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## Zia's Islamization Policies and Women Education: Interplay of Ideology, Media and Law in Shaping Pakistani Women's Access to Science and Technology

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### ABSTRACT

This research study takes in to account the Islamization policies implemented by General Zia-ul-Haq and their widespread implications for Pakistani women in terms of their education and professional attainment. Convergence of Media, Academia and Justice system has been thoroughly assessed to understand their impact on the trajectory of Pakistani women's pursuit of STEM education; while the laws implemented by the state institutions redefined their role in the society from being professionals to domesticated and 'ideologically' Islamic oriented beings. Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) has been implemented as the theoretical framework of this study, which highlights that policies of Islamization served as means for an ideological reformation of Pakistani society through education, legislations and media affecting the citizenship as well as the intellectual domain of women. Accessibility of women was marginalized in the professional domain, while their interest in STEM disciplines was overlooked undermining their potential and prospects in scientific fields. Overall, the education of women was transformed from science and technology to the realms of domestic and morality oriented disciplines. Policies of Islamization became a vehicle of sociocultural engineering in the institutional domain, which eventually led to long-term policy challenges for women in Pakistan, who intended to pursue higher education and professional excellence. This research study concludes that Islamization implemented by General Zia in media, education and lawfare domains subtly yet deeply impacted and hindered the long-term prospective growth of Pakistani women constituting 52% of the country's population; while the institutionalized collaboration during

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those times facilitated in the widespread implementation of these policies. Qualitative research methods have been adopted to conduct this study.

**Keywords:** Women Education, STEM, Policies, Islamisation, Ideological State Apparatus, Ideology, Science and Technology

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## INTRODUCTION

After the ouster of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan witnessed the emergence of General Zia-ul-Haq as the ruler of the country; whose ascent transformed the political, socioeconomic and cultural landscape of the country. Islamization was implemented as a state-sponsored policy; whereas efforts were made to institutionalize this concept through education, media and law in a systemic manner (Shah et al., 2016). While the elements of Islamization practically impacted most of the societal domains; women education, particularly in science and technology was significantly impacted as an outcome of complete oversight by the state. Ideological dimensions of Islamization practically confined women's role to household and married life, while their educational attainment was knowingly overlooked; from primary levels to the higher educational institutions.

It has been argued that education of women in Pakistan has been impacted by distinct layers of systemic, sociocultural and organizational obstacles. Gendered norms remain a predominant factor, while the accessibility of higher education across Pakistan has been limited by infrastructural and administrative challenges (Hashmi, 2025). The significant ideological shift of Pakistani society during General Zia era grossly complicated the religious values, since the educational structures were redefined in terms of accessibility, modernity and implementation of distinct facilities for women of all ages. Throughout Zia's period, the concepts of Islamization were predominantly implemented for the introduction of religious perspectives in to public as well as the private life through legislative reforms, media and educational policies. Textbooks were recalibrated while the educational policies of the state most importantly focused on the portrayal of Hudood Ordinance alongside other legislations that redefined the role of women in the public sphere as well as private lives (Butt et al., 2020). Media narratives complemented the laws enacted by the state, while the educational sphere focused on redefinition of gendered norms by laying down attribution of an ideal women as being most pious and modest, predominantly bound to only household duties, instead of attaining education and working professionally in competitive fields such as science and technology, among others.

This arrangement of institutionalized changes across the societal realm has had widespread implications for women in terms of their accessibility in STEM fields over time. Although the enrollment of women gradually enhanced in the educational institutions, their pathway towards pursuing education in STEM disciplines remained constricted due to administrative and ideological challenges, that were deeply ingrained in the organizational structures (Abbasi & Jaffar, 2021). Constrained higher education of women failed to lead them in to equitable outcomes,

and limited number of females were able to pursue their professional careers in the fields of science and technology. This pattern indicated that merely enhancing the statistical number of females in the educational institutions was not enough for the attainment of desired results, rather the level of accessibility and choice of Higher Education fields mattered as a pathway to their professional careers. Moreover, convergence of legislative domains, education and media led to the institutionalization of religion oriented architecture within the institutions, that actually demeaned women from pursuing scientific and technical fields, thereby leading towards the creation of a male-dominated societal domains (Bhatti et al., 2025).

