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## FORCED MARRIAGES IN PAKISTAN: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

### OUTLINE

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2. Back Ground
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#### II Causes of Forced Marriages in Pakistan

##### 1. Close-Family Ties

- (a) Importance of family
- (b) Concept of now or never
- (c) Improvement of rural ties

##### 2. Lack of Resistance from Women

- (a) Fatalistic Mindset of some women
- (b) Societal influence in decision-making

##### 3. Women Seen as a Burden

- (a) Patriarchal mindset of shifting burden
- (b) Increase in Poverty
- (c) Lack of participation in expenses

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##### 4. High Illiteracy

- (a) Education widens perspectives
- (b) Illiteracy leads to ignorance

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### III Consequences of Forced Marriages in Pakistan

#### 1. Increase in Violence Against Women

- (a) Partner becomes violent
- (b) Low-reporting due to fear of ruining relations

#### 2. Lack of Women in Workforce

- (a) Contribute towards homemaking
- (b) Patriarchal hurdles

#### 3. Increase in educational drop outs

- (a) Forced to drop-out
- (b) Increased social responsibility
- (c) "Children are women's responsibility"

#### 4. Increased Exploitation

- (a) Marxist Feminism view of Exploitation
- (b) Unpaid Labour in Agriculture forced by husband.

### IV Way Forward

- (a) State Intervention
- (b) Increase awareness
- (c) Women Support programs

### V Conclusion

## THE ESSAY

Asma was a girl who wanted to become a doctor. She was an ace student and was moving towards a bright future. However, she was forced to marry her cousin, who then forced her to drop out from her school. This is one of many stories of women in Pakistan that are forced to marry someone out of sheer pressure. Forced marriage is a concept that has led to the destruction of many lives and still families are adamant to pass down the trauma they once went through. The bond between two people is built on trust, humility, understanding, not on force, coercion, and exploitation.

In Pakistan, the reasons or the causes behind forced marriage include <sup>improving</sup> close family ties, lack of resistance from women, illiterate families, and due to socio-economic conditions. This leads to increase <sup>in</sup> violence against women, increase in school dropouts, exploitation in labour, and increased divorces. In this essay, the aforementioned causes and consequences will be elaborated on, while also providing a way forward to eradicate such a menace.

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One of the first causes behind forced marriages in Pakistan is close family ties. In Pakistan, family plays an important role in everyday life.

From decision making to connecting, the power that family holds over a person cannot be understated. However, in order to keep the family bloodline within the family, leads to the members of the family force their children to marry within the baradari. This leads to a situation where cousins are forced to tie the knot, even if they do not want to.

For instance. In KPK, some tribes like Orakzai force their children to marry within the baradari. This leaves the members of the tribe no choice but to abide by the norms, leading to forced marriages in many cases. Additionally, the concept of now or never forces the children of families to get married.

Whenever a marriage proposal comes knocking at the family, the family immediately accept it. The reason behind the impetuous approval comes from the fear that if the family lets the proposal go, then no one would marry their daughter. It is this fear that leads to forced marriages. Furthermore, in rural areas, marriage is a tool to improve ties with the tribal clans in the area.

This practice was used in ancient times,

however, it is still prevalent in Pakistani rural areas. Therefore, close family ties is one of the causes behind forced marriages in Pakistan.

Another cause behind the forced marriages in Pakistan is the lack of resistance from women themselves. In Pakistan, some women take on the fatalists mindset that suppresses their ability to resist. They believe that their purpose in life is natural and that is to get married and serve their husband and family. This mindset is further passed down to her daughters through the process of socialization that gives fuel to the cycle of oppression.

For instance, women in rural Pakistan believe that their purpose must align with that of their husbands. This was highlighted in a report by the pink ribbon for women organisation.

Additionally, the social conditions present in Pakistan perpetrates these mindset. Since society dictates an individual towards making a decisions that aligns with the norms, indirectly, the women agrees to marry for the sake of her family's name. Majority of the decisions made by us is dictated by the fear of the phrase "What will the people say?". This propells the individual to take a decision

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without understanding the consequences of the decision. This leads women to forcibly enter the contract of marriage, even though she agreed to it. However, it is important to understand that was it her decision or the decision that was imposed on her by various social institutions such as family?. Therefore, lack of resistance from women is a key cause of forced marriages in Pakistan.

The third cause of forced marriage is that in our society women are seen as a burden. This understanding stems from the patriarchal idea that women, especially if she is ~~your~~<sup>one's</sup> daughter, needs to be married off as soon as possible.

According to reports, nearly 19 million girls are married off before they turn 18. This statistic shows how keen families in Pakistan are to send their children towards the contract of marriages. Most of these marriages are forced as children under the ages of 18 do not have the ability or maturity to make such life decisions.

Similarly, women are seen as a burden due to the increase in poverty. Many families find it easier to transfer the burden of taking care of the daughter to someone else. As the current nation poverty rate is nearing 35%.

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the likelihood of forced marriages has increased drastically. Furthermore, many families do not allow women to work in formal settings, which leads to women bringing in less revenue to their households. This results in not only increased dependency of women in their male heads of the family, but also increases the strain on family. Therefore, forced marriages in Pakistan can be attributed to the patriarchal view of women as a source of burden.

last The last cause of forced marriages in Pakistan is high illiteracy. Education is a powerful component in widening one's perspective. With low education, people tend to embrace ancient thinking that perpetrates forced marriages. For instance, it was through education that women fought for their rights. Several feminist movements are a testament to this. Furthermore, illiteracy leads to ignorance. Many women do not know their rights. Even in Islam, the act of forceful marriages is not permissible. Education is the most efficient way to break the shackles of such acts. There are several provisions in Pakistani law that protect women from such acts; however, due to zero to no awareness, women suffer the consequences.

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of the decisions made by someone else. Therefore, high illiteracy is one of the devastating causes of forced marriages in Pakistan.

As the causes have been identified, the consequences include increase in violence against women, high rates of school dropouts, exploitation in labour, and increased divorces.

One of the first consequences of forced marriages is the increase in violence against women. Due to the nature of the marriage, women sometimes find a partner who indulges in physical violence. This leads to increase in domestic violence. Pakistan demographic and health survey revealed that 28% of married women between 15 to 48 years of age have experienced domestic violence whereas ~~60~~ 6% of them have faced sexual violence. This shows how forced marriages have significantly led to the increase in violence against women.

Furthermore, some women in Pakistan do not report such crime as they believe that it would ruin their relationship with their spouse. A documentary aired on BBC showed how a rural women in Pakistan was ostracized by her family for filing a complaint against

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her husband. Another documentary on conditions of women in rural Sindh showed how women believed that they deserved the violence because they were not able to serve their husband properly. These were some of the cases that are highlighted but this shows the grim reality of forced marriages in Pakistan. Therefore, the violent consequences of forced marriages in Pakistan is the increase in ~~do~~ violence against women.

The second consequence is the rampant exploitation of women. The Marxist feminist have for decades argued that women are being exploited by the capitalist system. In Pakistan, this is true as women who are forcibly included into the contract of marriage are exploited for cheap and sometimes unpaid labour. Women ~~the~~, in rural areas, are exploited by their conditions through hard manual labour. They are forced by their husbands to join them in the field to earn livelihood for him. In a report by WHO, women in rural Pakistan are exploited and forced to work under a sardar or land lord with minimal returns.