Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization (JITC)
Volume 15 Issue 1, Spring 2025
ISSN$_{(P)}$: 2075-0943 ISSN$_{(E)}$: 2520-0313
Homepage: https://journals.umt.edu.pk/index.php/JITC

Article QR

Title:	**Islamic Inheritance Rights for Women in Pakistan: Exploring Legal Safeguards and Social Challenges**
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DOI:	https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.151.09
History:	Received: November 01, 2024, Revised: February 23, 2025, Accepted: February 24, 2025, Published: April 25, 2025
Citation:	Nisar, Amina, and Rafidah binti Mohamad Cusairi. "Islamic Inheritance Rights for Women in Pakistan: Exploring Legal Safeguards and Social Challenges." *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 15, no. 1 (2025): 146–165. https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.151.09
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Conflict of Interest:	Author(s) declared no conflict of interest

A publication of
Department of Islamic Thought and Civilization, School of Social Science and Humanities
University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan

Islamic Inheritance Rights for Women in Pakistan: Exploring Legal Safeguards and Social Challenges

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Abstract

Women's right to inheritance is often denied outright, despite the protective provisions enshrined in both Pakistan's Constitution and *Shari'ah* law across Punjab. This study examines Islamic inheritance rights for women within the framework of family law by exploring the legal and social barriers they face in Pakistan. It investigates the underlying reasons why women forgo their inheritance rights, as well as the challenges they encounter when attempting to assert them. The study also explores the available options for women and the obstacles that hinder them from exercising autonomy in pursuing these choices. A qualitative research approach was adopted, with data collected through in-depth interviews. Using purposive sampling, the study selected nineteen women, six men, and three legal experts from the Punjab province as participants. Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the data. Findings reveal that women face significant challenges in accessing their legal inheritance under Islamic *Shari'ah* inheritance laws, primarily due to limited awareness of their rights, familial pressure, and cultural norms that discourage women from claiming their rightful share. This research reinforces existing literature on women's Islamic inheritance rights and underscores the urgent need for policy interventions. It calls upon the Pakistani government to enhance the enforcement of inheritance laws and implement public awareness campaigns that empower women to claim their entitlements.

***Keywords*:** inheritance, inheritance denial in Punjab, Islamic Family Law, social barriers to inheritance, women's rights in Pakistan

Introduction

Women's rights of inheritance refer to the share of the properties which a woman is entitled to, as granted by law. One of the key concerns under Islamic family law is the differing inheritance rights for women.[1] Since this study is focused on Pakistan, where Islam is practiced by the majority of the population,[2] the country follows a legal system based on Islamic principles. The share of each heir is determined by the degree of their relationship to the deceased.[3] Empirical evidence, however,

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[1]Halimah Basri et al., "Inheritance Rights of Women in Makassar Society: A Study of Living Qur'an and Its Implications for Islamic Law," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 6, no. 2 (October 3, 2022): 537, https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v6i2.13882

[2]Muhammad Khalid Masud, "Modernizing Islamic Law in Pakistan: Reform or Reconstruction?," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 2 (2019): 73–97, https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/340/article/779684/summary.

[3]Tarmizi Tarmizi et al., "The Dynamics of Determining Men and Women Parts in Matters of Inheritance: A Study of Islamic Law," *Jurnal Diskursus Islam* 10, no. 2 (August 31, 2022): 271–89, https://doi.org/10.24252/jdi.v10i2.30172.

suggests that there is a significant gap between what is said in law books about women's inheritance rights and the reality for women regarding inheritance.

Women's renunciation of their entitlement to inherit in the Pakistani context reflects that accepting a share of inheritance could be interpreted as a denial of their established gender role.[4] Furthermore, the indirect economic power that men have over women might also be considered as one of the reasons that might force women to relinquish their rights to inheritance intentionally to maintain peace in the family and overcome possible conflicts.[5]

The clear inheritance rights for women, as outlined in Islam and the Pakistani constitution, fail to prevent persistent debates about their inheritance rights in the country. The research fills a fundamental gap in current scholarship by highlighting both legal inconsistencies and uncovering cultural practices that compel women to give away their assigned inheritance.[6] This research evaluates the lived experiences of affected women while strengthening its approach with empirical data next to sociological philosophical and theoretical insights, unlike traditional legal-focused reports.[7] Through this research method, the academic value is enhanced as it offers fresh interpretations of gendered legal structures, simultaneously creating theoretical connections between Islamic legal doctrine and social legal research domains. Additionally, it provides actionable recommendations to enhance inheritance rights implementation.[8]

Another reason that inhibits women from claiming their right of inheritance is the social rejection, particularly when women are perceived to be demanding what society considers their due right of inheritance.[9] This practice reflects the enduring male dominance that forces women to rely financially on their male family members, thus sustaining male privilege over females.[10] This philosophical analysis brings into question both justice and fairness aspects in Islamic legal systems, as they operate differently between theoretical frameworks and actual practices. The research relies on feminist legal theory along with Islamic legal theory to evaluate text interpretation methods under patriarchy in cultural settings.[11] Thus, many women do not have the slightest idea of legal provisions and rights about inheritance; hence, they often give up claiming their rights.[12] Women in Pakistan

[4]Keller, "The Women of Salò: Roles and Expectations in the Italian Social Republic - ProQuest," Proquest.com, 2023, https://www.proquest.com/openview/01a765444c38ff3d2ba9c23141443238/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y.

[5]Lisa Leghorn and Katherine Parker, *Woman's Worth: Sexual Economics and the World of Women* (Routledge, 2022)., https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003302995.

[6]Tarmizi Tarmizi et al., "The Dynamics of Determining Men and Women Parts in Matters of Inheritance: A Study of Islamic Law," *Jurnal Diskursus Islam* 10, no. 2 (August 31, 2022): 271–89, https://doi.org/10.24252/jdi.v10i2.30172

[7]Halimah Basri et al., "Inheritance Rights of Women in Makassar Society: A Study of Living Qur'an and Its Implications for Islamic Law," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 6, no. 2 (October 3, 2022): 537, https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v6i2.13882.

