

Forced Marriages: Causes and Consequences in Pakistan

Outline:

1. Introduction

Thesis Statement: The polyfactors of poverty, peer pressure in tribal areas, patriarchal mindset and weak legal framework in Pakistan perpetuates forced marriages, a human right violation with life-long consequences including mental health, economic dependency and identity loss.

2. Causes of Forced Marriages in Pakistan

2.1 Poverty and settling debts in tribal areas of Pakistan

a. Exchange of young girls for disputes

b. Example of Abida named girl

2.2 Peer pressure and social coercion

a. Ensuring suitable partner

b. Caste and ethnicity

2.3 Patriarchal Society

- a. Case of Watla Satta
- b. They perceive daughters as burden

2.4 Broken families

- a. orphan daughter
- b. A Girl in the River: The prince of forgiveness documentary

2.5 Weak legal framework

- a. Absence of enforcement of laws related to forced marriages
- b. The Pakistan Penal code section 498-B

3. Consequences of Forced Marriages in Pakistan;

3.1 Depression and physical violence

- a. 75% Pakistani girls and women witnessed physical violence
- b. 10 million girls are married before the age of 15 (Dawn)

3.2 Leads towards economic dependency on counterpart

- a. loss of education right
- b. dependency on in-laws

3.3 Unprecedented domestic violence based on their gender.

- a. Over 90% of Pakistani women have faced domestic violence in their lifetime (NEHRP)
- b. 8% of Pakistani have experienced sexual violence at home (UNFPA)

3.4 Unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions

- a. As per of 2023, an estimated 66 abortion occur each year per 1000 women of reproductive age in Pakistan
- b. One in five married women in Pakistan who want to avoid pregnancy are unable to access effective method to do so.

3.5 Loss of self-esteem and identity crisis.

- a. Suicide attacks
- b. Shatter one's sense of self-worth.

4. Suggestions to minimize the Forced Marriages in Pakistan:

4.1 Legal and policy reforms

- a. Robust existential laws
- b. Swift justice
- c. Article 34 of Constitution of Pakistan.

5. Conclusion

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While most 16-year-olds are worrying about exams and friendships, Fatima was packing a bag for a journey she never chose, to a husband she had never met. In an era of globalization and digitalization where individuals can choose their careers, their home, and their identity with unprecedented freedom, the ancient chains of forced marriages continue to bind generations of youths. Forced marriages is a human violation considering as a cultural tradition. Simon de Beauvoir rightly said in her book 'The Second Sex' that one is not born, but becomes a woman. In Pakistan, forced marriages are product of polyfactors including mass illiteracy and poverty. Social coercion as well as social norms in certain areas of Pakistan also is cause of forced marriages. Pakistani society, a society dominated by male, considers their sons as their heirs and daughters as

burden. The consequences of forced marriages in Pakistan lead towards severe repression on victim's mental health and pregnancies issues. Economic dependency on their spouse and in-laws making escape virtually impossible. This essay attempts to discuss the causes and consequences of forced marriages in Pakistan.

To begin with, mass poverty and settling debts in tribal areas of Pakistan is the foremost cause of forced marriages. Tribal areas such as Balochistan and FATA, the jirgas, which is a tradition like judicial bench, decide the fate of a girl. Disputes in clans over a piece of land shatter the freedom of young girls. For example, in Balochistan's district Naseerabad, Abida was given in exchange of dispute settlement to the opponent clan.

Therefore, poverty and settling disputes in tribal areas of Pakistan shatter the fullest the forced marriages.

Likewise peer pressure and social coercion is another cause of forced marriages in

Pakistan. Societal pressure and social taboos forces ~~the~~ parents towards marriages. They believe that suitable partner is essential and mandatory without the considering the will of their daughters. Being well off is not the parameter of a good husband. Moreover, the phobic of caste system and ethnicity also play a role in this regard. certain families in Pakistan prefer marriages in their relatives and ethnicity, ^{fear} of losing control over inheritance or property rights. Hence, ~~pressure~~ peer pressure and social norms leads towards the forced marriages in Pakistan.

Another factor that causes forced marriages is patriarchal mindset. Patriarchal mindset refers where house or society ^{are} dominated by male - where inclusivity is missing. The head of the house perceive - in most areas - daughters as burden. Daughters have to left the home one day whereas son to stay with them. Not only they

perceive daughters as burden, but also they encourages the old presence custom called 'Watta Satta', in which parents brothers and sisters are married to another pair of a brother and sister. If one marriages fails or dispute arises, it directly threatens the other, creating a complex web of pressure and coercion. In a nutshell, patriarchal society is the cause of forced marriages in Pakistan.

