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Essay

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Topic: Forced Marriages in Pakistan: Causes and Consequences

Outline:

A- Introduction

a) Hook

b) General statements

c) Thesis Statements: Poverty, social norms, climate change, lack of education, tribal and feudal practices and many other reasons are key drivers behind forced marriages in Pakistan. Such marriages cause health risks for women, unwanted pregnancies, domestic violence, higher divorce rates and various other things that undermine national development goals.

B. Causes of Forced Marriages in Pakistan

a) Poverty is a major driver of forced marriages in Pakistan.

- b) Norms and traditions of family are a reasons behind forced marriages.
- c) Climate Change is increasing rates of forced marriages in Pakistan
- d) Endogamous marriages are performed on basis of social groupings and castes.
- e) Tribal and feudal practices offer brides to settle disputes and pay debts.
- f) Social pressure and honour culture in Pakistan increase forced marriages.
- g) Weak legal enforcement cause continuation of forced marriages.

C. Consequences of Forced Marriages in Pakistan

- a) Put women's Physical and Mental health at risk.
- b) Cause Unwanted pregnancies and enhance financial burden.

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- c) Ratio of domestic violence is high in forced marriages
- d) Higher divorce rate in country
- e) Strained family relations
- f) Loss of individual identity
- g) Forced marriages undermine national development goals

D. Conclusion

In the land where marriage is considered sacred, countless lives are shakled in the names of honour, culture, and control; not by choice but by compulsion. Forced marriages in Pakistan remain a silent crisis, cloaked in tradition yet screaming for justice. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights defined forced marriage as, "When one or both parties join a marriage without their complete and free permission, it is

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referred to as a forced marriage." Forced marriage is a form of marriage in which there is no consent of both individuals and they are bound by social, emotional and religious pressure. Poverty, social norms, Climate change, lack of education, feudal practices are ^{some} major causes of forced marriages in Pakistan. They cause health risks for women, unwanted pregnancies, domestic violence, higher divorce rates and also undermine national development goals.

Poverty is a major driver of forced marriages in Pakistan. Poor parents give their children to their relatives or friends as labor and, mostly they marry their innocent children

without consent. Parents are their children's sole caregivers, yet they confront several challenges. Ratio of child and forced marriages is high in developing countries and in those countries that have low GDPs.

Human Rights Watch in rural Pakistan reports that parents in extreme poverty feel forced to marry off daughters to ensure their 'protection' and lessen financial strain. This reveals that poverty is a major cause of forced marriages in Pakistan.

Practices like early marriage and cousin marriage are deeply rooted in society because of norms and traditions of families in Pakistan. In developing countries like

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Pakistan, people follow traditional values and norms even more than their religion. Therefore, arranged marriages within the family or tribe are encouraged to maintain property, lineage and community ties. In such settings, individual consent, especially of the girl is often overlooked.

UNICEF reports that over 21% of girls in Pakistan are married before the age of 18, largely due to traditional practices and family pressure. The decision is made by elders, with no input from the girls. This proves that norms and traditions in the families are reasons behind forced marriages in Pakistan.

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In this contemporary era, Climate Change is increasing rates of forced marriages in Pakistan. Climate change cause many disasters in Pakistan like floods of 2022 and 2025 and such floods destroy all belongings of citizens. So, people are left with no economic belongings and their homes are damaged also. In such conditions they force their children to get married in order to get dowry and to relieve their economic burden.

In 2025 floods a term known as "moonsoon brides" became very popular in Pakistan because of such marriages.

So, In addition to causing various other negative impacts, Climate change is also increasing rate of forced marriages.

in Pakistan.

In Pakistan, endogamous marriages are performed on basis of social groupings and castes without consent of any party involved. People in Pakistan misinterpret religion to justify such kind of forced marriages. They never consider marrying their child with someone who is out of their caste or ethnicity. For example people who are Syed, consider themselves superior and never marry their daughters out of caste. Therefore, they end up forcing their children to marry with someone who belong to same caste or ethnicity. This endogamous rule of marriage is purely based

on social groupings and castes and involves no consent of parties involved.

In addition to above causes, tribal and feudal practices also cause forced marriages. Such practices offer young brides as gifts or tools to settle disputes within the tribes and to pay debts. Customs like Vani or Swara use marriage to settle disputes. In 2020, a tribal jirga in Sindh ordered a 13-year old girl handed over to settle a family feud. It shows that harmful tribal practices offer brides to settle disputes and pay debts, this eventually increases rate of forced marriages in Pakistan.

