

# **Sociology: Arranged Marriage**

## **Introduction**

For my sociology coursework project, I have decided to carry out an investigation on family. My research question is; "is marriage still important amongst the Asian community?" I think that what my project is based upon is interesting because I would be able to find out different views on arranged marriages. I would also find out if there's a contrast between younger Asians and elder Asians on views on marriage.

### **My aims of this project are to find out:**

1. Opinions and attitudes of young Asians on arranged marriages.
2. Opinions and attitudes of elder Asians on arranged marriages.
3. Reasons why arranged marriages might be decreasing or increasing.

### **Hypothesis**

My hypothesis is that arranged marriages within the Asian community is considered not important or is declining. This issue is important to me because I belong to the Asian community and think that more people prefer to not get an arranged marriage. I think this because arranged marriage isn't talked often. This issue is also important in Britain today because it could have an effect on the marriage rate.

To do this project, I am going to have to find secondary data of marriage in Britain and look through graphs whether the marriage rate is increasing or decreasing. I would hand out questionnaires to young Asians and elder Asians to find out their opinions and attitudes towards arranged marriage. I would then compare the results I receive to see if they vary.

## Methodology

For my project, the method I would be using to investigate my research question is questionnaires. The reason why I have chosen this method is because I could ask questions which could include both open and closed question. Therefore my research would have a varied amount of data where the results include both qualitative and quantitative data. Through qualitative data, I would be able to gain answers which would give me an in-depth understanding about people's feelings towards arranged marriages. Through quantitative data, I would be able to put results in tables or graphs because there is likely to be similar choices of answers. Quantitative data would also help me compare all responses I get much easily than it would through qualitative data. The outcome of this method would be that I would be able to ask young and elder Asians questions about arranged marriages. Compared to other methods, I think this method is much quicker and easier to carry out.

I am aware of the disadvantages of using this method. Those who are filling out the questionnaire may not be honest about their answers, therefore their answers will lack validity. This may have been affected by the questions being too personal for them to answer, or that they aren't too sure about ways of answering them. For example, since I am going to hand out questionnaires to young Asians, they may not know much about arranged marriages and how it's dealt with in their community. Also, they probably have never thought of marriage because it is something that is not as important at their stage. However, I would ask questions which both younger and older Asians would feel comfortable to answer. Hence, I would with end up with more accurate results which would be reliable.

To help me with my sampling frame (a list of the people or items from which a statistical sample is taken) I would hand out questionnaires randomly to roughly eighteen Asian people. I am not sure of the population of the Asian community in Britain, therefore my sample size may not be representative (or in proportion with the population).

To work out the keywords and issues for my topic, I would use sociological textbooks. The internet is also a great source of secondary information and I will use it to find out the marriage rate in Britain to see if it is increasing or decreasing. This may help me understand the mixed result I may get depending on the different age groups.

I have taken into account ethical considerations. I feel that some possible ethical issues for my research are that my questions may not be clear or hard to understand. I am to overcome these by taking into account things such as gender and age and by asking the right questions. Also, some people may not want to answer certain questions because they find it too personal. Therefore, I will ensure them that every data would be kept anonymous.

The first mistake I came across after conducting my pilot study is that I was excluding everyone under the age of 15. Another mistake was that there were very few questions, which may have resulted with not enough answers to help back up my hypothesis.

**(Pilot) Questionnaire**

**Dear Respondent**

Please fill out this questionnaire

1. AGE (Please Circle)  
15-18 18-21 21-25 25+

2. GENDER:  
Female  Male

3. ARE YOU (please tick):  
Single?  Married?  Cohabiting?

6. Do you think marriage is important?  
Yes   
No   
Not Sure

7. What do you think about arranged marriages?  
-----  
-----  
-----  
-----

8. Do you think arranged marriages were more common in the past?  
Yes:   
No:

## Questionnaire

### Dear Respondent

Please fill out this questionnaire to help me with my sociology coursework project which is based on arranged marriages.