[8]Badriah Khaleel, Khalid Ahmed, and Syed Sajid Ali Shah, "Critical Discourse Analysis of Pakistani Inheritance Law and Justice System for Women," *Pakistan Social Sciences Review* 7, no. 3 (September 30, 2023): 87–100, https://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2023(7-III)08.

[9]Ibid.

[10]A. A Daibu, S. A Daibu, and J Aimienrovbiye, "Women's Right to Inheritance in Africa: The Nigerian Experience.," *Africa Nazarene University Law Journal* 6, no. 1 (2018): 28–56.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Vayda Megannon, "The Lived Experience of Inheritance for Muslim Widows in Contemporary South Africa," Uct.ac.za, 2020, https://open.uct.ac.za/handle/11427/32861.

face several challenges regarding any chance of getting what is rightfully due to them.[13] While *Shari'ah* law clearly states that women should be given a fair share of the inheritance, it is either misinterpreted or not applied correctly; hence, women are denied their rightful share. This ongoing problem reveals a legal contradiction because Pakistan has protective laws for women, yet their execution fails because of traditional interpretations of the law and cultural opposition to female rights. The article notes that while there are several laws for women's rights and protection, the issue of discrimination in inheritance remains a significant problem.[14] Cultural or male-oriented interpretations of laws aimed at safeguarding women from such misrepresentation have reduced women to nurturing vessels with no right to rightful inheritance. Family property ownership bears positive consequences for women since it enhances their steadiness in society and offers something to survive on, thus boosting women's self-employment and improving gender equity.[15] Women throughout different regions encounter discrimination through inheritance laws that endanger their financial autonomy. This study examines gender bias in Pakistan and connects it to worldwide discussions involving economic and gender rights.[16] Gender discrimination in different countries of the world manifests in feminine discrimination in the aspect of inheritance, which remains a threat to women as far as economic independence is concerned.

The purpose of this research is to identify the tactics used to force women to surrender their rights to property and the difficulties faced by women who seek justice under Islamic family law in Pakistan. Therefore, the main objective is to explore the state of women's inheritance within this context by investigating the societal and legal barriers to women's property rights.

2. Literature Review

The following sections attempt to document previous literature to identify the history of women's inheritance, the laws, societal factors, and the challenges and complexities accompanying the issue.

2.1 Inheritance in Islamic Law

The Islamic legal framework of inheritance plays a fundamental role in *Shari'ah* because the Qur'ān provides clear directives that the Hadith elaborates. According to the Qur'ān, specific guidelines establish how inheritance should be distributed so that all recognized legal heirs get their properly allocated portion including female occupants of the family. [17] The Islamic principles of inheritance are derived from multiple Qur'ānic verses which include:

[13]Ghazal Mir Zulfiqar, "Inequality Regimes, Patriarchal Connectivity, and the Elusive Right to Own Land for Women in Pakistan," *Journal of Business Ethics*, March 21, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-022-05097-y.

[14]A. A Daibu, S. A Daibu, and J Aimienrovbiye, "Women's Right to Inheritance in Africa: The Nigerian Experience.," *Africa Nazarene University Law Journal* 6, no. 1 (2018): 28–56.

[15]Duman Bahrami-Rad, "Keeping It in the Family: Female Inheritance, Inmarriage, and the Status of Women," *Journal of Development Economics* 153 (November 2021): 102714, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2021.102714.

[16]Halimah Basri et al., "Inheritance Rights of Women in Makassar Society: A Study of Living Qur'an and Its Implications for Islamic Law," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* [Samarah: Journal of Family Law and Islamic Law], 6, no. 2 (October 3, 2022): 537, https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v6i2.13882.

[17]Oluwakemi D. Udoh, Sheriff F. Folarin, and Victor A. Isumonah, "The Influence of Religion and Culture on Women's Rights to Property in Nigeria," ed. Emmanuel O Amoo, *Cogent Arts and Humanities* 7, no. 1 (April 17, 2020), https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2020.1750244.

"For men is a share of what their parents and close relatives leave, and for women is a share of what their parents and close relatives leave, be it little or much—an obligatory share."[18]

"Allah commands you regarding your children: for the male, what is equal to the share of two females..."[19]

"And for you (husbands) is half of what your wives leave if they have no child. But if they have a child, then for you is one-fourth of what they leave…"[20]

Inheritance laws play a significant role in shaping the social fabric and the socioeconomic status of any society.[21] While there has been progress in gender equality, women still face challenges when claiming their inheritance.[22] Cultural and societal factors are crucial in determining when and how women may be pressured to surrender their inheritance rights.[23] Nevertheless, in an endeavor to safeguard women's property rights, various legal provisions are enforced worldwide. In Pakistan, inheritance laws are confined under Islamic family laws as a part of *Shari'ah*, which plays explicitly a significant role in protecting the inheritance rights of women. Based on the Qur'ān and Hadith, rules have been laid down on the distribution of inheritance, with all legal beneficiaries, including women, being protected. It is again pertinent to mention here that the laws regarding inheritance in Pakistan are also based on the knowledge of the Qur'ān and the shares of the heirs. In Pakistan, under the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, all the laws that are against the Islamic *Shari'ah* laws are declared null and void.[24]

The Islamic principles of inheritance are derived from multiple Qur'ānic verses, and Islamic inheritance law emerges from Qiyās (analogical reasoning), Ijma' (consensus), and Ijtihad (independent reasoning) according to the *Usul al-Fiqh* theory which is about the principles of Islamic jurisprudence.[25] The Objectives of Islamic Law known as *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* uphold the juridical values of *adl* for justice alongside *hifz al-mal* for wealth protection, ensuring social equilibrium. Under Islamic law, the inheritance system forbids economic injustice and provides financial security for every beneficiary specifically including female heirs. [26]

In *Shari'ah*, the Qur'ān outlines specific distributions to several family members, such as the spouse, children, parents, and siblings.[27] In the distribution of the family inheritance, the right of

[18]An Nisa 4:07.

