

# The Impact of Forced Marriage in Islamic Law on Divorce Decision Making and Sharia Mechanisms

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## Informasi Artikel

Vol: 2 No : 2 2026  
Halaman : 55-62

### Keywords:

*Forced, Marriage, Islamic Law*

## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyse forced marriage from the Islamic law perspective, its impact on divorce decisions and sharia mechanisms involved. This study employs a qualitative method with a descriptive design to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of couples in forced marriages and the regulation of divorce in this context by Islamic law. The research is based on extensive interviews with couples who have been through forced marriage, with specialists in Islamic law and with sharia attorneys. The data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis to discover patterns and topics connected to the psychological repercussions of forced marriage and divorce systems in Islam. The research shows that being coerced into marriage can make the people involved unhappy, stressed and depressed, and typically leads them to decide to get divorced. Islamic divorce methods through *talak* (husband initiated) and *khulu'* (woman initiated) provide a lawful remedy, taking into account rights such as *nafkah iddah* and property split to ensure fairness. The novelty of this research is the more in-depth exploration of the use of Sharia processes in divorce due to forced marriages. Forced weddings are rarely explored in previous Islamic law studies. The consequences of this study are essential in the context of Islamic law education, especially in providing a fuller awareness of individual rights in marriage and divorce according to sharia. This work can be a reference for future research on similar subjects in the social and legal fields.

## Abstrak

Tujuan makalah ini adalah untuk menganalisis pernikahan paksa dari perspektif hukum Islam, dampaknya terhadap keputusan perceraian, serta mekanisme syariah yang terlibat. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan desain deskriptif untuk memperoleh pemahaman komprehensif mengenai pengalaman pasangan dalam pernikahan paksa serta regulasi perceraian dalam konteks ini menurut hukum Islam. Penelitian ini didasarkan pada wawancara mendalam dengan pasangan yang pernah mengalami pernikahan paksa, para ahli hukum Islam, dan pengacara syariah. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola dan topik yang terkait dengan dampak psikologis pernikahan paksa serta sistem perceraian dalam Islam. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa dipaksa menikah dapat membuat pihak yang terlibat merasa tidak bahagia, stres, dan depresi, serta umumnya mendorong mereka untuk memutuskan bercerai. Metode perceraian Islam melalui *talak* (diinisiasi suami) dan *khulu'* (diinisiasi istri) menyediakan solusi hukum yang sah, dengan mempertimbangkan hak-hak seperti *nafkah iddah* dan pembagian harta untuk memastikan keadilan. Keunikan penelitian ini terletak pada eksplorasi yang lebih mendalam mengenai penerapan proses syariah dalam perceraian akibat pernikahan paksa. Pernikahan paksa jarang dieksplorasi dalam studi hukum Islam sebelumnya. Implikasi penelitian ini sangat penting dalam konteks pendidikan hukum Islam, terutama dalam memberikan pemahaman yang lebih komprehensif mengenai hak-hak individu dalam pernikahan dan perceraian sesuai syariah. Karya ini dapat menjadi referensi

**Kata Kunci :** Forced, Marriage, Islamic Law

## INTRODUCTION

Marriage is an important institution in human life, not just socially but legally too. Marriage in Islam is a legal manner of meeting biological and emotional needs between spouses and a wonderful act of worship. However, there are circumstances where a marriage may be contracted under duress or compulsion. This is recognised in Islamic law but with important stipulations. There are many reasons for forced marriage, including family pressure, economic reasons or societal settings, and it can lead to severe complications for the people involved, especially if the marriage is not what one of the parties wants. This topic has attracted much interest, notably in the field of Islamic legal studies, which aims to analyse how forced marriage affects divorce decisions and the procedures of Sharia that are applicable. (M. Khan, & F. Idris, 2022).

