

Outline: Forced Marriages in Pakistan - Causes and Consequences.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Brief explanation of forced marriage in Pakistan
Lack of Consent and its effects on individual
- 1.2 Happiness and mental well-being
Connection between forced marriage and broader
- 1.3 Social problems.

2. Causes of forced Marriage in Pakistan

2.1 Cultural and Traditional Pressures

- a Family honor and social expectations
- b Preference for early marriage of girls

2.2 Patriarchal Mindset

- a Male dominance in decision-making
- b Control over women's choice and mobility

2.3 Lack of Education

- a Uneducated parents and girls being
- b Unable to resist forced decisions.
- b Low awareness of rights.

2.4 Poverty and Economic Dependancy

- a) Families marrying off daughters to reduce financial burden
- b) Exchange marriages (Watta Satta)

2.5 Population Pressure

- a) Higher birth rates linked with early and force marriage
- b)

3. Consequences of forced Marriage

3.1 Psychological and Emotional impact

- a) Stress, depression, anxiety
- b) low of confidence, reduce creativity and productivity.

3.2. Domestic Violence

- a) forced marriages as a root cause of physical and emotional abuse
- b) power imbalance leading to long-term trauma

3.3. Impact on Education

- a) Girls pulled out of school
- b) Rise in female illiteracy
- c) long-term effect on national educational

3.4 Health and Reproductive Issues

- a) Early Pregnancies
- b) Malnutrition, maternal health risks
- c) Birth of children with poor upbringing due to unprepared mothers.

3.5 Economic Consequence

- a) Reduced female participation in workplace
- b) lower household productivity

3.6 Family and Social Instability

- a) Unhappy marriages lead conflicts
- b) Negative impact on children and extended family

4. Impact on National Development

- a) Contribution to high population growth
- b) Unproductive individual affecting economic performance
- c) Social backwardness due to gender inequality.

5. Recommendation

5.1 Education and Awareness

- a) Schooling for girls
- b) Awareness Campaign about right and

5.2 Legal Enforcement

- a, Implementation of law against forced marriage
- b, Protection mechanisms for victims

5.3 Empowerment of Women

Economic independence

Counselling and support services

5.4 Community and Role in Media

Changing mindset through media and local leadership.

6. Conclusion.

Imagine being forced into a lifelong relationship without a single moment of choice - this is the silent reality for many in Pakistan. Force marriage remains a widespread but overlooked issue, deeply tied to culture, family expectation and outdated traditions. When a person is married without consent, marriage become a form of pressure instead of partnership.

The absence of free will in such unions damages mental well-being. Individuals trapped in forced marriages often experience anxiety, depression, frustration, and loss of confidence. Their productivity, creativity, and personal growth decline under emotional stress. However

However the impact is not limited to the individual. Force marriages are linked to major social problems such as domestic violence, early pregnancies, illiteracy, and poverty. Women and girls are especially affected, as they are often pulled out of school and deprived of independence and productivity. Thus, forced marriage is not only a violation of personal right but a barrier to social development.

Cultural and traditional expectations play a major role in forcing marriages in Pakistan. Many families believe that a girl's marriage is tied to family honor, so they rush to marry daughters at a young age to protect reputation. In rural Sindh and South Punjab, for example, girls are often married off before 18 to avoid criticism from the community. According to UNICEF, 18%

of Pakistan girls are married before adulthood. These decisions ignore a girl's education, consent, and future. In the end, such tradition may satisfy societal pressure, but they silently destroy individual freedom and long-term well-being.

Patriarchy is one of the strongest forces behind forced marriages in Pakistan. In many families, men controlling all major decisions, including when and whom a girl should marry. Women are often treated as dependents with no rights to choose their future. In provinces like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, fathers and elder brothers commonly finalize marriage without even informing the girl. Aurat Foundation report shows that many young brides were never asked consent. When mobility, education, and voice are restricted, force marriage becomes easier to impose. Ultimately, patriarchy maintains power structure while silencing women's basic rights and autonomy.

Illiteracy continues to fuel forced marriages in Pakistan. When parents see girls are uneducated they lack the confidence and awareness needed to reject unfair decisions. In 2025 rural areas of interior Sindh and Southern Punjab Southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa still report high dropout rates among girls after primary school. According to the Pakistan Education Statistics 2024-2025 & many families consider schooling unnecessary for daughters. Without education girls remain unaware of their legal right and cannot challenge decisions imposed by family elder.

Economic hardship pushes many families to marry off daughters as a financial escape. In 2025, inflation and unemployment have increased poverty, especially in district of Tharpakar Rajanpur, and Kohistan. Some parents see early marriage as a way to reduce household expenses. Practices like Watta Satta — marrying daughter in exchange arrangements are still common in rural Punjab and KP. Families justify these decision as survival strategies girls in lifelong dependency.

depriving them of education, freedom and opportunities.

High population growth continues to worsen the cycle of forced marriage. In 2023 Pakistan's population has crossed 248 million, with many early marriages contributing to frequent childbirths. Girls married before 18 are more likely to have multiple children, increasing pressure on already struggling families. Areas with low access to family planning, like parts of Balochistan and South Punjab, show rising birth rates. This creates a chain reaction - more children, less education and greater vulnerability to forced marriages in the next generation.

