

**MARRIAGE SYSTEMS AND SUCCESS IN  
MARRIAGES IN PAKISTAN**

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**ABSTRACT**

The Present research was conducted to study the difference in marriage systems and success in marriages in Pakistan. To conduct the scientific analysis of research the marriage systems were divided into three categories i.e. "Totally Arranged Marriages" "Partially Arranged and Partially Love Marriages ". It was hypothesized that "Partially Arranged and Partially Love Marriages" and "Totally Arranged Marriages" will be successful as compared to "Totally Love Marriages". The success of marriage was determined by the out come of Marriage. The fates of "Partially Arranged and Partially Love Marriages" and "Totally Arranged Marriages" were compared with the fate of "Totally Love Marriages". A total number of 300 married individuals participated in the study. A standardized interview form was constructed in order to find out the results of the marriages in Pakistan and to collect some biographical information from the individuals. Divorce and Separation were taken as the criteria for unsuccessful marriages and length (individuals who were currently living together and have been happily married for more than five years) of marriages was taken as a criterion for successful marriages.

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A Chi-square test was computed for the statistical analysis of the data.

The research findings provide the evidence that “Partially Arranged and Partially Love Marriages” and “Totally Arranged Marriages” are successful as compared to “Totally Love Marriages. The hypothesis was significant at  $P < .001$  level.

### INTRODUCTION

Marriage is one of the most important social institutions for living a sound and happy life. It unites the two opposite sexes to satisfy their biological and social needs.

Marriage has its own heritage and is considered essential all over the world. This fundamental institution has preserved the human race and made the existence of civilization possible. In Pakistan, marriage is imperative due to the religious and psychosocial constraints or obligations.

Reddy, (1998) states that in the process of evolution of marriages systems in the world, various rules, regulations, restrictions, permissions, traditions, customs, and values have been developed to bring stability and development of this institution.

Marriage is defined differently by various people, scientists and scholars, because of the controversial nature of its meaning in different societies and social contexts. Even though it refers to human mating relationships in general, it takes into consideration different factors such as sex and procreation, the issues of legitimacy of and children and other relevant factors. The most precise definition of marriage is given in International Encyclopedia of Population by Riss, (1982) who states that “the term marriage generally means the

Legal union of the persons of the opposite sex. Civil, religious and other ways of establishing the legality of the union differ according to the laws and the customs of the countries of the world”.

The United Nations, (1968) brought out a comprehensive definition and meaning to the concept of marriage. It reveals that “marriage entails a change from any other marital status to the status of married”. The legality of the union may be established by civil, religious or other means as recognized by the law of the country. There are two types of marriages. First marriage which refers to persons moving from marital status ‘single’ to the status ‘married, and remarriage which includes persons moving from the divorced or widowhood or separated status to the married status.

It is a well-known fact that the decision about the marriages is not a random factor. Most of the people get married with the partners of similar race, and religious background Gagnon et al, (1994), Hill et al, (1976), Murstein, (1972) & Silverman (1971). Murstein, (1986) further explains it and says that this happens because the people with similar characteristics and background are more likely to come across each other and discover compatible interests and ideas.

Different types of marriage systems are practiced in various countries. Some societies favour “Totally Arranged Marriages” where the selection of the spouse is usually made by parents. Whereas some favour “Totally Love Marriages” where individuals are given free choice to select a mate and at times parents are not consulted or informed of the impending marriage. These two are extreme forms of marriages and between these two extremes are “Partially Arranged and Partially Love Marriages” in which parents make their selection and then give the option to their son or daughter to reject or accept their choice. On the other hand the bride and the bridegroom in some

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case make their choice and give parents the power to accept or reject their choice. In this form of marriage views of both family and individuals supposed to get married are considered and given due importance.

Trotter, (1986) explained that in some societies love before marriage plays an important role and love marriage is considered to be the personal right of an individual. However, in Pakistani society individual's choice for marriage is not given so much importance. Most of the marriages are arranged by parents and elders of the family but some of the marriages are also based on love.

