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Forced Marriages in Pakistan: Causes & Consequences

Outline

1 Introduction

1.1-Hook Statement

1.2- Background

1.3- Thesis Statement

"Forced Marriages in Pakistan are very common due to deep-rooted causes; cultural and societal pressure, patriarchal society, lack of education, weak judicial system and sometimes due to economic factors. These come with consequences such as rights violation, domestic violence, depression & anxiety and patriarchal system gains more power while hindering development of women."

2. Main Body

2.1 - Causes of Forced Marriages in Pakistan.

2.1.1 - Cultural and Societal and Traditional Norms.

2.1.1.1 - Deep rooted tribal and feudal practices (e.g. Watta Satta, Vanni)

2.1.1.2 - Use of marriage to strengthen ties

2.1.1.3 - Using marriage to settle disputes

2.1.1.4 - Ignoring personal choices for Honour based family reputation.

2.1.2 - Patriarchal and gender-discriminating Society.

2.1.2.1 - Male authority in family decisions.

2.1.2.2 - Linking daughter to family's honour

2.1.2.3 - Suppression of females and their voices.

2.1.2.4 - Obedience, the only accepted act of a female. (Romanticizing the roles of violent males and submissive females in media).

2.1.3 - Economic Restraints

2.1.3.1 - Parents marrying off their daughters early due to poverty.

2.1.3.2 - Greed for bride price (Hay Mohar)

2.1.3.3 - Groom's family's greed for dowry.

2.1.3.4 - Economic instability of women and their dependence on parents.

2.1.3.5 - Marriage as a financial transaction.

2.1.4 - Lack of Education.

2.1.4.1 - Illiteracy of women

2.1.4.2 - Limited or no access to awareness programs.

2.1.4.3 - Wrong interpretation of Islam for personal needs. (Wrongly justified customs or traditions in the name of Islam).

2.1.4.4 - Lack of information about the right of consent in Islam.

2.1.4.5 - Women's lack of awareness about legal and Islamic rights.

2.1.5 - Weak Legal Framework.

2.1.5.1 - Poor implementation of protective laws (eg child Marriage Acts, Prevention of Anti-Women Practices Act)

2.1.5.2 - Increased influence of jirgas and panchayats over law.

2.1.5.3 - NO Gender-sensitive training to law enforcement officials resulting in biased decisions.

2.1.5.4 - Fear of backlash from society.

2.2 - Consequences of Forced Marriage in Pakistan

2.2.1 - Psychological Impact

2.2.1.1 - Loss of self esteem and identity.

2.2.1.2 - Depression, anxiety

2.2.1.3 - Feeling of entrapment

2.2.1.4 - Emotional damage resulting in lifelong trauma.

2.2.2 - Educational and career deprivation

2.2.2.1 - Females forced to drop out of school.

2.2.2.2 - Childbirth at young age restricting the chance of the education pursuasion.

2.2.2.3 - Family responsibilities hindering the career development.

2.2.2.4 - Illiterate young mother's inability to raise children proficiently.

2.2.3 - Generational Cycle of Oppression

2.2.3.1 - Children raised in forced marriages taking inequality as normal

2.2.3.2 - Continuation of same practices in the next generation.

2.2.3.3 - Continued cultural acceptance of forced marriages.

2.2.4 - Prevalence of Gender Inequality

2.2.4.1 - Strengthening male dominance

2.2.4.2 - Hindering women empowerment

2.2.4.3 - Increase of Patriarchal control resulting often in marital discord and domestic violence.

2.2.4.4 - Discouragement of progressive family models.

2.2.5 - Legal and Human Rights Violation

2.2.5.1 - Breaching constitutional and international law (eg United Nations law of human right eg UDHR).

2.2.5.2 - Lack of access to justice for the victim.

2.2.5.3 - Continuation of tribal and feudal justice systems (jirgas, panchayats)

2.2.5.4- Not seeking justice with the
fear of biasness by law enforcing
officials and societal backlash.

2.3 - Suggestions

2.3.1 - Strengthen implementation of existing
laws.

2.3.2 - Gender sensitive trainings for law
enforcement officials.

2.3.3 - Promote gender equality through
education.

2.3.4 - Use of media for the reform of
cultural practices.

2.3.5 - Empower women by encouraging their
education and encouraging financial
independence.

2.3.6 - Establishment of protection centers
for victims.

3- Conclusion -

3.1 - Summary

3.2 - Restatement of thesis statement.

