

Q No. 1

Forced Marriages In Pakistan: Causes and Consequences

1 Introduction

- i. Current status of forced marriages in Pakistan.
- ii. Thesis statement: Despite legal frameworks, forced marriages persist in Pakistan under the veil of socio-cultural norms, economic constraints and lack of education leading to severe social, economic and psychological consequences.

2 Causes of forced marriages in Pakistan.

- i. Socio-cultural norms
 - a- concept of family honor.
 - b- control over female autonomy.
- ii. Economic Pressure
 - a- Poverty and dowry related practices.
 - b- Marriages as financial

transactions or debt settlement.

iii. Lack of education and awareness

a- illiteracy leads to limited awareness of legal rights.

b- Gender based educational disparities.

iv. Weak legal enforcement

a- Gap in implementation of legal frameworks.

b- social reluctance to report or challenge forced marriages.

3 Consequences of forced marriages.

i. Perpetuation of Gender discrimination

a- loss of autonomy for men

b- social isolation for women.

ii. Economic disempowerment

a - School dropouts resulted in less future opportunities.

b- limited economic independence.

iii. Psychological impacts

a- Depression, anxiety and ^{increased} suicidal tendencies.

b- Health compromised due to ^{unwanted} early pregnancies which increase maternal mortality rate.

iv. legal marginalization

a- lack of access to justice

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Proposed measures to curb forced marriages in Pakistan.

i. Activate support systems.

a - Shelter, counselling and rehabilitation for victims.

ii. Empowering Vocational women.

a - Vocational training and legal literacy for girls especially.

iii. Strengthening legal frameworks.

a - Enforce existing laws and close legal loopholes.

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Conclusion

Marriage should be a bond of love not a chain of coercion. Once Malala Yousufzai said, no one should be forced into a life they did not choose. Pakistan is home to nearly 19 million child brides and forced marriages remain widespread especially in rural areas and minority communities. According to NHCR, Pakistan is one of the highest ranking countries for forced marriages. The practice of forced marriages is especially common in rural areas of Pakistan where cultural traditions and poverty drive families to marry off daughters early. The tradition of Vani and swara is so common where daughters are seen to be as debt settler or guarantee to foster the relations among ~~tribe~~ enemy tribes. These ridiculous practices are due to lack of awareness and illiteracy. Often families don't see forced marriages as a crime or human rights violation so they don't report forced marriages are not even reported. Despite legal frameworks, forced marriages persist in Pakistan under the veil of socio-cultural norms, economic constraints and lack of education, leading to severe social, economic and psychological consequences.

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The causes of forced marriages in Pakistan are multifaceted. Cultural and traditional beliefs play a dominant role. Families often view marriages as a means to preserve honor. Inter tribal marriages are often prohibited, paving the way for forced unions in the name of honor. This practice extends beyond Pakistan's border; for instance, 49% of forced marriages cases in the UK originated from Pakistani community.

In Pakistan, this practice remains alarming prevalent, particularly among women and girls, the consent is not taken seriously and marriages are imposed through coercion, threats or deception just to control female autonomy because there is a common perception that female can be easily driven by western concept of marriage in which partner is of their choice. In fact this is not ^{only a} western concept but also an Islamic concept of marriage.

In addition, forced marriages are result of poverty and dowry related practices and even these marriages can be seen as financial transaction or debt

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settlement. In many areas of Pakistan, the trend of "vani" is common practice where women pays the penalty for the act she do is not even involved in. Compensation marriages are largely accepted as a way of keeping the peace between tribes and families. According to the report in Express Tribune, a young girls is married to 41 years old married man as swara for her brother's alleged disliked relation with his cousin. This was done to resolve the conflict peacefully. ~~but the~~ Another trend of forced marriage is Watta-Satta where brother sister pair from two households are married to each other. This results extreme level of reciprocal domestic violence.

Another cause of forced marriages is lack of awareness and education.