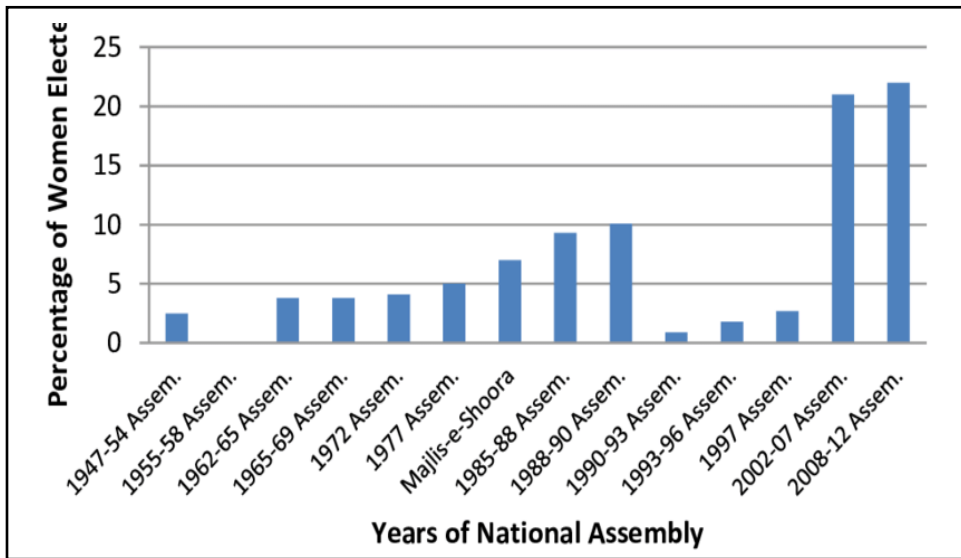
Serial	National Law	Year of Promulgation
1	Articles: 15, 18,23,26,27 of the Constitution	1973
2	Child Marriages Restraint Act	1929
3	Dowry and Bridal Gifts (Restriction) Act (based on Quran)	1976
4	Family Courts Act (based on Quran)	1964
5	Guardians and Wards Act (based on English law)	1880
6	Labor Laws of Pakistan	
7	Law of Evidence (based on English law and Quran)	1984
8	Majority Act	1875
9	Muslim Family Law Ordinance (based on Quran)	1961
10	Muslim Marriage Act (based on Quran)	1939
11	Muslim Personal Laws of Shia and Sunnis (based on Quran)	
12	Penal Code of Pakistan (based on English law and Quran)	1860
13	Qisas and Diyat Ordinance (Section 306, C) (based on Quran)	1991
14	Shariah Laws/ Hudood Ordinances (based on Quran)	1979

Source: Raana Zahid (2007). *Gender Reform Action Plan, Ph.D Diss. University of Washington*

The Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act, 2010, The Women in Distress and Detention Fund (Amendment) Act, 2011, Protection of Women Act 2016 (Passed by Punjab Assembly). (Khalid Rehman and Nadeem Farhat, 2014). This legislation is not new but has a long history, as shown in above table.

Pakistan’s women political history has many ups and downs. To bring reforms in existing laws, various attempts have been made by men and women legislators. Women activists groups and civil societies played an extraordinary role against discriminatory laws and legislation. In 12-13 December 2011, women parliamentarians had achieved a milestone when three important bills were passed. These include “Prevention of Anti-Women Practices, 2011 Acid Control and Acid Crimes Prevention, 2011 and Women in Distress and Detention Fund (Amendment)” 2011. This was a significant parliamentary move towards women’s protection in society. The legal move is necessary, but it needs to translate into women’s social status in society as equal human being. While interviewing different academics, there are also varying understanding. Maria Mustafa, an academics from Islamabad, expressed that woman have created their political space despite many hurdles. Women have long struggle towards capturing a

political space. (Dr. Maria Mustafa, 2014). The percentage of women parliamentarians in the National Assembly is shown in the following graph.