Love marriages are taking place in the Subcontinent since the time immemorial but this trend has increased in Pakistan in the last few years with the influx of western culture and invasion of electronic media. In spite of this change in traditional mate selection process in Pakistan the family decision and choice regarding mate selection is still given priority to the individual's decision. The reason for this is that in societies like Pakistan the marriage is not only a bond between two individuals but also a bond between two families.

Furthermore, boys and girls who grow up in societies like Pakistan often welcome their parent's help in selecting a mate. Levine et al, (1995) studied attitudes about love and arranged marriages among college students in 11 different countries. The researchers predicted that in their views about love, people in Western, individualistic cultures would differ significantly from people in developing collectivistic cultures. To test this prediction, they had students respond to the question about love as a prerequisite for marriage originally used by Kephart. The researcher also rated the values of each culture on a continuum from individualistic to collectivistic. As predicted, young adults from Western



Individualistic cultures (United States, Australia, and England) gave much more importance to romantic love as a basis for establishing a marriage than did people from Eastern Collectivistic cultures (Pakistan, India, Thailand, Philippines).

The literature review also suggests that the divorce rate is high in societies where love marriage system is common and individualistic cultures have more divorces than do communal cultures; Traindis, (1994).

It has also been observed and almost all of the researches on love marriages suggest that love marriages most of the time end in a divorce. The divorce could be result of the fact that the spouses had high and unrealistic expectation from each other and they conceptualized an ideal marriage and family structure. Hence, after marriage they are disillusioned and breakup Dion & Dion, (1991), Gupta & Singh, (1979).

Many societies consider satisfaction as a vital factor in the success of a marriage. In Pakistan the satisfaction is dependent on the socio economic and family factors. In Pakistan understanding between the individuals and the family of the spouses is considered more important. On the basis of the research findings of Dawood, and Farooqi, (1997, 2002) it could be inferred that socioeconomic status and education level of females are the significant factors in the marital adjustment of Pakistani females.

Moreover, Individualistic societies place central importance on personal goals, while collectivistic societies stress group goals. Dion and Dion (1993) suggested that these different orientations strongly effect how people conceptualize love and intimacy. These researchers offer three specific propositions, supported by relevant

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data from two individualistic (Canada and the United states) and three collectivist societies (China, India, and Japan).

(1) Romantic love is more likely to be considered an important basis for marriage in individualistic societies than in collectivist ones. For North Americans, it seems natural and even self evident to say that two people meet, fall in love, decide to get married (or live together), and hope to explore and share their real selves, and to experience personal growth through the relationship. In contrast, in many Asian societies the person getting married is supposed to take into account the wishes of others, especially of parents and other family members. It is not unusual for marriages to be arranged by the respective families on the basis of such factors as occupation and status, not on the basis of love and the lover's free choice. The intense feelings of passionate love and the self-absorption of two lovers would be disruptive to the functioning of the group.

(2) Psychological intimacy in marriage is more basic to marital satisfaction and personal well being in individualistic than in collectivistic societies.

In Canada and the United States, for example much of the research on marriage deals with how the partners evaluate one another, how well they know one another, and how satisfied each person feels in the relationship. In China, India, and Japan there is a less concern about this kind of marital happiness or satisfaction because the primary ties of intimacy and the source of well being are rooted in family relationships with parents, sibling, and other relatives. One example of the difference is that marital satisfaction in the United States is based on the couple's interaction, in Japan, socioeconomic factors determine satisfaction Kamo, (1993). At a more general level, those in individualistic societies express more

unrealistic optimism than those in collectivistic societies, Heine & Lehmann, (1995). Thus, when expectations are not fulfilled, Westerners react with surprise and disappointment.

(3) Although individualism values romantic love as the basis for marriage, some aspects of psychological individualism make it difficult to develop and maintain intimacy.

Earlier, the problems faced by married partners who must make compromises in their everyday interaction were pointed out. This issue is all important in individualistic societies, which emphasize that value of autonomy, personal control and independence. It is clearly difficult to strive simultaneously for intimacy and for independence, and Dion and Dion, (1998), suggest that this conflict may account for the high divorce rate in the United States and Canada. A relationship simply ends when either partner feels sufficiently dissatisfied. The strongly individualistic person finds it difficult to care for need, and trust his or her partner. In collectivistic societies, in contrast, dependency on others is not something to be avoided but a highly valued aspect of relationships.