[19]An Nisa 4:11.

[20]An Nisa 4:12.

[21]Duman Bahrami-Rad, "Keeping It in the Family: Female Inheritance, Inmarriage, and the Status of Women," *Journal of Development Economics* 153 (November 2021): 102714, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2021.102714.

[22]Tricia Glazebrook, Samantha Noll, and Emmanuela Opoku, "Gender Matters: Climate Change, Gender Bias, and Women's Farming in the Global South and North," *Agriculture* 10, no. 7 (July 3, 2020): 267, https://doi.org/10.3390/agriculture10070267.

[23]Oluwakemi D. Udoh, Sheriff F. Folarin, and Victor A. Isumonah, "The Influence of Religion and Culture on Women's Rights to Property in Nigeria."

[24]Muhammad Zubair Abbasi, "Islamic Constitutionalism in Pakistan: Nature, Impact, and Compatibility with International Human Rights Law," *J. Int'l L. Islamic L.* 18 (2022).

[25]Ghulam Rasul Zahid, "Family Laws in Pakistan: A Comparative Study of Islamic and Civil Code," *Jahan-e-Tahqeeq* 4, no. 4 (2021): 280-286.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Muhammad Faizul Haque et al., "Women Rights to Inheritance in Muslim Family Law: An Analytical Study," *International Journal of Islamic Business Management* 4, no. 1 (2020): 15-26, https://doi.org/10.46281/ijibm.v4i1.543.

property is given as 2 ratio 1; the women share one part while the men share the right to two parts.[28] However, the division of the assets may differ depending on the case, for instance, the number of beneficiaries or the type of asset. Islamic family law in Pakistan is included in the country's legal system through laws such as the Muslim Personal Law (*Shari'ah*) Application Act of 1937, which deals with matters of marriage, divorce, and inheritance among Muslims. However, issues about the definition of *Shari'ah* and its possibility of being in harmony with the legal systems of the developed world and human rights have remained.

It is pertinent to mention that in recent years, few attempts have been made to change Inheritance laws in Pakistan. There was a move to pass the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance, and women's inheritance rights bills were enacted. However, owing to cultural imperative, low literacy levels, and complex legislation, women's rights to inheritance are still an issue.[29] Overall, the legal provisions governing inheritance in Pakistan include *Shari'ah* law, a component of Islamic law, and civil law.[30] Despite the governmental actions to change these laws, much more effort is needed to achieve equality for women and men regarding inheritance.

2.2. Inheritance in Pakistani Laws

The inheritance laws for women in Pakistan are statutory, non-statutory, customary, and Islamic *Shari'ah* laws.[31] The laws also observe equality in terms of succession, allowing women to inherit from a deceased son or daughter. Further enhancements to the existing laws on inheritance, which safeguard the rights of every individual can be observed in the Criminal Law (3rd Amendment) Act of 2011. The law added Section 498A to the Pakistan Penal Code, which made it unlawful to stop women from having their fair share of inheritance. Offenders could be liable to prosecution if found guilty, and the repercussions include imprisonment for five to ten years, fines up to one million rupees, or both. This is because, through the above amendment, the parliament has criminalized the act of denying women their rightful inheritance by their male counterparts.[32]

The Muslim Family Laws Ordinance of 1961 is an excellent legal instrument that governs most matrimonial laws, including succession, marriage, divorce and maintenance, and many more in Pakistan.[33] In particular, regarding inheritance, the ordinance is instrumental in reconciling the Islamic practice of inheritance whereby women and other heirs are rightly entitled as the Islamic laws provide for.[34] The law stated that local women are allowed to inherit and be given their rightful share of the inheritance as provided by Islamic law.[35] Most importantly, this law has provisions that forbid

[28]Ibid.

[29]Fatum Abubakar, "Islamic Family Law Reform: Early Marriage and Criminalization (a Comparative Study of Legal Law in Indonesia and Pakistan)," *Al-Ahkām Jurnal Ilmu Syari'ah Dan Hukum* 4, no. 2 (December 31, 2019), https://doi.org/10.22515/al-ahkam.v4i2.1667.

[30]Ghulam Rasul Zahid, "Family Laws in Pakistan: A Comparative Study of Islamic and Civil Code."

[31]Abida Yaseen, Ali Shouzab, and Taimoor Raza Sultan, "Inheritance of a Daughter: An Analysis Based on Islam and Laws Prevalent in Pakistan," *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs* 5, no. 2 (2022): 1098-1111

[32]Ibid.

[33]Hira Shahjehan, Sami Ur, and Rahman, "Laws Relating to Polygamy in Pakistan: Rights of the Polygamous Wives," *L. Rev* 5 (2021): 25, https://www.iiu.edu.pk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ILR-Vol-5-Issue-2-Article-2-15042022.pdf.

[34]R. Minnee, "Impact of Marriage and Social Norms in Determining Women's Property Rights within the Muslim Communities of Bangladesh," repository.uel.ac.uk, October 14, 2022, https://repository.uel.ac.uk/item/8v1qq.

[35]Ibid.

prejudiced actions that could lead to denial of the rightful share by the women. An example of this is denying daughters or widows their property rights.[36] The right to property here refers to the legal entitlement to own, use, and dispose of property.

In most regions of Pakistan, the social and cultural practices often contradict the legal requirements, thereby suppressing women's right to inheritance.[37] Out of tradition, many families, especially those with traditional and or cultural bases, pressure women to surrender their rightful shares to some male members either in the name of maintaining family harmony or due to lack of legal understanding.[38] Although the law provides a legal framework for women to demand their rights and recognize their inheritance, the enforcement of these laws is significantly hindered by legal restrictions, illiteracy, and social constraints. Therefore, there is an urgent need for stricter measures and greater awareness of legal provisions to ensure their practical implementation.