Broken families also adds to weight in forced marriages. Broken families are those where the separation of husband and wife occurred or one of them died. The orphaned daughter is married before the age of maturity, more likely, at the age of 15 years.

Oscar-winning documentary named 'A girl in the river: The prince of forgiveness' presents a grim picture where a father killed his young daughter for not accepting marriage proposal. Would that her mother alived, she would not have seen such tragedy. When wife died, dies,

The father is inclined towards another marriage. In doing so, he gets her marry to avoid violence and chaos at home. Therefore, broken families causes the forced marriages in Pakistan.

In a similar way, weak legal framework in legal system of Pakistan is another cause of forced marriages. Pakistan with numerous legal flaws have not been effective to minimize the forced marriages cases. Absence of strict enforcement of laws that are deals such cases remain low. The Penal code of Pakistan Section 498-B deals with the forced marriages. Lack of swift justice and weak enforcement lead to prevail of forced marriages.

The above discussion attempted to discuss the causes of forced marriages in Pakistan. However, the following paragraphs will shed a light the consequences of forced marriages in Pakistan. Firstly, the consequence

of forced marriage impacts the victim's mental health and physical health. Girls do not attain the age of maturity before they are married. According to the United Nations (UN) findings that 75% Pakistani girls and women have witnessed physical violence in their lifetime. This means forced marriages is prod leads to physical violence at unprecedented pace. Another findings reported by Dawn newspaper that 10 million girls are married before the age of 15 in Pakistan. 10 million girls are married before age of maturity is loss of their higher education. Hence, depression and physical violence on girls have severe impacts.

Secondly, forced marriages has consequence of economic dependancy on their spouse and in-laws. They do not avail of education. Hardly any of them reaches higher education. Education, fundamental right promised by the Constitution of Pakistan is taken away from them. Absence of

economic opportunities and jobs for them make hard for them to be economic independent. Therefore, forced marriages make young girls dependent on ^{their} spouses and laws.

Thirdly, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) have been seen at homes. Gender based violence is a phenomenon where one is marginalized or oppressed based on her gender.

As National Commission of Human Rights of Pakistan (NCHRP) over 90% of Pakistani women have faced domestic violence in their life time. Another findings given by United Nations Framework on Pakistan (UNFPA) that 6% of Pakistani women have experienced sexual violence at their homes.

Therefore, Gender Based Violence arises from forced marriages in Pakistan.

Fourthly, Forced marriages leads towards unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortion. Pakistan, where people lack basic health facilities, spends only 1.6% of its GDP on health sector. In an.

a survey, an estimated 66 abortion occur each year per 1000 women of reproductive age in Pakistan. Of which one in five who want to avoid pregnancy are unable to access effective method to do so.

Lacking no medical facilities in rural areas presents a grim picture. Hence, unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortion take place every years owing to forced marriages in Pakistan.

Last but not the least, forced marriages shatter the identity of one's. This leads to loss of self-esteem and identity crisis in society. Girls with mindset try to commit suicide. They see their life worthless as they are married against their will and taken their freedom. Girls deserve peace and freedom and right to life, right to choose a partner of own choice. Therefore, girls feel worthless because of forced marriages.

The above paragraphs have discussed the consequences

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of forced marriages in Pakistan.
The following paragraph will
discuss a suggestion to overcome
this dilemma.

The state must
rebuild legal framework in Pakistan.
Despite of flaws in legal system
of Pakistan, ensuring swift justice
and rehabilitation units could
reduce the forced marriages.
Article 34 of the Constitution of
Pakistan 1973 ensures the
measures to include women
and girls in all domain of
life. With right and strict
implementation of laws definitely
reduce the forced marriages in
Pakistan.

To sum up, forced
marriages in Pakistan is poly
factors including patriarchal
society, peer pressure, poverty
and broken family. The consequences
are severe on victims such
as life time trauma and depression.
Also they face health issues such
as anorexia - 7 pregnancies
and abortion. The state must
ensure swift justice and

robust legal laws. If this dilemma remained unchecked or ignored in Pakistani society, there will be devastating impacts on women and girls in ~~upcoming~~ coming times.