

The Mental Health Impact and Warning Signs of Forced Marriages

Tustin, California Jul 13, 2022 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - Child and forced marriage (CFM) is a human rights violation and a harmful practice that disproportionately affects women and girls globally, preventing them from living their lives free from all forms of violence.

Worldwide, more than 650 million women alive today were married as children (Source: [United Nations Human Rights](#)). Every year, at least 12 million girls are married before they reach the age of 18. This is 28 girls every minute.

In 2016, there were an estimated 15.4 million people in forced marriages. 88% of victims were women and girls. 37% of victims were under 18 at the time of the marriage. Of these, 44% were under 15 at the time of the marriage.

Forced Marriage is not only a human rights violation that happens abroad, it also happens right here in the US, California, and locally! An online survey of 7,791 individuals estimated a sample prevalence rate of forced marriage in the U.S. at 11%. 7% of respondents were in a forced marriage, 3% had faced or experienced it but were no longer married to that person, and 1% reported being threatened with forced marriage.

We must watch out for the warning signs and keep raising awareness to end the practice of Forced Marriage. [Global Hope 365](#) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls, locally, nationally, and worldwide through raising awareness, education, collaboration, and prevention. Our focus is on ending harmful practices toward women and girls such as Child Marriage, Human Trafficking, and other forms of gender-based violence.

Mental and Physical Health Impact of Forced Marriages

Child marriage is also often accompanied by early and frequent pregnancy and childbirth, resulting in higher than average maternal morbidity and mortality rates.

Common psychological effects of forced marriage are feelings of depressed mood, irritability, low self-esteem, rage and frustration, sleep problems, difficulty in forming relationships, and difficulty trusting others. Victims may have other mental health problems and display behaviors such as self-harming, self-cutting, or anorexia, as well as drug and alcohol misuse.

Isolation is one of the biggest problems facing victims of forced marriage. Those who attend services seeking help are likely to be under severe stress when running away from the situation. In addition, the victims have feelings of guilt, as they have run away from their families and thus brought shame, leading to social ostracism and harassment from the family and community.

To end the practice globally, progress must be significantly accelerated and sustained. Without further acceleration, more than 120 million additional girls will marry before their 18th birthday by 2030. (Source: Unicef)

Warning Signs of Forced Marriages

Here are some warning signs that an individual may be facing a forced marriage:

Family History

- Unreasonable restrictions by parents, such as being placed on “house arrest” or not being allowed to speak with others without supervision
- Family disputes or conflicts, or mentions of “honor” violence
- Siblings or other family members who had forced or early marriages.
- Self-harm or suicide attempts by siblings
- Unexpected or unfamiliar visitors or houseguests

Health Issues

- Mental health concerns, including anxiety, depression, isolation, emotional withdrawal, self-harm, or attempted suicide
- Early, unwanted, or concealed pregnancy
- FGM/C or virginity tests, or other increased attention to gynecological health or fertility
- Accompanied by family members to all visits never left alone with the provider

Law Enforcement Issues

- Family reports individual for substance abuse, theft, shoplifting, etc.
- Reports of violence, abuse, and death threats in the family home against an individual or other family members
- Individuals or siblings reported missing or runaway

Education/Employment Issues

- Planned or threat of unusual travel overseas, especially to “visit a sick family member” or “for someone else’s wedding”
- Fear of upcoming holidays or breaks, or lack of confidence that they will return to school or work afterward
- Sudden withdrawal from school or work, especially if pressured by family
- Frequent, persistent, unexplained absences

- Surveillance by siblings or other family members
- An unusual decline in behavior, grades, punctuality, performance
- Withdrawal from school by parents/forced to quit a job

To reach this target, Global Hope 365 is dedicated to:

- raising awareness about childhood, early and forced marriage
- Supporting girls and women who were child brides, feared becoming one, or almost became one
- building partnerships and initiating change in local and national legislation
- Educating communities. Helping girls, their families, and communities learn about the risks of a child, early and forced marriage is critical to changing social norms and traditions.

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