This research study takes in to account the institutionalized dynamics of Islamization and its widespread implications in the Pakistani society by way of aligning the educational curriculum with the conservative religious values and introduction of legislations such as the Hudood Ordinance, with the objective of restricting the public and professional conduct of women in the society, while complementing these perspectives through media narratives (Bukhsh, 2024). It also elucidates how Zia regime created and promoted systemic and structural sociocultural barriers in Pakistani society to circumscribe the involvement of women in attaining educational in STEM disciplines, while further pursuing their professional careers in fields related to science and technology. In a nutshell, this research study explores that how state led Islamization policies downgraded women from pursuing STEM fields, which eventually led to a serious gap in terms of gender parity in scientific and technological fields in Pakistani society.

### **Core Argument of the Study**

The timeframe from 1977 up until 1988 has been marked by history as an era that transformed the sociocultural sphere of Pakistani society, since the government institutions deeply embedded the 'Islamization phenomenon' in educational, media and legislative landscape as a policy measure. Widespread implementation of this strategy as a state policy continued to result in its long-term impacts on Pakistani women's lives with implications on their lifetimes and many decades to come. As a conscious effort or negative externality, the foregoing systemically sidelined women from the mainstream, while circumscribing their accessibility in Science and Technology landscape. The concept of Islamization functioned as institutionalized engineering for legitimizing patriarchal control. Enforcement of legislations, such as the Hudood Ordinance, promoted imbalanced and male-dominated perspectives thereby, exacerbating the systemic barriers for women and limiting their participation in STEM disciplines.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) is a theoretical framework that has been proposed and extensively explained by Louis Althusser, in which he deconstructs and segregates the repressive state apparatuses, which may encompass the armed forces, law enforcement agencies, and legislative institutions that have the capacity to implement compliance, while maintaining the societal order through coercive

methodologies, and the ideological state apparatuses, which may encompass educational institutions, religion, media, and family, and have the capacity to internalize the belief system, objectives and ideologies within individuals alongside the broader ideas of aligning their cognizance and agreement with the dominant structures of power; thereby, highlighting the influential structures within the societal framework (Althusser, 2014). This framework further highlights that the state remains more interested in sustaining and highlighting its power structure through internalization of ideological frameworks, rather than imposing it through force and law enforcement agencies; making subservience seem legitimate and natural (Althusser, 2024).

Policies of Islamization implemented by General Zia-ul-Haq highlights a classic example of such a transformation of ideological dynamics by the state apparatus with the objective of producing a traditionalist gendered order in the name of religion, while restraining the accessibility of women towards modern scientific knowledge. It can be ascertained that General Zia-ul-Haq, who lacked a democratic basis after his military takeover in 1977, pursued consolidated political power with the introduction of Islamization policies that combined religiosity and governance. Scholars like Toni Ruska (2023) and Hemalatha (2019) point out that this endeavour was not just philosophical and theoretical in nature; but also political, that was aimed at legitimizing centralized control by integrating Islamic ethical guidelines into the daily operations and policymaking of the government institutions (Hemalatha & Scholar, 2019; Ruuska, 2023). This approach is made clearer by Althusser's thesis, which categorically holds that General Zia changed the intellectual and theoretical environment to equate compliance to government with devotion to Islamic faith as an effective tool that reduced dependence just on coercion and power oriented notions within the society. This shift in perspective made ideology tangible - going beyond merely being theoretical - that made it somewhat convenient for a predominantly autocratic regime to operate through the structures that influenced numerous facets of society, particularly in terms of how people perceived sexuality, gender, ethical standards, knowledge and education. The administration used educational programmes as its primary Ideological State Apparatus in an effort to normalize male-dominated and Islamic norms (Kanwal, 2015).

The 1979 National Education Policy changed curricula and teaching methods from academic inquiry to propaganda warfare, setting a broader premise that the main goal of educating students was to advance and promote Islamic conduct of life within the Pakistani society. Scholars like Maryam Azam (2023) and Rubina Saigol (2005) are of the view that educational programmes and texts were revised to conform to orthodox and traditionalist Islamic theology, which portrayed men as logical participants in societal affairs, while highlighted women as righteous custodians of their families and domestic affairs (Azam, 2023; Saigol, 2005). Religious tales were used to reinterpret scientific concepts, whereas the educational courses placed more emphasis on upright behaviour than on logical thinking. Subsequently,

the biology lectures included religious references to the universe without establishing due connection with scientific concepts limiting students' critical and scientific thinking. For women, study of scientific and technological disciplines became ethically dubious as well as politically and socially improper as a result of this philosophical infiltration across the societal sphere (Roy & Mohammadi, 2017).

