

# DIGITAL RESEARCH ON HARMFUL PRACTICES IN ASIA

2023 APRIL





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# INTRODUCTION

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Quit.AI, in partnership with the UNFPA Asia Pacific Regional Office, conducted a digital research on harmful practices, specifically child marriage and GBSS, in chosen geographies including Bangladesh, China, India, Nepal and Vietnam. The research includes a digital ecosystem analysis to understand people’s perceptions, attitudes and behaviours around harmful practices; an influencer mapping to identify emerging online voices, leaders and related campaigns; and a digital footprint analysis for stakeholders to provide recommendations that they are reaching the target audience in providing support or information about harmful practices.

# WHAT ARE HARMFUL PRACTICES?

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Harmful practices are defined as “discriminatory practices committed regularly over such long periods of time that communities and societies begin to consider them acceptable”.<sup>1</sup> This includes practices such as child marriage and son preference, which are internationally recognized as human rights violations.

Despite these practices being universally banned, millions of girls and boys experience them in some form, but girls are more vulnerable.<sup>2</sup> About 650 million girls and women today were married as children.<sup>3 4</sup> Early marriage hinders a girl’s future by preventing her from going to school and forces her into childbearing at a young age. Early marriage is a result of multiple factors – poverty, lack of access to education, gender and social norms.



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<sup>1</sup><https://www.unicef.org/protection/harmful-practices>

<sup>2</sup>[https://china.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/highlights-en-single\\_page\\_layout\\_2.pdf](https://china.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/highlights-en-single_page_layout_2.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>[https://www.unicef.org/media/files/Child\\_Marriage\\_Report\\_7\\_17\\_LR..pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/files/Child_Marriage_Report_7_17_LR..pdf)[https://www.unicef.org/media/files/Child\\_Marriage\\_Report\\_7\\_17\\_LR..pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/files/Child_Marriage_Report_7_17_LR..pdf)

<sup>4</sup>[https://www.unicef.org/media/files/Child\\_Marriage\\_Report\\_7\\_17\\_LR..pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/files/Child_Marriage_Report_7_17_LR..pdf)



# DEFINING SON PREFERENCE, GBSS AND CHILD MARRIAGE.

Son preference, GBSS (gender-biased sex selection) and early marriage are examples of harmful practices. They are defined below.

## Son preference:

The practice of preferring male offspring over female offspring, most often in poor communities, which view female children as liabilities and male children as assets to the family. This can result in families instilling superiority in male children and inferiority in female children, manifesting in actions such as prioritizing boys' education, nutrition and more.

The extreme manifestation of son preference is female foeticide and sex-selected abortions; in some countries, this has resulted in skewed population sex ratios.<sup>1</sup>

## GBSS (gender-biased sex selection):

GBSS is a manifestation of son preference and gender discrimination against females, which specifically includes the problem of imbalanced sex ratios caused by sex selection. Sex selection can take place before a pregnancy is established, during pregnancy through prenatal sex detection and selective abortion or following birth through infanticide or child neglect.<sup>2</sup>

## Child marriage:

Child marriage refers to any formal marriage or informal union between a child under the age of 18 and an adult or another child.<sup>3</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/1761/file/Gender%20glossary%20of%20terms%20and%20concepts%20.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/1761/file/Gender%20glossary%20of%20terms%20and%20concepts%20.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage>





# SCOPE

This research will look at two harmful practices in multiple geographies:

**1) CHILD MARRIAGE:**  
India, Nepal, Bangladesh

**2) SON PREFERENCE:**  
India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Vietnam, China

Quilt.AI has conducted a digital ecosystem analysis on these topics, an influencer mapping of key stakeholders and a digital footprint analysis for select stakeholders in the chosen geographies.



# OBJECTIVES

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The report is divided into **three sections**, each with the following objectives.

## 1. Digital Ecosystem Analysis

**To understand and profile people's perceptions, attitudes and behaviours around harmful practices, specifically child marriage and son preference.** This digital ecosystem will look at multiple factors including the discourse around harmful practices (e.g. level of awareness) on social media and what people are searching for related to harmful practices, and will understand people's roles based on their attitudes (e.g. activists, supporters) and how to inform or shift their attitudes.

## 2. Influencer Map

**To identify emerging online voices, leaders and related campaigns.** This includes an in-depth overview of online social media discourse, emerging online campaigns and groups and influencers who support or oppose harmful practices. Along with a list of influential people and campaigns in this space, we will also analyse their messaging (e.g. sentiments, tonality), level of engagement with their posts and other interests that could act as hooks to amplify engagement.

## 3. Stakeholders Analysis

**To provide recommendations that ensure stakeholders are reaching their target audience in providing support or information about harmful practices.** The digital footprint analysis of select stakeholders will measure their engagement online and how to improve their reach and communications for individuals who need help.







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\*Please note that all quotes in this section have been translated into English

# DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM ANALYSIS

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# METHODOLOGY

## 1. Digital Ecosystem Analysis

### Social media discourse analysis:

1

**Data gathering:** Quilt.AI searched for key conversations online across various platforms to do with son preference (including GBSS) and child marriage through plugging in keywords related to these topics (in both English and the local languages). Platforms inspected include: Twitter, Quora, Facebook, Youtube and Weibo (for China).

2

**Sizing and skews:** The research team estimated the volume of conversation for each discourse theme relative to others, as well as the volume coming from each country relative to others. Country skews (which show whether the discourse was especially prominent in certain countries) are provided on each discourse slide.

3

**Digital ethnography and inferences:** Quilt.AI's research team, who are trained in content and semiotic analysis, studied recurring themes and nuances seen in a number of posts. They then drew inferences that best reflect the data or online sphere. Sphere, an in-house proprietary tool, was used to gather search queries at scale.

### Supplementing with search data:

To get a complete picture of son preference and child marriage, Quilt.AI looked at what people are searching for related to these topics.

1

**Data gathering:** 1 million Google and Baidu searches were gathered over a one-year period (Mar 2021 to Feb 2022).

2

**Clustering:** Searches were grouped into broad themes (gender determination and conceiving a son) as well as smaller themes within those (gender determination tests, diets for conceiving a son, etc.)

3

**Analysis:** Growth in searches was calculated for each keyword, as well as for various cross-tabulations of the data, by comparing the average search volume of the first six months with the last six months of the one-year period.

# LIMITATIONS

## 1. Digital Ecosystem Analysis

### Social media discourse analysis:

- Limited son preference discourse found for Bangladesh and Vietnam:** Because the words for “son” / “daughter” and “girl” / “boy” are used interchangeably in Bengali and Vietnamese, we found limited discourse on the topic of actual son preference for these countries.
- Instagram excluded:** Because location cannot be specified on Instagram, it was excluded from the digital ecosystem portion of the analysis.

### Supplementing with search data:

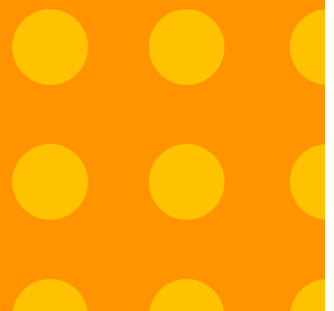
- No intent/action-oriented keywords for early marriage:** For son preference, keywords indicated intent or action (searches for things like “how to have a son”, “symptoms of a baby boy”), whereas for child marriage they tended to be generic queries about child brides (e.g. “child bride”, “early marriage”) rather than something that showed intent to marry a child, or else were help-seeking or reporting-related queries.
- No search data available beyond a year:** Google does not provide search data beyond a year for most keywords.
- Limited search data available for China via Baidu:** Baidu provides time-specific data for very few keywords, so the number and variety of keywords used for China is slightly less.





## **SON PREFERENCE**

**WHY ARE SONS PREFERRED?**  
**THE ONLINE DISCOURSE.**



# SOCIAL PRESSURES TO HAVE AT LEAST ONE SON IN THE FAMILY

SIZE: 40%

COUNTRY SKEWS: Nepal, China, India<sup>1</sup>

Social and cultural norms may have an impact on the importance given to sons, in comparison with daughters.<sup>2</sup> Online discourse – especially in India, Nepal, and China – includes instances where **not having a son** in the family places people at the **centre of societal gossip**.

People are seen sharing online the criticism they have received from their community for not having any sons in the family, especially since it raises doubts related to continuing family lineage. Many complain that it is typically their own family/relatives or neighbours who judge. Having only daughters in the house is seen as unfavorable and burdensome.

In particular, women in Nepal express frustration over a question that is commonly asked: **“You don’t have any brothers?”** (दाजु भाई छैनन्?).

“If you have only daughters in the house, **people will talk** about it saying ‘these people don’t have a son, who will carry on the family name?’ Relatives and neighbours talk about it in a very negative way. They will **not allow the parents to live in peace.**”



“I’m also under a lot of pressure. It’s already my fourth child. **I hope it’s a boy.**”



“The sad thing is those **criticizing my parents** for only having daughters were our **own maternal and paternal relatives.**”



“I hate being asked you don’t have any brothers? Only sisters? (दाजु भाई छैनन्? छोरि छोरि मात्रै?) >.<”



“It’s true that if there is no son, **the neighbours will gossip.** Even in the urban area, there are still remnants of this kind of thinking.”



<sup>1</sup>**Note on Size and Skews:** The research team estimated the volume of conversation for each discourse theme relative to others, as well as the volume coming from each country relative to others. As such, country skews (which show whether the discourse was especially prominent in certain countries) are provided on each discourse slide.

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331975898\\_Social\\_Norms\\_and\\_Son\\_Preference\\_in\\_India%27s\\_Northeast\\_-\\_An\\_Econometric\\_Exploration\\_Masterarbeit](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331975898_Social_Norms_and_Son_Preference_in_India%27s_Northeast_-_An_Econometric_Exploration_Masterarbeit)



# WHEN CONSIDERING THE FAMILY NAME, A DAUGHTER IS “NOT YOUR OWN”

SIZE: 35%

COUNTRY SKEWS: China, Vietnam<sup>1</sup>

The countries in this study all traditionally follow a patrilineal kinship system wherein only sons are able to carry on the family name.<sup>2</sup> Online discourse suggests that when a daughter marries, she is no longer seen as “your own” as she becomes a member of her husband’s family.

This online discourse is most pronounced in China, where **lineage preservation is a core value** of the patriarchal family system.<sup>3</sup> There are many Chinese sayings dedicated solely to this idea that are circulated online, such as “Investing in a daughter is like watering the neighbour’s garden” and the bank example (see quote on the right).

