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Essay - Mock 4

Topic: Forced Marriages in Pakistan: Causes and Consequences

→ Outline:

1) Introduction

Thesis Statement: Forced marriages in Pakistan stem from patriarchal traditions and ignorance, causing deep social and psychological harm, promotes social injustice and hinders national progress.

2) Causes of Forced Marriages in Pakistan

a) Cultural and Traditional Norms:

Patriarchal family structure values control over women. Customary practices like watta satta, Vani, Swara and tribal settlements. Misinterpretation of religion to justify coercion.

b) Concept of Family Honor and Social Pressure:

3) Consequences of Forced Marriages

a) Psychological and Emotional Trauma:

Depression, anxiety, PTSD, and suicidal tendencies. Long-term mental health impact on victims and children.

b) Violation of Human Rights:

Denial of consent, autonomy, and dignity. Breach of International conventions (CEDAW, UDHR, CRC).

c) Domestic Violence and Abuse:

High correlation between forced marriage and spousal violence. Women being trapped in abusive relationship due to social stigma.

d) Impact on Education and Economic Development:

Early marriages leads to school dropouts, leading perpetuation of poverty and dependence.

e) Inter-generational Effects:

Children born into dysfunctional households.

Normalization of gender-based violence

f) Social Backwardness and Gender

Inequality:

Reinforcement of patriarchal norms and hindrance to national progress, productivity and equality.

4) Legal and Policy Framework in Pakistan.

5) Role of Religion and Misconceptions.

6) Way Forward

a) Legal Reforms and Enforcement

b) Education Awareness

c) Women Empowerment

d) Role of Media and civil Society.

e) Religious and community leaders

f) International Cooperation.

7) Case Studies and Real-world Examples.

Role of NGOs, forced marriages cases across Pakistan.

8) Conclusion

→ Essay

Marriage, in its true essence, is a sacred union founded upon mutual respect, love, and consent. However, in many parts of Pakistan, this sanctity is violated when individuals, mostly young women, are coerced into unions without their free will. Despite modernization, legislation, and growing awareness, the practice persists across rural and even urban Pakistan.

Forced marriages in Pakistan are not isolated incidents but symptoms of deeper structural issues like patriarchal traditions, economic vulnerabilities, and distorted notions of honor. These marriages not only destroy lives at personal level but also perpetuate social injustice and hinder national development.

This essay talks about causes and consequences of forced marriage in Pakistan. First let's discuss the causes and then the consequences of forced marriages.

According to United Nations, a forced marriage occurs when one or both parties do not give free will and full consent. In Pakistan, such unions often take forms like **vani or swara** (girls given in marriage to settle disputes), **watta satta** (exchange marriages), and **early child marriages**. Despite legal prohibitions, these practices remain prevalent, particularly in rural areas where tribal customs outweigh state laws.

The persistence of forced marriages stems from a complex web of social, economic, and cultural factors.

Firstly, Pakistan's deeply entrenched patriarchal system

places women under male guardianship, viewing them as symbols of family honor. Parents often believe they have the moral authority to decide their daughters' futures.

Secondly, economic hardship fuels coercion. In poor households, daughters are married off early to reduce financial burdens or gain monetary benefits. In some cases, land disputes are settled by giving girls as compensation.

Thirdly, illiteracy, and lack of awareness prevent people from understanding the concept of consent and legal rights. Many rural communities consider forced marriages a normal part of life.

Lastly, weak legal enforcement allows the practice to continue.

Although Pakistan has laws against child and forced

marriages, their implementation is slow, inconsistent, and often resisted by local power structures.

These causes leads to devastating consequences not only personally, mentally and physically, but also socially.

Psychologically, victims face depression, anxiety, and lifelong trauma. The absence of consent fosters resentment, emotional detachment, and, in many cases, suicide.

Socially, forced marriages perpetuate gender inequality and domestic violence. Women trapped in unwanted unions face abuse but lack the means or societal support to seek justice.

Economically, these marriages limit women's educational and professional opportunities, reinforcing cycles of poverty and dependence.

At broader level, such practices hinder national development by suppressing half of the population's potential. A society that denies women autonomy undermines its own progress.

Let's look at the Islamic angle, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself annulled several marriages performed without the women's approval. Yet in Pakistan, cultural customs are often justified under the guise of religion.

Legally, Pakistan's Child Marriage Restraint Act (1929, amended 2019) and Prevention of Anti-Women Practices Act (2011) criminalize forced and early marriages. However, enforcement remains weak due to lack of awareness, corruption and societal resistance.

To eradicate forced marriages, a multidimensional approach is essential. Laws must be enforced rigorously, and punishments for offenders must be visible and consistent. **Education**, especially of girls is the strongest deterrent. Empowered, educated women are less likely to become victims of coercion.

Awareness campaigns led by media, civil society and religious leaders can reshape public perception. Sermons and community programs should highlight that Islam upholds women's right to consent. NBO's can provide shelters and legal aid for victims.

Finally, economic empowerment programs must target women in rural areas, ensuring that financial dependence does not translate into social subjugation.

To conclude, forced marriages in Pakistan are a grave violation of human dignity and a barrier to social progress. They are sustained not by religion but by ignorance and patriarchy. Ending this practice requires more than legal measures. It demands a transformation of collective conscience.

When a woman's right to choose her partner is respected, she becomes not just a wife but an equal citizen, capable of shaping her destiny and contributing fully to her nation's future.

Freedom to choose in marriage is not rebellion; it is a fundamental expression of humanity.