The educational system predominantly functioned as an ISA, which was responsible for promoting the notion in the societal sphere that women's domain was purely domestic and family-centered, and not scientific or technical; societally intercalating values compelling female students to become conservative human beings instead of centering their carrier dreams of becoming the analytical thinkers, such as scientific researchers. Furthermore, during the regime of General Zia, the media outlets served as an additional powerful Ideological State Apparatus intended to promote and legitimize the aforementioned orientation of the government in all societal spheres. All media including radio, television and print newspapers were placed under the direct control of the state authorities, dubbed by Althusser as the 'ideological interpellation' that served as means for the state to socially construct identity within the society with better acceptance by the masses.

Scholars like Nasir Uddin (2014) and Afiya Zia (2009) are of the view that 'ideal' women were solely portrayed in the media as devout, self-sacrificing and family-driven individuals; while the state completely overlooked the need to build on their intellectual and overall societal contributions within the society (Din, 2014; Zia, 2009b). The state-owned Pakistan Television (PTV) banned shows that featured women in scientific or professional roles, and forced its female broadcasters to dress more conservatively. These transmitted images served as sociocultural blueprints, establishing the ethical bounds of appropriate female conduct and influencing the limited cultural conception of women's responsibilities (Zia, 2017). Althusserian theory contends that this was the ideological reinforcement of male superiority by means of institutional machinery, wherein cognitive achievement was male-dominated and ethical behaviour for women was domesticated.

During the Islamization process, the legal system was also changed into a religiously motivated instrument. The formation of Shariah Courts and the Hudood Ordinances (1979) codified an ethical framework that metaphorically and constitutionally subjugated women. Although Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) legislation frequently corresponded to intimidation, the regulatory structures also function ideologically by establishing the limits of justice and appropriate conduct (Khan, 2009). Under Zia regime, such regulations taught society to accept gender inequity as a religious obligation by encoding male domination as a divine decree. Example can be quoted of the Hudood Ordinance, which essentially regulated women under the constructed social imperative of women's of piety by redefining their sexuality as a moral and legislative challenge in the society.

Under such social ideals with religious undertones, the idea that female participation across the general population and professional domains, particularly in science and technology, was rendered practically contradictory to the Islamic

principles contouring a certain natural religious function of women strengthened through their moral policing and strict laws. This also translated into male dominance becoming an essential requirement by the ideological operations of this legislation (Waheed, 2024). Althusser further contends that Zia's Islamization can be well understood as a concerted effort including several Ideological State Apparatuses, educational institutions, the media, and the legal system; all of which complemented one another as much as possible. This ideological material was created by deep influences in the educational system; which was then spread and standardized by the mainstream media and consecrated by the system of justice (Shabir & Mahmood, 2020). Collectively, these mechanisms produced surroundings where women's duties were monitored through discussions about morals and religious obligations instead of explicit coercion and yet remained tightly regulated. Patriarchal governance of sorts became a norm within the societal sphere by this integration as women were taught to be subservient rather than creative, critical, and scientific. Thus, it can be argued that Islamization's conceptual representation of femininity served as a covert yet effective impediment to women's accessibility to and progression in education science and technology education and careers.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research study is qualitative, analytical and deductive in nature. Primary as well as the secondary sources have been employed to gather the data. Primary sources of data encompass three semi-structured interviews from the subject experts; while the secondary sources of data include books, research articles, magazines, government website and online sources with authentic and credible repute. Data analysis has been carried out through document analysis, while ethical considerations have been observed through interviews.

### **Context of Islamization under General Zia-ul-Haq**

Government of Pakistan sought to implement the policies of Islamization throughout General Zia era as an extensive strategy that involved organizational restructuring, that was intended to focus on ideological credibility and not as an accidental rhetoric. General Zia's dictatorship purposefully combined government structures with the power of the clergy in order to create consensus as this appeared to be not only a religious policy shift but rather a calculated reaction to Zia's failure for achieving the political and constitutional legitimacy following the 1977 coup (Arif et al., 2022). The importance of women's educational attainment remained fundamental as the government unified several governmental institutions around a religious and normative foundation as the options for more than half of the population in terms of their social orientations and occupations were practically limited.

