

Date: 20-10-25

Day: Monday

Name Ume-Farwa

Batch 83 (41203)

Mock Exam I

(10:30 to 1:30)

Essay

Forced Marriages in Pakistan: Causes & Consequences

Outline

1

Introduction

1.1 Hook

1.2 Background

1.3 Thesis Statement:

Forced marriages in Pakistan stem from patriarchal traditions, economic vulnerability, and gender inequality, causing deep psychological, social, and national harm.

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Understanding the concept of Forced Marriage

2.1 UN and Pakistani Legal definitions.

2.2 Difference between arranged and forced marriage

★ Evidence: UNHCR (2023) defines forced marriage as "a Union in which one or both parties have not given free and full consent."

3

Historical and Cultural Context

3.1 Colonial legacy and tribal traditions.

3.2 Watta Satta, Vanis, Swara, and honor-based practices.

★ Evidence: Aurat foundation (2022) reported that over 1000 cases of swara were recorded annually in KPK and South Punjab.

4

Causes of Forced

Marriages in Pakistan

4.1★ Cultural and traditional norms

4.1.1 Patriarchal control, family honor

4.1.2 Example: Marrying Cousins to retain Property within the clan.

4.2 Economic Factors

4.2.1 poverty, dowry and bride price

22 Evidence: UNICEF (2021):
18% of girls in Pakistan
are married before 18
mostly for economic reasons.

4.3 Lack of education and awareness

4.3.1 Illiteracy, ignorance
of rights.

4.3.2 Evidence: Pakistan
Bureau of Statistics:
female literacy 49%.
(2023)

4.4 Gender inequality

4.4.1 Male dominance,
lack of autonomy

4.4.2 Evidence: Global
Gender Gap Report
2024 ranks Pakistan 142/146

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4.5 Weak legal enforcement

4.5.1 Laws exist but not implemented

4.5.2 Evidence: Only 12 Convictions under Anti-women Practices Act since 2011 (HRCP report 2023)

4.6 Religious misinterpretation

4.6.1 Misuse of religion to justify Coercion

4.6.2 Reference: Hadith - Prophet (PBUH) annulled marriage of Khansabint Khidam against her will

5

Consequences of Forced Marriages

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5.1

Psychological trauma- depression Suicide

Example: Reported case
in Lahore (2019): a

17 years old girl attempted
suicide after being forced
into marriage.

5.2

Social disintegration-

domestic violence,

broken families

Evidence: 70% of women
in forced marriages report
abuse (UN Women 2022)

5.3

Economic impact- reduced workforce

Participation

Evidence: World Bank
2023: Pakistan loses
\$ 5.6 billion annually
due to women's
economic exclusion.

5.4 Human rights violations - conflict with Constitution and CEDAW

5.5 Impact on children health risks, maternal mortality

Evidence: Pakistan
demographic Survey 2022:
maternal mortality rate
186 per 100,000 births

6 Real Life Narratives

6.1 Case of Vani girl
in Dera Ismail Khan (2021)

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6.2 British-pakistani girls
deceived into forced
marriages abroad
(BBC 2022)

7 Efforts to Curb Forced Marriages

7.1 Legal measures—

2011 Anti-women
practices Act, 1928
Child Marriage
Restraint Act.

7.2 Civil Society—

Aurat foundation
Blue veins, Bedari

7.3 Media awareness—

Dramas like Udaari
and Kankar

7.4 Education and

religious reform—authentic
Islamic interpretation.

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Evidence: Council of Islamic ideology (2018) affirmed women's right to consent.

8 Recommendations

- 8.1 Strict law enforcement
- 8.2 Community - based awareness campaigns
- 8.3 Economic Empowerment of women.
- 8.4 Role of media, education, and religious scholars.

9

Conclusion

ESSAY

"A marriage without consent is not a union of hearts, but a silent surrender of freedom."

Marriage one of the oldest social institutions is

intended to symbolize companionship, trust and equality. However, in

Pakistan, this sacred union is often marred by coercion and cultural

compulsion. Many women and men particularly in rural regions, are married off without their consent.

Sometimes to preserve family honor, sometimes to settle disputes, and at times merely to uphold

centuries-old customs. While Islam emphasize the necessity of free consent in marriage, the ground reality contradicts this ideal. The concept of consent - the very essence of marital harmony is often disregarded giving rise to a form of violence that is social, emotional, and legal at once.

In an expository sense, forced marriage differs from arranged marriage in one fundamental way: the absence of consent.

In arranged marriages families may facilitate the match, but both individuals retain the right to accept or reject the

proposal. In forced marriages however, emotional pressure, social threats, or outright coercion replace free will.

According to the **Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)**,

thousands of women are ~~victims~~ **victims** of forced marriages every year. Many of them are minors, married off to men

significantly older than themselves, often as part of economic or social exchanges. This highlights the deep entrenchment of patriarchal norms that treat women as property rather than persons.