Researchers have undertaken multiple studies to investigate the gap between Islamic inheritance regulations and their social implementation in Pakistan. [39] The research shows that Pakistani statutory laws exist but customary practices often hold more influence over the legal frameworks. A study from previous researches focuses on the cultural challenges that stop female inheritance rights.[40] Researchers have revealed that women demonstrate only limited understanding of legal matters thus making them susceptible to exploitation. Recent legislation through the Punjab Partition of Immovable Property Act (2012) aims to assist women in gaining access to inherited properties. The research demonstrates that official delays and poor implementation methods are slowing down the advancement of progress.[41]

2.3. Barriers to Women Regarding Their Inheritance Rights in Pakistan

Studies show that Muslim women either do not inherit anything or only receive a portion of what is permitted by the Qur'ān, despite *Shari'ah*'s position on women's inheritance rights.[42] Although Pakistan is an Islamic state it is still not an ideal place for women to demand their rights. One of the main reasons women surrender their property is their ignorance of and lack of comprehension of their inheritance rights.[43] Furthermore, lack of awareness about what women are entitled to under the law, economic dependence on the male and the complexity of legal processes are the major reasons.[44] It is easy for male relatives to lure women into handing over the money they

[36]N. J Coulson, *Islamic Family Law: Progress in Pakistan.* (In Changing Law in Developing Countries. Routledge, 2021), 240–57.

[37]Muhammad Umair et al., "Diluting the Patriarchal Dominance: Review of Developing Feminist Discourse in Pakistani Context," *VFAST Transactions on Education and Social Sciences* 11, no. 1 (March 31, 2023): 202–7, https://doi.org/10.21015/vtess.v11i1.1392.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Abida Yaseen, Ali Shouzab, and Taimoor Raza Sultan, "Inheritance of a Daughter: An Analysis Based on Islam and Laws Prevalent in Pakistan."

[40]R. Minnee, "Impact of Marriage and Social Norms in Determining Women's Property Rights within the Muslim Communities of Bangladesh."

[41]Ibid.

[42]Muhammad Faizul Haque et al., "Women Rights to Inheritance in Muslim Family Law: An Analytical Study."

[43]Agnes Andersson Djurfeldt, "Gendered Land Rights, Legal Reform and Social Norms in the Context of Land Fragmentation-a Review of the Literature for Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda," *Land Use Policy* 90 (2020).

[44]Ruth Meinzen-Dick et al., "Women's Land Rights as a Pathway to Poverty Reduction: Framework and Review of Available Evidence," *Agricultural Systems* 172 (June 2019): 72–82, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.agsy.2017.10.009.

were given for inheritance under the trap of providing for such women financially in the future. If women want to keep the inheritance among family members, they can be threatened with giving up their wealth. Some of the factors include the subjugation of women, community expectations, and the affection that females develop towards their brothers. Some women willingly renounce their rights to inheritance for their brothers, husbands, or fathers to abide by women's roles in a patriarchal society.[45]

However, women in Pakistan continue to face several challenges when claiming their inheritance rights.[46] Despite these challenges, the traditional cultural practices in the Asian region significantly hinder women's ability to inherit property. In today's world, women experience various challenges attributed to cultural beliefs like forced marriage, child marriage, and honour killings. This is because women are often at risk of honour killings when they struggle for rights from male factions as a result of the culture of patriarchy.[47] For instance, women in tribal areas are forced to marry the Holy Qur'ān,[48] solely to safeguard family property.[49] Another major hindrance identified is male relatives' resistance, which stems from prejudice and the desire for the family to remain wealthy. Sadly, the few women who try to assert their right to inheritance find themselves being harassed in the forms of verbal abuse and sometimes even physical violence by their male counterparts. Another problem among women is that women give up their right to inheritance to a man to pay dowry or wedding expenses even though the Prevention of Anti-Women Practices Act, 2011, makes it illegal for anyone to deny a woman her right to property.[50]

Thus, the issue of women's right to inheritance remains unresolved in Pakistan owing to root causes that include deeply ingrained cultural beliefs that uphold patriarchy, other culturally biased practices, and inadequate women's inheritance laws and processes in the country.[51] Such enduring issues need international cooperation to change perceptions, increase understanding, and enhance the laws and systems. It will only be through such long-term efforts that women will be able to effectively and equally claim their rights. The challenges of empowering women in the sphere of inheritance can be tackled through the formulation of adequate legislation, the improved access to information, and the transformation of society so that it recognizes women's rights to inheritance on equal terms with men's rights.

[45]Duman Bahrami-Rad, "Keeping It in the Family: Female Inheritance, Inmarriage, and the Status of Women," *Journal of Development Economics* 153 (2021), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2021.102714

[46]Ibid.

[47]Muhammad Sher Abbas, "Honour Killings in Pakistan and Status of Women in Islamic Law," *Available at SSRN 3760294* (2021).

[48]Some families encourage "marriage to Qur'ān" to prevent a woman from marrying any person. Women who are married to the Holy Qur'ān are not allowed to have a relationship with a man or to marry anybody. Moreover, men fear being cursed if they have a relationship with a woman who is married to the Qur'ān.

[49]Badriah Khaleel, Khalid Ahmed, and Syed Sajid Ali Shah, "Critical Discourse Analysis of Pakistani Inheritance Law and Justice System for Women."

[50]Dr Naseem Akhtar, Prof Dr Muhammad Hammad Lakhvi, and Dr Arshad Munir, "Women Rights in Pashtun Tribes of Pakistan: Challenges and Opportunities," *Al-NASR*, (2023): 35–46, https://doi.org/10.53762/alnasr.02.02.e03.