Moreover, General Zia's Islamization strategies ought not to be seen as a collection of discrete legislative or public addresses, but rather as a systemic intrusion to the societal transmission of gender-specific decisions regarding education. Means for the implementation of this Islamization strategy was the

introduction of extensive reforms in education. Systemic overhauls in terms of curriculum and educational policies transformed the overall structure, while placing a greater emphasis on the religious education and spiritual norms of the society. Scientific inquiry was underserved, particularly for women whose sole focus was reoriented towards their familial responsibilities (Arshid et al., 2023). Furthermore, the state reformed the curriculum in a manner that reframed the religious history while introducing moralizing concerns towards scientific disciplines, which eventually had corresponding implications for the society. Firstly, these changes minimized the epistemic dimensions of the scientific knowledge, as it was highlighted as the subordinate and completely distinct from the religious intellectual understanding. Secondly, the state created a gender-specific epistemic perspective as women were primarily highlighted as the ethical and moral custodians of the society, while their contributions in STEM fields were completely overlooked (Ahmed et al., 2024). Reflective of deliberate choices by the policymakers, this led to deterioration of women's prospects in scientific and technological fields.

These educational policies and changes in curricula also had a considerable impact on the accessibility as well as the enrolment of women in the educational institutions. An extensive percentage of families refrained to admit girls in the educational institutions, which evolved as a systemic reality in due course as ideological implications of Islamization led policies in the society (Arif et al., 2022). With limiting educational accessibility for females, the overall quality of education also declined with respect to scientific inquiry. The overall smaller enrolment in education institutions set further back the enrollment in the STEM disciplines, since the norm of inquiry and scientific investigation was surpassed by moral and ethical scientific curriculum.

This ideological and administrative reordering got organizationally reinforced by legislative reforms by General Zia. Notwithstanding the complicated trends of enforcement, the legislative evaluation of Hudood Ordinance and other Islamic laws highlight gender-oriented conjectures that transformed the public status as well as the societal dynamics of women in the society (Shah, 2012). It can be further highlighted that the prosecution associated with the Hudood Ordinance and other Islamic frameworks inexplicably influenced the poor and minority groups of the society, disproportionately affecting women, who were predominantly vulnerable to educational, media and legislative contexts. Although government institutions made efforts to enhance the enrollment of female students in the educational institutions, the practical implications of Islamic legislations under Islamization focused on women as a theme of public moral regulation discouraging families to send their women to educational institutes and deterring women from pursuing higher education with a clear moral high ground established for them that is family oriented and domesticated.

Another most important pillar of the organizational strategy introduced by General Zia was the regulation of media platforms. Throughout the Zia era, media disregarded women from being portrayed as career professionals, while frequently

highlighted and promoted domesticated women as an ideal woman in Pakistani society, who was modest, focused in her familial responsibilities and apolitical (Arshid et al., 2023). Media somewhat distorted the identity of an ideal woman by showcasing them as being responsible only for household; while their involvement in educational attainment, particularly in STEM fields was regarded inconsequential. Furthermore, the media outlets also highlighted as well as standardized the gendered explanations of Islamic principles, that were implemented in widespread domain within different societal frameworks, focusing on patriarchal principles. These institutional dynamics were heavily state-sponsored and were carried out in an accelerated manner at the time of heightened regional geopolitics, particularly within the context of the Soviet-Afghan conflict (Siddiqi, 2023).