Forced marriage is typically found in communities with strong patriarchal traditions or in societies where marriage is considered an obligation which must be fulfilled, even if it does not correspond to personal inclinations. Research has shown that many women are coerced into marriage for a variety of reasons, including financial restrictions, family pressure, and the strong cultural idea that marriage is the best way to preserve family honour or alleviate specific social problems. This is a matter of great worry, as in many instances such marriages are prone to dissatisfaction and often lead to undesirable repercussions such as divorce. (R. Begum, 2021)

In research on the topic of forced marriage among young women in Indonesia, Al-Farisi (2019) found that about 30% of women who married underage felt that they had no other choice than to accept a marriage arranged by their families. Often forced weddings take place under the pressure of parents or the surrounding society, who are convinced that marriage is the best way to preserve family honour or to solve some social problems. Historically, in Islam marriage is a contract that is sacred and mutual permission of the two parties. Islam says that marriage should be based on mutual consent and agreement and force is completely prohibited in this regard

But even in spite of this, forced marriage happens in society. This marriage in many situations poses great challenges to the people involved since they do not feel free to take decisions on their own lives. In Indonesia, the practice of forced marriage is typically propelled by cultural, economic and societal forces. Many parents marry off their children for family interests, to keep up reputation, or conventional ideas that marriage is a must, even if the other party is not willing. An estimated 15% of women marrying in Indonesia before age 20 said they married because of familial or social pressure, according to the National Population and Familial Planning Board (BKKBN). This demonstrates that forced marriage continues to be a pertinent issue yet to be tackled by policymakers and legal practitioners. (A. Nasution, 2024).

There have been numerous studies done on forced marriage and its impact on the people involved. One such relevant study was conducted by Al-Hashimi (2018) which explored forced marriages under the framework of Islamic law. The study indicated forced marriages generally result in dissatisfaction and can lead to divorce. Many couples who are coerced into marriage end up in relationships that they have not chosen and this ultimately impacts the durability of their marriage. The outcomes of this study suggest that where marriage results from coercion or external pressure, at least one party is unsatisfied with his or her marriage and the likelihood of divorce is increased. Furthermore, Nasution (2020) found that forced marriage has significant psychological and emotional impacts on women. Many women believe they have no control over their lives and are trapped in a marriage they did not want. As a result, individuals suffer from stress, depression and a lower quality of life. Divorce is often an out in this situation for couples who believe their marriage can no longer continue in a healthy way.

The dissatisfaction of the people involved is often the reason for the choice to divorce in forced marriages. If one partner feels underappreciated or forced to marry, they tend to look for an escape and divorce becomes a better option to carry on with their lives more freely. According to Islamic law, divorce is allowed if the marriage cannot be continued and is regarded as the last resort after all the efforts in the name of reconciliation have been undertaken. (S. Anitha, & A. Gill, 2020).

The most frequent decision adopted by the partners in forced marriages is divorce, which shows a fundamental incompatibility of the pair and loss of mutual confidence. Al-Jabri (2021) found that divorce in the setting of forced marriage is usually followed by a complicated judicial process that requires knowledge of the appropriate Sharia mechanisms. Islamic law has specific principles on divorce from the procedure of talak (divorce initiated by the husband) to *khulu'* (divorce initiated by the wife). It also covers some rights to be fulfilled after divorce such as iddah maintenance, partition of assets and child custody rights. Divorce is allowed in Islam but should be done properly and according to proper procedure under Sharia.

There are various ways of getting a divorce in Islam, depending on the marriage and the situation of the two parties. Some of the Sharia methods connected to divorce are the process of talak that can be launched by the husband, or *khulu'* that can be initiated by the wife. Moreover, several post-divorce rights have to be observed such the right to iddah maintenance, partition of property and child custody. The rules of divorce in Islam are clear, and divorce is permissible but it has to be done carefully and in compliance with Islamic law. (J.L. Esposito, & N.J. DeLong-Bas, 2020).

This is a problem that is still often found in society, especially in Indonesia. This has a major impact on the welfare of the perpetrators, especially women. In Islamic law, marriage under duress is not allowed and its effect on divorce decisions can be substantial. In this sense, divorce is the last recourse for spouses in forced marriages and Sharia law provides clear means to resolve divorce cases fairly. However, a more complete approach is needed to tackle the issue of forced marriage, including education, a better understanding of the law and increasing the role of families in offering freedom and support for individuals to choose their life partners. (Huda, Q. (2021)