THE ESSAY

When the right to choose one's life partner becomes a privilege instead of a right, freedom itself stands questioned. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan states that in 2024, over 1000 cases of forced marriages were reported despite existing laws of prohibition. In the name of family honour, tradition and cultural obligations, thousands are coerced into marriages despite the law and religious teachings that emphasize the importance of consent for the validity of marriage. Hazrat Muhammad ^ﷺ invalidated the marriages where the bride's consent is not included. The persistence of forced marriages caused due to the extreme patriarchal control, ~~often~~ results in the violation of human rights, weakens the moral and hinders development of Pakistan. Forced Marriages in Pakistan are very common due to deep rooted causes; cultural and societal pressure, prevailing patriarchal society, lack of education,

weak Judicial systems and sometimes due to economic factors. These come with consequences such as rights violation, domestic violence, depression, anxiety and patriarchal system gains more power while hindering development of women.

Tribal societies and feudal communities have a lot of deep-rooted traditional practices i.e. Watta satta (exchange of brides between 2 families) or vanni (giving girls in marriage to settle disputes or blood feuds in order to save the male heir). When two families have disputes, individuals are forced into marriages in order to dissolve disputes and strengthen relationship through kinship and family ties. Individuals especially females have no right for personal choice and liking or selecting someone for marriage. They are often forced to be entitled to family honor and reputation. They are often married forcefully even to immoral individuals just in the name of family honor and inter-family relations.

Another reason is the patriarchal household system in Pakistani societies especially in Sindh, KPK and Balochistan where tribal systems and feudal systems are in prevalence. In this system, males are dominant and have strict control over the household decisions. Males of the household make decisions even about marital affairs. Daughters are often linked to the honour of the household and family. If they choose a life partner for themselves, it is considered that she tried to stain the honour of the family and reputation of the family and thus, the family would force the girl into unwanted marriage or either kill her in the name of honour. Females of the family are supposed to be obedient and submissive at all costs and in every situation. This is even shown in dramas as the lead male role being overly dominant, violent, aggressive and cruel, while the female is shown

as weak and submissive. This results negatively on younger generations, encouraging males to become aggressive and the girls think that this kind of behaviour is justified.

Economic factors also play an important role in forced marriages. Financial instability and poverty forces parents to marry their children young, sometimes even forcefully, in order to get rid of extra financial burden. Sometimes, they would marry their children or young girls in order to get handsome bride price. This practice is quite common in KPK. This is the price that groom pays to the bride at the time of marriage, also known as lag mehr. It basically belongs to the bride but in some cases it is confiscated by the family. There are cases where the groom is forced to marry a girl whose parents are giving a large dowry, even when he does not like the

girl and such relation would end up in disputes, domestic violence, depression and even divorce. Women have fewer opportunities of education which make them economically instable and dependent on family. So, the parents would try to get her married as soon as possible. So, according to these kind of situations, marriages often act as money transactions rather than a noble and sacred relation.

Another cause of forced marriages is ^{lack of} education. People have no proper education and awareness about right and wrong. They just think, that the traditions going on for centuries are right. Girls have fewer or no opportunities of education and they have no awareness about their legal and religious rights. They don't know that without the girl's consent, marriage is invalid. The elders and religious scholars who know about this, they ignore it for personal needs. They misinterpret Islamic teachings for their own needs.

and in their favour. Islam gives the right to an individual to choose their life partner with their liking, even girls, but they do not allow it.

The legal framework of Pakistan is also very weak. There are existing laws and acts that restrain from child marriages and forced marriages but there is no proper process and protocol for the implementation of these laws. In tribal areas, especially Sindh and Balochistan, jirgas and panchayats are greatly influenced. The members of these jirgas give decisions on various matters and these are consisted of male members. They often give decisions beneficial to male populations and their decisions are quite biased. Even if the victims want to file a report against the oppressors, law enforcement officials have no gender sensitive trainings and they even dismiss these

cases calling them family matters. Some victims also hesitate to report cases with the fear of societal backlash that they face.

These come with very gruelling consequences. Victims of forced marriages often suffer domestic violence which is physical as well as mental causing them to lose self esteem and even forgetting their identity. Females often suffer from depression and anxiety from this abuse and due to heavy responsibilities at such a young age. They feel like they are entrapped in a prison with no personal freedom and are just acting as maid or servant. All this emotional damage at a very young age leads to lifelong trauma which is then further transferred into the younger generations.

Due to marriages, females are forced to drop out of school and leave their education and start caring for their families after marriage.

then comes the children and the girl get busy in the upbringing of offsprings and any chance of education diminishes. When they are left uneducated, women become economically dependant on their husbands and are forced to suppress their emotions. Illiterate mothers can't give proper upbringing to their child and can't educate them to be great men.

Children raised in such marriages take these kind of marriages as normal. They see domestic violence and gender inequality in their homes and families and take it as normal and rightful behaviour and later practice it themselves after their marriages and thus, all these sinful practices goes on and on for generations and making way for future forced marriages.

This system helps prevailing gender inequality in society. In forced marriages, males are more dominant.

They control the household and often ignores the rights of females.