

TOOBA GUL ESSAY TEST

ENGLISH ESSAY

7- Can laws alone protect women in Pakistan?

OUTLINE

1- Introduction

Thesis statement: In the rapidly evolving world, protection of women is an enigma. Social protection often outstrips legal actions. Hence, ensuring social protection is essential to set the stage for every other type of women's protection.

2- Protection of women: ^{in Pakistan} Social or legal aspect

3- Society provides the framework for women's protection ^{in Pakistan} (Argument)

a- Society lessens glass-ceiling to pursue profession for income

women salaried accounts = 19%. (SBP, 2025)

b- Determines women's enrollment in educational institutes

c- Reduces women's reliance on men for financial support

- d- Empower women in decision making
- e- Effective social norms thwart honor killing

(Bano Bibi case 2025)

4- Legal protection makes social protection effective in Pakistan (Counter Argument)

- a- Social protection programs enhance employment opportunities

(UN Global Accelerator on Jobs expands social protection to 400 million by 2030, including Pakistan)

- b- Serves justice through transparent litigation

- c- Anti-harassment laws at workplace foster women's protection

(Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013)

(Anti-Rape Act (Investigation and Trial) 2021)

- d- legal actions protect women from religious misinterpretations

- e- Robust political actions spur women's protection

(National Action Plan, 2021)

5- Without social measures, legal measures become ineffective (Rebuttle of the Counter Argument)

- a- Social norms set the stage for social protection measures

(Womes are expected to prioritize domestic work over economic activities in eastern societies)

- b- Without social approval, legal justice & safe
- c- Practive implementation of anti-harassment laws is a fallacy without social collaboration
- d- legal actions are often trampled by stringent patriarchy
- e- Society's collaboration is imperative for political action

6- Conclusion

Essay:

"The relation of male to female is by nature a relation of superior to inferior and of the ruler to be ruled" (Aristotle). This statement aptly highlights male dominance in Pakistani society. Women need protection in every sphere of life to counter men's influence in the society. However, in the rapidly evolving world, protection of women have become an enigma. Social protection often outstrips legal actions. Hence, ensuring social protection is essential to set the stage for every other kind of women's protection. Social protection is paramount to legal protection, as it diminishes glass-ceiling in women's professional life, increases enrollment rate in education and decreases dependence on men for financial support. Besides, it encourages women in decision making^{and} hampers honor killing. Alternatively, legal protection makes social protection efficacious by enhancing social protection programs, fostering transparent litigation and accelerating anti-harassment laws. Moreover, political actions spur legal actions to save women from religious misinterpretation. However,

social measures are essential for the effectiveness of legal measures. Social norms and approval initiate legal actions. Additionally, practical implementation of anti-harassment laws are often hindered by patriarchal norms. Hence, without social approval, legal action is elusive.

Women's protection has been enigmatic in Pakistan since long. The widespread debate about the precedence of social or legal protection is still unresolved. On one hand, social protection is essential, as it has the potential to alter the conservative mindset of men. For example, Pakistan ranks 148 out of 148 countries in Global Gender Gap Index, 2025. On the other hand, legal actions are vital to ensure women's protection. For instance, the establishment of Islamabad first rape crisis cell at PIMS is a vital step forward in Pakistan's commitment to combating sexual violence. The government's action to curb violence against women is a setback to the criminals involved in crimes against women. This shows that the protection of women is a double-edge sword, necessitating both legal

and social measures to ensure it.

Social framework is vital for women's protection, ^{in Pakistan} as it depreciates glass-ceiling barriers in the advancement of women's careers springs from societal pressure. Due to excessive expectations from women to ^{gender} traditional gender roles, their economic participation is quite low. For example, in Pakistan, women hold only 19% of the accounts in the salaried segments while men hold 80% of the accounts in the salaried segment (SBP, Gender-based Bank Deposits, 2023). This significantly low financial independence of women is only alleviated by progressive social mindset. Hence, robust social framework accelerates women's protection.

Along with curbing glass ceiling, society enhances women's enrollment in educational institutions. Literacy rate among women in rural areas is low due to stringent patriarchal norms. Contrastingly, literacy rate escalates in urban areas. For example, literacy rate in Pakistan is 62.8% with males 72.5% and females 51.8%. (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2025). The

significant gap between literacy rate of men and women speaks of discriminatory social norms. Similarly, rural literacy rate is 35% as compared to urban literacy rate i.e., 65% (PBS, 2025). In this way, society determines the enrollment of women in educational institutes.

With enhanced women's literacy rate, society diminishes women's dependence on men for financial support. Women are considered the responsibility of men according to religious teachings and societal norms. With the advent of modernity and changing gender roles, society molds itself into increasing women's financial participation. For example, Pakistan's women labour force participation is 22%, which is comparatively lower than Bangladesh (43%) and Malaysia (55%) (UNDP, 2024). This manifests the financial independence of women with progressive societies. Thus, it is the society that dwindles women's financial dependence on men.

Moreover, financial independence of women in Pakistan also empowers them in decision-making. They are

free to choose their education, profession and even life partners. However, in some areas, strict social norms impede women's decision making. For example, Pakistan ranks 148 out of 148 countries in gender inequality (WEF, Global Gender Gap Index, 2025). Women's decision making is encouraged globally in SDG 5. Therefore, society determines women's decision making in every aspect of life.

In addition to decision making, effective social norms impede honour killing. In conservative societies, including Pakistan, when women do something that breaks social norms, they are killed by male family members to save their honour. Several cases highlight the ongoing issue of honour killing in Pakistan. For example, **Bano Bibi Case in 2025**, when a woman and her husband are killed in Balochistan on orders from a tribal leader. These horrible incidents are curbed through efficient and progressive social norms. Support for victims and community engagement have the potential to curb honour killing in Pakistan. Hence, efficient social norms hamper honour killing.