Forced marriages often destroy a person's mental stability. When individuals are pushed into relationships without consent, they experience constant stress, anxiety, and depression. Many girls in Pakistan report feeling trapped, isolated, and hopeless after such marriages. Their creativity and productivity decline because they cannot focus on personal growth or goals. A 2024 mental health survey

by Rozan highlighted that many young bride lose self-confidence within the first year of marriage, showing how psychological damage becomes a silent but long-lasting consequences.

Forced marriage often becomes the foundation of domestic abuse. When one partner never agreed to the union, power imbalance deepens, and ~~emth~~ emotional or physical violence becomes common. In 2025, the Aurat Foundation and Shirkat Gah reported that a significant number of domestic violence cases originate from forced or early marriages. Women in such households rarely have the power to resist or leave. As a result, the trauma becomes long-term affecting not just the victim but also children who grow up witnessing violence.

When girls are married off early without consent, their education ends abruptly.

Many families believe schooling is unnecessary once a marriage is arranged. In 2025, Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) data still shows a rise in female illiteracy in areas where early marriages are

Common, Such as rural Sindh and KPK.
Once girls leave school, they lose access to
Skills, independence, and opportunities. This
weakens the country's human capital and
Shows national progress in education and development.

Early and forced marriages exposed
girls to serious health issues risks. Many become
pregnant before their bodies are ready, leading
to malnutrition, delivery complications, and
maternal mortality. According to UNICEF
Pakistan 2024 report, adolescent birth remain
high in areas with forced marriages. Young
~~mothers~~ mothers are often unprepared emotionally
and ~~physical~~ physical, resulting in poor
child care and weak upbringing lack of
healthcare access further worsens the situation
Creating long-term problems for both the mother
and ^{her} children.

Forced marriages reduce women's role in the economy. When girls are married early, they lose the chance to pursue education, jobs, or entrepreneurship. In 2025, Pakistan's female labor force participation is still below 25% partly due to early marriage pressure. Families also suffer because uneducated, dependent women cannot contribute financially. As household productivity drops, the cycle of poverty continues on a national level. The economy loses skilled workers, which slows development and widens gender-based economic inequality.

Unhappy marriages create long-term family tension. When a person is forced into marriage, emotional dissatisfaction leads to frequent conflict between spouses and with in-law. Children raised in such environments often suffer from insecurity and stress. Reports from Pakistan's 2025 Family Welfare Association show higher rates of spousal separation and disputes in forced unions. Extended families also experience strain

and division. Instead of building harmony, forced marriages weaken social bonds and create instability that affects multiple generations.

Forced marriages do not just damage individual lives — they slow down Pakistan's national development. Early marriages often lead to more childbriths, which adds to the country's already high growth. This increase pressure on resources like food, health, and education. When girls are denied education and freedom, they become economically unproductive, reducing the country's skilled workforce. According to the Pakistan Economic Survey 2024-25, low female participant participation weakens GDP growth. Gender inequality also keeps society socially backward, as women remain excluded from decision-making and leadership. As a result, forced marriage hold back both social progress and economic advancement.

Education is the strongest tool to prevent forced marriages. When girls stay in schools they gain confidence, awareness, and decision-making power.

In 2025, many NGOs in Pakistan are promoting consent awareness in rural Sindh and KP, and Balochistan. Workshops, school campaigns, and community, and community sessions help families understand that marriage without consent is a violation of rights. ~~Education~~ Educated girls are more likely to resist forced decisions and build productive future. Expanding scholarships and literacy programs can break the cycle of silence and subordination.

Laws against forced marriage exist in Pakistan, but weak enforcement keeps the practice alive. The Child Marriage Restraint Act and Sections of the Pakistan Penal Code criminalize such unions, yet many cases go unreported. In 2025, the Ministry of Human Rights has pushed for stricter implementation and quicker legal action. Protection centers and helplines also support victims. For real change, police, local courts and jirgas must act without enforcement, laws remains.

Symbolic and fail to protect vulnerable individuals.

Empowering women is essential for preventing forced marriages. Economic independence gives them the confidence to refuse unfair decisions. In 2025, skill-development programs and microfinance initiatives in Punjab and Gilgit-Baltistan are helping young women earn their own income. ~~Counseling~~ Counseling services also help survivors of forced marriages rebuild their lives. When women gain access to education, jobs, and financial resources, their bargaining power grows within families. Empowerment does not only protect individual. — It uplifts entire households and communities.

Social Change requires active involvement from communities and media. Local leaders, teachers, and religious scholars can challenge outdated customs that promote forced marriage. In 2025, television dramas, digital campaigns, and radio programs have started highlighting the emotional and social

damage caused by such practices. Community dialogues in rural areas are also encouraging families to respect consent. When media and civil society work together to shift mindsets, harmful traditions weaken, and new generations learn to value women's rights and dignity.

In conclusion, forced marriage in Pakistan is not only a violation of individual rights but a direct obstacle to national development. When marriages occur without consent, the consequences spread far beyond the household. Victims suffer from depression, anxiety, low productivity, and loss of identity, while families face conflict, instability, and limited economic growth. Girls forced into early marriage are often pulled out of school, which contributes to illiteracy, unemployment, and weak social progress. High birth rates linked to early unions further strain national resources. The issue demands urgent and collective action. Education, especially for girls, must be prioritized to build awareness and confidence.

Laws against forced marriage should be applied strictly, with mechanisms to protect the victims. Women's empowerment through economic opportunities and counseling can help them resist harmful decisions. Media and community leaders must challenge the cultural norms that normalize forced marriage. Only through combined efforts can Pakistan move toward a just, educated, and progressive society.