A comparison of intimate relationships in individualistic societies suggest that, compared with collectivism, individualism result in romantic love being a more important basis for marriage and psychological intimacy as a more important determinant of marital satisfaction. A built in conflict between independence and intimacy often leads to relationship failure.

It is evident from the literature review that marriages in western countries are often based on love. However, on the other hand in many countries including Pakistan, marriages are often based on family decision where parents take the whole responsibility of selecting a most appropriate mate. The most important issue here is

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to analyse that, what is the fate of such marriages where individual choice is rejected as a basis for marriage?

It is essential to conduct research on the issue because numerous problems are creeping into marriage and the need for counseling is increasing day by day. With the complex pattern of interpersonal relationship involved in marriage, the institution is made all the more complicated by the changing socio-economic setup. It has a complex structure which needs further analysis.

It becomes the responsibility of a qualified clinical psychologist to provide exact statistical evidence regarding the system of marriage, which is more successful in Pakistan. In the light of the research findings the people will be able to take sensible decisions about their life partners and this will improve the mental health of the people of the country, as marriage and family are the two important social institutions and success or failure of marriage plays an important role in the psychological well being of the spouses, their children and their families. The purpose of the present study was to compare the outcomes of three marriage systems i.e. (1) "Totally Arranged Marriages" (2) "Partially Arranged and Partially Love Marriages" (3) "Totally Love Marriages" in Pakistan.

Keeping in view the findings of the various researches cited it was hypothesized that "Partially Arranged and Partially Love Marriages" and "Totally Arranged Marriages" will be successful as compared to "Totally Love Marriages".



METHOD

**Participants:**

A total number of three hundred individuals participated in the study. Hundred participants were taken from the group whose marriages have been “Totally Arranged”. Hundred participants were from the group of “Partially Love and Partially Arranged Marriages” and hundred were from a group of “Totally Love Marriages”.

**Measures:**

**Standardized Interview Form:**

A standardized interview form was constructed in order to find out the results of the marriages in Pakistan. The Divorce and Separation were taken as the criteria for unsuccessful marriages and length (Individuals who were presently living together and have been married for more than five years) was taken as the criterion of successful marriages.

Before the interview an effort was made to create a rapport with the participants. The following information was collected from each participant through standardized interview form.

1. Age
2. Education
3. Marital Status
  - Divorce
  - Separation
  - Successful (The individuals were specifically asked whether they are happy in their marital life or not?)
4. Place of residence
5. Educational Qualification
6. Occupation
7. Family income from all sources
8. Type of marriages
  - “Totally Arranged Marriages”
  - “Partially Arranged and Partially Love Marriages”
  - “Totally Love Marriages”

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### **Definition of Variables:**

#### **“Totally Love Marriages”:**

“Totally Love Marriages” are defined as the system of Marriages” in which the spouses are the only involved people in the decision making process of the marriage, the family members and parents are not consulted.

#### **“Partially Arranged And Partially Love Marriages”:**

“Partially Arranged and Partially Love Marriages” are defined as the system of marriages in which the spouse is selected with the joint decision of parents, family and the partners involved.

This system of marriages is a combination of arranged and free choice method of mate selection due to which it is known as the system of “Partially Arranged and Partially Love Marriages”.

#### **Totally Arranged Marriages”:**

“Totally Arranged Marriages” are defined as the system of marriages in which parents or elder family members select spouse for their daughters and sons and the couple is not involved in the decision making process.

#### **Successful Marriages:**

Marriages in which spouses were presently living under one roof and have been living happily. The individuals were specifically asked whether they were happy in their marital life or not. In the light of the research findings of various previous researches only those couples who have been married for more than five years were taken.

#### **Unsuccessful Marriages:**

Marriages were considered to be unsuccessful in case of divorce (legal dissolution of marriage) or separation (spouses are not living together without dissolution of marriage).