[51]Ghazal Mir Zulfiqar, "Inequality Regimes, Patriarchal Connectivity, and the Elusive Right to Own Land for Women in Pakistan," *Journal of Business Ethics* 177, no. 4 (2022): 799-811.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study Design

This study investigates women's inheritance rights within the framework of Islamic family law using a qualitative research design. Qualitative research allows for an intensive examination of the various dimensions of a certain subject by delving into the opinions, experiences, and social relationships of individuals, providing a significantly rich understanding of the subject matter.[52]

3.2. Sampling Method

Purposive sampling method was employed for this study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which participants are selected to meet the specific criteria relevant to the research question. In this case, participants were chosen based on their ability to provide insights into the legal and cultural framework surrounding women's inheritance rights in Pakistan. The sample consisted of men, women, and legal experts, which were chosen purposefully for their potential to contribute knowledge-rich, analytic authority dense access to the phenomenon. The study used participants as the main stakeholders affected by inheritance regulations together with social customs. The participants shared specific knowledge about the obstacles and legal barriers alongside societal pressures that prevent them from pursuing their inheritance rights. Male family members provided essential perspectives because they help explain how inheritance-related cultural and social expectations affect women when they seek their inheritance rights. Women's perspectives were crucial in understanding how patriarchal power structures hinder women's access to inheritance. Attaining insight into legal frameworks and inheritance laws required the involvement of both lawyers and Islamic law scholars. Their expertise created a bridge between Islamic laws and Pakistan's legal mechanisms through a combination of judicial and theological understanding of the matter.

3.3. Data Collection Method

The primary method of data collection for this research was semi-structured exploratory interviews. An interview guide was devised to ensure that the interviews remained semi-structured, allowing for flexibility in the conversation while ensuring that key themes were addressed. Knowing that many of the participants were from diverse linguistic backgrounds, the interview guide was translated into Urdu and where possible, presented in the participants' respective local languages. By providing the interview guide in the most familiar language of the participants, language barriers were minimized, enabling respondents to feel more comfortable and express themselves more freely in their preferred language. The use of the local languages is indeed a part of the ethical consideration as it increases the positive context for the respondents and makes the research setting more inclusive and culturally apt.

3.4. Data Collection Duration

The data collection phase for this study was planned for three months, during which a diverse group of participants were involved in order to get a wide range of data. With this framework a large amount of data was generated with a range of a deep and detail information related to the research questions.

[52]Antonio A. Bush and Mauriell H. Amechi, "Conducting and Presenting Qualitative Research in Pharmacy Education," *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning* 11, no. 6 (June 2019): 638–50, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cptl.2019.02.030.

4. Results and Discussion

Thematic analysis has been used to identify, analyse, and record patterns (themes) within the data.[53] It allows for unobvious patterns to be revealed, ensures it is a systematic and robust examination of the data and provides rich and detailed accounts of events in the data.

In the Punjab region of Pakistan women face a patriarchal society that hinders them from seeking their rights in various areas, including inheritance, where they are often victims of discrimination.[54] The prevalent cultural practices, taboos, stereotypes, and patriarchal structures play a significant role in shaping the legislative and cultural context of Pakistan, which often undermines women's inheritance rights.[55]

Based on the interview findings, the researcher has performed a thematic analysis. After reviewing the interview transcripts closely, the researcher formulated different themes in accordance with the interview questions.

4.1. Theme I: Understanding of Inheritance Rights

Despite the equitable and fair provisions of *Shari'ah* law regarding inheritance, women remain deprived of their legal rights. This deprivation can occur for various reasons, but it is most often due to societal perceptions of women as vulnerable within Pakistani family settings. As a result, women sometimes intentionally or are forced to relinquish their inheritance rights. One of the respondents explained it as: "In Pakistan, there are different situations. Some women waive off their rights due to family love, some women are forced to give up their rights, and some women are bold and get their rights."[56]

The major reason is lack of understanding about women's inheritance rights in Pakistan. A common misconception is that women in Pakistan are not permitted to inherit property from their parents or other relatives.[57] Especially in case of widow and mothers, people in Pakistan don't even consider them while allocating the inheritance shares. However, the truth is that women in Pakistan are legally entitled to inherit property from family members. Women in Pakistan have misunderstanding that if they assert their inheritance rights, they will be alienated from their families or lose relationships with their blood relatives. In reality, when women claim their rightful inheritance, tensions may arise initially, but over time, things tend to settle down. In rural areas, social inequalities often define land as a shared resource, making it harder for women to claim their rightful inheritance. This is further complicated by their lack of understanding of inheritance procedure.[58] One of the respondents said during interview, "Women in Pakistan don't even have understanding of their own rights in Islam, except for a few who have religious education."[59]

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[53]Michelle E. Kiger and Lara Varpio, "Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Data," *Medical Teacher* 42, no. 8 (May 1, 2020): 846–54, https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2020.1755030.

[54]Raza ul Habib, Ahmad et al, "Empowering Women: Navigating Islamic Rights and Cultural Hurdles in Pakistan," *Al-Hameed Islamic Studies Research Journal* 3, no. 3 (2024): 2959–1767.

[55]Ahmad, Ishaq et al, "Inequality Regimes, Patriarchal Connectivity, and Women's Right to Property Inheritance in Rural Pakistan," *Journal of Positive School Psychology* (2023): 1251-1267.

[56]Interview with Miss Amira, the Teacher at a private School and Academy, on 21 January, 2023.

[57]Syed Noor Ul Hassan Hashmi et al., "Examining Some Misconceptions About Islamic Women's Rights from Pakistan's Perspective," *Multicultural Education* 8, no. 12 (2022): 65-69, DOI:10.5281/zenodo.7424550

[58]Sajida Parveen et al., "Women Empowerment in Inherited Land Rights: End of Violence in Rural Areas," *The Journal of Adult Protection* 24, no. 5/6 (2022): 231-242.

[59]Interview with Madam Razia Amjad, the Head of an Islamic institution, on 10 February, 2023.

Illiteracy and lack of awareness are potential reasons behind women being deprived of their inheritance rights. The Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) Survey shows that rural women have lower literacy rates compared to rural men, with only 51% of women being literate, compared to 72% of men.[60] The National Commission on the Status of Women[61]documented that Pakistani women's ignorance about legal inheritance rights stands at 18%, thus making them susceptible to societal and family pressures.