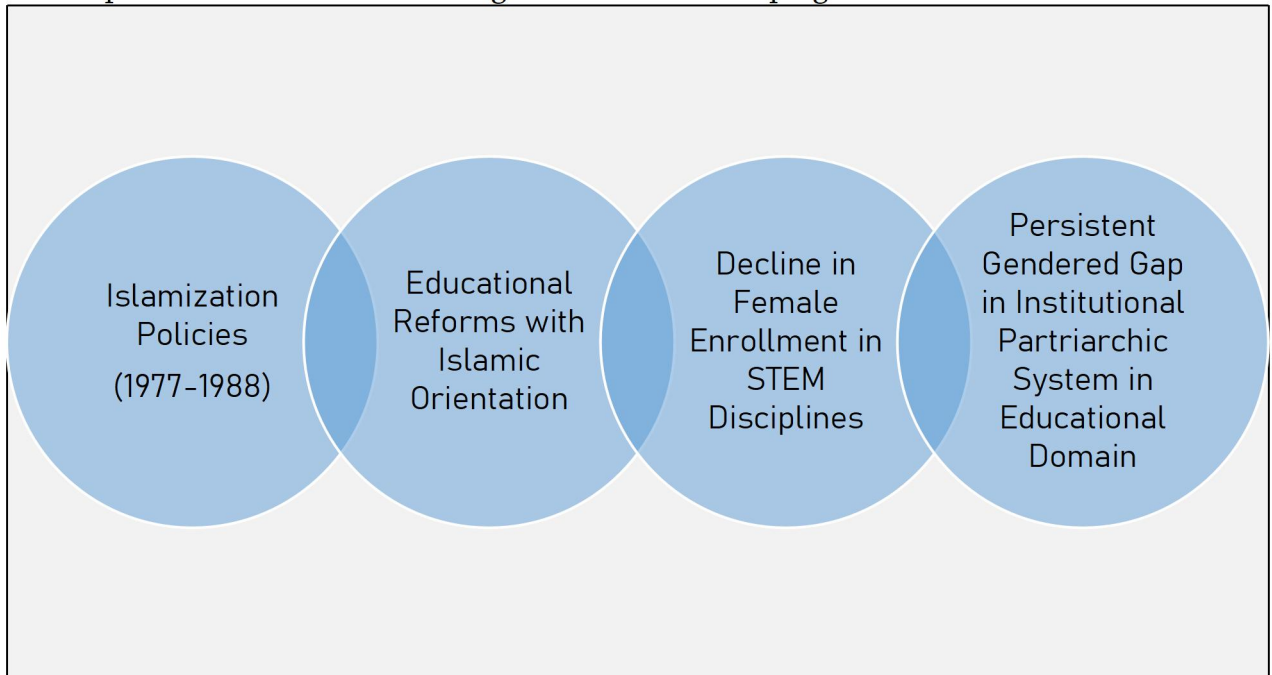
Since Pakistan had been receiving extensive funding for the Afghan conflict at the time, which dominated finance in the government as well as the private sector, elements necessary for promoting the policies of Islamization were also extensively funded by the state, irrespective of their institutionalized cost. The conflict oriented environment further highlighted the ideas of masculinity connected to religiosity, as the funding received from donor organizations was being spent on the training and related infrastructure of Mujahideen as a state priority that overshadowed all the other issues. A natural casualty amid this was the STEM disciplines and much needed investments in education of women in Pakistan that had been ignored in the region since before and failed to become a policy priority since the time of the country's inception.

The aforementioned factors working together towards policies of Islamization implemented by General Zia created a substantial challenge for women in Pakistani society, particularly in terms of their educational and professional attainment. General Zia attempted to revamp the curriculum, which undermined scientific inquiry and highlighted women as beings needing constant moral regulation, while state media channels set high standards for them of piety, domestication and household/family orientation (Awan, 2016). The overall implications of these interventions were societal and institutionalized. Although the overall enrollment of women in society significantly rose as Benazir Bhutto became the next Prime Minister after General Zia, as well as a prominent symbol of women empowerment, the setbacks for women in STEM disciplines from the Zia's regime were too deep for the proceeding brief democratic governments to redeem.

### **Islamization and Educational Policies for Women in Pakistan**

It is an established reality that Pakistan underwent significant transformation during the reign of General Zia-ul-Haq, since his leadership style and policies of Islamization had a wide-spread impact in the society. Islamization ideology was indoctrinated within the educational curriculum, while the role of women was substantially reduced from the professional domain. Louis Althusser highlighted that Education became the most important Ideological State Apparatus during that era, since it evolved as a mean through which the Zia regime intended to acclimatize his religious ideology in all social spheres, while establishing the gendered orientation

and secure consensus for the regime's political authority and legitimacy (Chawla & Riaz-ul-Huda, 2015). Figure 1 summarizes the transformational educational landscape of Pakistani women during General Zia-ul-Haq regime;



*Figure 1: Women Educational Landscape During General Zia-ul-Haq Era (1977-1988)*

Furthermore, the policies of Islamization were not restricted to Friday sermons by the religious clerics, these were implemented through systemic institutional designs that encompassed changes in the educational curriculum, training of the teachers as well as the legislative and media frameworks. All of these domains comprehensively worked to establish an ideologically strong and religious orientation, with distinct patriarchal educational focus. Consequently, the educational system undermined cognitive and intellectual capabilities of women, while merely focusing on their increase statistically in the educational institutions, suppressing the enrollment as well as the interest of women in the hard scientific disciplines (Shaheed & Mumtaz, 1990). Zia regime had thus established an educational order with a sole focus on emphasizing a domesticated role of women with only legitimate place as highly pious and noble member of the society equated with home/family-orientation, with household responsibilities trumping academic or professional pursuits.