1. AGE (please specify):

2. GENDER:

Female  Male

Bangladeshi

Pakistani

Indian

Other Asian

Background

Other

Please specify: -----

Prefer not to say

3. ARE YOU (please tick):

Single  Married  Cohabiting  Prefer not to say

4. IF YOU ARE SINGLE:

**Would you consider getting an arranged marriage one day? (Please tick):**

Yes

No

Not sure

Depends  Please specify on what: -----

-----  
-----

5. IF YOU ARE MARRIED:

**Was your marriage arranged?**

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

**6. Do you think marriage is important?**

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

**7. What do you think about arranged marriages?**

-----  
-----  
-----

**8. Do you think arranged marriages were more common in the past than it is nowadays?**

- Yes:
- No:
- Not sure:

**PLEASE EXPLAIN YOUR ANSWER:**

-----  
-----  
-----

**9. What do you think influences mostly on the different views on marriage?**

- Religion
- Traditions
- Peer Groups
- Role Models
- Mass Media (e.g. television, magazines, newspapers)
- Other  Please specify: -----

**Please explain your answer:**

-----  
-----  
-----

**10. Explain in detail your views on this topic**

-----  
-----

*Thank you for your time*

**Purposes of my questions**

I have asked people question 1 because I felt the age of a person has an affect on the answer. For example, those who are under the age of 18 may have a different view to marriage than those who are over 18. This may be because those who are over 18 are likely to be married and therefore would answer my questions through the help of own experiences.

Question 2 refers to what gender and background a person belongs to. I think these are important to know because girls might have different views on marriage than a boy, and it is also important for me to know what background a person belongs to as it may have an effect on my results. For example, if a person is British, they may feel that arranged marriage is similar to forced marriage because they lack knowledge.

I asked question 3 because I felt that married people may have a different views to marriage than those who are single or even cohabitating. I included a 'prefer not to say' option as there may be some people who feel uncomfortable to tell another person whether they are single or not.

Question 4 should only be answered by those who are single. Through question 4, I would be able to find out whether people would still consider arranged marriage or not. Whereas question 4 should be answered by those who are single, question 5 only applies to those who are married. It asks whether their marriage was arranged or not. I think this question is a good question as it connects with the subject and I would be able to find out how many of those people had an arranged marriage. I think that if a person did not have an arranged marriage, they may answer differently than those who did.

Question 6 asks if marriage is important. I asked this question because I thought that it is important to know if it's arranged marriage which is declining or whether it is marriage itself. Question 7 adds more to question 6 as it asks still asks about marriage, but this time, about arranged marriage. I asked this question because I think everyone has different views on marriage. This would also help me understand whether people prefer arranged marriage or not.

I asked question 8 because it links to my hypothesis that "arranged marriages...is declining". Through this question, I would be able to find out whether I was right or wrong. I have also asked the respondents to explain their answers. This way I would be able to find out why it is declining or why it isn't.

Question 9 is also an important question as it involves what influences the views people have on arranged marriages, for example, religion, traditions, media, etc. I have also asked the respondents to explain their answers.

I added question 10 incase anyone wanted to add anything further or even to let me know if there was a question they found hard to answer or understand, etc.

## **Content**

In one form or another marriage has existed almost as long as civilization itself. All this shows is how marriage is important to people's lives, as our ancestors have all been through it. Most parents wish their children to grow up and one day, get married to the most suitable spouse, who they'll love and would be able to spend the rest of their lives with. They also wish that their son or daughter can get married so they can help carry on the next generation and at the same time, be supported by the in-laws. However, a relationship is believed to work only if there is some sort of love between the husband and the wife.

Some cultures believe that love comes first, and then marriage. Whereas other cultures believe that love grows after marriage. This explains why many people prefer arranged marriages where they marry a person whom they have never met. In many cases, arranged marriages are seen to have been successful. Nevertheless, making any marriage work takes much dedication and hard work, no matter how the two people meet or where they live.