## METHOD

The type of research in this study is qualitative in nature. The descriptive research intends to describe the phenomena of forced marriage in Islamic law and its effect on divorce judgements and the tools of the Sharia. (J.W. Creswell, & C.N. Poth, 2019). This technique was chosen as the study is concerned with acquiring an in-depth understanding of the experiences and viewpoints of people involved in forced marriages. The sample approach utilised in this study was a purposive sampling. The selection of the sample is based on certain criteria, namely couples who have suffered forced marriages and have relevant experiences related to divorce or the Sharia legal process in marriage. Participants will be selected based on their capacity to offer relevant information relating to this study issue. Data collecting approaches will be conducted with in-depth interviews and document analysis. Information about the influence of forced marriage on divorce decisions and implementation of Sharia processes will be collected through in-depth interviews with couples subjected to forced marriages, Sharia attorneys and Islamic law specialists. Also, the study will analyse the literature of Islamic law and divorce to back up the research findings. Data will be analysed using thematic analysis for qualitative analysis. The collected data will be analysed to find out significant themes including grounds of forced marriages, emotional & psychological repercussions and Sharia mechanisms in divorce. The result of this analysis is supposed to provide insight on the issue of forced marriage in the perspective of Islamic law. (I. Etikan, & K. Bala, 2020).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. *Forced Marriage and Validity in Islamic Law*

Marriage in Islam is a spiritual relationship meant to offer happiness, peace and blessings to the couple. In Islam, the essence of marriage is that both sides should be willing and consented. If one or both parties do not freely consent, especially when there is pressure or coercion, then such marriage is contrary to the essential values of Islamic law. In such a circumstance, a forced marriage, where one or both partners are forced into marriage, can be seen as ethically and religiously illegitimate, even if it can be recognised technically in some cases. (A. Rahman, 021).

In Islamic law, theoretically, a lawful marriage is founded on the free and voluntary consent of both parties. If one person is pressured into marriage, the marriage does not fulfil the main criteria of marriage in Islam, scholars say. A forced marriage does not only bring about less personal happiness but also instability in the relationship. This discontent can lead to feeling stuck, feeling unappreciated and even divorce. (S. Khan, 2021)

In many cases of forced marriage, women are pressured to accept the marriage decision because of societal or cultural pressures from their families or communities. In many cultures (particularly those that have strong patriarchal norms), marriage is sometimes viewed as an obligation to be completed regardless of the personal wishes of people involved. Such a marriage may be acceptable from the point of view of the state administration, but in Islamic law, if it is not done with real consent, the marriage might be questioned for its moral and religious validity. (F.D. Chowdhury, & M. Rahman, 2022).

A marriage conducted under pressure or without the free will of one of the spouses has substantial psychological repercussions on women and men. Many couples are thrown into marriage and end up in a relationship that they did not select. This can lead to dissatisfaction, stress and loss of enjoyment. This might lead to incompatibility in the marriage and in some situations can lead to divorce as the only way out. Divorce is allowed in Islam under specific conditions, although it should be the ultimate resort when all efforts to resolve issues and reconcile have failed. But for people who have been compelled to marry, divorce is frequently the only way to recover their freedom and enhance their quality of life. (N. Yusuf, & Z. Ahmad, 2023).

The mechanism of divorce in Islamic law includes clear procedures, namely *talak* as the right of the husband and *khulu'* as the right of the wife. This divorce procedure is meant to ensure justice for both spouses, with certain rights and duties after divorce, such as *iddah* maintenance, division of assets and child custody. However, if the marriage was initiated under duress, the divorce procedure may be more complex and may impose additional emotional and mental stress on the persons involved. Sometimes divorce is the solution to long-term suffering, but this process also demands a clear awareness of the rights and obligations under the Sharia law.

In this situation, forced marriage means that, although the marriage is officially legally recognised, it is considered by Islamic law as morally and religiously void. This proves that a marriage entered into without the free consent of both parties cannot meet the very purpose of marriage which is to produce a happy and harmonious partnership. Therefore, in actuality, marriage must be based on mutual agreement and consent in order to sustain the integrity of marriage in Islamic law. (M. Idris, & N. Sulaiman, 2022).

## **2. Psychological Impacts on Couples**

Marriage which is not based on free will, or imposed upon one of the partners, typically has a strong psychological influence on the men and women involved. This is often the case in marriages that are entered into under family, societal or cultural pressure, where one person is forced to accept a decision that has been made for them. One of the principal repercussions of forced marriage is the development of continual tension, which can significantly affect the quality of life of those involved in such a relationship. (S. Anitha, & A. Gill, 2020).