Although this ideal is also valued in the other countries, the conversation tends to be masked under the **guise of companionship**: men in particular discuss not wanting a daughter as they would not see her often.

“There’s this ideology deeply embedded in people’s mindset: **‘Giving birth to a son is like growing a bank; giving birth to a daughter is like attracting a bank’** (生儿子是建设银行、生女儿是招商银行). This is why people don’t **spend much effort raising daughters**, because after they get married, they belong to another family, not yours.”



“He told me that he wanted a son because the thought of his child leaving him for another family made him very sad. He **didn’t want to have a daughter only for her to marry and leave.**”



“Family names have little significance in most modern societies, but in China, **keeping your roots is all about surname/clan.** Daughters have no worth mainly because they don’t pass down the family name.”



“I feel that the reason why **boys are good is because they can keep their parents company** longer. For girls, the moment they are married, it will be **hard to see them often.**”



<sup>1</sup>**Note on Size and Skews:** The research team estimated the volume of conversation for each discourse theme relative to others, as well as the volume coming from each country relative to others. As such, country skews (which show whether the discourse was especially prominent in certain countries) are provided on each discourse slide.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2844398>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1973627?seq=1>

# THE PREFERENCE FOR A SON HAS ECONOMIC UNDERPINNINGS

SIZE: 10%

COUNTRY SKEWS: China, India, Nepal<sup>1</sup>

Online discourse points to the ease with which men can secure jobs – something women cannot do as easily. Therefore, **having sons makes practical sense** unlike having daughters. A man's ability to provide for or "take proper care" of his family makes having sons more desirable (relates to the idea of the "caretaker" explored in the report.)

This **narrative is particularly pronounced in China**. This narrative is particularly pronounced in China where an "inverted pyramid"<sup>2</sup> family structure appeared. This would mean that one person in the household is responsible for up to six elders or dependants. Online narratives further suggest that given **the structural and societal barriers women face in employment**, many parents and grandparents view it as necessary to have at least one son due to their higher income-generating potential and perceived ability to support the family financially.

"But it is a fact that **sons can earn more** than daughters, this is not 'sexist' to say. He can take proper care of the family including parents when they become old."



"These days **women can't find jobs**, doesn't matter if you're married or have kids! But it's so **much easier for men** to find jobs, so of course having a son makes more sense and not a daughter! Only when there's gender equality will the preference for boys be corrected!"



"It's not only in the villages where sons can bring more money, **even in urban areas**, women don't make as much as men. So there needs to be **at least one son to make money** for the family."



<sup>1</sup>Note on Size and Skews: The research team estimated the volume of conversation for each discourse theme relative to others, as well as the volume coming from each country relative to others. As such, country skews (which show whether the discourse was especially prominent in certain countries) are provided on each discourse slide.

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319643070\\_The\\_Model\\_of\\_Intergenerational\\_Relation\\_in\\_Balinese\\_Family](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319643070_The_Model_of_Intergenerational_Relation_in_Balinese_Family)



# SONS ARE CARETAKERS, WHILE DAUGHTERS MUST BE TAKEN CARE OF

SIZE: 10%

COUNTRY SKEWS: India, Vietnam, Bangladesh<sup>1</sup>

The traditional role of a son across the countries is that of a “caretaker” (also referred to as the male breadwinner model)<sup>2</sup> because he takes care of the family as parents age. However, we find little discourse around this. Instead, we find a counter-discourse around how daughters tend to assume this position more often nowadays (as detailed further in the report).

Nevertheless, we find the modern/urban equivalent of this manifests as **wanting a son because “it’s not an easy world for women”**. This is particularly seen in response to cases of violence against women. Although these comments show awareness of the patriarchal systems that make the world more challenging for women and girls, they further **perpetuate the idea that daughters are a “burden”**.

“Actually daughters are fine as well, but **a sense of security and safety can only be provided by a son, no?**”



“Other people have sons to take care of them when they get old, but both my daughters are married and are not around to care for me. So one of course prefers having a son.”



“After having children, I just want a son. It's **not because I like boys more than girls, but because being a girl is so hard.**”



“[Redacted name] said she wanted a boy, because she was afraid of many things when giving birth to a girl, the world is so scary now, **girls always suffer.**”



“I have a sister and I'm always **worried about her** even though I know she can take good care of herself. So if I have to choose **between having son or daughter, I'll choose son.**”



<sup>1</sup>Note on Size and Skews: The research team estimated the volume of conversation for each discourse theme relative to others, as well as the volume coming from each country relative to others. As such, country skews (which show whether the discourse was especially prominent in certain countries) are provided on each discourse slide.

<sup>2</sup>[https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9780230800830\\_1](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9780230800830_1)

# DEATH RITUALS ARE TYPICALLY PERFORMED BY SONS

SIZE: 5%

COUNTRY SKEWS: Nepal, India<sup>1</sup>

**Men play an important role during last rites/death rituals** in Nepal and India, and within Buddhist/Hindu communities in Bangladesh. Online discourse on this topic in Nepal and India especially points to the **preference for sons for this reason**. Patriarchal norms has been the dominant pattern in all aspects of death customs.<sup>2</sup>

There is also discourse from India and Nepal on how girls and women today are participating equally in these rituals. Despite these changing social customs and empowerment of women, the discourse also suggests that many people (particularly older generations) still prefer for these to be carried out by a son or male family member.

Ancestor worship in Vietnam is also typically conducted by the eldest son in the family, but we found no discourse around this topic online.

[Excerpt from a poem/song written by a user online]  
"I don't have a son. **I wonder, who will carry my body when I die?**"



"People always used to ask **my parents, who will perform the rituals after death?** I would see them upset by this, they know they don't have a son to do it."



"Nowadays girls can do it too, I have seen daughters carry the body and light the pyre. But I think some **older generations don't believe this is the proper way** to do it. They still wish for a son."



"I did all the rituals after my father's death as I am the only daughter of my parents. **My relatives wanted that my uncle's son should give fire.**"



<sup>1</sup>Note on Size and Skews: The research team estimated the volume of conversation for each discourse theme relative to others, as well as the volume coming from each country relative to others. As such, country skews (which show whether the discourse was especially prominent in certain countries) are provided on each discourse slide.

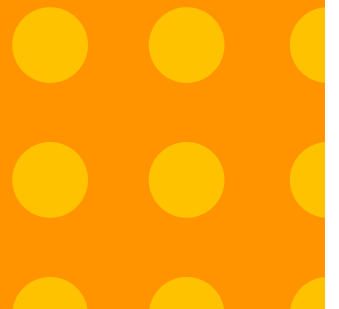
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44147980>



## **SON PREFERENCE**

YET, MORE VOICES IN  
THE ONLINE DISCOURSE ARE  
**AGAINST SON PREFERENCE.**

NETIZENS VALUE DAUGHTERS  
AS WE FIND THEM TAKING UP  
ROLES TRADITIONALLY  
RESERVED FOR SONS.



# DAUGHTERS ARE EMPATHETIC AND RELIABLE, AND ARE THEREFORE “BETTER” THAN SONS

SIZE: 45%

COUNTRY SKEWS: Nepal, India, China<sup>1</sup>

Online discourse on the difference between sons and daughters focuses on the latter's nurturing abilities. Daughters are valued for their **reliability, empathy and emotional closeness** – especially towards their parents and grandparents. They are largely portrayed online as loving and respectful, contrary to sons who tend to be spoken about as self-serving.

While these perceptions of daughters may seem positive, they are still **rooted in traditional gender roles**. These narratives **prototype women** and expect them to fulfill their part as caregivers and emotionally support their families.

For instance, in China, the phrase “good wife, wise mother” divides females into “wife” (qi), “mother” (mu), “daughter-in-law” (xi), “mother-in-law” (po) and “women” (nüren), making it difficult for them to find their identities.<sup>2</sup>

“So many sons these days walk around the village saying ‘I married a lower caste girl **so my parents don’t make me take care of them**’.”



“Everyone wants sons but it’s the **son who will go and put you in an old folks home** when you get old...”



“I still feel that when you age, having a daughter is better because they are **more caring** and better at taking care of you.”



“I applaud a daughter performing death rituals. In fact, **a daughter will do this out of love, respect, sincerity**, but the same may not be always true for a son.”



“An educated son cares for his family and an educated daughter cares for and nurtures two families and three generations.”



<sup>1</sup>**Note on Size and Skews:** The research team estimated the volume of conversation for each discourse theme relative to others, as well as the volume coming from each country relative to others. As such, country skews (which show whether the discourse was especially prominent in certain countries) are provided on each discourse slide.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.2753/CSH0009-4633450404?journalCode=mcsh20>



# NETIZENS OUTRAGE OVER THE ISSUE OF FEMALE INFANTICIDE

SIZE: 25%

COUNTRY SKEWS: Nepal, India, China, Bangladesh<sup>1</sup>

According to the UNFPA, the number of “missing females” has more than doubled in the past 50 years – 61 million in 1970 to 142.6 million in 2020. Countries such as India and China account for a majority of this globally.<sup>2</sup> Online discourse on the rampant issue of female infanticide is dominated by outrage against the practice. People speak openly about low levels of education, and **the general culture of ignorance** that leads to the **perpetuation of the practice**.

In China specifically, there are **conversations around the dismal sex ratio caused by “abortions and killing of female infants”**. The focus within the country is also on big cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, where the gender ratios are especially stark.<sup>3</sup>

“Be it boy or girls, it is a life, you cannot just kill it, it's **so cruel**”



“I don't know, when our society will improve, when will the child killing like this reduce **When will we realize our conscience?**”



“Damn, this extremely **deformed [newborn sex ratio] data is too terrifying**, how many female babies have to be killed?? It really is the existence of **hell on earth.**”



“The **low level of education and consciousness** of this country is seen when you hear about those who kill their babies when a daughter is born! **When will this ignorance end?**”



“When it comes to abortion and killing of female infants, people always say ‘these things happen only in rural areas, not big cities’. Look at the gender ratio of newborns in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, is that normal to you??”



<sup>1</sup>**Note on Size and Skews:** The research team estimated the volume of conversation for each discourse theme relative to others, as well as the volume coming from each country relative to others. As such, country skews (which show whether the discourse was especially prominent in certain countries) are provided on each discourse slide.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unfpa.org/swop-2020>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/282119/china-sex-ratio-by-age-group/>

# PEOPLE ADVOCATE FOR EQUAL LEGAL RIGHTS FOR DAUGHTERS

SIZE: 15%

COUNTRY SKEWS: India, Nepal, China<sup>1</sup>

Netizens online **raise their voices against unequal laws for sons versus daughters**. This primarily includes unequal inheritance laws in India, Nepal and Bangladesh.<sup>2,3</sup> In the past few years, however, there have been amendments to succession laws, specifically in India, to remove gender discriminatory provisions.<sup>4</sup>

Online conversations focus on the **ways in which the legal system continues to serve the best interests of men** (e.g. through meager penalties on crimes against women, allowing gender discrimination in hiring and so forth), and these are also given as reasons for the gender imbalance. They argue that as long as the laws continue to prefer men (and sons), so will the people.