4.2. Theme II: Implementation of Legal Regulations

The government has taken measures to protect these rights, such as passing laws like the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance in 1961 and the Punjab Enforcement of Women's Property Rights Act in 2021. However, the proper and adequate implementation of laws is crucial to ensure fair treatment among women or other legal heirs. One of the respondents also explained, "If law implemented in true sense than women can easily assess their rights."[62] Proper enforcement of inheritance laws is vital to securing women's inheritance rights. In Pakistan, the Constitution of Pakistan 1973 provides equal rights to any citizen to obtain, possess, and alienate property anywhere in the country. This underlines the necessity of law enforcement to deliver specific results. Pakistan, an Islamic country, has to adhere to the rules of "Islamic Inheritance Jurisprudence" in inheritance law, whereby under *Shari'ah* law, only the blood relation has the legal right to inherit back the property from the descendant once he is dead. *Shari'ah* also elaborates on the permissions given to women in inheritance. Furthermore, section 498A, which is part of the Pakistan Penal Code, also proclaims, "If any individual compels a woman to surrender her right of inheritance of property, then that particular person is punishable by law."[63]

A Human Rights Commission of Pakistan study (2023) revealed that more than sixty percent of women's inheritance cases take an endless amount of time to resolve in courts because of procedural delays and social discrimination against them. Data collected by the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women[64] indicated that 23% of female inheritance claimants managed to obtain their rightful inheritance share even though legal regulations were in place.[65]

4.3. Theme III: Reasons for Women to Waive off their Inheritance Rights

Ignorance and pressure from society are the leading causes as to why women relinquish their rights. This is because women have no inkling of how Islam has appreciated their status and defended their rights. In essence, it can be postulated that Pakistani women, in general, have inadequate knowledge about their rightful share of inheritance from a reliable source. While educated women or those from religious backgrounds may have some knowledge of the Islamic perspective on female inheritance, many others have misconceptions due to limited understanding of Islam's teachings on the matter. Only a small number of women are familiar with the legal obligations surrounding inheritance, and even those who are aware typically only know a few specific laws. Awareness can empower women to fight for their rights. Therefore, the lack of awareness contributing to women

[60]Federal Bureau Statistics, "Pakistan" paper presented at the *Gender statistics in Pakistan,* concluding workshop, enhancing social and gender statistics. (Islamabad: Federal Bureau of Statistics, 2003).

[61]UN Women, "Commission on the Status of Women," *Fiftieth Session* 27 (2020).

[62]Interview with Miss Amira, the Teacher at a private School and Academy, on 21 January, 2023.

[63]Anam Saleem, and Ghania Khan, "Constitutional Safeguard and Plight of Women in Pakistan," *Pakistan Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 1, no. 1 (2020): 14-24.

[64]Statistics, "Pakistan."

[65]ibid.

waiving their inheritance rights. “Due to lack of awareness about their rights, they usually waive off their rights.”[66]

One of the reasons women are compelled to forgo their inheritance rights is their deep emotional attachment to their brothers. From a young age, girls are taught that their brothers are superior because they provide them with protection and security. They are also made to believe that brothers will always be the rightful heirs of the family, and therefore, women should not challenge this norm but instead maintain strong ties with their brothers.[67] Many women relinquish their inheritance either out of love for their brothers or because they rely on them for social security. It has been observed that women across various regions of Pakistan commonly give up their property in favour of their brothers, and this practice is prevalent even among highly educated women. Demanding the share of property also leads to conflicts. In this regard, women mostly prefer to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings with their brothers, fathers, or husbands. One of the respondents shares her stance in these words, “Yes, we women by ourselves don’t demand our share and waive off because we love our brothers and don’t want to take share from them.”[68]

While various traditional practices have contributed to denying women their inheritance rights, dowry stands out as the most influential. Dowry is not a requirement in Islam and is not commonly practiced in most Islamic countries, except in South Asian nations where it was already a part of Hindu culture before the spread of Islam. Dowry is often viewed as a substitute for a woman’s rightful inheritance. Some women even prefer dowry over their inheritance, despite its short-term benefits and much lower financial value compared to an actual inheritance. However, its impact on depriving women of their inheritance has lessened due to increasing awareness and education. Nonetheless, unless the government takes strict action against the dowry system, it will be difficult to eliminate this custom. One of the respondents also explained the misconception of dowry as an inheritance in these words, “At the time of wedding, daughters are given a lot of things, and it is considered that still something is left behind to give her as a share of inheritance. Dowry is definitely an alternative to inheritance.”[69]

Moreover, when women speak up for their inheritance rights, family members often raise objections, and combined with a lack of awareness, the women ultimately relinquish their legal rightful inheritance shares. These negative family dynamics perpetuate unequal legal inheritance share and exploitation of women's legal and human rights.[70]

4.4. Theme IV: Motivations for Asserting Inheritance Rights

In Pakistani culture, women are often financially dependent on the men in their lives, and the lack of financial resources becomes a key reason behind women demanding a share in property. However, the cultural constraints within Pakistan discourage women from asking for a share in the property if they are financially stable. One of the respondents explained it as, “Yes, if you have financial issue than you can demand but if you are in sound financial condition, you should not ask for it.”[71]

[66]Interview with Miss Amara, a Qur’ān Volunteer and Teacher, on 11 February, 2023.

[67]Bahrami-Rad, “Keeping It in the Family: Female Inheritance, Inmarriage, and the Status of Women.”

[68]Madam Shabnam, the Teacher at a Govt. School, Interview on 12 January 2023

[69]Madam Shabnam, the Teacher at a Govt. School, Interview on 12 January 2023

[70]Tamaryn L Crankshaw, Jane Freedman, and Victoria M Mutambara, “Intergenerational Trajectories of Inherited Vulnerabilities amongst Young Women Refugees in South Africa,” *Comparative Migration Studies* 11, no. 1 (2023), https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-023-00335-2

[71]Miss Ariba Munir, a Beautician and Cosmetologist, Interview on 25 January 2023.