Zubaida Jalal (2014), a women activist and politician, has appreciated the steps taken by different governments for women's empowerment and their political Representation. She pointed out that women legislators are facing many challenges inside and outside of parliament. Despite having political Representation, men have a dominant position in decision-making circles. There is a need to do more for reflecting voices of women in decision-making forums. Past nine years (2004-2015) are immense in the background of legislative improvement on vital women's rights issues. This is extraordinary in Pakistan's parliamentary history that seven progressive laws to cover specific areas of women came in during just nine years. She further explained the impressive achievements of women parliamentarians for tabling and passing the legislative bills on various women related issues like promulgation of “honour killing act 2004, Protection of Women Act 2006” and altering Hudood Ordinances in 2009-10, acid attack act and women sexual harassment Act 2011. She further explained that the deficiencies of these acts but expressed her hope for future improvement.

In an interview Hinna Rabbani (2014) explained the importance of the history of women related legislation and elaborated Muslim Family Laws Ordinance 1961. The ordinance was promulgated on the “recommendations of marriage and family laws” commission set up in 1955. The main purpose of this law was to strengthen family and discourage divorce along with right to inheritance. She also said that women need more rights in society. Number of cases related to *Hudood* laws are as under.

Categories of Crime	Year 2008	Year 2009	Year 2010	Year 2011	Year 2012	Year 2013	Grand Total	Percentage increase decrease in VAW cases between 2012 - 2013
Abduction/Kidnapping	1,784	1,987	2,236	2,089	1,607	2,026	11,729	26.07
Murder	1,422	1,384	1,436	1,575	1,745	1,425	8,987	-18.34
Domestic Violence	281	608	486	610	989	498	3,472	-49.65
Suicide	599	683	633	758	575	668	3,916	16.17
Honour Killing	475	604	557	705	432	487	3,260	12.73
Rape/Gang Rape	778	928	928	827	822	956	5,239	16.3
Sexual Assault	172	274	74	110	58	38	726	-34.48
Acid Throwing	29	53	32	44	83	43	284	-50.81
Burning	61	50	38	29	71	42	291	-40.85
Miscellaneous	1,970	1,977	1,580	1,792	1,134	1,669	10,122	47.18
Total	7,571	8,548	8,000	8,539	7,516	7,852	48,023	4.47

Source: Rathore, M. A. (2015). *Women's Rights in Pakistan: The Zina Ordinance & the Need for Reform*.

Many minor and some significant modifications have been introduced in family laws at various sections of legislation. Improving social status through legal procedures carried a long process. The dowery and Bridal Gifts (Restriction) Act was passed in 1976. In 2004, law against honour killing was promulgated. It took almost 28 years between these two laws related to women protection in Pakistan. Laws and social development are interrelated. Now society has moved forward, and existing laws are not compatible to the emerging need of society. Therefore, there is a need to change all existing laws and make them compatible with the requirement of the existing context of society. The major cause of increasing trends in crimes is a mismatch of existing laws and the emerging needs of society. Regarding women issues, Aurat Foundation and “National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW)” have introduced various legislative drafts for parliamentary consideration. In addition to this, the personnel laws of marginalized religious minorities persist subject of serious negligence, and they must also be viewed into and transformed in consultation with the parliamentarians of their communities.

In 1997, the Pakistan Peoples Party’s government led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was dismissed by General Zia-ul-Haq, the then Army Chief. Zia-ul-Became Chief Martial Law Administrator and introduced various laws that badly affected women's political sphere in society. The Zia 11 years rule over Pakistan was a crucial period for women's political development. The *Haddood* ordinance, 1979 included multiple other laws which were used to strengthen patriarchal culture in Pakistan Society. Some of them are Zina (adultery/abduction) Ordinance. This ordinance was related to the offense of rape. The other one is Qazf enforcement, 1979, which deals with crimes related to false witnessing of zina. The Enforcement of *Hadd* ordinance which deals with the consumption of Alcoholic items,

execution of the punishment of the Whipping Ordinance. This requires a mode of initiating punishment of flagellation.