A person, whose marriage is arranged, before they get to know the person they might get married to, is called an arranged marriage. Traditionally, a parent would look for a person who is willing to marry their daughter or son. Once they find a man or a woman, they would then find out as much as they can of that certain person, for example, what's their job, if they are religious or not, or even if they have a criminal record. Once the parent is happy and have agreed on the suitable match, they would then ask their son or daughter whether he or she would like to get married to the person they've chosen for them. Usually, the child would agree as he or she is expected to.

In the past, there were many cases where the bride or groom decided to get married to a total stranger even though they didn't want to. This probably happened because back then, they weren't given a chance to have much say in whether they wanted to get married or not. Children were more disciplined too. Nowadays, everyone has the freedom of speech and forced marriage is illegal.

In places like Asia, arranged marriages are very popular. This may be because it is seen as a norm which was carried by generations of people. Religions, like Islam may have also had influence on it as it does not allow sex before marriage and so, it encourage people to not have any form of mixing of the sexes socially. Therefore, people believe that if someone else, for example a parent or another kin etc, chooses a future bride or groom for their children, instead of the child choosing their partner themselves, then they can avoid any risks as such.

The most important reason for why parents usually choose their child is because of the saying that 'parents know best'. The reason for this saying is because parents have known you ever since you were born. As you reach the stage of when you're ready to get married, for example, when you are at the age of 18, your parents already know most of your likes and dislikes since they were the ones who you had spent most of your life with.

In places, like in Asia, where arranged marriages are common, divorce rates are lower compared to places like the US where the so called 'love marriages' are more common. One of the reasons why arranged marriage may seem to work in there countries is because, for example in Bangladesh, divorce is a taboo. People are made to give the impression that their marriage is working but in actual fact, they probably don't want to be faced with the society looking down on them. This is why those certain couples try to make things work, especially for the sake of their own families.

There are some cases where divorces in places like Asia, are slowly rising. This may be because of the effect women's rights had had on women, especially for those in the US or the UK. Before, when Asians migrated to those parts of the world, they began to accept the

modern cultures and lifestyles and learnt to adapt to them. In Britain and the US, women's rights and opportunities were equal to men's whereas in third world countries, women still had no voice. As a result, marriage could've seemed to have worked, but it's hard to tell if those married women were happy with their relationships with their husband or not as not many of them spoke out.

Now that many Asians live in Britain or the US, the younger generations are being influenced by both the British culture and also Asian culture and are now mixing the two together. Being able to do this, we are now receiving mixed views about marriage, whether it is arranged or not. Many people are viewing arranged marriages as something they might fall back on if they fail in finding someone themselves. Others, who aren't so sure about what arranged marriages are about, are presuming that it must be something very similar to forced marriages as you are not choosing the person you want to be, yourself. Some people feel that they wouldn't want someone else to choose the person who they'll have marry.

More reasons for why arranged marriages may not be so popular are because, many people, especially women, feel that marriage is no longer as important. They feel this way because before, a woman needed to get married so that she can be financially stable as she would be receiving the money her husband would bring. But now, women can find jobs of their own which means that they don't really need someone else to help them. Co-habitation, which is living in a relationship outside of marriage, is also becoming common. Many people find marriage pointless as, at the end of the day, the couples tend to break up, or they feel that their love has 'died away'. Views like these show how independent people are getting and how arranged marriages could be slowly 'fading'.

### Analysis



My questionnaire included questions which resulted with both qualitative and quantitative data. Therefore, in this section, I would be explaining what most respondents had felt towards arranged marriage and also be using bar graphs to present my quantitative data. Altogether, there were 21 participants who had responded to my questionnaire. I ended up having much more females answering my questionnaire than males. Most of those who answered my questionnaire were Bangladeshi. There was one Pakistani and an Indian person. There was also a British person. The age range goes up to 13 years to 53 years. I found that this is a good thing since I received many different views about marriage.

After the participants had completed and handed the questionnaire back to me, I viewed it and found that my study is representative. The reason why I think this is because those respondents who were under the age of 18 had given me similar answers to one another. Those people who were over that age had also given me a similar answer to one another. This shows that age has an affect on how a person answers a question. This may be because the older you are, the more experienced you probably are. This explains why those who were younger weren't sure about how to answer some questions like, 'What do you think about arranged marriages?', whereas those who were over 18 had a lot to say.