Greedy behaviour from husbands or in-laws also forces women in Asian culture to demand their property share, even if they do not feel the need to do so for themselves. But as the traditional culture has been revolutionized due to other societal or cultural advancements, women are now taking bold steps to demand their share in property. In this regard, awareness is also increasing among women, particularly in the developed nations where they have access to education or other facilities. One of the respondents also explained it as, "Yes awareness of rights is also a reason to claim the right."[72]

These incidents clearly illustrate the lack of social acceptance regarding women's claims to their rightful inheritance. Even when these claims arise from challenging circumstances, women are often viewed as selfish and greedy. The fact that these women are entitled to their shares is frequently overlooked. Widowed women, in particular, are often seen asserting their inheritance rights, and their motivations are frequently linked to adverse circumstances. For example, one respondent from Pattoki mentioned that she initially refrained from claiming her inheritance but was compelled to do so after her brother's child sold her parental house without her consent. She decided to claim her share out of a sense of retaliation. Her daughter explains this during an interview in these words, "At first she didn't claim her inheritance from her natal family. However, her brother's child sold her parental house without her permission. So, she decided to claim her share in inheritance with a revenge."[73]

This illustrates that women often justify their claims due to a lack of social acceptance. Only a few women claim their inheritance based on personal decision-making. One respondent, who was neither in financial distress nor under pressure from in-laws, claimed her inheritance solely because she knew her rights. This highlights that claims made by women on their own initiative are rare, with most claims being driven by financial need or external pressure. In such a myriad, women ask for their inheritance rights with reasons of financial demand either due to their financial condition or by getting enforced by their in-laws and these factors also humiliate the original meaning of having or providing inheritance rights to the women.[74]

Moreover, the study highlights that women face additional cultural limitations, such as weak financial positions, limited administrative hold, bureaucratic hurdles and legal rights in a family as additional cultural limitations and they also have to endure many pressures from members of the family that foster the path of waiving inheritance rights.[75] The same identified issue has been highlighted by empirical research that family owners and the administrative authority of the families show a negative hold on the overall family members' legal wealth and block the succession process according to the defined legal procedures.[76]

4.5. Theme V: Challenges in Claiming Inheritance Rights

In the region of Punjab, Pakistan, women experience similar issue as any other women in other parts of the country when it comes to claiming their right to property or inheritance. Despite the legal system granting equal inheritance rights, patriarchal traditions and discriminatory cultural practices frequently hinder women from fully exercising these rights. This issue is especially prevalent in rural regions, where customary practices tend to take precedence over legal entitlements. One of the

[72]Miss Saba Shan, a Qur'ān Volunteer and Teacher, Interview on 3 March 2023.

[73]Mrs. Shan, a Houswife, Mother of Saba Shan, Interview on 3 March 2023.

[74]Muhammad Faizul Haque et al., "Women Rights to Inheritance in Muslim Family Law: An Analytical Study."

[75]Rubab, Iram et al, "Do Legal and Institutional Reforms in Punjab, Pakistan Protect Women's Inherited Land Rights?" *Journal of International Women's Studies* 25, no. 4 (2023): 5.

[76]Wen-Tsung Hsu and Hsiang-Lan Chen, "Family Firms' Social Responsibility: Exercise of Family Control versus Family Dynasty Succession," *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences / Revue Canadienne des Sciences de Administration*, 2023.

greatest challenges for women in securing their inheritance rights in Pakistan is lack of parental support. However, parents should be the ones behind triggering their sons and motivating them to follow *Shari'ah* concerning inheritance as dictated by the religion of Islam. Lack of parental support not only provokes brothers to deprive their sisters of their legal *Shari'ah* right to property but also discourages their women not to asking for their right to property in future. One of the respondents also indicated this perspective in these words, "Parents don't support much, rather forced their daughters to give up rights in favour of their brothers."[77]

Women often fear cutting off ties with their families and leaving their rights in the favour of their brothers. Another challenge that women face is complex and stringent legal procedures involved in inheritance cases. The legal system has been identified as the sole potential solution to ensure that women receive their rightful share of inheritance. However, the complexity of legal procedures makes women reluctant to pursue this option.[78] The challenges they face include the high costs of hiring lawyers, the distant location of courts from small villages, the predominance of male staff in revenue offices, and the slow, drawn-out nature of court proceedings. One of the Respondent who have her case in court for her share of inheritance share her experience in these words, "The court procedures are so complicated even women cannot deal with it, and we have to pay high fees of lawyers and have to wait for many years. In simple words the scenario in courts in Pakistan is horrible."[79]

Other challenges involve gender bias, restricted social mobility of women, social pressure, pressure from family and negative reactions from families or even violence from family members. Most importantly, the culture within most of the families in Pakistan is customized following the person's own will. For instance, the family culture is male dominant where the male is considered the sole owner and dominant on every property etc. As a result, at the time of inheritance, male owners do not want to subjugate their dominancy which results in conflicts. In this regard, women are less likely to press for recognition or demand their share of the inheritance.

The Pakistani government has addressed some of these challenges in the preceding years. Women in Pakistan have been awarded the right to inheritance through the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance of 1961 with amendments. However, the government has established legal aid centers and women's organizations that educate women and those who fight for their rights in inheritance. Nevertheless, there is still inconsistency in the enactment of such laws, which is a worrisome factor, especially in the rural areas where traditional courts are practiced and culture endorses the dominant male chauvinism. Due to this, women cannot enjoy their full legal rights on inheritance as they are being denied chances to inherit. Further efforts must be made to raise women's awareness of their legal status and enhance the ability of legal organizations to enforce their legal rights and punish violators. Therefore, it seems that even in the present legislative framework of Pakistan, women continue to face several challenges to claim their due share as per legal rights of inheritance. These challenges arise from cultures that are dominated by patriarchal values, insensitive cultures, as well as inadequate laws and institutions. These challenges must be overcome by shifting cultural and social attitudes, increasing awareness about the issue and its existing legal frameworks, and fortifying the laws and policies at various tiers to ensure that women can enjoy human rights as any other individual.