Historically, the education system of Pakistan before the era of General Zia can be seen as primarily hybrid as it had religious orientation, yet modernist interventions were also broadly accepted. Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto had introduced the National Education Policy (1972-1980), in which he emphasized the elements of national development and social equality through secular aspirations. Although these were highly promising objectives, the statistical realities in the Pakistan's educational system did not correspond to these. Literacy rate for men was roughly around 35.1%, while it was around 16.2% for women (Zia, 1998). These statistics would be seriously concerning for any developing state, nevertheless, the

main point of contention was a significant gender disparity especially in view of the fact that women were about half the population – a big chunk of the youth and working age population.

Between the two regimes, the societal structures were already weak, women across the country were religiously and ideologically vulnerable while the state was still trying to find its right direction. Since the Pakistani society was already challenged due to gendered disparities, General Zia was successful in implementing Islamization policies that further distorted the shape of the role of women in terms of their educational and professional empowerment (Zia, 1998). Statistics also highlight that the policies of Islamization restricted the accessibility and engagement of women in STEM disciplines. University Grants Commission (now the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan) highlighted that women constituted less than 12% of the total enrollments in the engineering as well as the technological disciplines by the end of 1985. Moreover, the representation of women in different faculties of scientific disciplines also declined significantly, from 22% in 1975 to 16% by 1987, despite the rise in literacy rate of females from 16% in 1977 up until 25% in 1988 (Kazi, 1992). Although the policies of Islamization expanded the basic literacy for women, their scope in the workforce and chances of attainment of higher education, particularly in STEM disciplines and technical education significantly declined.

#### **Legislative Islamization and its Women-Oriented Implications**

With the strong administrative control, General Zia-ul-Haq ensured that his policies are implemented across the country without any hindrance and, for this very purpose, legislations were passed that evolved as the backbone of his Islamization project and contributed to transforming the society into an Islamized version. The legislative structures facilitated General Zia regime to implement the new 'moral compass', guided by the strict Islamic regulations. Although media and educational domains served as the Ideological State Apparatuses; the judicial system of the country and constitutional arrangements served as the repressive support system in terms of institutionalizing the gendered dynamics under the garb of religious acceptability (Lau, 2016). General Zia through his executive orders as well as the state structure formulated a legislative-ethical framework by means of legislations, constitutional amendments and nuanced interpretations of the laws that eventually impacted the autonomy, mobility and engagement of women in the public life. Furthermore, these legislations also helped the state to extensively redefine the notion of citizenship by placing patriarchal system above everything else; the social identity of women in society strictly became conditional upon compliance with the ethical codes of new Islamization policies broadly enunciated by the institutions through their respective policies (Gholami & Alemi Tammeh, 2020).

The concept of Islamization was put forth after the implementation of Hudood Ordinance in 1979. This ordinance was designed to transform Pakistan's Criminal Code in compliance with the justice system attributed to have been given by Islam.

This ordinance addressed the challenges pertaining to fornication, adultery, Qazf, consumption of alcohol and theft, establishing the basis for the foundation of Islamization laws (Saeed, 2004). Introduction of this legislation had disastrous implications for women in Pakistani society. Zina legislation lay the burden of proof – to present four male witnesses – on women, completely blurring the lines between adultery and rape. If a woman was unable to present the witnesses, she was accused of immorality and was eschewed by the society for her immoral acts, while the justice system sent her to prison in most cases. It was later revealed that during first five years of the passage of Hudood Ordinance more than 80% of Pakistani women were held in jails on Zina-related charges, most of which were harsh judicial decisions (Murshed, 2010). This demonstrates the level of gendered control exercised by the state due to the implementation of legislative Islamization under the guise of concerns for religious morality. Another legislation that complemented the Hudood Ordinance and was passed during the Zia era was the Law of Evidence (Qanun-e-Shahadat). Passed in 1984, this legislation enforced the idea of testimony of two women against one man in the matters of financial conduct (Mirza & Rizwan, 2024). This legislation categorically highlighted women as inferior against man in the administrative, legislative and financial affairs, which had serious ramifications for their societal affairs. Addressing the subject, Anita Weiss is of the view that this legislation reduced the capacity of women in the legal affairs, while concurrently excluding them from public administration, medicine and testimonial equality in the legislative affairs (Weiss, 1985). Here, Althusserian theory highlights that the justice system of Pakistan served to naturalize as well as replicate the ideological dimensions of epistemic superiority of male members in society as allusion to a divine decree.