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In Pakistan, honour culture and social pressure are also major reasons behind child marriages. Pakistani fathers consider marriage of their daughters as a guarantee of their ongoing social protection. They consider it as a thing of honour of dignity to get their daughters married as early as possible. For this reason they support or initiate forced marriages for them.

Human Rights Watch 2019 Report that family honour and societal expectations are reasons for forced marriages in Pakistan. So, girls are often married early and by force to preserve reputations of them.

Weak legal enforcement in Pakistan is cause of continued forced marriages in Pakistan. There are certain laws about forced marriages in Pakistan. But implementation of such laws is still not ensured. This gap between laws and implementation is causing no deterrence against forced marriages. ^{So,} People force their children to marry without their consent, and have no fear of state and authorities. When Islamabad High Court declared marriage under 18 invalid then **Federal Shariat Court** challenged the decision. Such reasons cause weak legal enforcement and ^{thus} increasing rate of forced marriages in Pakistan.

There are various reasons of forced marriages in Pakistan as discussed above. Such marriages cause various negative impacts on individuals, society and on country. Some major consequences of forced marriages are given below.

For starters, forced marriages put women's physical and mental health at risk. Forced marriage is associated with forced sex and sexual abuse, which result in serious health issues such as genital damage and injuries. This can also cause long-term mental issues. **A woman named Salma in Southern Punjab died in 2025 after sexual abuse from**

her husband. This shows that forced marriages are constant threats for women's physical and mental health.

Unwanted Pregnancies are another issue caused by forced marriages. Pregnant females who have not completed their physical development are at a higher risk of lifelong physical and psychological harm, as well as maternal child mortality. Unwanted pregnancy compel girls to leave their education and it enhances financial burden on both boys and girls. Contraception and Reproductive medicine, 2023 report revealed that there are 2.4 million unintended pregnancies annually in Pakistan.

So, one can say that forced marriage are causing unwanted pregnancies and increased financial burden in Pakistan.

Many studies in Pakistan revealed that ratio of domestic violence is more in cases of forced marriages. After forced marriages, violence is done by husband and other family members. Abuse in relationships can be expressed physically, emotionally, sexually, verbally or mentally. **Forced Marriage and the law, 2014 states that** when someone is being controlled, their sources of support are taken away, their skills are used for one's own gain, they are denied the resources they require for independence,

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resistance, and escape, and their everyday actions are dictated. So, forced marriage exacerbate all forms of domestic violence.

Forced marriages are contributing to increase divorce rate in Pakistan. Parents can force their children to get married but they cannot force them to live with a person forever. Couples try to understand each other after forced marriages but ^{most} often they fail to do so and end up with separation or divorce.

It was be observed in Karachi in 2022, when 24,157 divorces were reported, with 9,827 women filing for khula. This reveals

that divorce rate is increasing in Pakistan and forced marriage are contributing to this increase.

Forced marriages are also causing strained family relations in Pakistan. Couple of forced marriage often fail to understand each other and they always quarrel in front of their children. Such relationships depress children and they fail to express themselves in positive way. In this way both parents and children suffer and eventually strained family relations are experienced.

Forced marriage negatively impact individual life in many ways and eventually it

undermines the national development goals of Pakistan.

Such forced set of marriages lower female literacy rate,

increase fertility among women and result in

poor health of women

All these things hinder

social progress of not only women but overall of nation.

Forced marriages hinder

implementation of sustainable development goal 13 and

its projected impact is

stated that 150 million

more girls will marry by 2030, slowing progress.

Overall, forced marriages

challenge implementation

of SDG, 3, 4, 5 and 13

and undermine the

national development

goals of the country

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There are various causes of forced marriages in Pakistan. These causes include, poverty, social norms, Climate Change, tribal practices and many others. The consequences of forced marriages are poor women's health, unwanted pregnancies, domestic violence, higher divorce rate and many things that undermine national development goals in Pakistan. Marriage is a sacred bond between a man and woman and that is supposed to happen with consent of both parties. Without consent of one or both parties it causes various repercussions and effect both partners, socially, physically, psychologically and economically. In Gender

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gap index of 2025 Pakistan ranked last in the list and that make it more vulnerable to forced marriages. In such time, there is a strong need to implement laws against forced marriages strictly and to increase spending on health, education and development. There is a hope that, soon Pakistan will defeat this crisis of forced marriages and will attain its national development goals. Because Sir Arthur Conan Doyle says,
"A Forced marriage is no marriage."