[77]Interview with Miss Effat, the Principal of a Govt. School, on 12 January 2023

[78]Simona Feci, "The Exclusion of Women from Inheritance Rights: An Unresolved Issue?" in *Negotiations of Gender and Property through Legal Regimes (14th-19th Century)* (Brill Nijhoff, 2021).

[79]Interview with Miss Zobia, a Housewife and a Widow, on 18 February 2023.

Other research findings also indicate that male privilege and control of land, legal discrimination, economic characteristics, and the absence of a favorable legal environment are some of the factors that deny women their right to inheritance.[80] Empirical investigations have also revealed that despite the Muslim Family Law Ordinance 1960 and *Shari'ah* Act 1962, women in Pakistan are unable to get their rightful inheritance due to negative family support and relationship-damaging reservations.[81] All these negative social, cultural and family challenges have the biggest support of the weak judicial system in Pakistan that shows no robust action and any legal revolution and move to restrict and eradicate this violence of women's legal inheritance.[82] Hence, these factors must be legally and publicly highlighted and negative conception of unequal legal distribution should be eradicated.[83]

Empirical insight has also narrated that in Pakistan, there is a misconception that the Islam religion deprives women of inheritance, so the legal, cultural, social and historical factors all combined should impede the right direction laminated by the *Shari'ah* and Islamic ordinances to empower the women with their legal inheritance rights.[84]

5. Conclusion

The study highlights several challenges faced by women in Pakistan that often lead them to waive their inheritance rights. Lack of education and awareness, emotional attachment, emotional blackmailing in the form of disputes and confrontations, and recessive personality are some individual-level challenges endured by the women. In addition, women face huge negative family, societal, cultural, and relational pressures that act as significant obstacles. In addition, male dominance is also very critical factors that devastate a woman's courage to claim her legal inheritance rights. Moreover, a weak legislative system, lack of awareness of Islamic regulations and politeness in the legislative procedures are the judicial factors that foster the waiving decision of women for their legal inheritance rights. The findings reveal a concerning lack of legal protection for women's rights in Pakistan, contributing to the empirical literature by emphasizing the need for greater awareness and the promotion of women's legislative inheritance rights. It is urgent for robust legal actions to be taken to facilitate women in claiming their rightful inheritance. Furthermore, the women and the whole family systems and their administrative bodies must be educated with the basic rules defined by Islam for the women's inheritance and this seed must be watered with robust legal, social, and cultural values.

5.1. Recommendations

Pakistan needs stronger enforcement systems for women's inheritance rights to achieve their proper implementation. Public inheritance tribunals need to be established by the government for handling inheritances more efficiently while offering security to women against family coercion.

[80]Bibi, Anbreen et al, "Unveiling Obstacles: A Comprehensive Examination of Women's Struggles in Acquiring and Administering Ownership of Immoveable Property.," *Kurdish Studies* 12, no. 4 (2024): 1497–1507.

[81]Sumedha et al Arya, "Everything Was Blood When It Comes to Me": Understanding the Lived Experiences of Women with Inherited Bleeding Disorders."," *Journal of Thrombosis and Haemostasis* 18, no. 12 (2020): 3211–21.

[82]Badriah Khaleel, Khalid Ahmed, and Syed Sajid Ali Shah, "Critical Discourse Analysis of Pakistani Inheritance Law and Justice System for Women."

[83]Isis Gaddis Rahul Lahoti, and Hema Swaminathan, "Women's Legal Rights and Gender Gaps in Property Ownership in Developing Countries," *Population and Development Review* 48, no. 2 (2022): 331–77.

[84]Iram Rubab, "Status of Women Inheritors in Islam: Institutional Hurdles in Punjab, Pakistan," *AL-QAWĀRĪR* 2, no. 4 (2021): 13–24.

Majority-level awareness campaigns based on media outreach community engagement and religious institution participation should educate women about their inheritance rights throughout Pakistan. Women need affordable legal aid services that will make proper legal representation accessible to them throughout rural Pakistan. Digital recordings of land and property documentation help prevent fraudulent activities which ensures transparency for all parties involved. Partnerships between Islamic scholars, legal experts and policymakers must exist to explain religious misinterpretations that prevent women from inheriting their share of property. The law should impose strict penalties to punish individuals who force women to surrender their property rights or withhold what belongs to them.

5.2. Limitations

Various restrictions limit the transferability and scale of this research study. The study used restricted participant numbers from Punjab province in Pakistan thereby failing to include a wide range of country cultural variations. The research depended mainly on subjective participant data that might have shaped the study results through analyst interpretations. The researchers encountered difficulties obtaining official statistical records about inheritance rights violations which restricted their ability to deliver complete quantitative findings about the situation. Participants faced difficulties when discussing the sensitive subject matter because they needed to overcome familial and societal expectations regarding open disclosure of their situations. The research lacks data on the diversity of inheritance methods across Muslim sects along with *Shari'ah* legal interpretations since both factors could alter study outcomes and warrant extended investigation.

5.3. Future Research Direction

Future research needs to combine mixed research methods that connect quantitative survey data with qualitative interview findings to achieve a better understanding of Pakistani female inheritance rights. Taking the research to more provinces would show different inheritance practices across Pakistani regions. Comparative research involving Pakistan and its Muslim-majority counterparts would enable the identification of optimal laws to enforce.[85] The study of religious and legal practitioners who affect public views about inheritance rights would offer significant value to researchers. Research that follows a single population over time will generate vital information needed to develop strategies supporting women's legal access to inheritances. Further inquiry regarding monetary and sociological effects on women from gaining property rights would enhance advocacy work effectively.

Conflict of Interest

The manuscript authors have absolutely no financial or non-financial conflict of interest regarding the subject matter or material discussed in this manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

The data associated with this study will be provided by the corresponding author upon request.

Funding Details

This research did not receive a grant from any funding source or agency.

[85]Sumedha et al Arya, "Everything Was Blood When It Comes to Me": Understanding the Lived Experiences of Women with Inherited Bleeding Disorders.",," *Journal of Thrombosis and Haemostasis* 18, no. 12 (2020): 3211–21.

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