

Forced Marriages in Pakistan : Causes & consequences

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In the famous, 'Sangah Maah' drama a young 18 year old Kubra Khan was forced by her brother Amir Khan to wed an already married man for the sins that Amir committed earlier. In the drama Amir murder Ubaid Khan the groom brother on a property issue. Later, the Jirga ordered Amir to give blood shed in the form of his sister being married to an unknown married man. Stories like these ^{in Pakistan} are just a tip of an iceberg. As in Pakistan, countless Kubras are being forcedly married due to preserving traditional values, ^{solving} conflict and at times to clean the shame of dishonor. While finding the reasons of forced marriages, one can deduce that it is due to prevalent entrenched ethnocentrism and xenocentrism mindset in Pakistani society. Due to this mindset, infamous practises like Wanni and GhukK are still practised. Similarly, Socioeconomic issues, coupled with wealth control and family pressure also incentivises this practise. This exacerbate gender based violence (GBV) and perpetuate a cycle of violence and marital rape. Moreover, deprive

women of basic fundamental rights and at time incentivises the ^{scavage} underage marriages, which lead to high risk of gender disorders in new borns. Likewise, it accelerate mental health problem and in extreme cases the death of women. Hence, under these circumstances it becomes imperative that the state formulate and implement stringent laws to end this menace. Moreover, courts must implement heavy punishment and fine ^{the} on perpetrators of forced marriages and the government must maintain a database to track and support victims and work on rehabilitation. In the pages to come this essay will discuss in detail the causes and what consequences forced marriages menace poses to society and how state can end this practise.

Forced marriages in Pakistan is due to innumerable reasons. However, entrenched ethnocentrism and xenocentrism values is the most significant cause of this practise. Sociologist view that strong belief over ones ethnicity and disregard toward other ethnicity lead to practise of forced marriage.

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For instance, the practise of Wakia Satta in Southern Punjab and rural Sindh is a classic case in point. In these areas, parents often time forcefully wed their ^{daughter to} families who are closely related to them. Hence, one can concur that ethnocentrism and xenocentrism is a major cause of this practise.

Similarly, the idea of preserving traditional values and mores is another cause of forced marriage. As families want to retain and foster their belief, ideas and aspiration, which often time result in practises like forced marriage. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa practise of 'Wanni' is common, whereby a girl is often time order to be married to a person who is much older and unknown to her. Though such practises do retain tradition and culture but deprive the girl of her rights and voice. Thence, traditional values is another cause of forced marriages in Pakistan.

In Pakistan, the concept of extended family is prevalent. This leads to control and put

everyone in check. However, this control and family pressure often leads to forced marriages. Like, in Pakistan cauzan marriages are common. Needless to say that cauzan marriage is not a bad phenomenon, ^b But when it is forced on either boy and girl this leads to severe mental health problems and in extreme cases causes bad blood within family. So, in this context one can conclude that family pressure and control is another major cause of forced marriages.

Socio-economic issue is yet another cause of forced marriages. As poor families often time give away their ^{elder} ^{young} daughters to marriage so that they can sustain their other children. With World Bank Reporting that poverty level in Pakistan being risen to 44%, one can assume that many poor families may have married their young daughters to resolve inflationary effects. The issue of finance and socioeconomic deprivation is the central causes of forced marriage in many cause. Therefore, one can come to ^{the} conclusion that

Socioeconomic deprivation
~~forced marriage~~ is a cause of
forced marriage in Pakistan.

while looking at
the landscape of Pakistan one
can see that property^{holding} is the
treasure of all families irrespective
of rich or poor. The practise
of holding property within
the family is another at times
a reason of forced marriage.

In many urban and sub-urban
areas, girls are ^{forcefully} married off
to immediate family member.
The reason is to hold property
within the family. This
practise is common in Sindhi
feudalistic landlords as property
signifies ^{power} wealth and held over
resources.

Likewise, phenomenon
of ^{bringing} shame and dishonor is associated
only with women and girls. For
instance, ~~And~~ if a girl brings novel ideas,
a new thought or do anything
which is not expected of her
she is labeled as a person who
has brought dishonor in the
family. This leads to her
forceful early marriage as a
punishment. However, if she refuse
to comply leads to her evident
death.

used as Forced marriages is an instrument to solve disputes and conflicts. Such practise are common in Pakistan's tribal areas, whereby girls are married off to opposite enemy clan to maintain equilibrium in the society. This practise makes girls vulnerable to domestic violence ^{and} marital rape which not only lead to physical health deterioration but also destroy bride mental health. So, One can conclude that to settle dispute and conflict forced marriage is used as an instrument to maintain equilibrium in society.