These ordinances promulgated during the Zia regime suggest two major forms of punishment. One is *Hadd* which means limit. In this case, punishment is defined in Quran and Sunnah. The other type of punishment is *Tazir*, which means to punish. It also contains any punishment other than *hadd*. Punishment on the ground of *Hadd* can be given to those culprits whose age is 18 years or above. In the case of females, age is 16 years and signs of puberty. The other criterion of punishment is related to eyewitness account or accused accepting a charge. Two eyewitnesses are required in all cases except Zina. In Zina, four eyewitnesses required. There are some criteria for eyewitnesses. The witness must be Muslim in case of accused Muslim and non-Muslim; however, proof of witness for non-Muslim accused can be a non-Muslim.

Under *Hadd* punishment, there are some well-defined sentences. For married Muslims and non-Muslim, if he is involved in Zina, then 100 lashes and stoning to death is a punishment. Moreover, in case of using Alcohol and liquor, 80 lashes. In case of theft, they were cutting a right hand. Moreover, along with these punishments, Zia-ul-Haq also introduced *Qanoon-i-Shadaat*. Ziaul Haq also propagated *Qanun-e-Shahadat*, 1984 Law of Evidence which made a woman's evidence half as that of a man. Commenting on these laws, Mufti Usman, a religious scholar in an interview, stated that there was no parliament in Pakistan between 1999-2002 during this period women related laws were enacted, and children of Pakistani women became citizens by amending 1951 citizenship act in 2001. Similarly, family court act was enacted in 2002. (Mufti Usman, 2014). He further elaborated that the renewal of 17% women reserved seats in parliament, 33% in local governments were the major steps towards women empowerment. Saira Baloch (2014), an activist, explained that gender-based legislation and women's inclusion in decision making bodies was a result of the long-standing struggle of civil society and human rights activists. Women are doing well in parliamentary forums, but they need to integrate themselves with civil society activists.

On the performance of women parliamentarians, Wusatullah Khan (2014), a journalist said that women legislators are doing well in legislative proceedings. He showed his satisfaction over various bills and acts in favour of women's protections, but he pointed out that the outcome of all these legislative activities could not be materialized unless to change the social structure of the society and to bring acceptability of women as a human being in the male-dominated social sphere. He further pointed out some important bills regarding Pakistan's Penal Code Amendment Bill 2004 tabled by Ms. Samia Qazi (2014) from the platform of Muttahida Majlis Amal (MMA) and code of criminal procedures amendment bill 2004 by member Assembly Kashmala Tariq from PML-Q and Family Court Amendment Bill tabled by Ms. Mehreen Anwar Raja from PPP. These acts and

legislation are only for political purposes and point-scoring, not to empower women at the grassroots level.