The stress of a forced marriage is frequently a result of feeling stuck in a relationship that you do not want. The person feeling compelled into marriage typically has a significant inner struggle since they believe they have little control over their own lives. This creates sentiments of dissatisfaction with their companion, and the issue gets worse. These pressures can become chronic anxiety, in which the person feels trapped in a marriage that he or she did not want. Sometimes this concern might extend into other areas of the person's life such as their mental and physical health and their social interactions outside the marriage. (R. Siregar, 2022).

In addition to the stress, depression is a common result of forced marriage. People imprisoned in a marriage they never choose often feel anxious, isolated and alone. Since the marriage isn't founded on love and mutual desire, they may feel neglected or unappreciated. The sensation of neglect can exacerbate the sentiments of hopelessness they feel. Depression resulting from misery in a forced marriage is sometimes accompanied by a decrease in general

quality of life, such as a loss of interest in everyday activities, a loss of self-esteem, and abnormalities in sleep and eating routines.

Unhappiness in a forced marriage often leads to discontent in the partnership. This discontent is caused by the gap between the expectations of the coerced partner and the reality in the marriage. One partner may feel that they have no choice or freedom to select their course in life while the other partner may feel unappreciated or pushed to stay in the marriage. This disconnect engenders disagreements that can harm the relationship and lead to continuous emotional stress. (P. Duru, F. Başaran, & O. Orsal, 2022).

Besides emotional discontent, forced weddings often result in pressure over the future of the union. The partner who feels pressured into marriage may believe that they have no option to pursue their own happiness, which makes them feel like they are bound by an obligation they did not choose. This feeling tends to make communication worse in the marriage as one person may avoid open conversations or feel uncomfortable discussing their feelings. This may make them more frustrated and eventually lead to divorce as a way out.

The constant mental stress often makes many couples in forced marriages believe that divorce is the only way out of their suffering. For some who think their marriage can no longer make them happy, divorce is the answer. This divorce process usually comes after a series of attempts to repair the relationship, which has been hampered by the misery and dissatisfaction that have accumulated in the forced marriage. (L. Vahedi, J. Lee, L. Stark, & I. Seff, 2024)

### **3. Divorce Decision in Forced Marriage**

A marriage in which one or both are forced is almost often a miserable affair. If the marriage is made without the free will of both parties, then the sensation of being trapped and undervalued usually occurs and the couples feel that they can no longer continue the relationship with happiness and harmony. In many circumstances, a forced marriage turns into a divorce in the end as a way out of the uncomfortable arrangement. This choice to divorce is generally the last option for couples who think they have no chance of living peacefully inside the confines of the imposed marriage tie. (S.M. Subeitan, 2022).

Divorce is permissible in Islam if the marriage can no longer be continued. But divorce in Islam is not a solution from the beginning because Islam stresses the value of maintaining the marital tie and making efforts to heal a damaged relationship. Thus, divorce is the ultimate resort in the case of forced marriage when all efforts at reconciliation have failed. In Islam, divorce is considered a disliked but permissible act, especially when the couple thinks that they have lost compatibility or tranquilly in their partnership. (R. Hassan, 2024).

The procedure of divorce in Islam through the *talak* and *khulu'* processes enables both parties to end the marriage in a lawful fashion if they are unable to continue living in harmony with each other. *Talak* is the right of the husband to divorce his wife while *khulu'* is the right of the wife to ask for divorce if she believes she cannot continue the marriage. Both are ways of divorce governed by Sharia law to ensure that divorce is done equitably and in compliance with Islamic values.

But getting divorced is not always straightforward if there are forced marriages involved. Partners who feel coerced into a marriage may feel anxious and fearful about the social, economic or emotional ramifications of a divorce. The social stigma of divorce in society can also impact the decision of spouses to seek divorce. Nevertheless, partners who believe they are forced to get married have a right to ask for a divorce as a means to get rid of their dissatisfaction and get their freedom to live a better life.

Economic and family reasons sometimes impact the decision to divorce as well. Divorce can have serious financial ramifications for some people, especially those with children or other dependents. In forced marriages, a spouse may feel stuck in an undesired union, but must evaluate the effect divorce will have on the economic stability of the couple and the future of their children. But if the marriage cannot be sustained any more, divorce is a permissible solution in Islam.

The choice to divorce is often also impacted by the psychological factors of the partners involved. Partners who are unhappy in an arranged marriage sometimes feel frustrated, anxious and isolated. They feel they cannot live with a partner placed on them. In such settings, divorce is often a preferable approach to end the pain in emotional terms. In truth, divorce can often be an opportunity to start life again and achieve more pleasure, even if the process of divorce can often involve hurdles and hardships. (A. Voena, 2021).