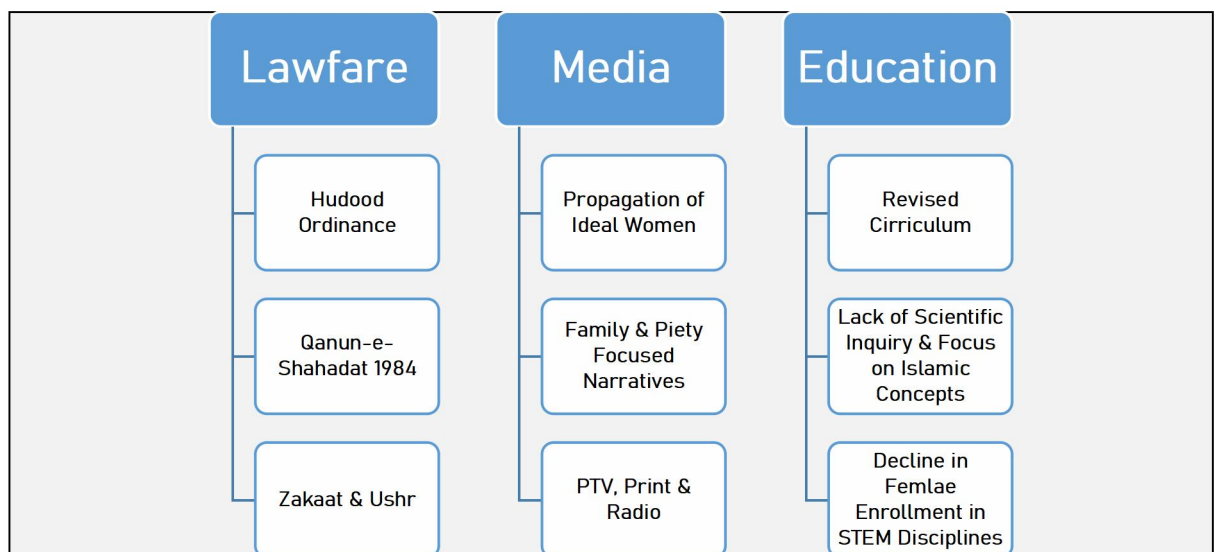
Furthermore, General Zia made constitutional amendments with the objective of incorporating the Islamization laws at the institutional level, while reforming the evidence as well as the criminal justice system. Objective Resolution (1949) was made part of the 1973 constitution, as per the Eight Amendment passed in 1985 by the Parliament of Pakistan (Ahmad, 2018). This act ensured that all the subsequent legislation that were to be passed by the Parliament of Pakistan were in accordance with the rules of Islam as laid down in the Holy Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH). Furthermore, the establishment of Shariah Appellate Bench and the Federal Shariat Court were developed to assess the contemporary legislations and their compliance with the Islamic principles. Nevertheless, these institutions evolved to become the rival judicial organizations, challenging the institutional hierarchies and working mechanism. Another major challenge was that these institutions employed male-oriented jurisprudence for the interpretation of religious scriptures and further strengthened the gender-biased judicial system in Pakistan.

The educational implications of the legislative Islamization were severe, since the legislative codes acted as the moral guidelines, completely reframing the perception of society for gendered expectations (Shaheed & Mumtaz, 1990). The justice system of the state acted as a pedagogic institution, as the Qanun-e-Shahadat and the

Hudood Ordinance were quite often debated upon across the public spectrum as well as the media forums. Men were highlighted in the society as the defenders and the moral guardians, while the role of women confined to her household and her obedience and humility was glorified. Hence, the justice system had itself evolved its undercurrents to become an ideological institution, rather than serving as a neutral institution for the provision of justice in the society (Yilmaz & Ahmed, 2018). Media, educational Institutions and the justice system all acted in the same direction to further the dynamics of Islamization in the society, promoting some prescribed gender-oriented perceptions in the society.