[In response to unequal waiting times for Nepali men versus women to confer Nepali citizenship on their foreign spouses]  
"As a dad of a daughter I can say **this is a disgusting land of law**. Daughter and son must be treated equally. If a daughter in law can obtain a citizenship after 7 years then why not a son in law!"



"Gender preferences are very complex, this preference for sons is driven by the **country's policies which makes people feel that having a daughter is more disadvantageous** than having a son."



After the new Judgement of SC giving equal inheritance rights to daughters



Indians online celebrated equal property rights for daughters through the 2020 amendment to the Hindu Succession Act



<sup>1</sup>**Note on Size and Skews:** The research team estimated the volume of conversation for each discourse theme relative to others, as well as the volume coming from each country relative to others. As such, country skews (which show whether the discourse was especially prominent in certain countries) are provided on each discourse slide.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/country-profiles/countries-list/customary-law/inheritancesuccession-de-facto-practices/en/?country\\_iso3=NPL](https://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/country-profiles/countries-list/customary-law/inheritancesuccession-de-facto-practices/en/?country_iso3=NPL)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342232988\\_Women%27s\\_right\\_of\\_inheritance\\_in\\_Bangladesh-\\_a\\_comparison\\_between\\_the\\_inheritance\\_right\\_of\\_women\\_in\\_Bangladesh\\_and\\_the\\_UK](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342232988_Women%27s_right_of_inheritance_in_Bangladesh-_a_comparison_between_the_inheritance_right_of_women_in_Bangladesh_and_the_UK)

<sup>4</sup> <https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/asia/india/2005/the-hindu-succession-amendment-act-2005>



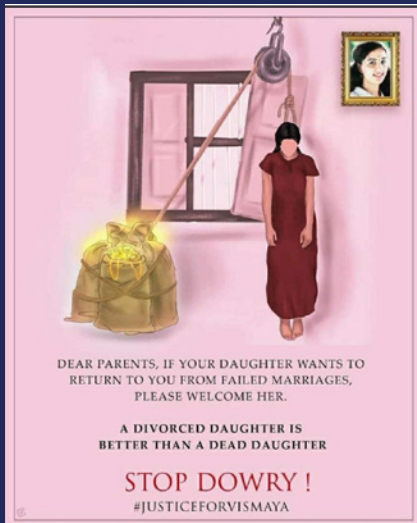
# THE ACT OF PLACING FINANCIAL VALUE ON SONS IS DEPLORED ONLINE

SIZE: 15%

COUNTRY SKEWS: India, China, Nepal<sup>1</sup>

On social media, across countries, people raise their voices against the concept of placing financial value on sons over daughters. In India, Nepal and Bangladesh, people condemn the concept of **dowry**. However, the anti-dowry conversation tends to largely be in reaction to violence against women that occurs as a result. Not as many conversations exist about how the concept of dowry furthers the idea that daughters are a “burden”.

Similarly, although China has the concept of a “bride price” rather than a dowry,<sup>2</sup> many conversations exist on Weibo about **families “buying” sons**. This occurs when the **son-in-law inherits** the family business and property. Daughters complain of parents who refuse to buy them houses and cars unless they get married (and bring in someone to inherit the family’s wealth).



“Woman poisoned by her husband due to dowry in UP. We cannot do anything for this? **Don't we have strict law against it?** #stopdowry”



“Every time they [parents] say that they will **buy you a car only after you get married**, they really just want to buy a son!”



“If anyone asks for dowry, you have to reply **‘we are not interested in marrying our daughter to a beggar family’**. In this day and age, it is unacceptable to ask for dowry.”



“It is so common to **buy someone else’s son** if you don’t have a son. Parents hand over their family business to their son-in-law rather than their own daughter. It’s rotten.”



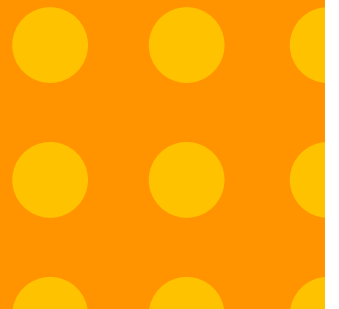
<sup>1</sup>Note on Size and Skews: The research team estimated the volume of conversation for each discourse theme relative to others, as well as the volume coming from each country relative to others. As such, country skews (which show whether the discourse was especially prominent in certain countries) are provided on each discourse slide.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30033756>

## **SON PREFERENCE**

AS SEEN, THE ONLINE  
DISCOURSE LARGELY SHUNS  
SON PREFERENCE. IT PAINTS  
A PICTURE OF A MORE  
PROGRESSIVE REALITY.

**IS THIS TRULY THE CASE?**



# SEARCH DATA REVEALS A BLEAKER PICTURE OF SON PREFERENCE

Across all countries, there are thousands of searches a year about 1) how to have a son and 2) identifying a baby's sex (in countries where prenatal sex determination is illegal). The table on the right displays this data.

Recently, growth in searches in each country is driven by:

● **BANGLADESH:**

searches about diets (+75%) and sex positions for conceiving a boy (+64%)

● **INDIA:**

searches about diets to conceive a boy (+34%) and sex determination tests (+24%)

● **NEPAL:**

ovulation periods (+50%) and general searches about how to have a boy (+31%)

● **VIETNAM:**

ovulation periods for conceiving a boy (+19%)

● **CHINA:**

general searches about how to have a boy (+14%) and signs/symptoms of a boy child (+11%)

**Google/Baidu search data over a one-year period (Mar 2021 to Feb 2022).** Figures represent search volume, while numbers in parentheses represent search growth (first half of the one-year period vs. second half). Searches about identifying gender are listed as N/A for those countries where prenatal sex determination is legal.

	Searches about identifying baby's sex	Searches about how to conceive a boy
Bangladesh	N/A	10,810 (+54%)
India	262,560 (+10%)	30,2610 (+29%)
Nepal	1,200 (0%)	2,390 (+9%)
Vietnam	N/A	15,2280 (+9%)
China	23,6670 (+38%)	60,681 (+23%)

**Please note:** search volume data is significantly larger than the figures represented here. Data is not available for all keywords searched, and thus is not entirely captured.



# SEARCH TERMS REVEAL NUANCES BETWEEN COUNTRIES

Some country-specific nuances include:

- **BANGLADESH:**

Searches tend to be largely generic, about "how to conceive a son".

- **INDIA:**

Indians are seen mentioning specific methods in their searches unlike those from other countries – this includes diets, sex positions, medicines and ovulation calendars for conceiving a son.

- **NEPAL:**

Searches reveal that calendars (astrological and ovulation) are popular son-conceiving methods.

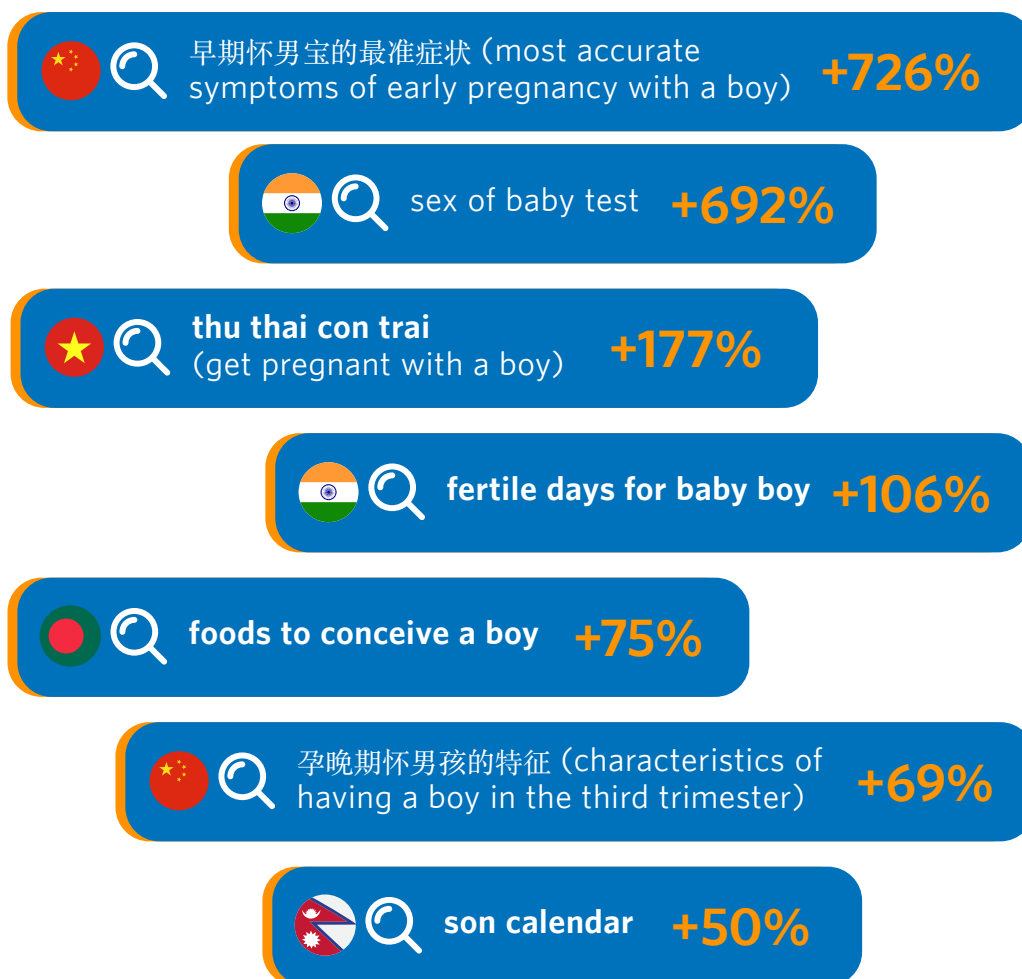
- **VIETNAM:**

It is common to search about conceiving a son as per "your wish" (ý muốn) – articles also mention this word to differentiate between having a son by chance vs. by choice.

- **CHINA:**

Search terms about signs/symptoms that reveal a baby's gender are very common. They are also very specific, as people look for signs/symptoms specific to their trimester/months.