RESULTS

Chi square test was computed to compare the outcomes of 3 systems of manages

- 1) Totally Arranged Marriages
- 2) Partially Arranged and Partially Love Marriages
- 3) Totally Love Marriages

The result of statistical Analysis are shown in table No. 1 and graph-1. The hypothesis sates that “Partially Arranged and Partially Love Marriages” and “Total Arranged Marriages” will be successful as compared to “Total Love Marriages”. The assumption was significant at  $P < .001$  level the results indicate that there is a differences in three groups it is evident that “Partially Arranged and Partially Love Marriages” and “Totally Arranged Marriages” are successful as compared to “Total Love Marriages”.

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### TABLE NO.1

**DIFFERENCE AMONG THE OUTCOMES OF  
TOTALLY ARRANGED MARRIAGES,  
PARTIALLY ARRANGED  
AND PARTIALLY LOVE MARRIAGES  
AND TOTALLY LOVE MARRIAGES**

		Totally Arranged Marriages	Partially Arrange and Partially Love Marriages	Totally Love Marriages	Total
Successful Marriages		77 (75 . 33 Fe)	89 (75 . 33 Fe)	60 (75 . 33 Fe)	226
Un Successful Marriages	Divorce	16 (16 . 66 Fe)	6 (16 . 66 Fe)	28 (16 . 66 Fe)	50
	Separation	7 (8 Fe)	8 (8 Fe)	12 (8 Fe)	24
Total		100	100	100	300

$$X^2 = \frac{(F_o - F_c)^2}{F_c}$$

$$X^2 = 23 . 451$$

$$Df = 4$$

Significant at P < .001 Level

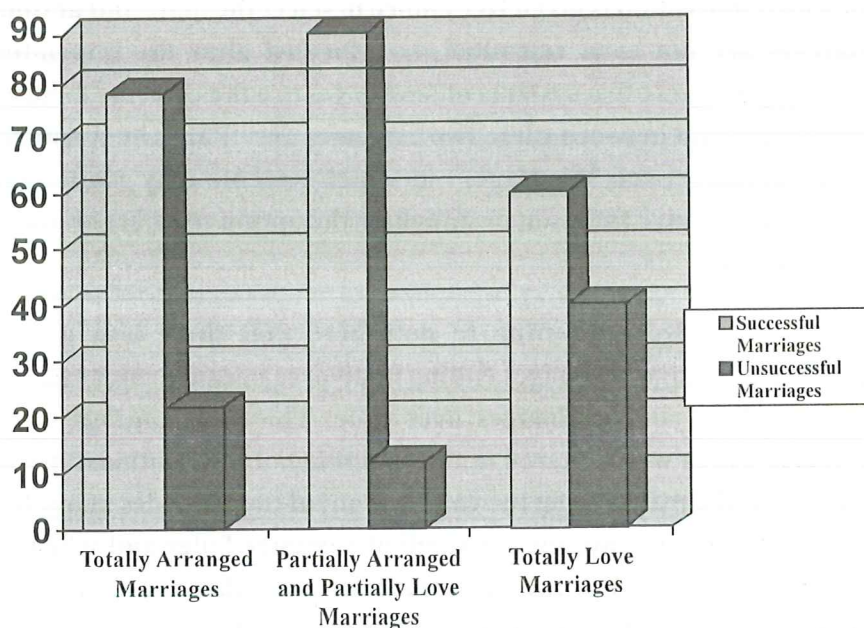
The results indicate that there is a difference in three groups. It is evident that “Partially Arranged and Partially Love Marriages” and “Totally Arranged Marriages” are successful as compared to “Totally Love Marriages”.



GRAPH 1

TABLE NO. 1

DIFFERENCE AMONG THE OUTCOMES OF TOTALLY ARRANGED MARRIAGES, PARTIALLY ARRANGED AND PARTIALLY LOVE MARRIAGES AND TOTALLY LOVE MARRIAGES



## DISCUSSION

The hypothesis is supported by the data and is highly significant at  $p < 001$  level. The results are shown in table No 1 and Graph-1. It is evident that “Partially Arranged and Partially Love Marriages” and “Totally Arranged Marriages” are successful as compared to “Totally Love Marriages”.