However, critics of the above idea opine that legal protection contributes to the effectiveness of social protection in Pakistan.

by enhancement of employment opportunities via social protection programs. These programs work to encourage women empowerment and financial independence. They focus on infrastructure development and offer training **UN's Global Accelerator on jobs skill** aims to expand social protection to 400 million new jobs by 2030, including Pakistan. In this way, social protection measures contribute to employment of women in Pakistan.

Along with generation of employment, legal protection serves justice through transparent litigation in Pakistan. Women are empowered to bring gender-sensitive disputes in a court of law, providing legal services for dispute resolution. These organizations improve access to justice for women. **For example, Ausat Foundation** supports women victims at risk and saves lives. Moreover, women-led organizations speak for women rights. **UN Women Pakistan** strives to implement and enforce laws to serve justice through transparent litigations. In this way, legal protection serves justice through transparent litigation for women.

After women's protection in a court of law, legal actions spur anti-harassment laws at workplace harassment. The enactment of laws curb violence and ends gender based crimes. For example, **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013** is an effective legal step to nip in the bud harassment of women at workplace. Moreover, several modern laws combat sexual laws effectively. **Anti-Rape Act (Investigation and Trial Act, 2001)** offers a comprehensive services to women being raped and defend against criminals of rape. Therefore, anti-harassment laws at workplace ensure women protection.

Enactment of anti-harassment laws ensure legal actions to save women from religious misinterpretations. Women's rights are often interpreted on religious misconceptions by stringent patriarchy. From education to profession, marriage to household responsibilities, misinterpreted religious norms are imposed on them. With the enactment of laws, women's rights have been protected by and large. In 2015, Punjab made **Child Marriage**

Restraint (Amendment) Act 2015, to discourage child marriage, especially of girls. Moreover, under federal law and the laws of three provinces, the minimum legal age for marriage is **16 years for girls**. This counters the religious misinterpretation of child marriage, especially of girls. Hence, legal actions protect women from religious misinterpretation.

Legal actions protecting women from religious misinterpretation leads to political protection for women. Government enact and enforce laws with organizational support to protect women from violence, discrimination and harassment in Pakistan.

Pakistan National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) works in collaboration with government to promote women's rights and protection. Similarly, several acts protect women's interests in Pakistan. For example, Pakistan's **National Action Plan** includes measures to protect women rights. In this ways, political actions along with legislation fosters women's protection.

Nevertheless, the arguments given by the opponents do not hold water.

due to various reasons. For example, those who believe that social protection measures enhance the employment opportunities for women overlook the significance of ingrained social norms required for fostering these programs. These norms have the potential to limit the effectiveness of social protection measures aimed at women empowerment. Women get restricted within house boundaries due to social norms.

For instance, women are expected to prioritize domestic work and childcare over economic activities in eastern Pakistani societies. These social norms limit women's ability to access and benefit from social protection measures aimed at promoting women empowerment. Therefore, social norms set the stage for social protection measures.

Similarly, transparent litigation through legal action necessitates social approval in Pakistan. Society determines the legality of crime first being incurred by women. Without social consent, legal justice is worthless. **For example, man and woman tie in a wedlock through legal means i.e, court marriage.** However, the couple needs

social approval to make their relation in consonance with social norms in Pakistan. Hence, social validation provides the basis for legal actions.

Anti-harassment laws are ineffective without social collaboration. The social taboo attached to the harassment of women at workplace makes victim's support evasive. They may face social stigma or blame for reporting abuse, making it difficult for them to seek help. Victims may not receive adequate support from family, friends or authorities leaving them vulnerable to further abuse. For instance, in the backward areas of Pakistan, acid attacks against women are a form of violence often linked to rejection of marriage proposals. Despite laws against such attacks, perpetrators often go unpunished due to lack of social approval for victims seeking justice. Thus, practical implementation of anti-harassment laws is elusive without social collaboration.

Likewise, legal actions are often trampled by stringent patriarchy. In

conservative societies, social and moral codes precede legal actions. Women in tribal culture are often trampled by stringent patriarchy. In conservative societies, women in tribal culture are responsible to local jirgah in case of being culpable of a crime. In Pakistan, a newly-wed couple has been killed in Balochistan lately, on the accusation of being involved in immoral relationship. Despite the legality of their marriage, patriarchal norms dominate over legal course. Thus, legal actions are crushed by patriarchal norms to intact social honor.

Society's involvement is imperative for political action to proceed. Women-led policies often encourage women protection and ensure the provision of their rights. However, without social involvement and community initiatives, women protection is evasive. **Women's Suffrage Movement in 1920** involves women's collaboration from the society to achieve the right to vote through protests and advocacy. Similarly, social inclusion for women is established in securing other rights such as right to education and employment. Here,

social collaboration
action.

accelerates political

In summation, the protection of women is an enigma. Social legal action due to its paramount position. However, the critics of social protection underrate the necessity of legal protection. Despite legal measures, women's protection is elusive without social involvement. The reason behind ~~water~~ this is that legal actions do not hold water without social validation. Society paves the way for women to avail opportunities such as education, employment, financial independence and healthcare. On the other hand, legal actions add to the efficiency of social protection through enactment of laws. Moreover, these laws contribute to political action for women and workplace safety from harassment. Nevertheless, social measures provide fuel to the vehicle of legal actions for women. This is done by approval of society ~~from~~ for legal proceedings, social protection measures and marriage to women. Therefore, society precedes law for the protection of women.