## Snippets of growing search terms across countries:



# CONTENT AROUND “HOW TO HAVE A SON” FLOURISHES ONLINE...

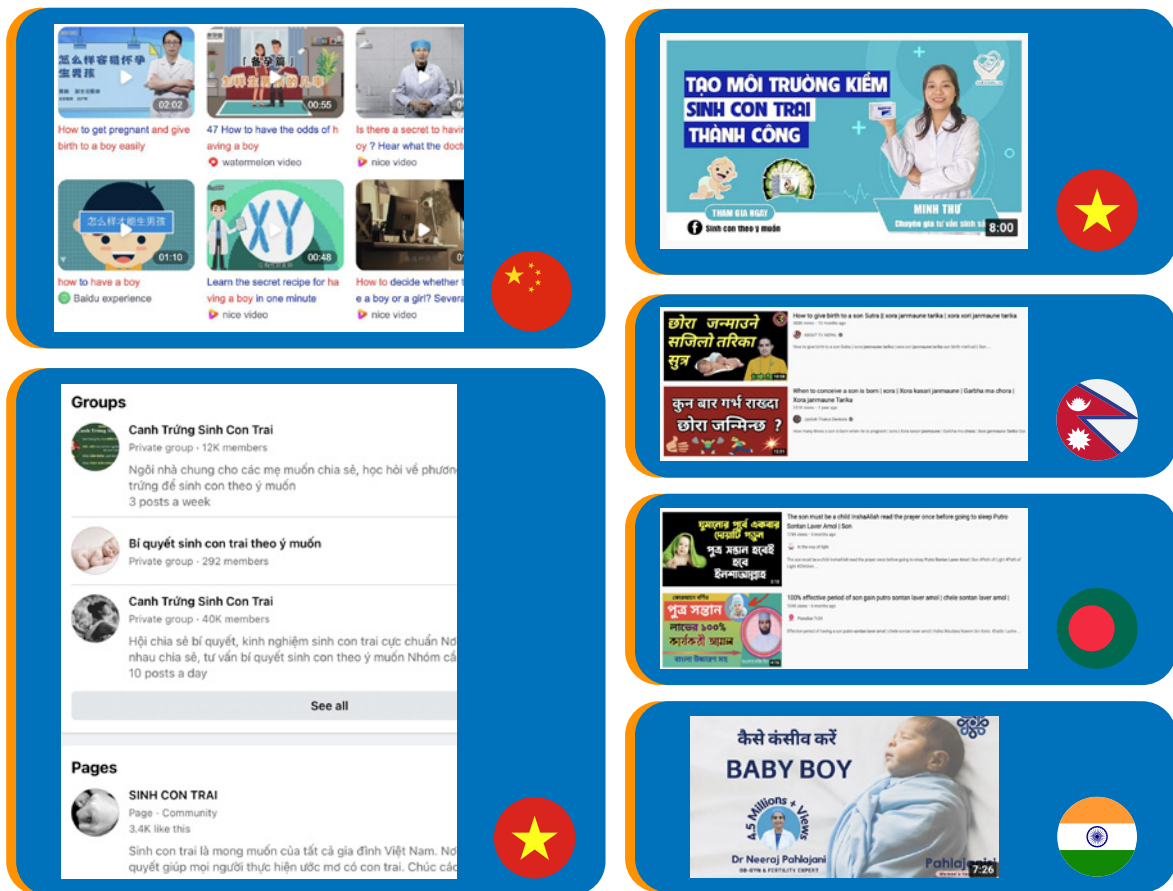
SIZE: 60%

COUNTRY SKEWS: All<sup>1</sup>

A simple search for “how to have a son” in local languages unearths countless websites/blog articles, YouTube videos, social media posts and even Facebook groups (in Vietnam) that **share instructions and tips on conceiving a son**. While most content suggests ways to “increase likelihood”, others claim a “guarantee”.

This information is typically conveyed through some type of **trusted authority**, either a medical or religious figure, in order to make the information **seem more credible**. For example, videos show someone with a lab coat or religious clothes as the thumbnail, or an article is shared on an unofficial “health care” website or blog.

On YouTube, the top resulting videos **generate around 30,000–800,000 views per video**.



Snippets of the translated results pages from Facebook, YouTube and Baidu when searching “how to have a son” in local languages.

<sup>1</sup>Note on Size and Skews: The research team estimated the volume of conversation for each discourse theme relative to others, as well as the volume coming from each country relative to others. As such, country skews (which show whether the discourse was especially prominent in certain countries) are provided on each discourse slide.

# ... WHICH SPREADS MISINFORMATION AROUND "CHOOSING" A BABY'S SEX

SIZE: 20%

COUNTRY SKEWS: All<sup>1</sup>

Online discourse on popular ways to conceive a son (including the countries in which we see them being shared the most) include:

- **Sex positions for conceiving a son** (all countries)
- **Optimal times during which to have intercourse** (ovulation periods in all countries; auspicious or astrological dates in India, Nepal and Bangladesh)
- **Diets** (ayurvedic-inspired diets in India; acidic and salty/alkaline food diets in Vietnam and China)
- **Religious prayers** (Bangladesh, India, Nepal)

This misinformation has **the potential to spread widely**, and ordinary netizens are seen discussing these methods online among themselves. Moreover, some of these methods also perpetuate the idea that the sex of the baby is either the man's or the woman's fault.

民间最流行的生男生女秘诀


生男生女秘诀：饮食篇  
传言：多吃碱性食物生男几率大，多吃酸性食物生女几率大。  
解释：在碱性环境中，男性精子中的Y染色体比X染色体要活跃，所以，带Y染色体的精子更容易与卵子结合而生男孩。反之亦然。

Popular folklore secrets for conceiving boys/girls




নেক পুত্র সন্তান  
লাভের আমল  
[সহীহ আমল]


"The best time to conceive a son [Shahih period]"



"Having a daughter or a son is not the woman's role. **It is the man's fault.** A man has X and Y chromosomes, while a woman only has X. So **it is the man's job to pass on his Y chromosome!**"



"I did **alkaline douching** almost every time before having sex when we were trying for a baby, and **now I have two sons.**"



4. Drinking cough syrup: Tips for giving birth to a boy from folklore

It sounds strange at first, but this is the experience of giving birth to a boy that has been tried by many people! Accordingly, many types of cough syrup when used have the effect of thinning body mucus, including cervical mucus. This opens the door for Y-chromosome sperm to move faster.

The advice for this secret to having a boy is that you should drink cough syrup a few days before "getting into battle". However, you should consult with your doctor about the type of product you plan to take. Because, some forms of medicine can also cause unwanted reactions to health, or give the opposite effect.



Translated snippets of methods to "guarantee" or "increase the likelihood" of having a son, as well as quotes from netizens online.

<sup>1</sup>Note on Size and Skews: The research team estimated the volume of conversation for each discourse theme relative to others, as well as the volume coming from each country relative to others. As such, country skews (which show whether the discourse was especially prominent in certain countries) are provided on each discourse slide.



# NETIZENS ONLINE SHARE SECOND-HAND STORIES OF SON PREFERENCE

SIZE: 15%

COUNTRY SKEWS: China, Vietnam, Nepal<sup>1</sup>

While there are narratives online (as explored earlier) that point towards the diminishing preference for sons over daughters, and moving towards an equal society, this may not be case. Even among **progressive and educated circles, the preference for male children is palpable.** This can be gauged through the stories shared by people online.

They make references to relatives or peers who “seem liberal” but still have a bias towards having sons and would go out of their way to have a male child. For instance, husbands insisting on “trying” for a son after already having two daughters.

There are also incidents narrated wherein **people make comments about how it is “better” to have a son.**

“So many friends, school mates, relatives either seriously/jokingly expressed that it’s better to have a son. Even some who are self proclaimed supporters of female empowerment”



“I have friends that gave birth to 2 girls, but her husband still request to **try until they get a son.** I have another relative that already had 2 girls, on the third birth **when it was a girl, their reaction was if someone had died.**”



“We are three daughters, [...] I remember one day **a neighbour** came to our home with a calendar **proposing dates where the chances of conceiving a son is high.**”



“My brother and his wife are not super educated, and more traditional. Even though they just had a girl they **immediately are trying for a boy,** they don’t even have the financial means for another child...”



<sup>1</sup>Note on Size and Skews: The research team estimated the volume of conversation for each discourse theme relative to others, as well as the volume coming from each country relative to others. As such, country skews (which show whether the discourse was especially prominent in certain countries) are provided on each discourse slide.

# FATHERS ARE MOCKED FOR NOT BEING “MANLY ENOUGH” TO HAVE A SON

SIZE: 5%

COUNTRY SKEWS: Bangladesh, Nepal, India<sup>1</sup>

Men are mocked online when birthing another consecutive daughter, or sometimes even one, as it is treated as something **emasculating**.

In Nepal, we find men mocking fathers of daughters by saying the father “does not have enough Y-chromosomes”, while in Vietnam it turns into a joke about the strength of their sperm (as a reflection of the father’s own strength).

Oftentimes men pass these off as “jokes”, claiming they are not gender-biased. There is even evidence of men condemning acts of violence committed against women for not birthing a son, and in the same line pinning the blame on the father. In either case, birthing a daughter is treated as something unfortunate.

“[Name redacted] doesn’t have enough y-chromosomes”



“4 daughters? Bro couldn’t even send one Y chromosome??”



“I’m not surprised his sperm wasn’t strong enough to produce a boy”



“His sperm didn’t do any work at all”

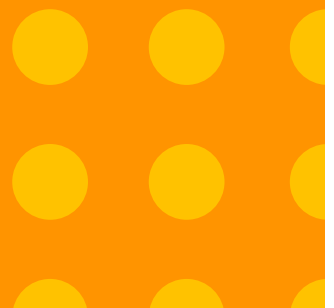


**Comments made in response to men who have had daughter(s).**

<sup>1</sup>Note on Size and Skews: The research team estimated the volume of conversation for each discourse theme relative to others, as well as the volume coming from each country relative to others. As such, country skews (which show whether the discourse was especially prominent in certain countries) are provided on each discourse slide.

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THE ONLINE DISCOURSE  
SURROUNDING **CHILD**  
**MARRIAGE.**





# MANY SHARE STORIES OF CHILD MARRIAGE OCCURRING IN THE PRESENT DAY...

SIZE: 45%

COUNTRY SKEWS: India<sup>1</sup>

In the online sphere, netizens are seen sharing stories of early marriage occurring more recently (in the past decade): this ranges from encounters with child brides, to first-hand accounts of women recalling suitors arriving at their houses when they were merely teenagers.