The first aim of my coursework was to find out the opinions of young Asians on arranged marriages. I manage to give questionnaires to thirteen under 18s. Many of them felt that arranged marriages are ok 'as long the future couples get a say in it'. Someone thought that 'it's a lot of fun as you'll get a chance to meet new people who might join to be a part of your family and your whole family can get involved to help you find your one special person – which is nice to see'.

Many of the younger respondents felt that religion has more influence on what people think about arranged marriage as 'religion always influences a lot in our lives'. Others thought that culture has more influence on arranged marriages. They explained that religion doesn't say no to love marriages whereas traditional cultures do. They also said how the idea about marriage is passed down by generations.

The second aim of my coursework was to find out opinions of elder Asians on arranged marriages. I gave out questionnaires to eight over 18s. Most of the adults felt that arranged marriages are a good thing as it tends to work. One adult said that 'religion influences on how the parents raise their kids'. They explained how if a person was brought up in a strict environment, it is likely that the child wouldn't disappoint their parents by going against their wishes. Those kids who are brought up in a more relaxed environment are likely to speak as freely since their parents probably expect them to.

Another adult said how 'if both sides agree with the marriage then there's nothing wrong with it'. Most of the adults agreed with the fact that 'parents want what's best for their kids' and therefore would try to find the most suitable person for their children. Some adults also explained how parents, who are experienced and been through arranged marriage, would be considerate of their child and nowadays, parents would allow their child to have a say in what they think about the marriage before it takes place. One adult also added that mothers and fathers want to 'fill their duties as parents' so that 'their child's life is successful'.

Many felt that religion has more influence on what people think about arranged marriage as 'religion always influences a lot in our lives'. Others thought that culture has more influence on arranged marriages. They explained that religion doesn't say no to love marriages whereas

traditional cultures do. They also said how the idea about marriage is passed down by generations. Another respondent said that 'cultures were much stricter'. This could mean that culture is not seen as the main influence on marriage since it's not as strict anymore.

The third aim of my coursework was to find reasons why arranged marriages might be either decreasing or increasing. I found out that most people under the age of 18 think that arranged marriage is decreasing. However, those over that age felt that arranged marriage is still going on as much as it did before. Many of the Asians said that arranged marriage may be decreasing because 'society is different now', i.e. it has changed over the years. Another respondent explained that when people migrated to the west, they learnt the norms and values which western societies follow. They explained that parents are getting used to western cultures, especially now that we are expected to be more modern since we are living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

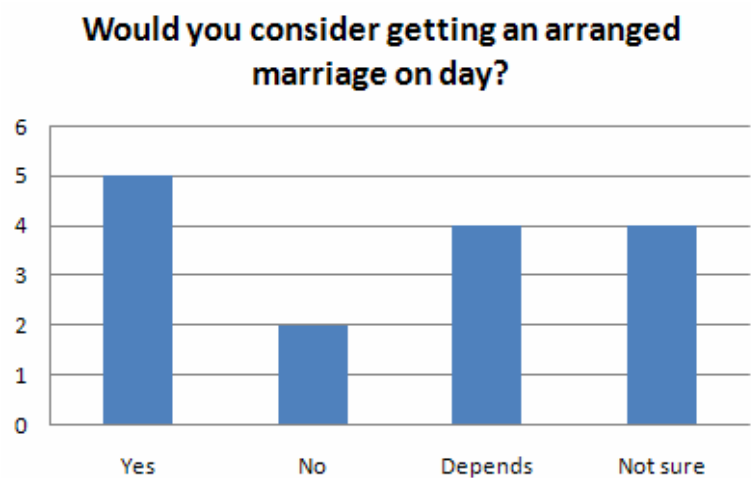
Another adult said that 'most of our parents had arranged marriages, but nowadays love marriages are becoming more common'. This also explains that arranged marriages could be declining. Changes like this may be happening because of something called media where love marriage is seen as the most common marriage of all. Media also tends to portray arranged marriage as forced marriage. One respondent said how 'media has the biggest influence on society'. This shows that a lot of people would be influenced by what the media would tell them.

