

# Forced Marriages: Causes and Consequences

## Outline

### I - Introduction

a - Hook

b - Background Information

c - Thesis Statement

### II - Causes of Forced Marriages

1 - Constitutional Crises regarding the issue

a - No proper law enforcement mechanism

b - Lack of awareness regarding legal rights

2 - Feudalism as a Cause of Forced Marriages

a - Decisions by Jirga system and Feudal lords

b - Wani and Women as war or murder compensation

3 - Economic issues and Forced Marriages

a - Women <sup>men</sup> as a source of finance by in-laws

b - Economic issues poses limits to Freedom of choice

#### 4- Socio-Cultural Norms and Forced Marriages

- a- Marriages for sake of status Quo
- b- Cousin marriages as a social Norm
- c- Watta-Satta.

#### 5- Conservatism and Religious misinterpretation

- a- Emotional Blackmailing on name of honour in conservative society.

### III - Consequences of Forced Marriages

#### 1- Psychological Issues in Couples

- a- Anger, Anxiety
- b- Domestic violence

#### 2- Medical and Health Related Issues

- a- Genetic problems in children as a result of cousin marriages
- b- Case study: Down syndrome cases in Cousin marriages - Report by Nature
- c- Marital Rape

#### 3- Social Issues a consequence of Forced Marriages

- a- Increase in Divorce Rate
- b- Incompatibility impacts Family System.

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#### 4- Impacts of Forced Marriages on Children

- a- mental and Emotional Growth is impeded
- b- children learn vicious cycle of violence

#### 5- Forced Marriages Impacts on Working Force

- a- Hampers the mental ability of major work force (working men and women).

#### III - Conclusion.

## The Essay

The Arabic literature has a famous story of an Arab man, who was forcefully married to her cousin. Once he fell ill and doctor advised him to take <sup>some</sup> rest. He left his office and came to home to take few hours ~~left~~ rest. As soon as he reached home, his wife started to argue over a small matter. Ultimately, the discussion reached to the point where her wife reminded her the circumstances in which she had to marry him. He leaves the home and go to office where his fellows mock him. He ultimately resigns, which lead to worst economic crises and domestic violence. The short story reveals that forced marriages impact the life of an individual at personal, professional, economic and social level. Men and women, which are major factors in a country's prosperity, lose their ability to perform for the prosperity of a nation.

Women are more affected compared to men. Women, who were to be a major asset of a state, become a commodity in third world societies as a consequence of forced marriage. Though the issue of forced marriages is not new yet the debate has resurfaced in third world countries like Pakistan. The major causes of forced marriages include constitutional crises, Feudalistic practices, economic and socio cultural issues and conservatism. The consequences include psychological and health ~~related~~ <sup>and</sup> social ills. The practice impacts the children and the ability of couples to work for progress of society.

To begin with, one of the major causes of forced marriages is lack of constitutional awareness regarding this issue. Neither the younger generation has the idea about their legal right nor their guardians are aware about any such rights. Constitution of Pakistan grants the right to every citizen, a man or woman, to choose and take a decision about

about his or her future without any pressure. But due to lack of awareness, young men and women are not able to use their legal rights. Similarly, there is no proper law enforcement mechanism to stop these practices. Feudal practices are among big hurdles, which hamper the young ones to reach the law regarding this issue. Locals do not dare to challenge the Feudal's decisions regarding their decisions regarding forced marriages. Hence, the constitutional drawbacks are one among the reasons toward increasing forced marriages in countries like Pakistan.

Similarly, the prevailing Feudalism and Jirga system are among the main causes of forced marriages. According to a report published by express tribune in 2023, more than 60% of forced marriages are reported from areas which are either under feudal practices or under Jirga system. The reports shows significant number of forced marriages from areas Sindh, Balochistan, south Punjab and

ex-Fala. All these areas are under direct influence of Feudal lords. The matter and disputes in those areas are either decided by Feudal lords or via Jirga system. These systems see women in form of a commodity. To settle the dispute among tribes women are used and exchanged resulting in forced marriages. Similarly, women are used as a crime compensation or murder compensation in the name of Wani. The practices are common in rural areas. Thus this factor is a major contributor to the forced marriages in Pakistan.

Economic issue is another reason which leads to forced marriages.