While most of the conversation **points towards remote villages and minority groups** as communities/areas where early marriage still occurs, some stress that the **mindsets that perpetuate child marriage are still seen today** even in urban areas. Indians, in particular, are seen talking about how their older relatives tend to encourage the bachelors in their families to find a young wife (16-20) as she is better suited to bear healthy children.

"My husband's family put pressure on me to have a baby. Every month when I got my period they used to look at me as if I'm a traitor to the family. Finally I got pregnant unplanned, I wasn't ready for a kid and neither was my body as I lost the kid at 3 months. But now everyone talks and says it's because I'm in my mid 20s. **They say if he married a younger girl between 17-20** the child would have been born because they have fresh and fertile eggs. **This kind of thinking is still common.**"



"Sadly this is **mostly happening still in villages...**I have seen a 15 year old at hospital getting scan.... when I talked to her I couldn't stop crying....she was not allowed to study further and at such small age she was married to a man who was 15 years older than her..."



"I think these practices are **still prevailing in underdeveloped regions** where there's lack of education and among minority groups. So government must take action in these regions."



<sup>1</sup>Note on Size and Skews: The research team estimated the volume of conversation for each discourse theme relative to others, as well as the volume coming from each country relative to others. As such, country skews (which show whether the discourse was especially prominent in certain countries) are provided on each discourse slide.

# ... WHILE OTHERS BELIEVE THAT IT IS A THING OF THE PAST

**SIZE:** 15%

**COUNTRY SKEWS:** Nepal, Bangladesh<sup>1</sup>

In conversations about early marriage in the past (particularly under documentaries about pre-90s early marriage), many pass off early marriage as something that no longer happens.

Comments about being fortunate that “such things don’t happen in our time” are aplenty. People express gratitude that **modern-day customs and traditions have changed** and that girls today are able to complete their education and live life on their own terms.

This reveals a **gap in knowledge:** many are unaware of how rampant early marriage is in their countries in the present day.

“We are very lucky to be born in this generation, I really cried a lot while watching this film...”



“I cannot imagine having to end my education in grade 2 to get married... what a horrible thing. **We should all be fortunate the times have changed.**”



“[This documentary about early marriage] really resembles back then Nepal. **We are really fortunate at this era.**”



“Married at 11??? At 11 I was sleeping with teddy bears and doing my homework. We are so lucky **this type of thing doesn’t happen anymore.**”



<sup>1</sup>**Note on Size and Skews:** The research team estimated the volume of conversation for each discourse theme relative to others, as well as the volume coming from each country relative to others. As such, country skews (which show whether the discourse was especially prominent in certain countries) are provided on each discourse slide.

# NETIZENS EMPATHIZE WITH THEIR GRANDMOTHERS WHO MARRIED AS CHILDREN

SIZE: 25%

COUNTRY SKEWS: Nepal, Bangladesh<sup>1</sup>

Conversations about early marriage online reveal that it is an **issue close to home** for many as people share stories of their **grandmothers' (sometimes even mothers') child marriages**. When stories about child brides are shared online, people empathize with them and bring up their own grandmothers' stories. The conversations are very emotive in nature as netizens share the shock, anguish and remorse they felt for their grandmothers, and now the child bride in the story.

All in all, the discourse reveals that people tend to **react strongly to stories** of child brides and early marriages. These stories are met with an outpouring of emotion and tend to **encourage conversation** about early marriage and the mindsets, cultural norms and policies (or lack thereof) that have allowed it to take place.

"My grandmother always told me about her story. She was married at the age of 8. I can feel how much she struggled in her life like thousands of others."



"When you realize that your grandma went through the same, **you feel how lucky you are**. I can't even imagine myself being in the same situation. **I couldn't control my tears.**"



"My grandma was married at age 12. I can barely imagine how it would be if it still was the same tradition. **We are lucky this type of thing doesn't happen anymore.**"



"My grandma used to tell us she studied only up to grade 2 at that time! My grandma also feels deep inside her heart when she says 'I would have studied so much if the times were like this when I was younger!', **which breaks me the most**"



<sup>1</sup>Note on Size and Skews: The research team estimated the volume of conversation for each discourse theme relative to others, as well as the volume coming from each country relative to others. As such, country skews (which show whether the discourse was especially prominent in certain countries) are provided on each discourse slide.



# PEOPLE CALL FOR STRONGER ACTIONS AGAINST EARLY MARRIAGE

SIZE: 15%

COUNTRY SKEWS: India, Nepal<sup>1</sup>

In India, Nepal and Bangladesh, governments have set a minimum age of marriage and have enacted laws that criminalize child marriage.<sup>2,3,4</sup> However, many locals online express shock about early marriage statistics in these countries, which reveal that the issue is still prevalent.

People online call for **stricter punishments** for all actors involved in an early marriage and better vigilance. Many in India express frustration that these laws do little to help if there isn't enough **state or police-led vigilance** taking place in areas with high incidences of early marriage. Some also mention that better training should be provided to people on reporting early marriage. On the other hand, in Nepal, netizens complain that the government isn't doing enough to **prevent child "love" marriages, where children/adolescents elope and get married.**<sup>5,6</sup>

"This movie is based on traditional child marriage. But today adolescents are getting married without parents concern due to **love affairs** so we should be focused towards prevention of this **modern case of child marriage.**"



"In India the age of a girl is from 18 when she is allowed to get married. But boy has to be at least 21 to get married. What type of justice is this? Both girls and boys should get the same age."



"Raising the age is a good thing... this allows girls to complete their education. Law banning child marriage exists... but we still hear news on the same, **due to lack of vigilance.** Center should take states into confidence and **take steps on vigilance** as well before making a law."



"We have these laws on child marriage, but many **people in Rajasthan don't listen.** There has to be stricter punishments and better monitoring!"



<sup>1</sup>**Note on Size and Skews:** The research team estimated the volume of conversation for each discourse theme relative to others, as well as the volume coming from each country relative to others. As such, country skews (which show whether the discourse was especially prominent in certain countries) are provided on each discourse slide.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.childlineindia.org/a/issues/child-marriage#:~:text=In%20India%2C%20under%20The%20Prohibition,legal%20age%20limit%20is%20null>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/09/09/our-time-sing-and-play/child-marriage-nepal>

<sup>4</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/review-effectiveness-new-legal-regime-prevent-child-marriages-bangladesh-call-law#:~:text=The%20current%20law%20in%20Bangladesh,a%20female%20as%2018%20years>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.girlsnotbrides.es/articulos/6-facts-you-need-to-know-about-child-marriage-in-nepal/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/Child%20Marriage%20in%20Nepal-%20Report.pdf>



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# INFLUENCER ANALYSIS

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# METHODOLOGY

## Influencer Analysis<sup>1</sup>

1

**Data gathering:** Quilt.AI curated a list of 36 influencers (breakdown by country and list of influencers available in the appendix) and scraped 100 posts from each of their available social media profiles (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Weibo) where feasible.

2

**Discourse analysis:** Influencers' posts were studied qualitatively to gauge the most common themes and topics discussed pertaining to female empowerment, child marriage and gender equality.

## Limitations

1

**Discourse is prominent primarily in Bangladesh and India:** We find little discourse on harmful practices and empowerment of girls in the sample of data curated from influencers in Vietnam, China and Nepal. For Vietnam and China, fewer influencers were identified in our desk research.



<sup>1</sup>Influencers include prominent advocates working to abolish child marriage and GBSS. They were identified by country through desk research and in collaboration with UNFPA country offices.

# IN INDIA, THE EMPHASIS ON EDUCATION AND ENROLLING GIRLS IN SCHOOLS IS PROMINENT

In India, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted already vulnerable groups when it comes to access to education. Research by UNICEF suggests enrolment of girls in schools is lower compared with boys, especially in senior grades. Older girls are more likely to be relegated to household chores and caring for their families, which impacts their education and in many cases leads to child marriage.<sup>1</sup>

Influencers such as Safeena Husain and Shipra Jha emphasize the importance of education for girls. They speak about the **rise in dropout rates and the need for community intervention to ensure that girls stay in school**. The link between girls' education and ending child marriage is further explored by them.

Discourse among influencers also includes heartening stories of girls being enrolled in school by their mothers or them going to school, especially in rural areas. They also **urge the government to enact policies such as scholarships, which ensure girls' access to equitable education**.

**The discourse on education of girls is dominant in India**, versus all other countries studied.

## Safeena Husain

"Before COVID-19 there were over 4 million Indian girls out of school. Today, estimates show that 10 million girls are at risk of dropping out, with one in two girls in #India's state of Uttar Pradesh unsure if they will ever go back."~@safeenahusain  
[news.trust.org/item/202111181...](https://news.trust.org/item/202111181...)



## Safeena Husain

Armed with a comb and half bottle of mustard oil, little Payal's mother getting her ready for school enrolment!  
[@educate\\_girls](#)



## Shipra Jha

Prioritize the education of girls through enabling policies like scholarships so that their lives are saved. Act now !



## Shipra Jha

#endchild marriage- local communities can remain vigilant, in some places NGOs have started bridge schools to ensure girls are able to go back to school once it opens



<sup>1</sup><https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/16511/file/India%20Case%20Study.pdf>

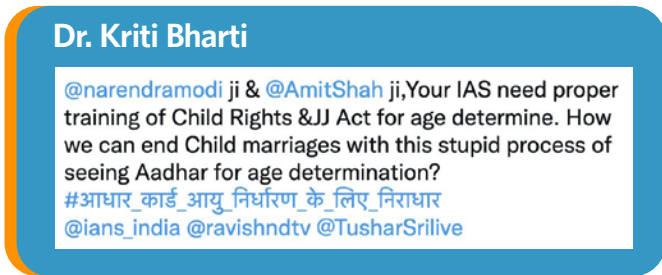


# CELEBRATING THEIR OWN OR ORGANIZATIONS' WORK IN TACKLING CHILD MARRIAGE

All the discourse from influencers about **child marriage comes from India**. The discourse can be broken down into several types of narratives.

Firstly, influencers such as Dr. Kriti Bharti share their own work in the field of ending child marriage. They share news and magazine articles they have written. Influencers also **speak out against local approaches that perpetuate child marriage** such as using Aadhar cards for age determination. Secondly, influencers **share supportive posts from organizations that seek to end child marriage**. This includes posts to help raise awareness of the organization's work (e.g. Girls Not Brides) or celebrate the accomplishments.

The third type of narrative that emerges is **sharing stories of girls or women who faced child marriage**. These stories talk both of the challenges the girls/women face and success stories of girls who escaped child marriage.