A respondent said how arranged marriages 'used to be done for the sake of society'. Through some research, I was able to find out that people had to get married in order to keep their status. Nowadays, this isn't as important. More people are interested in getting their own jobs and living off their own money which they earned themselves. This shows that people prefer to be independent now. This explains why arranged marriages could be declining.

A few respondents, especially the adults, felt that arranged marriages are still as common as it was before. One adult said that 'in all cultures it (arranged marriages) were common, not just in the Bangladeshi culture'. She also added that she thinks 'arranged marriages are as common as non-arranged marriages'. She explained that you're likely to find that the number of non-arranged marriage is balanced by the number of arranged marriages if you compare all the cultures, where arranged marriage is mostly practiced in, with all those cultures where arranged marriage isn't common.

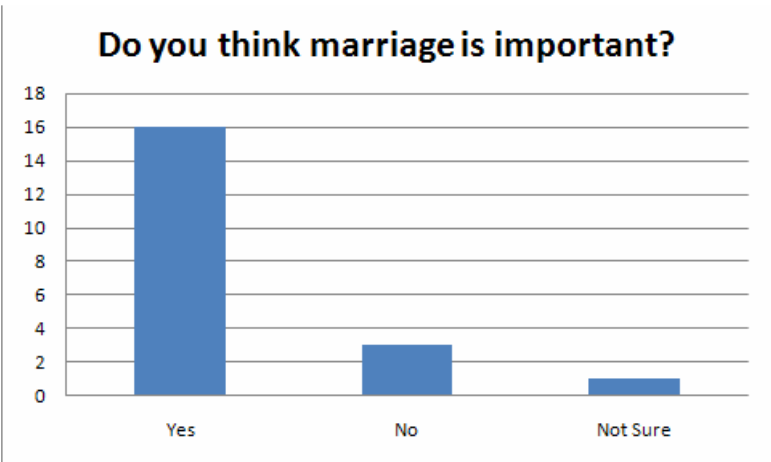
Through my questionnaire, I found out that all those Asians who were married had an arranged marriage. Those who were single gave me a mixed answer to whether they would consider getting an arranged marriage one day or not. Most said yes where as few others weren't sure. This may have been because they felt that they didn't know much about arranged marriage or that they prefer non-arranged marriages but aren't sure if that's allowed in their culture or religion.

## **Figure 1**



This question only applied to those who were single. I think that this is an important question as it shows if those from the younger generations are thinking about arranged marriages or not. This is important to the topic because if a person doesn't want an arranged marriage, their answers to the next few questions would be different compared to those who are thinking or getting an arranged marriage. Here I got a very varied result. Those who ticked 'depends' explained that if he or she can't find a person by themselves, then they would consider an arranged marriage.

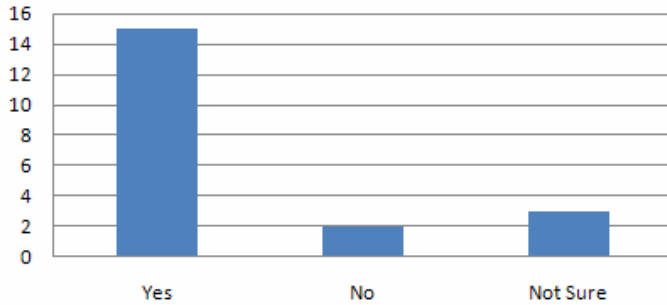
**Figure 2**



What this bar graph shows is the number of people who felt that marriage is either important or not. Most people said that yes, marriage is important whereas 3 people felt that it isn't. There was only one person who wasn't sure. I think that this part of the questionnaire was an important part because, through the result I received, I could find out whether it is marriage as a whole which is disappearing. These results show that marriage is still very popular; however, a few people feel that it isn't really important at all. This may be because of their own experiences where they've seen that not all marriages last or that they feel that people can live with another person outside of marriage, i.e. through cohabitation.

