**Learning Journal Unit 6**

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**Reflections on Societal Influence, Pressure, and Pro-Social Behavior in Pakistan**

As a 43-year-old Pakistani man, the influence of society on my behavior and interactions with others offers me a deep understanding of how cultural norms shape not just individual lives but the collective social fabric. Growing up in Pakistan, a country where traditional values often take precedence over personal preferences, the expectations of family, community, and religion have had a profound impact on my worldview. This writing explores the ways in which society shaped my thoughts and behaviors, the pressures to conform that I experienced, and the significance of pro-social behavior in a typical Pakistani culture.

**Society’s Influence**

Society, especially in Pakistan, has a strong role in defining what is considered acceptable and expected. From an early age, I was taught to adhere to the values of respect for elders, family honour, and the importance of religious and cultural traditions. These teachings, often reinforced through social interactions, media, and community events, shaped my behaviour and my interactions with others. In terms of career and personal life, societal expectations around success and stability, led me to pursue a path that aligns with conventional norms, such as securing a stable job, marrying early, and prioritising family responsibilities. These expectations sometimes limited my exploration of personal interests or non-conventional career paths, reflecting how deeply societal pressures are ingrained in daily life.

**Conformity to Societal Pressure**

Like many individuals in Pakistan, I faced pressure to conform to societal expectations in various forms. The notion of marriage at a certain age, often reinforced by family and community, was a pressure I faced in my early thirties. The idea that one must marry early to secure family honour and avoid being labelled "leftover" is a common social norm in Pakistan. Although I resisted the pressure initially, the constant inquiries about my marital status created an internal conflict between my personal timeline and societal expectations. Eventually, I chose to marry in accordance with societal norms, yet I struggled to balance my desire for independence with my obligation to fit into this expected narrative.

There are many people around me who have conformed to societal pressures in similar ways. I witnessed friends and family members choose career paths they weren’t truly passionate about, simply because they aligned with family or social expectations of respectability and financial security. For some, this conformity led to resentment, while others found satisfaction in meeting the expectations placed on them. I have observed some of them internalise the values of their families so strongly that they become advocates for these norms themselves, passing them down to future generations.

**Pro-Social Behaviour and Altruism in Pakistan**

In Pakistan, pro-social behaviour and altruism are integral components of our social and cultural tradition. Whether it is offering financial assistance to a neighbour in need or participating in religious charity events during Ramadan, these acts of kindness are highly valued. Growing up in a collectivist society, I have witnessed numerous acts of altruism, where individuals selflessly support others, sometimes even at the cost of their own well-being. This sense of community is central to our social fabric, and the importance of helping others is often ingrained through religion, particularly in Islam, where charity (Zakat) is not just a moral virtue but a religious obligation.

For me, the concept of pro-social behaviour has been a cornerstone of my upbringing. From a young age, I was taught to be respectful, to help the less fortunate, and to consider the well-being of my community. These lessons were reinforced by the example set by my family and community. Even as I navigate the complexities of modern life, these values remain a guiding force in my actions. Whether it is through financial assistance or providing emotional support to those in need, I continue to view altruism as a powerful way to build stronger connections and foster mutual respect.

**Conclusion**

Reflecting on society's influence on my life and how it shapes my interactions has been an eye-opening process. Societal expectations in Pakistan, particularly concerning career choices, marriage, and religious practices, often create pressure to conform. However, the importance of pro-social behaviour and altruism within Pakistani culture provides a counterbalance, reminding me of the value of helping others and building a community based on mutual respect and kindness. As I continue to navigate these societal pressures, I strive to find a balance between adhering to cultural norms and staying true to my personal values, recognising that societal influence can be both a guide and a challenge.

**References**

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