# ARDENT SUPPORT FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT BY FEATURING WOMEN OR EVENTS

All the posts regarding women's empowerment are from India as well. There are three emerging narratives from the posts.

First, there are posts **that refer to government initiatives around women's empowerment.** For example, highlighting statements by government officials (e.g. Smriti Irani) around women's empowerment. This also includes sharing events of government officials being trained on **women's empowerment efforts such as employment, sports and politics.**

There are also influencers who feature inspiring women on their accounts or share posts from other organizations. For example, Sohini Bhattacharya shared a video featuring inspiring young girls who are challenging gender norms. Others also **retweet organizations' posts that feature their beneficiaries** or the work they are doing.

### Dr. Ranjana Kumari

Retweeted by Rekha Sharma

NCW  
@ncwIndia

NCW organised 3-day training programme on Leadership Skills & Empowerment of Women for Elected Women PRI Members at State Institute of Panchayat & Rural Development, Assam. Women representatives from zila parishad, anchalik panchayat & gram panchayat attended the training. @PIBWCD



Rekha Sharma and 9 others

### Dr. Ranjana Kumari

Retweeted by Smriti Z Irani

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting  
@MIB\_India

The @MOMaIndia launched #NaiRoshni, A Scheme for Leadership Development of Minority Women in 2012-2013 for the empowerment of women.

The scheme will act as a catalyst to embolden women and to make them Aatmanirbhar

@PMOIndia @MinistryWCD @smritiirani @ianuragthakur @Murugan\_MoS



0:42 3,635 views

### Smriti Irani

Retweeted by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting  
@MIB\_India

The @MOMaIndia launched #NaiRoshni, A Scheme for Leadership Development of Minority Women in 2012-2013 for the empowerment of women.

The scheme will act as a catalyst to embolden women and to make them Aatmanirbhar

@PMOIndia @MinistryWCD @smritiirani @ianuragthakur @Murugan\_MoS



Watch again

0:00 3,205 views

### Rekha Sharma

Retweeted by Dr. Ranjana Kumari

Canada in India  
@CanadaInIndia

Canada's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs @MartaMorganUSS met inspiring leaders and exchanged views on #feminist #ForeignPolicy aimed at empowering women and girls 🌍 - to build #GenderEquality, peace, #inclusion, & prosperity!

@WAGE\_FEGC @CanadaFP



# CLARION CALL TO END RAPE CULTURE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT AGAINST GIRLS

In October 2020, the Bangladesh Government approved an amendment that would allow for the death penalty in rape cases. This was in response to nationwide outrage and protests, after the sexual assault of a woman in the remote southern village of Noakhali.<sup>1</sup> On platforms such as Twitter, there were fiery **conversations on the perpetuation of rape culture in Bangladesh**. Activists like Umama Zillur demanded accountability from the Government. Hashtags such as #RageAgainstRape were also used to document protests across the country.

Besides this, influencers such as Nazma Akte spoke about **sexual assault faced by women and the need for raising awareness** to mark the beginning of the "16 Days of Activism" campaign. In Nepal, limited discourse was observed on the topic of rape and sexual intercourse with minors.

While influencers don't always directly speak about early marriage and son preference, they **use social media to educate people about larger systemic problems that girls and women face**, which are important when it comes to the advancement of girls' and women's rights.

## Umama Zillur

All the work had been done for the government, all they needed to do was decide if they were going to listen.

Let's not forget to ask - what's the hold up on our other key demands critical to tackle rape culture in Bangladesh?



## Nazma Akter

The #16days campaign starts today, raising awareness of violence against women; the most prevalent form of human rights violation. Rape & sexual assault have risen throughout pandemic. Laws protecting women at home & at work must be better upheld. #16DaysOfActivism @IndustriALL\_GU



## Bandana Rana

सहमत - नाबालिगसँगको यौन सम्पर्क सहमतीमै भए पनि बलात्कार नै हो । PERIOD .

Translated from Nepali by Google

Agreed - Sexual intercourse with a minor is rape even if it is consensual. PERIOD.



## Umama Zillur

a powerful stance against rape culture.

#RageAgainstRape



<sup>1</sup><https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/12/bangladesh-approves-death-penalty-for-rape-cases>





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# STAKEHOLDERS ANALYSIS: **HIGH-REACH VERSUS LOW-REACH ORGANIZATIONS**





# METHODOLOGY

## Influencer Analysis

- 1 Data gathering:** Quilt.AI curated a list of 29 organizations (breakdown by country and list of organizations available in the appendix) and scraped 100 posts from each of their available social media profiles (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Weibo) where feasible.
- 2 High, medium, low reach tagging:** Organizations are tagged as either high, medium or low reach. This was based on organizations' total social media reach (a summation of the follower counts of all their social media profiles). Those among the top third of total reach were flagged as high, middle third as medium and low third as low.
- 3 Text and image analytics:** Quilt.AI uses in-house AI tools to analyse all social media posts. Natural language processing (NLP) and image-processing analytics allow us to disaggregate the number of hashtags used in a post, identify top objects detected in an image, top words detected in captions and the dominant sentiment detected in captions through sentiment analysis.
- 4 Drawing inferences from high versus low reach and engagement:** Quilt.AI's team of researchers compare the NLP and image-analytics outputs of high-, medium- and low-reach stakeholders to draw out key differences in the types of content shared. Posts are also sorted by engagement to understand what makes content draw higher engagement. Websites of stakeholders are also scanned qualitatively for a perspective on resources shared.

## Limitations

- 1 Not all organizations identified have social media profiles:** These are still included in our website scan.

# HIGH-REACH STAKEHOLDERS OFTEN USE IMAGES OF REAL PEOPLE

Quilt.AI ran object detection on the sample of social media posts from stakeholders.

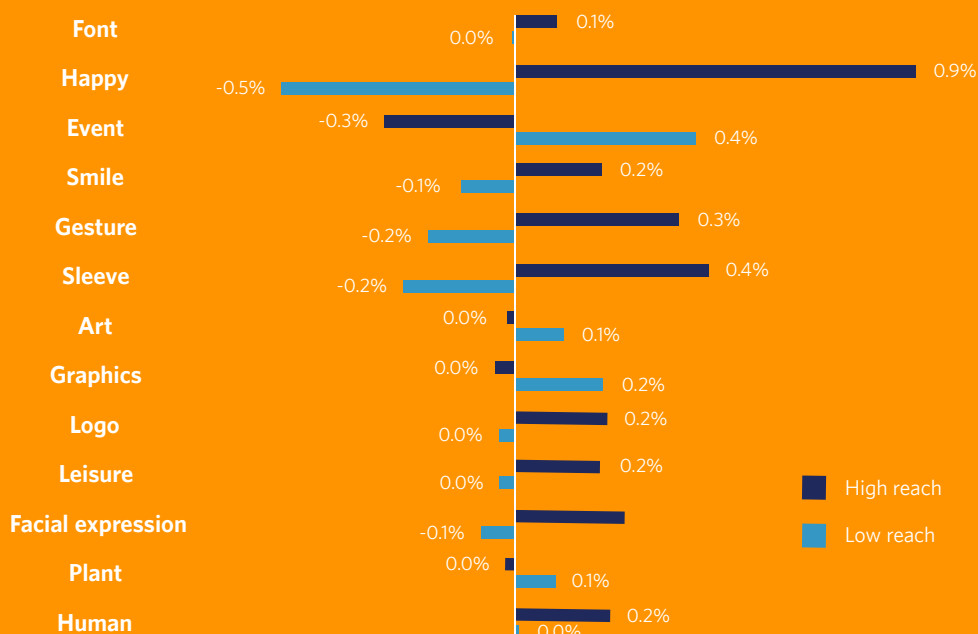
**For high-reach stakeholders, the following objects appear more than average:** happy (detected in facial expressions), smile, hand gestures, sleeve (detected in clothing), logo, leisure (detected in actions), facial expressions, human.

**While for low reach, it is the following:** event, art, graphics, plant, screenshot.

The striking difference between the two is that high-reach stakeholders tend to use more real people in their posts, as evidenced by human elements appearing more often than average in their posts. Low-reach providers tend to use more graphics and illustrations than average.

These images of real people don't necessarily include faces: many high-reach stakeholders use images of hands, backs of heads and so forth to uphold privacy of victims.

**Below are the objects detected the most often in posts. The chart shows the object detected % difference from average** (for example: for high reach, 20% of posts had 'font' detected, this is 0.1% more than the average share of posts with 'font' detected)



# HIGH-REACH STAKEHOLDERS USE MORE HASHTAGS AND MENTIONS

**High-reach stakeholders tend to use more hashtags per post**, on average 4 per post as opposed to low reach, which use around 3 per post. Hashtags can increase a post's reach and engagement as they make the post discoverable outside of the poster's account.<sup>1,2</sup> Top hashtags from high- and medium-reach stakeholders reveal that these organizations use generic hashtags outside of their own hashtags. For example, hashtags like **#educategirls**, **#sdg4** (sustainable development goal 4) and **#education** are used alongside their own hashtags like Educate Girls' **#girlsgobacktoschool** and UNICEF's **#foreverychild**.

Moreover, on Instagram, high-reach stakeholders are seen **mentioning other organizations/people in their posts more often**. These are typically partner organizations, speakers or activists featured in posts. Posts that use more mentions are more likely to get shared by the person tagged, thereby helping increase reach and engagement.

Reach level	Hashtags per post	Mentions per post
High	4.44	2.91
Medium	4.90	2.23
Low	3.20	2.10

## Top 10 hashtags detected in high- and medium-reach stakeholders' posts

- 1) **#educategirls**
- 2) **#sdg4**
- 3) **#education**
- 4) **#covid19**
- 5) **#endchildmarriage**
- 6) **#internationalwomensday**
- 7) **#backtoschool**
- 8) **#childmarriage**
- 9) **#genderequality**
- 10) **#educationmatters**

<sup>1</sup> <https://stickyleads.com/using-hashtags-to-increase-your-reach/#:~:text=According%20to%20a%20Twitter%20study,more%20comments%20and%20likes%2C%20respectively.>

<sup>2</sup> <https://later.com/blog/ultimate-guide-to-using-instagram-hashtags/>





# POSTS THAT RECEIVE HIGH ENGAGEMENT TELL REAL STORIES

Taking a closer look at content with **high engagement** (top 30% of posts by likes) reveals **the power of real stories**. Organizations like Human Rights Watch, CRY, Save the Children, UNICEF India (which are all high-reach organizations) tend to generate very high engagement on posts that share real stories. For example, CRY India posted about a bus service they organized for a local school, but instead of merely sharing this initiative, they attached a photo of a student (Anita) and shared the story from her perspective. There are numerous posts from CRY India of similar nature, all generating high engagement. **Humanizing an initiative or issue** therefore can have a powerful effect on engagement.

