

Date: 20 Oct, 2025

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ENGLISH ESSAY

FORCED MARRIAGES IN PAKISTAN: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

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God created humans as the only beings having the capability of thinking and making judgemental decisions. It was Adam (AS) and Eve (AS) that Helswt) chose as first beings. The rest comes from their heritage. The society was created on the bond of marriage, having trust and respect for one another. As the time passed and societies evolved, the two persons, male and female, started to be divided and it was that which led to unequal status of one from the other. Pakistan was achieved through alot of efforts and struggles to establish a homeland for muslims, where their rights, Islamic and constitutional, are guaranteed and it was not only men that worked for the attainment of this cause but also women. However, the nation achieved to ensure justice and rights shifted into the practice of forced marriages. The cause for this unequal status and norm are understood to be patriarchal structure of the society, illiteracy, mass poverty and strict family values. Resultantly, leading to violation of fundamental rights, disintegration of family and trust deficiency among couples. Therefore, it is important to understand the causes and consequences of forced marriages in Pakistan.

The term forced marriage can be defined as forcing an individual to be in a contract of marriage without his or her will, most of the time its her. The practice of forced marriage

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is vastly observed in societies with unequal status of genders and their dependency on one another. The phenomenon of forced marriage is prevalent in Pakistan and thus results from different factors.

Firstly, patriarchal structure of the society is a cause of forced marriages in Pakistan. Pakistani society is male dominated, there are less number of women who play active role in the governing of fifth most populous nation, despite women being around 48% of the population according to 2023 census. According to a report by Pakistan Administrative Research Center (PARC), the quota for women in civilian jobs is 10%. However, only 5% of women are in the service. This proves the patriarchal structure of society as a cause of forced marriage as women are mostly dependent on men for their livelihood.

Secondly, illiteracy also plays a role in forced marriages in Pakistan. More than half of Pakistan's population lives in rural areas and thus sticks with their old ways of living, that is agriculture. According to Economic Survey of Pakistan 2024-25, the total literacy rate in Pakistan was 60.6%, and that of women being 52.8% making almost half of women illiterate. This number makes it clear that there is no understanding of importance of education which enables individuals to know their rights.

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and advocate for rights of others, thus, leading to forced marriages.

Thirdly, mass poverty in Pakistan also causes forced marriages. The society is unequally divided among classes; there is a huge gap between the rich and the poor. Women from poor families, who don't have a source of income, is forced by parents to marry someone with a basic living and girls have no option but to comply as they also don't want to be a burden on their parents. The data by World Bank establishes that 45% of population in Pakistan lives below poverty line. This mass poverty leads to forced marriage.

Moreover, apart from mass poverty, another factor that leads to forced marriages in Pakistan are strict family values. In Pakistani society, it is evident that ethno-nationalism is common among all its provinces. Instead of having a national identity, people choose to be known by their provincial ethnicity, i.e., Sindhi, Baloch, etc. This leads to unadaptation by people for gender laws and most of people choose to stick by their family values which mandates them to marry their children only in family and even when the girls are not mature enough. The evidence for this is that it was in 2024 that Restraint of Child Marriage Act was passed in the capital, Islamabad. This proves that strict family

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values contribute to forced marriages in Pakistan.

In addition to strict family values, lack of trust in society also leads to forced marriages in Pakistan. People in Pakistan do not trust others most of the times and believe that getting their children married to some close relative, cousin, will be better for family and will help to bind relations together. This also establishes the notion that people do not believe others when it comes to marriage. This lack of trust in society leads to forced marriages in Pakistan.

As a result, these beliefs and norms leads to many consequences. Firstly, it leads to the violation of fundamental rights of individuals protected and ensured by Islam and Constitution. Islam gives women many rights and among these rights is the right to choose partner. The best example of this is when Hazrat Ali (RA), the fourth caliph of Islam asked the Holy Prophet (PBUH) for marriage with His (PBUH) daughter Fatima (RA), Holy Prophet (PBUH) asked Her (RA) before giving a positive response. Moreover, the constitution of Pakistan also guarantees numerous rights specifically in Article 14, the dignity of men, and Article 25, equality among citizens. These rights ensure that the dignity and equality must be

protected. However, the notion of forced marriage violates these essential values and leads to violation of fundamental rights.

Secondly, forced marriages lead to disintegration of family. When couple are forced to bind in a relationship without their will, they find it difficult to adjust with one another. This is mostly observed in cousin marriages that girls and boys always think of their cousins as brothers and sisters, however due to strict family values when they are forced to marry. They find it difficult to develop a bond as they are from the beginning told of cousin as a kin. This leads to many conflicts and thus proving that forced marriages lead to disintegration of family.

Moreover, when people are forced to be in a marriage contract, it leads to trust deficiency among that couple. It is observed in forced marriages that the partner does not trust his mate. It is human nature to like someone and when marriages are forced, there always is a bane as when the partner comes to know that his partner liked someone else before their marriage. This most of the times develops trust deficiency and leads to gender based violence.

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Resultantly, the lack of trust among couple leads to gender based violence. As due to patriarchal norms, the status of women is already compromised, the forced marriages result in violence against women to further subordinate her. It is prevalent in Pakistani society that women are even before their forced marriage subject to gender based violence and most of the time if she takes bold step and refuses to marry by force, she is subject to torture and most of the time killed. The best example can be taken of an influencer whose death shocked the nation, Sana Younis from Islamabad, a girl aged 14-15 was forced by a boy to marry her. When she rejected the proposal she was killed by the same guy that had claimed to love her. This proves that forced marriages lead to gender base violence in Pakistan.

To sum up, forced marriages ~~are~~^{is} a normal practice observed in Pakistan.

This unethical practice leads to many serious problems and is a result of wide range of aspects. The major causes of forced marriage as discussed in earlier paragraphs are illiteracy, patriarchal structures of society, mass poverty, lack of trust and strict family values. This all results in violation of fundamental rights, disintegration of family, trust deficiency

among couple and gender based violence. Pakistani society is intertwined in the practice of forced marriages which leaves dark stains on its image. God created humans equal, comparable and not subordinate to one another, therefore, in the practice of forced marriage should be discarded.

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