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It will be worth while mentioning that Pakistan and many other societies do not have open courtship system which is common in the western countries. In fact this system is considered unethical in many societies. Societies in which system of "Totally Arranged Marriages" is favoured the selection is usually made by parents or family members.

Whereas some favour the system of "Totally Love Marriages" in which individual is given free choice to select the mate and at times parents are not even consulted or informed about the impending marriages. These two systems of marriages are the extreme forms of marriages and between these two extremes are "Partially Arranged and Partially Love Marriages" in which parents may make their selection and give their son or daughter the option to reject or accept their choice.

It is also interesting to note here that there is a greater possibility of love marriages ending in divorce because romantic love is short lived and it changes over time. The shortcomings of the partner which were ignored in the beginning of the relationship may become unbearable when the couple is out of the fantasies about love in marital life. Eventually the thrill of romance fades and when the partners do not fulfill the expectations of each other they react with disappointment and consequently it becomes difficult for them to continue with the relationship.

The research conducted by Traidis (1994) also shows that the divorce rate is high in countries where love marriage system is common. Literature review suggests that love marriages are common in individualistic societies.

Pakistan is a known collectivistic society and arranged marriages are more common in this country. In Pakistan there is

more concern about primary ties of intimacy and relationship with family members. Furthermore, there is a joint family system and after the marriage the bride moves to the husband's house. The bride is expected to make adjustment not only with the husband but also with the whole family. Hence in collectivistic societies the group decision is considered to be superior to the individual's decision and family is given more importance in the decision making process of mate selection. The family in turn look after the interest and well being of the individuals. The emotional dependence on families gives the feeling of security to the individuals.

Most of the marriages are arranged in Pakistan but some of the marriages are also based on love. Love marriages had been taking place in the Sub continent since the time immemorial but this trend has increased in Pakistan in the last few years with the influx of western culture and invasion of electronic media. This change of attitude in the traditional system of marriages is creating many problems. As a result the need of counseling for both parents and children is increasing day by day.

It is worth while to note that most of the people who go against their social norms by running away from their homes, or do not include their parents in decision making process of marriage are most of the time left alone to cope with the life problems.

Most of the time the couple is unaware of the unforeseen difficulties and risks which may arise form their hastily made decisions. The high expectations that the couple has from each other makes it difficult for the couple to compromise the newly discovered problems in their marital relationships. Due to all these reasons it is most likely that "Totally Love Marriages" end up in divorce.

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The marriage system in which spouse is selected with the joint decision of the parents, family and the partners involved is known as the system of "Partially Arranged and Partially Love Marriages". This system of marriage is considered to be the most successful system because it is a combination of both arranged and free choice method of mate selection. The views of both the partners involved and the parents or the family is considered and given weightage. In the final decision of marriage equal importance is given to the views of both parents and the partners involved. Whereas, in the other two systems of marriages which are "Totally Arranged Marriage" and "Totally Love Marriages", the views of either of the two sides is given importance. It is observed that when the equal importance is given to the views of both, the parents and the couple in the decision making process of mate selection, the possibility of such marriages being successful or having positive outcome increases.

The system of "Partially Arranged and Partially Love Marriages" is prevalent in Pakistan and is also supported by the state religion. However, the system of "Totally Arranged Marriages" is more prevalent in Pakistan as compared to the system of "Partially Arranged and Partially Love Marriages". Considering this fact it should not be ignored that the traditional system of "Totally Arranged Marriages" needs to be adjusted to modernization. As today young people are exposed to numbers of stimuli through media. No doubt that this exposure has increased the level of awareness in them.

However, on the other hand this is playing an important role in provoking and misleading them. Keeping in view the mentioned facts this seems to be the demand of the situation that parents need to have a more understanding and flexible approach towards their grown up or adult children when taking important decisions about their future, particularly when deciding about their marriages.



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This change in the parent's attitude will reciprocate the change in their children's attitude. Consequently this will add strength to the institution of marriage and family in Pakistan.

It can be safely concluded from the results of the research that old systems of marriages cannot be abolished as they are the pillars of the Pakistani culture. The impact of modern influences cannot be ignored either. The decisions about marriages should be taken with joint consent of parents and spouses.

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