Another key engagement-generating tactic used by high/medium-reach organizations is using **calls-to-action**, particularly on Facebook posts. For example, Save the Children on Facebook asked users to comment what they think can empower a child, thereby increasing the post's discoverability as it reappears on others' newsfeeds.

**Posts below were among the top 10 most liked in our sample.  
All images are linked to the original post.**



\*Image used for representational purposes only

# THERE IS A CLEAR NEED FOR MORE ACTIONABLE RESOURCES FOR PEOPLE

It is evident from the discourse on child marriage and son preference/GBSS that many netizens strongly oppose these practices. The discourse on child marriage in particular reveals that people feel the need for more vigilance. However, few stakeholders provide clear and easily accessible information on **what people should do if they encounter** instances of early marriage or GBSS.

The majority of websites are focused on gathering donations and sharing initiatives. Similarly, learning resources tend to be focused on systemic efforts that can reduce such practices, with **little localized and actionable information** on how to directly report cases of GBSS/child marriage.

Searching for “report child marriage” in Bangladesh and Nepal results in reports/statistics on child marriage on the first results page. In India, UNICEF and ChildLine provide more actionable steps people can take. This type of information should be more readily available so **citizens are better informed on what actions they can take themselves.**

## How to report a child marriage in India

If you hear about a child marriage happening in your school or neighbourhood, you can tell your nearest panchayat, closest police station, a nearby charity that works for children or your local leaders, representatives or MLAs. These adults have a responsibility to stop a child marriage happening.

## What if I want to stay anonymous?

If you need advice or don't want to be identified, you can also call the childline helpline on 1098. You'll reach someone trained to help young people like you. You don't need to tell them your name.

## Don't put yourself in danger

Be mindful of your safety at all times. If intervening directly in any incident could put you in danger, or you see someone who is being attacked physically or in serious danger, call an adult for help immediately. In some cases, it may even be necessary to call the authorities.

## How to speak to my family and friends about child marriage

From your neighbor, to your aunty to your bus driver - there are many people around us who we can help to educate about child marriage.

Here are four strong messages you can share with anyone in your community about child marriage. If you're trying to change someone's mind, it's a good idea to listen to their ideas,

unicef for every child  
India

**UNICEF India and ChildLine provide actionable steps that citizens can take to stop child marriage:** this includes information about reporting to authorities as well as how to initiate conversations about child marriage.

## Report a child who needs care and protection

Fill as many details as possible to locate a child

Child's Full name	Child's (Email Address)	Child's Mobile (India Only)
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Child's Address		
<input type="text"/>		
City/District	State/UT	Pincode
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Child's Age	Child's Gender	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female <input type="radio"/> Transgender	
Language Spoken	Reason for reporting	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	
Please specify (any other reasons)	Please keep my contact details confidential.	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	



**Shared learning and capacity building**

- Advocacy**  
At Girls Not Brides we want to see local and national governments, regional bodies, and global institutions direct money and resources towards ending child marriage. We advocate for child marriage laws, policies and programmes that empower girls and their communities. We want them to be well-funded, comprehensive, and multi-sectoral.
- Fundraising**  
Ending child marriage requires long-term, sustainable funding. Yet there is currently not enough available and it can be particularly hard for community-based and national organisations to access it. Girls Not Brides.
- Youth Action**  
Resources, tools and information for young activists, teacher organisations, civil society actors and donors to support and promote meaningful inclusion of youth in the collective efforts of the Partnership to end child marriage.
- Child Marriage Research to Action Network**  
The CMARAN is a global alliance and platform for a coordinated global research agenda on child marriage, and to encourage the uptake of research by policy-makers and practitioners, etc.

**Learning for them**

- Child marriage and education**  
Keeping girls in school is one of the best ways to prevent child marriage. Child marriage limits girls' access to quality education. Here you will find key facts, reports, content...
- Child marriage and COVID-19**  
The COVID-19 pandemic is changing the way we live our lives - and the way we carry out our work. Child saving governments and non-governmental organisations are having to rethink...
- Child marriage and health**  
Child marriage has far-reaching consequences for girls' health. Explore how key facts and insights on the links between child marriage and adolescent pregnancy, gender-based violence, female genital mutilation/cutting, HIV and...
- Child marriage and humanitarian contexts**  
An overview of the key facts, drivers and consequences of child marriage in humanitarian contexts, and recommendations on how to prioritise girls and end the practice in times of crisis.
- Child marriage and the SDGs**  
Governments across the world have committed to a number of Sustainable Development Goals...

**GIRLS NOT BRIDES**

**An example of the types of learning/resources pages that most stakeholders have:** Girls not Brides' website shares educational content around child marriage, but no actionable steps that citizens can take.

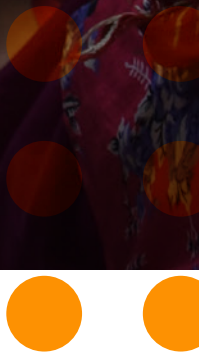




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# APPENDIX

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# TOTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND INFLUENCERS ANALYSED PER COUNTRY

Country	Organizations	Influencers
Bangladesh	7	7
China	3	8
India	7	11
Nepal	5	7
Vietnam	3	4
Across Countries	4	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>37</b>

## ORGANIZATIONS ANALYSED (1/3)

Organization	Country	Social media	Reach across socials
Kotha	Bangladesh	Website, Instagram, Facebook	10,036
Naripokkho	Bangladesh	Website, Facebook	11,186
Rupantar	Bangladesh	Website, Facebook	35,141
Udayan	Bangladesh	Website, Instagram, Facebook	10
UNFPA Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Website, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook	49,883
USAID Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Website, Instagram, Facebook	1,061,900
MDG Achievement Fund	Bangladesh	Website	N/A
Educating Girls of Rural China	China	Website, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook	2,667
Feminist Voices	China	Facebook	806
UNFPA China	China	Website, Twitter	355



## ORGANIZATIONS ANALYSED (2/3)

Organization	Country	Social media	Reach across socials
Save the Children	India	Website, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook	1,512,478
Breakthrough India	India	Website, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook	463,152
CRY (Child Rights and You)	India	Website, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook	842,304
Educate Girls	India	Website, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook	167,199
Saarathi Trust	India	Website, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook	3,822
UNFPA India	India	Website, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook	24,999
UNICEF India	India	Website, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook	4,627,947
Girls Not Brides	India, Nepal, Bangladesh	Website, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook	238,541
Terre des hommes	India, Bangladesh	Website, Twitter, Instagram	28,892

## ORGANIZATIONS ANALYSED (3/3)

Organization	Country	Social media	Reach across socials
Plan International	India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Vietnam	Website, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook	341,535
ICRW Asia	Multiple countries	Website, Twitter, Facebook	4,291
Janaki Women Awareness Society	Nepal	Website, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook	849
Women's Rehabilitation Centre (Worec)	Nepal	Website, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook	13,146
UNFPA Nepal	Nepal	Website, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook	65,963
ActionAid Nepal	Nepal	Website, Instagram, Facebook	8,317
Human Rights Watch	Nepal	Website, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook	8,884,518
Centre for Initiatives in Health and Population (CCIHP)	Vietnam	Website, Facebook	2,695
ISDS	Vietnam	Website, Twitter, Instagram	11,960
UNFPA Vietnam	Vietnam	Twitter, Instagram	54,229

# INFLUENCERS ANALYSED (1/4)

Name	Profile	Country	Social media	Reach across socials
Shireen Huq	Women's rights activists and co-founder of Naripokkho	Bangladesh	Facebook	784
Umama Zillur	Women's rights activist and founder of Kotha	Bangladesh	Twitter, Instagram, Facebook	2,323
Ministry of Women and Child Affairs	Government ministry	Bangladesh	Facebook	17,000
Sheikh Hasina	Prime Minister of Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Instagram, Facebook	4,158
Prof. Naila Kabeer	Renowned social economist and Professor of Gender and Development at LSE	Bangladesh	Twitter, Facebook	11,246
Nazma Akter	Bangladeshi trade unionist and founder of Awaj Foundation	Bangladesh	Twitter, Instagram	13,071
Maheen Sultan	Renowned scholar who works on gender	Bangladesh		-
Liang Xiaomen	Feminist activist	China	Twitter, Facebook	3,111
Li Tingting/ Li Maizi	Actress and gender equality advocate	China	Facebook	2,800
Xiao Meili	Women's rights activist and feminist	China	Twitter	77

# INFLUENCERS ANALYSED (2/4)

Name	Profile	Country	Social media	Reach across socials
子午侠士	Social media influencer and advocate for women's rights	China	Weibo	-
Yang Li	Stand-up comedian	China		-
Jiang Yilei or 'Papi Jiang'	Comedian	China	Facebook	398,000
Xiong Jing	Mixed martial artist	China	Facebook	-
Dr Kriti Bharti	Social activist and founder of Saarthi Trust	India	Twitter, Instagram, Facebook	8,868
Dr Ranjana Kumari	Activist, writer and academic	India	Twitter, Facebook	491,922
Farhan Akhtar	Actor and Goodwill Ambassador for UN Women	India	Twitter, Instagram, Facebook	18,960,102
Smriti Irani	Union Cabinet Minister for Women and Child Development	India	Twitter, Instagram, Facebook	18,762,358
Priyanka Chopra	Actor and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador	India	Twitter, Instagram, Facebook	40,742,757
Rekha Sharma	Chairperson, National Commission for Women	India	Twitter, Facebook	96,118
Suneeta Kar Dhar	Feminist activist and co-founder of South Asia Women's Foundation	India	Twitter, Instagram	2,449