Forced marriages bring one of the profound consequences on bride, physical and mental health. As she is prone to gender based violence (GBV). This ~~gender~~^{GBV} phenomenon is not only limited to physical health but ^{also} destroys ^{her} mental health. Human Right commission of Pakistan (HRCP) in its annual 2023-24 report ^{mention} more than 2000 gender based violence (GBV) ^{which} have been reported in Pakistan. Arguing further that

this is grossly underestimated number. As many cases go unreported due to family pressure.

Similarly, the scourge of forced marriage often time exacerbate genetic disorders. In Pakistan, where cousin marriages is high and common leads to genetic disorder in newborn childrens. Several studies have highlighted that cousin marriages leads to high prevalence of genetic combination which result in disorder. As in forced marriages many time the bride and groom are immediate cousin, which increases risk of genetic disorder.

Like wise, another consequence of forced marriage is ^{that} it perpetuate a cycle of violence. This cycle of violence manifest in the form of marital rape. The idea of consent and willingness is ^{manytime} flouted in ^{cases of} forced marriages. This is because the bride is on the disadvantage side, and the marriage of convenience hold ^{only} till she remain subserviant to her inlaws. As per All Pakistan Women Association (APWA) countless marital rape are happening which

not only degrade autonomy but also soul.

Resultantly, freedom and rights of women ^{are} alter in a forced marriage. Already, the woman is in a low position, so she is susceptible to violence and only obedience. This deprivation of one's fundamental rights: ~~the~~ right of freedom, association and thought is curtailed, which is another consequence of forced marriage.

Similarly, practise of forced marriage is not only limited to 18 years old girls, but this scourge is practise as well on underage girls. In Pakistan, only Sindh government has adopted stringent laws and has criminalised underage marriage. However, the rest of provinces have yet to criminalize the scourge of underage marriage. The phenomenon of underage marriage not only destroy young children of their health but destroy their mental health nourishment and exposes them to host of ~~bordernd~~ problem of child rearing, house hold chores and ^{adult} responsibilities.

If a forced marriage does not go as planned the ultimate result will be the death of women. APLWA report that thousands of women in Pakistan are killed ^{and} everywhere on charges of shame & honor.

The Latest Balochistan case is an example whereby a young girl was killed only because she wanted to marry a person of her liking. In extreme cases, when a girl refuse to toe the family line death is the ultimate silence for her.

Lastly, ~~the~~ forced marriages accelerate mental health problems. As the marriage is forced then question of one's consent and approval is violated by both respective family. The forced bride is forced to accept the new normal. This exacerbate ^{for her} mental health problems which encompasses physical and verbal abuses resulting into deterioration of bride health.

There are many ways ~~the~~ state can end this menace. Firstly, existing anti forced marriage laws must be

implemented in true letter and spirit. All provinces in Pakistan must formulate and criminalize practises of forced marriage. This will create deterrence and will protect young men and women. Moreover, establishing helplines can be another solution to end this scourge.

Similarly, focus should be on victim rehabilitation by establishing victim crisis center. The psychological and emotional support can help victims ameliorate the trauma they had gone through. Practises like focus group discussion, therapy and other activities can help victims overcome their bad memories.

Courts must play a pivotal role in discouraging ^{practises of} forced practises. For instances, priority daily court hearing and low adjournment can lead to speedy justice. Moreover, heavy fines and penalties can deter such practises. However, it is important that punishment must be made severely, so that no such incidents occur in the future.

Fourthly, government must maintain a data base that track and trace both victim and perpetrator. As by integrating data efficiently ~~and~~ better policies can be made to estimate the number of cases. Similarly, data driven policies can lead to effective, efficient and time bound intervention which can curtail this menace.

Lastly, efforts must be made to educate masses via school curriculum, tablo shoes, holding conferences and by making social issues drama. A national effort is the need of hour. Hence, concerted collective effort must be made so that this scourge of forced marriage can come to an end.

In conclusion, this essay has articulated in detail that in Pakistan forced marriage practice is due to entrenched ^{and} cultural, socioeconomic, ^{and} deeply prevailing patriarchal mind set. Which has led to normalisation of GBV, perpetuated a cycle of violence ^{and} marital rape against women.

Moreover, it has deprived women and girls of their basic fundamental rights and freedom. And resultantly has incentivised the practise of under age marriage which has profound physical and mental health problem for young girls. The essay in this regard recommend that the state must implement the existing anti forced ^{marriage} laws stringently. Moreover, focus should be shifted toward establishing victim crisis center for rehabilitation. Adoption of technology and data base maintainance can be crucial in formulating effective anti forced marriage policies. Lastly, a collective whole of a government and societal approach can end this menace because otherwise failure will lead to proliferation of such social ills which will cost a generations of dreams and aspiration.