Firstly, the people are interested in men or women who earns well.

This is more true for men.

Regardless of all the flaws, a man earning more is accepted compared to a man having no flaw but poverty. This leads to incompatible couples, where one partner is forcefully entered in the contract. Similarly, the economic issue poses a limit to freedom

(8)

choice. This limit of freedom of choice leads to undesirable consequences of forced marriages at the part of one or other partner.

Similarly, the socio-cultural values and norms are another contributing factors. The society has certain norms which are some time man-made. People do not prefer to marry their children out of family in order to preserve the status quo. This ultimately leads to a decision none other than an enforced contract of marriage. Similarly, cousin marriages, in order to save the family relations leads to this issue. The social and cultural norms of Pakistani society encourages the cousin inter-marriages. The practice is done to either keep the blood pure, or to fulfill the promises or to save the family relations. No matter what the motive is, they ultimately leads to forced marriages. Similarly, Walta Latta, in order to safeguard the social rights of a girl, is another practice which leads to

forced marriages.

last but not the least is conservatism. The conservative society impose its decisions on norms of social norms on religion. Religion is used as a fear factor to control the youth. Youth is Blackmailed via emotions and religious verses are misinterpreted. For example, ~~for~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ obey the parents as a divine order is communicated to women in rural areas, leaving no choice for their decision as wish. This ultimately results in nothing but a forced marriage.

Forced marriages have a number of consequences. As Newton stated, Every action has an opposite but equal reaction. Forced marriages have a number of consequences.

Firstly, the couple suffers from a number of psychological issues. Anger and anxiety are one among those factors. According to a study conducted by John Hopkison Institute, the incompatible couples have 55%

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(16)

more chances of chronic depression compared to compatible couples. This depicts that forced marriages make people more prone to psychological impacts like anger, frustration, anxiety and depression. This also leads to domestic violence. According to a report published by Women Association Forum of Pakistan, domestic violence cases are more prevalent in rural areas of Pakistan as rural areas of Pakistan also have more ratio of forced marriages, this depicts that psychological issues are one of the major consequences of forced marriages.

Secondly, the medical and health related issues are among the other consequences of forced marriages. Psychological issues and domestic violence leads to physical abuse, causing the health concerns of victim.

Marital Rape is another issue which not only impacts the victim psychologically but also <sup>have</sup> physical impacts. Likewise, the children as a result of forced coitus

marriages have a number of health concerns. The cousin marriages increase the chances of a number of genetic disorders. A study published by Nature in 2015 showed that more than 70% percent cases of downsyndrome occurred in <sup>children of</sup> couples who were first cousins. This shows that cousin marriage as a result of socio cultural norms results in various genetic disorders in children.

Likewise, a number of social ills surface as a result of forced marriages. For example, divorce rate in society has tremendously increased. A report published in Dawn in 2020, referring to an international ~~org~~ WHO, showed that 60% of divorce cases from rural Sindh was a consequence of forced marriages. Similarly, the incompatibility in couples result in a number of issues like intolerance and hostility. These practices leads to shaking of foundations of family system in the society. Thus forced marriages lead to a number of social ills in the society.

Since in the same way, the forced marriages have a number of negative impacts on children. Firstly, their mental and emotional health is badly impacted. A study by John Hopkins social institute show that children of incompatible couples face more difficulties in dealing issues involving emotional intelligence. Similarly, as the children learn <sup>everything</sup> from their parents, they also learn and adopt their behaviour. In the same fashion, they learn the domestic violence as well. This leads to vicious cycle of domestic violence. Thus, forced marriages pose a number of negative impacts on children.

Last but not the least is the impact of forced marriages on workforce of a society. As the forced marriages, a result of psychological torture, hampers the ability of an individual, it hampers the overall progress of a society. Aristotle once remarked, "a sound mind is in the sound body," but as due to psychological impacts

of forced marriages impact not only the brain but also the the body of an individual, the workforce remains no more competent. This hampers the prosperity of a state in longer run.

To conclude, a number of factors in third world states like Pakistan contribute toward forced marriages. These factors are not limited to single cause but a number of factors contribute toward forced marriages in Pakistan. Forced marriages have devastating impacts on society ranging from psychological to societal levels. Practical steps at state and societal level are required to end this menace.