**Figure 3**

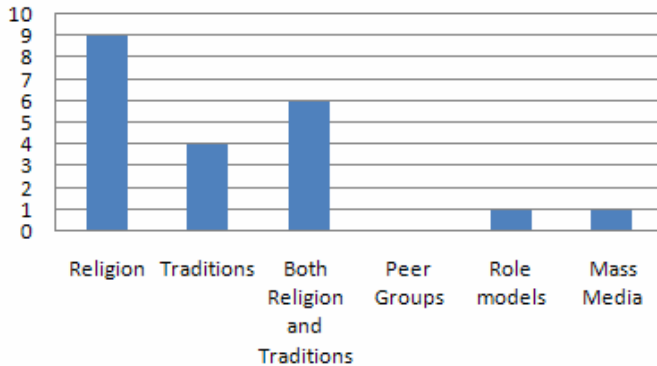
**Do you think arranged marriages were more common in the past than it is nowadays?**



As I expected, many people said yes, arranged marriages were more common in the past. However, there are a few people who felt said no and then explained this. One of them said that there are still a lot of arranged marriages going on. We'll find this especially if we look at other cultures. Another person said that there are as much arranged marriages as there was before, i.e. there hasn't been much that changed. Those who weren't sure said that 'nowadays, especially amongst the youngsters, are trying to find someone they love first. If it isn't possible, they go through with arranged marriage'. This explains why they weren't sure because there are still arranged marriages, but people are first looking for love marriages first. Those respondents who weren't sure whether arranged marriages are declining or not probably felt that it is still about the same.

**Figure 3**

**What do you think influences mostly on the different views on marriage**



In this question, I allowed people to tick more than one box. This is why I have also got an option 'both religion and traditions' in my bar graph. One person felt that religion 'influences a lot in our lives'. Another person explained how 'Islam doesn't say "no" to love marriages'. This shows that Islam may not be one of the things which influence on the different views on arranged marriage. She added that however traditions, like Bengali traditions, do say no to love marriages. Therefore, arranged marriages are seen as the more appropriate choice. This is also the reason why she picked 'traditions'. The one person who picked 'role models' as their option, explained that we usually follow one certain person. For example, if a person who we look up to hasn't got married, we may feel that we don't need to get married, etc. She said that if we see that our grand parent's marriage and our parent's marriage had worked, 'we also go along with it'. There was also a person who felt the 'media' influenced

us most about marriage as it ‘has the biggest influence in society today’. Those who ticked both ‘religion’ and ‘traditions’ felt the two go ‘hand-in-hand’ which together creates a very firm view about marriage.

### **Evaluation**

Overall the research methods used were suitable for my coursework because through the questions I asked, I was resulted with a lot of responses. A problem I faced because of using the method of questionnaires was that, there were some people whose English wasn’t their first language. Therefore I ended up asking them the questions and then writing the answers down myself, so it was more like an interview. A question I feel not everyone understood was question number 9, which asked the respondent their opinions of what they think influences mostly on the different views on marriage. Again, I think the reason for this is because English was not their first language. I felt that I needed more time to finish my coursework as I didn’t have as much male respondents than female respondents. Because of this, I didn’t get a chance to see whether a female’s answer differs to a male’s answer. Also, I wasn’t able to find much secondary data such as whether the marriage rates are increasing or decreasing because I lacked timing. I don’t think that there were ethical problems like bias because no one felt insecure of answering the questions, as it was quick and easy to do and also, details like the name of the respondent’s was kept anonymous. My research could’ve been improved if I found more secondary information. I could’ve also improved my research by adding more questions to my questionnaire. From carrying out this research, I have learned about the difficulties of research. I have enjoyed writing this coursework and conducting this investigation because I think it improved my organization and communication skills.

### **Bibliography**

These websites helped me find out a little bit more about arranged marriages and other people’s views about it:

- <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D0CE5D9173BF931A15755C0A9659C8B63>
- <http://www.directessays.com/viewpaper/59565.html>