On women's legislation, Humayun Khan (2014), a journalist, said that all efforts are for women empowerment and remove discrimination. He said that in 2005 and 2006, many important bills were tabled and passed by the parliament regarding women protection. The most prominent women parliamentarians who became champion of women rights at the floor of the Assembly was Ms. Sherry Rehman, Ms. Kashmala Tariq, Ms. Mehnaz Rafi, Ms. Samia Qazi, Ms. Beelum Hasnain, Ms. Samina Khalid Ghurki, Dr. Farida Ahmad Siddiqui and Robina Saadat Qaim Khawani. These women represented women voices at decision making circles. But the question is also there to translate all these legislative activities into massive social transformation as indicated by Mr. Wusatullah Khan. "In 2006, Ms. Mehnaz Rafi presented a bill on the offense of Qazf Enforcement of Hadd Amendment Bill", Ms. Kashmala Tariq on Hadood Amendment Bill and Robina Shaheen, Ms. Shakeela Khanum Rasheed tabled the bill on bonded labour, honour killing and women protection. Ms. Rukhsana, a journalist, and broadcaster said that in 2008, General elections were held, but there was no such momentum like previous National Assembly. In the latter half of 2008, Ms. Yasmeen Rehman, Member National Assembly tabled a private member bill. Aurat Foundation and United Nations succeeded in assimilation of their versions into a single draft through a series of consultative process. It was finally presented to Ministry of women development. Meanwhile a fourth bill was presented in National Assembly. Ms. Bushra Goher, member of National Assembly from Awami National Party started further consultation and interaction through sub-committee which was headed by Dr. Attiya Inayatullah, (MNA-PML-Q). The final draft was prepared by the Committee and then presented in National Assembly of Pakistan by Ms. Yasmeen Rehman. August 4, 2009 was an historic day when Domestic Violence Bill (Prevention and Protection) was passed. The bill was lapsed in the Senate of Pakistan due to change in legislative process after 18<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendments. "A recent initiative by the NCSW has created new hopes of the passage of a new reformed version of the DVB. In the meanwhile, women legislators in collaboration with the NCSW and Aurat Foundation are making efforts to introduce comprehensive legislation on domestic violence in provincial legislatures which hopefully will bear fruit soon". (Rukhsana Musarat, 2014). The suggestions of this law were important as it suggests establishment of enquiry committee within 30 days of the implementation of law. Many "important bills are yet pending before the Parliament, which include a private member's bill moved by Ms. Bushra Gohar of Awami National Party to remove discriminations in Pakistan Citizenship Act, 1951". (Bushra Goher, 2014) There are many people in Pakistan who are suffering from the citizenship act of 1951. This bill has not yet got any attention. The first liberal law for women, the Muslim Family Law Ordinance, came in 1961. In Regarding women related legislation, the 1976 Bridal



and Dowry Act was an important shift towards women status in Pakistan. there are many issues related to Dowry in Pakistan. At that time this act was welcomed by sections of the society but could not be implemented. From Zia period to onwards, it was an era of women suppression. Many prejudice laws were implemented in Pakistan which severely affected women status. In the 1990s, no major shift has been observed in the legislative process regarding women issues. It was Musharraf Regime, when women friendly legislation was introduced. This conducive legislative process has encouraged women to actively participate in parliamentary affairs.

## **Conclusion**

The inclusion of women as legislators in parliamentary affairs is a major step to address the grievances and socio-economic insecurities of women. Women parliamentarians have taken a deep interest in decision making forums on the issues related to gender discrimination. All the legislative activities are claimed to be conceived by women parliamentarians, particularly those related to women's rights. The study shows that women in parliament have moved bills related to removing gender discrimination, inheritance obstacles, citizenship issues, abolition of marriage with Quran, uplifting the women status and removal of discriminations at all levels of social and legal fabric. The women parliamentarians also tabled bills related to *Huddod* Laws, acid attacks, Wani and Swara. Many women are now entering in public sphere with more courage and spirit. Though the process is slow, but change has been observed during the recent years as During last few years Pakistan has ratified many important international charters related to women and other human rights.

During the Musharraf regime in Pakistan, the National Commission on Status of Women started its reforms process regarding women rights. The major pioneer women were Syeda Arifa Zehra, Majida Rizvi, Ms. Anis Haroon, who took deep interests in uplifting women status in Pakistan. These initiatives regarding women development shows that democracy is a way forwards towards bringing gender equality and making women parliamentarian more active in public and legislative affairs. Rule of law and constitutional supremacy are the fundamental indicators that can lead towards women active involvement in politics. Moreover, media, civil society, and intellectual support is required to create a conducive environment for women parliamentarian to represent women voices. Women legislators are still facing issues and hurdles regarding placing their recommendations over important issues however their position changed gradually with the passage of time.

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