From a descriptive viewpoint, the landscape of rural Pakistan reflects

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the social structures that sustain such practices. In the feudal villages of Sindh and Southern Punjab, customs like Vani, Swaras and watta satta, continue to bind women into marriages not of their choosing. Vani involves giving a girl in marriage to settle tribal disputes, while watta satta involves the exchange of brides between families.

A study by the **Aurat Foundation (2023)**

revealed that such cases are most prevalent in areas with weak law enforcement and low literacy rates, proving how education and legal awareness are key deterrents.

In a narrative frame, the story of a sixteen-year old girl from interior Sindh illustrates this harsh truth. She was married off to an older man to settle her Uncle's disputes. She attempted to flee but was caught and punished by her community elders. Her story, reported by **BBC Urdu (2023)**, reflects countless others - young voices silenced before they could even understand what marriage means. Each such story is a microcosm of broader societal disease that values honor over humanity and obedience over autonomy.

Through argumentation, one

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may contend that the root causes of forced marriages lie in a toxic combination of cultural rigidity, illiteracy, and economic dependency.

The persistence of Jirga and panchayat systems - traditional councils that often decide marriage disputes - reveals a parallel justice structure running contrary to constitutional principles. These institutions dominated by male elders often decided women's fates without their input.

Despite Pakistan's Criminal Law **(Amendment) Act**

2011 that criminalizes giving women in marriage to settle disputes, enforcement remains weak.

The Global Gender Gap report 2024 places Pakistan among the lowest ranked countries in terms of women's empowerment, reflecting how systemic inequality sustains such practices.

From an analytical standpoint, poverty acts as a major driving force behind forced marriages. Families facing economic hardship may view marriage as a financial strategy - either to reduce the number of dependents or to receive dowry and other benefits. This economic dimension is supported by **UNICEF Report (2022)** which found that child and forced marriages increase

during economic crises.

The lack of social safety nets forces poor families to make desperate choices, often at the cost of their daughters' futures. Thus forced marriages are not merely social traditions; they are also survival strategies shaped by poverty and patriarchy.

Additionally, in a philosophical sense, the phenomenon reflects the **Clash** between individual freedom and collective tradition. Pakistani society, being collectivist, places immense importance on family reputation and community approval.

Furthermore a psychological exploration reveals the

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invisible scars forced marriages leave behind.

Victims often suffer from depression anxiety, and post traumatic stress. The sense of entrapment, lack of autonomy, and emotional neglect create long term trauma.

The journal of interpersonal Violence (2021) documented that women in non consensual marriages are three times more likely to experience domestic abuse.

Moreover, From a legal dis course, Pakistan has made notable yet insufficient efforts to curb forced marriages. The prevention of Anti-women practices

Act (2011) explicitly criminalizes forced marriage, declaring

it a punishable offense.
Similarly, the Sindh Child
Marriage Restraint **Act**
(2013) raised the legal
marriage age to 18.

However, the gap
between law and practice
remains vast.

In a sociological dimension,
forced marriages contribute
to the marginalization
of women in public life.

A woman denied the
right to choose her
life partner is less likely
to participate in decision
making, education, or
employment. According to

UN women Pakistan,
female labor participation
remains below 25% partly
due to restrictive marital
and cultural norms.

Similarly, From a religious standpoint, forced marriages are entirely un-Islamic. Islam emphasizes mutual consent as a prerequisite for marriage. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) annulled the marriage of a woman who was wed against her will, setting a clear precedent. Yet, cultural traditions often overshadow religious teachings. Scholars like Mufti Taqi Usmani have repeatedly stated that coercing someone into marriage is haram (forbidden).

An evaluative approach reveals the deep consequences of forced marriages, both for individuals and society. Emotionally, it destroys

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trust between generations.
Socially, it perpetuates
gender inequality and
normalizes control over
women's lives.

Through an interpretive
lens, one may argue
that true reform must
begin with education
and empowerment.

Awareness campaigns,
community engagement,
and women's **literacy**
can help challenge the
cultural narratives that
sustain coercion. The
success of local NGOs
like **Blue Veins and**
Bedari in rescuing
forced marriages victims
illustrates that is possible
when communities are
changed.

Lastly, In reflective terms, the eradication of forced marriages demands a cultural awakening. It is not enough to legislate; mindsets must evolve. Society must move from obedience-based honor to dignity-based respect. When parents understand that their children's happiness and consent are the true measures of honor, coercion will lose its power. The journey toward a free and fair marital **culture** will be long and difficult, but it is both a moral and national imperative.

“Freedom to choose is the essence of being

humanity; to deny it in marriage is to deny humanity itself."

Forced marriages in Pakistan are not isolated acts. They are mirror reflecting social fears, traditions and inequalities. To end them, Pakistan must strengthen education, implement laws, empower women, and reclaim the true spirit of Islam that uphold consent and compassion. Only then can marriages return to its rightful place: a bond of love, not a burden of force.
