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# Forced Marriages :

## Causes and Consequences

### Outline

#### 1. Introduction

- (i) Hook
- (ii) Background
- (iii) Thesis statement:

Forced marriages are deeply rooted in patriarchal social cultures aimed at preserving male dominance and family honour, resulting in socio-economic consequences for women while depriving them of their fundamental human rights.

## 2. Causes of Forced marriages

### (i) Patriarchal Norms

- a. Sustaining male hegemony and family honour.
- b. Instrumentalizing women to safeguard family honour.
- c. Objectification of women as social and economic asset.

### (ii) Customary Practices

- a. Watta-Satta: Exchange of women in families for marriage.
- b. Vanni/Swara: Marrying the girl to settle disputes.
- c. Ghag: Public declaration of marrying a girl without her consent.

### (iii) Misinterpretation of religious teachings

- a. Distortion of religious practices to justify coercion e.g. caste system.
- b. Denial of right to free consent to women.
- c. Establishing authority over women.

### (iv) Educational Marginalization

- a. Restricted access of education to women especially in rural areas.
- b. Lack of legal and rights awareness.
- c. Globally, 87% of married adolescent girls (15-17) are deprived of education (UNICEF).

## (v) Economic pressure and poverty

a. Early marriages to release burden.

Treating daughters as economic liabilities.

## 3. Consequences of Forced marriage

### (i) Physical Abuse to victims

a. Domestic violence and sexual assault.

b. Marital rape and reproductive coercion.

### (ii) Psychological and Mental Abuse

a. Victims suffer from anxiety, depression and PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder).

b. Emotional Abuse from long-term trauma.

### (iii) Economic and educational disempowerment

a. Denial of right to education for women resulting in high illiteracy rate.

b. **Case study:** 47% illiteracy among women according to consensus of 2023 in Pakistan.

b. Economic dependency and intergenerational poverty.

### (iv) Gender Inequality and social regression

a. Poor global gender gap index, Pakistan ranked 148 in global gender gap index.

b. Strengthening male dominance in society.

## v) Violation of human rights

- a. Violation of Right to consent, right to liberty, education and dignity.
- b. Erosion of Public trust in justice systems

## 4. Way Forward

- i) Promoting Authentic Islamic teachings.
- ii) Grass roots Awareness campaigns.
- iii) Enforcement of Anti forced marriage laws.
- iv) Empowering women and promoting gender equality.

## 5. Conclusion

# Essay

"I wish that every human life might be pure transparent freedom" - Simone De Beauvoir

The above statement by Simone De Beauvoir, stands in the contrast with the lived realities of millions of women in Pakistan where freedom is taken away from women through act of forced marriage. Forced marriage is the marriage without the consent of intending spouses, mostly women. The deeply rooted patriarchal norms in society are the major cause of forced marriages which prioritise family honour over individual rights. Harmful customary practices such as Vanni, watta satta and Chhaag, along with misinterpreting religious teachings to strengthen male hegemony are the causes of forced marriages in rural areas of Pakistan. Other causes of forced marriages include educational marginalization by restricting the access of education to women and economic pressure. This results in physical and psychological abuse for victims which

~~perpetuates gender inequality~~. This further leads to social regression, educational disempowerment and violation of basic human rights. However, through authentic Islamic teachings, grassroots awareness campaigns and, empowering women and legal reforms will rectify forced marriages. Forced marriages are deeply rooted in patriarchal social cultures aimed at preserving male ~~honour~~ dominance and family honour, resulting in socio-economic consequences for women while depriving them of their fundamental human rights.

To begin with, patriarchal norms that empowers men serve as a primary cause of forced marriages in rural Pakistan. Patriarchy gave men the power to establish authority over the women by dominating them. Women are deprived of their right to consent in patriarchal societies, in order to sustain male hegemony which prioritize family honour over her individual rights. People from rural areas

of Pakistan are more engaged in this practice as women are considered as an economic & social asset. Objectification of women in forced marriages is a violent process that presents women as commodities or objects to be traded for social, economic or cultural benefits. They are treated merely as an object instead of human - this depicts ~~deprive them~~ the manifestation of entrenched patriarchal norms in society.

Secondly, customary practices, literally add fuel to fire by turning tribal disputes into long-term violation of human rights. Customary practice such as watta-satta, <sup>mostly</sup> seen in the rural areas of Punjab, is traditional custom of bride exchange involving the simultaneous marriage of brother-sister pairs from two different households. A study conducted by world bank researchers showed that 36% of brides are bartered annually in rural Pakistan. Similarly, customary practice of Vanni in tribal areas to settle blood disputes between

the tribes, deprive women of their rights  
Vanni is a heinous practice in which  
women are used as a means of compensation.  
Besides this, Chag, mostly practiced in  
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the public  
declaration of marrying a girl without  
her consent. It is a custom to intimidate  
and harass women which increase her  
suffering. All these practices serves as the  
cause of forced marriages. ~~negative~~

Thirdly, misinterpretation  
of religious teachings by elderly, in  
order to sustain male hegemony is  
another major cause of forced marriages.  
People living in different areas of  
Pakistan are seen practicing, <sup>wrong</sup> Islamic  
teachings that benefits male and  
justifies coercion. This misinterpretation of  
Islamic teachings, denies the rights given  
to women by Islam, they impose  
restrictions on women in every field  
ranging from education to marrying  
according to one's own will. This mis-  
interpretation further leads to allowing  
men in establishing authority over ~~men~~ women.

Elderly men force their decisions on women especially in marriage. It is mostly seen in caste systems created by the society in which women is not allowed to marry outside her caste. This old and traditional practices of misinterpreting religious teachings forces the marriage without consent.

Fourthly, educational marginalization of women is another cause of forced marriages in Pakistan. Women are given limited or no access to education mostly in rural areas. This leads to lack of awareness about their own basic and legal rights. In some areas of Pakistan, education of women is considered as a crime. This is very evident from the story of Malala Yousafzai, as she was shot on her way back to home from school. Globally, 87% of married adolescent girls (15-17 years) are deprived of education or they are out of school. This was a report by UNICEF which also shows the percentage of women in Pakistan. According to UNICEF, 52% of

women in Pakistan are out of schools. This educational marginalization serves as an indicator of forced marriages because less awareness leads to the deprivation of one's fundamental rights.

Lastly, the major cause of forced marriages in Pakistan is economic pressure and poverty. This leads to people marrying off their young girls in order to release burden and reduce economic pressure. Poverty, serves as a key factor which not only deprive women of education but it also deprive them of their right to consent. In poor families, daughters are seen as economic liabilities and sons are seen as asset as to help and serve their parents. So people tend to marry off their daughters early in order to have downy related considerations and releasing burden off their shoulders. This is evident from the example of Samina, a former child bride who was forced into marriage. Following her experiences, she

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evidence

became an activist, working alongside the team of "Bedari" to ~~(stop)~~ prevent forceful child marriages. Hence, ~~economic serves~~ as a major cause of forced marriages, particularly in Pakistan.

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