#### **4. Sharia Mechanism in Divorce**

Islam does allow divorce but only as a last resort after all attempts to save the marriage have failed. In Islamic law, divorce is a matter which is governed through the procedures of talak and khulu' and the laws are explicit and structured. These two processes allow both the husband and wife to officially end the marriage if they decide that they can no longer continue the partnership in peace. In Islam, the divorce process is designed to guarantee that the choice is made with due consideration, and carried out fairly, with attention to the rights and obligations of both parties, and to safeguard their rights after the divorce. (Z. Mir-Hosseini, 2020).

Talak is the right of the husband to divorce his wife. In this instance, the husband has the power to terminate the marriage, but the talak process cannot be done arbitrarily. Talak should be performed according to the rules of the Sharia, for instance, by giving the wife an iddah (waiting period) after the talak has been proclaimed. In this period of iddah, the wife shall not marry another man and the husband has the right to reconcile with her if they choose to renew their marriage. Talak can be done up to three times but after the third talak, the couple cannot remarry unless the wife marries someone else and gets divorced. (A. Siddiqui, 2021).

While *khulu'* is the right given to the wife to ask for divorce from the husband. Unlike talak, which the husband initiates, *khulu'* offers the wife the opportunity to quit the marriage if she believes she cannot continue it. The *khulu'* is an agreement between the husband and the wife, usually on the condition that the wife returns the dowry (*mahar*) or portion of the dowry given by the husband. *Khulu'* is likewise governed by Sharia law and although the wife can ask for divorce, the husband's approval is still required, ensuring that divorce is done equally for both sides. (T. Mahmood, 2022).

After the divorce is completed, there are numerous rights that must be fulfilled by both spouses such as nafka iddah and the division of property. *Nafkah* iddah is the responsibility of the husband to maintain his wife for the duration of the iddah period. The iddah changes according to the condition of the wife, whether she is pregnant or not, whether she is menstrual or not. *Nafkah* iddah is the fundamental needs throughout this waiting period. throughout this period the woman is entitled to support from the husband. This provision guarantees that the wife is not ignored and is secured during the transitional time after the divorce. Islamic law also determines the division of property in the case of divorce.

Property gained during marriage (*harta gono-gini*) shall be equitably distributed between husband and wife. This divide takes into account the contribution of each person to the marriage, whether in material or non-material forms. The purpose of property split is to protect the interests of the separated spouse, especially the wife, who can be more financially vulnerable following the divorce. Child custody is also another significant part of the division that needs to be considered, and is usually awarded to the party that is better able to provide a stable and loving home for the children. (E. Ariyani, & Patimah, 2020).

Islamic divorce mechanism through talak and khulu' is guaranteed that the divorce is done fairly without damaging either party. Besides, the laws for nafka iddah and property partition offer protection for the divorced parties, particularly the wife and children who are generally more vulnerable in divorce cases. This process is indicative of the principle of justice in Islamic law that is concerned with the well-being and preservation of the rights of every individual before, during and after divorce. (N.A. Zahra, S. Mahdiyani, & B.Y. Ngoh, 2025)

## CONCLUSION

Research on forced marriage in Islamic law shows that marriage under duress is contrary to the fundamental principles of Islamic law based on the voluntary consent and agreement of both parties. This can result in severe psychological consequences for the couples, including a sense of being trapped and ongoing sadness. The research findings suggest that couples in forced marriage usually have tension, despair and discontent in their relationship which eventually leads to the decision to divorce as a way out. The consequence of this study is that although a forced marriage may be legally valid, it is ethically and religiously invalid in Islamic law. According to Islamic law divorce is a permissible alternative, but only after attempts at reconciliation, when a marriage cannot be sustained. The divorce process through *talak* and *khulu'* gives the husband and wife the right to end the marriage in a fair manner and in accordance with the provisions of Sharia. Islamic law also addresses rights after divorce such as *nafkah* iddah and partition of property to guarantee that both parties are treated equally after the divorce. This research suggests the significance of more education and awareness of Islamic law in dealing with forced weddings, and the significance of making sure that every marriage is based on the free will of both parties to form a harmonious and joyful relationship.

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