### **Inter-Institutional Synergy in Convergence of Ideology, Law and Media**

As General Zia introduced the Islamization policies across Pakistani society through the synergy and planned cooperation of educational institutions, media and justice system, the impacts of the implementation of the ideological tenets of this strategy were witnessed across the society. State institutions cooperated with each other for implementation of these policies, while the patriarchal tendencies dominated in the socio-political and legislative domains. Inter-institutional synergy brought together academia, media and governmental rhetoric aligning these under a single moral code. Figure 2 highlights how media, educational and law domains worked synergistically in support the Islamization policies in Pakistan.



*Figure 2: Convergence of Education, Media and Lawfare*

Assessing this synergy through Althusser theory one sees that ideological and repressive apparatuses were concurrently permissible within the domain of this framework, since the media served as a normalizing and surveillance tool, the academia played its role as the ethical administration while the justice system served as the legislative interpretation of the prescribed ideology (Saeed & Khan, 2017). Professional collaboration of these organizations systemically worked to redefine and reorient the role of women in the society, also in the disciplines of science and

technology, wherein reasoned and intellectual thought process, visibility and autonomy were being diminished by the state's gendered and moral apparatus. Synergy of these institutions was also highlighted in the National Education Policy of 1979, while the same philosophical dimensions were promoted through different TV channels and other print media forums (Jafar, 2005). The Justice system further acted in favor of state policies by providing legitimacy. Example can be taken of state-run Pakistan Television Network (PTV) that broadcast these moral standards through graphic representation, serials and public service announcements.

Relationship between the academia and media was particularly significant in terms of the ideological hierarchy. Changes in the educational curricula focused on modesty, piety and morality, while simultaneously media portrayed these values through meticulously crafted narratives. Evaluation of the content of PTV from that timeframe highlights lack of female characters, a stark contrast given the reality that Pakistan was a developing state with more than 52% of female population at the time, this undermined representation had a demeaning impact on the society. Textbooks certified during that timeframe show high moralization of gendered roles in terms of their religious values. Roles of women in society were redefined from scientists, educationists and media professionals to submissive and silent wives and selfless mothers and daughters (Zia, 2009a). All of these modifications had long-term implications for Pakistani society. All of these were deliberate interventions by the state with all the government machinery, including bureaucracy, involved in the implementation of these policies while maintaining an institutional synergy.

PM Secretariat and the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) had the authority to oversee the affairs pertaining to education, media and information as well as the religious matters. Both of these institutions served as the hub for the implementation of the Zia regime's ideological influences. Council of Islamic Ideology defined the rules for the modifications in the curricula, ethics pertaining to media channels and the legislative affairs pertaining to Islamization policies, with a strong focus on the redefinition of women as spiritually and ideologically inclined towards Islam, while having family oriented and modest values (Mughal et al., 2025). Each government institution played a role to implement and strengthen the ideological values of Islamization within the society, through cohesive strategies that were constructed by the bureaucratic elites. These patterns indicate that the successful implementation of Islamization policies had become possible due to institutional synergies as well as the predominant acceptance of these sociocultural undercurrents by the society steered by the state.

## CONCLUSION

This study was a historic investigation of deeply ingrained systematic, political and social factors emanating from General Zia's period of government affecting women's education and prospects in STEM. It was argued that policies of Islamization introduced by General Zia-ul-Haq were not merely ideological indoctrination, but the systemic engineering of Pakistan's political, ideological,

sociocultural and legislative landscape. Following the stream, State institutions established the male-dominated structure of society that became the guiding ideology of citizenship; while the corresponding institutional synergies redefined the role of women in the society. Educational curricula were revised, while media bore the responsibility to project Islamization oriented projects, encompassing TV dramas and public service messages. Patterns of education for women were define and redefined to shape and popularize their role as domesticated beings, house-oriented, modest, pious and ideologically compatible with the state projected Islamic principles. Women's STEM education bore a huge brunt of the new social dimensions, and their professional careers were undermined. It can safely be argued that the Islamization policies of General Zia transformed the ideological dynamics of Pakistani society, negatively affecting women's prospects in competitive fields including STEM education and careers, the impact of which can still be seen reverberating in the Women in Science landscape of Pakistan.

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