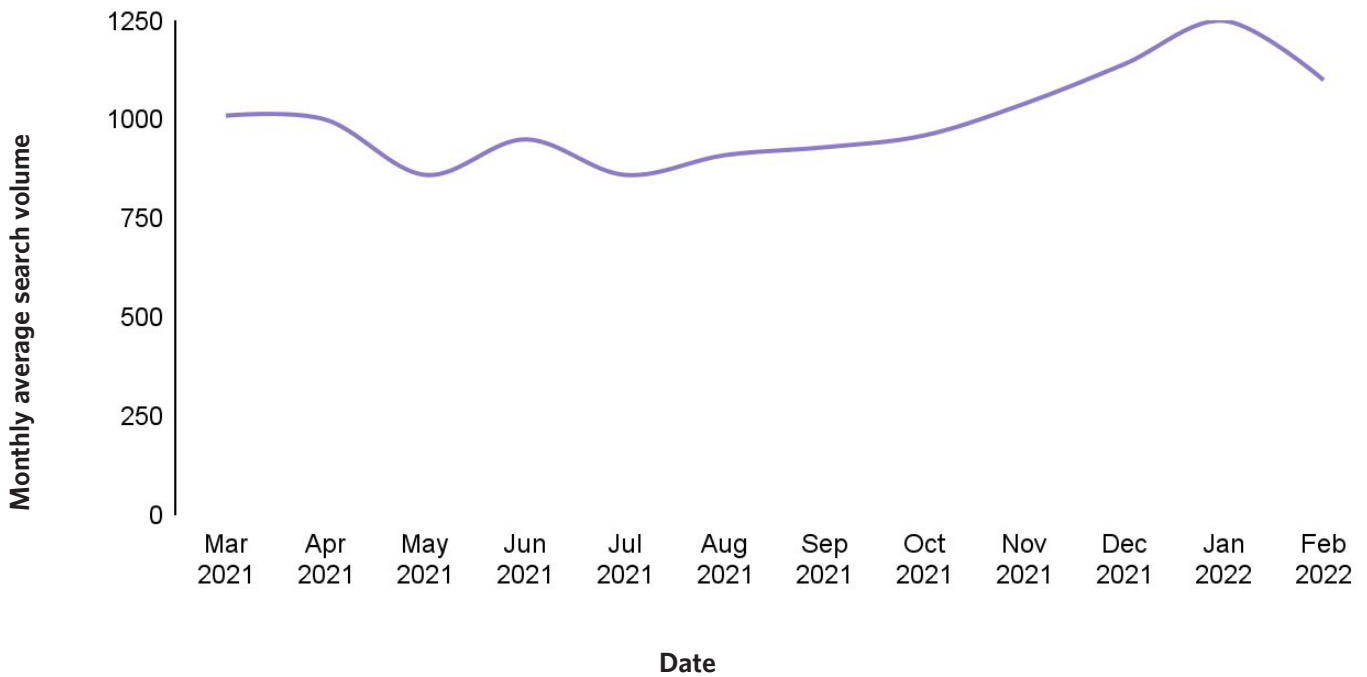
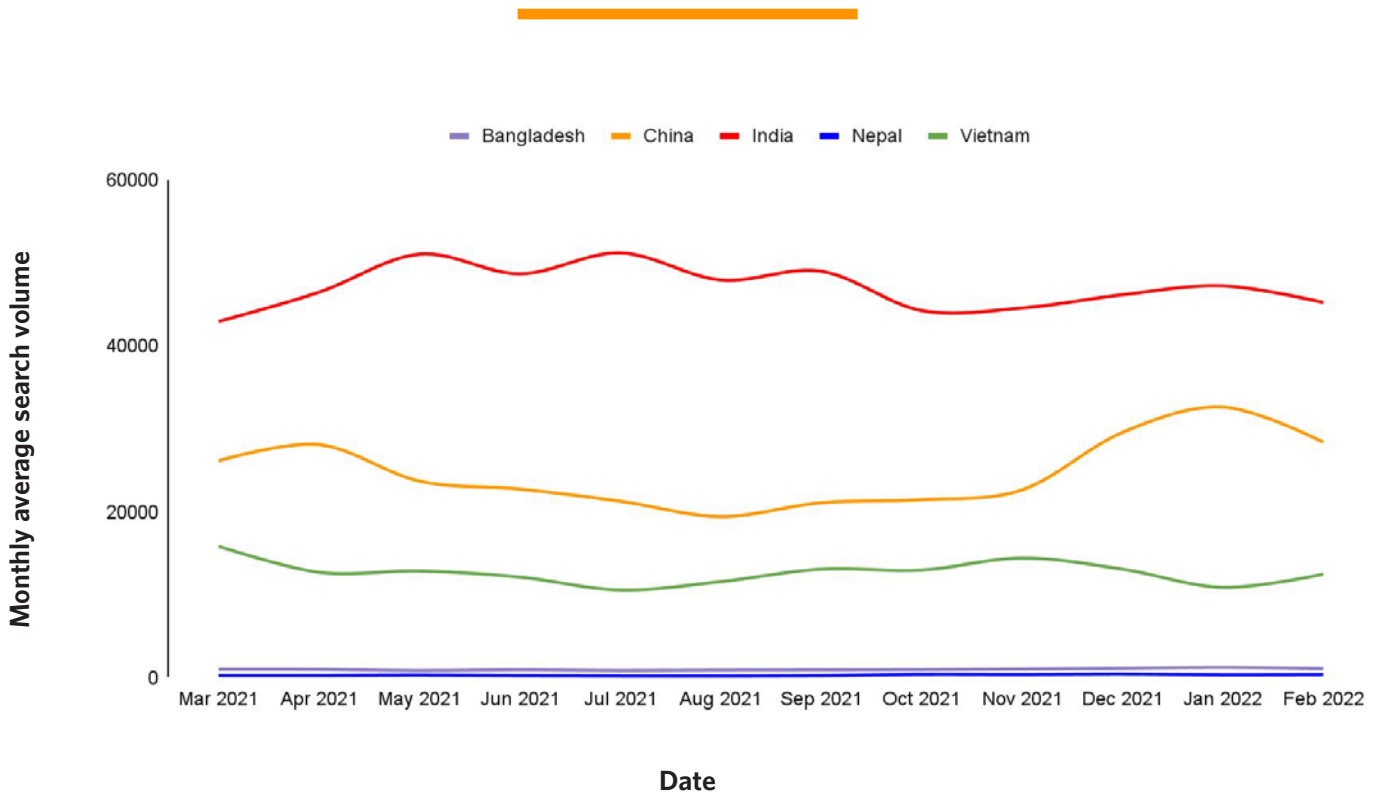
## INFLUENCERS ANALYSED (3/4)

Name	Profile	Country	Social media	Reach across socials
Avani Lekhara	Olympic Paralympian and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Ambassador	India	Twitter, Instagram	111,342
Shipra Jha	Head of Asia Engagement, Girls not Brides	India	Twitter	285
Sohini Bhattacharya	CEO and President of Breakthrough India	India	Twitter	1,582
Safeena Husain	Social worker and Founder of Educate Girls	India	Twitter	5,652
Sonali Regmi	Social worker	Nepal	Twitter	19
Melissa Upreti	Lawyer and human rights activist	Nepal	Twitter	675
Bandana Rana	Women's right and gender equality practitioner	Nepal	Twitter	15,583
Prashansa KC	Activist	Nepal	Facebook	1,730
Rastra Timalsena (Random Nepali)	Lawyer and YouTuber	Nepal	Twitter, Instagram, Facebook	33,334
Nankali Maksud	Senior Advisor, Harmful Practices, UNICEF HQ	Nepal	Twitter	991
Mamta (The Digital Lawyer)	Lawyer and social media influencer	Nepal	Instagram, Facebook	11,383

## INFLUENCERS ANALYSED (4/4)

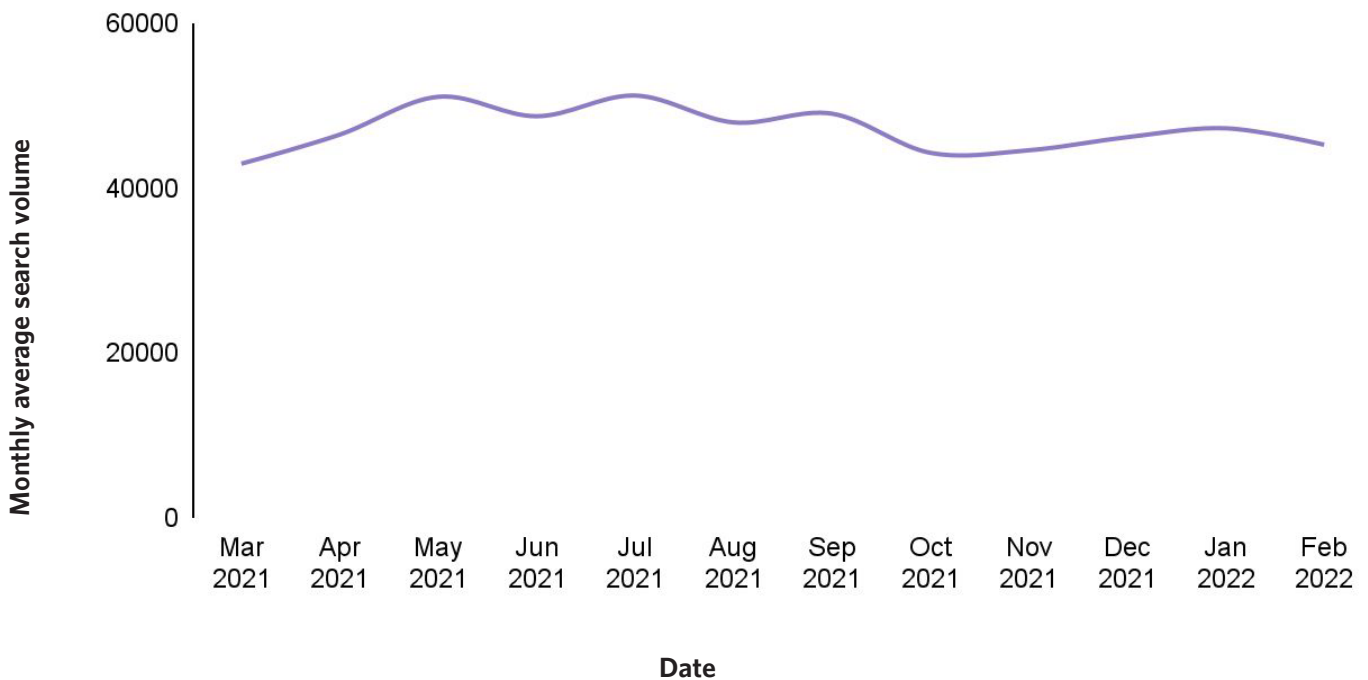
Name	Profile	Country	Social media	Reach across socials
Hoang Bach	Singer and UN Women Goodwill Ambassador	Vietnam	Instagram	19,600
Dr Khuat Thu Hong	Founder and Director, ISDS	Vietnam		-
Hoang Tu Anh	Vice Director of CCIPH	Vietnam		-
Department of Gender Equality, Ministry of Labour, War Invalids, and Social Affairs	Government Minister	Vietnam		-

# TIME SERIES CHART OF SON PREFERENCE AND GBSS QUERIES ACROSS COUNTRIES

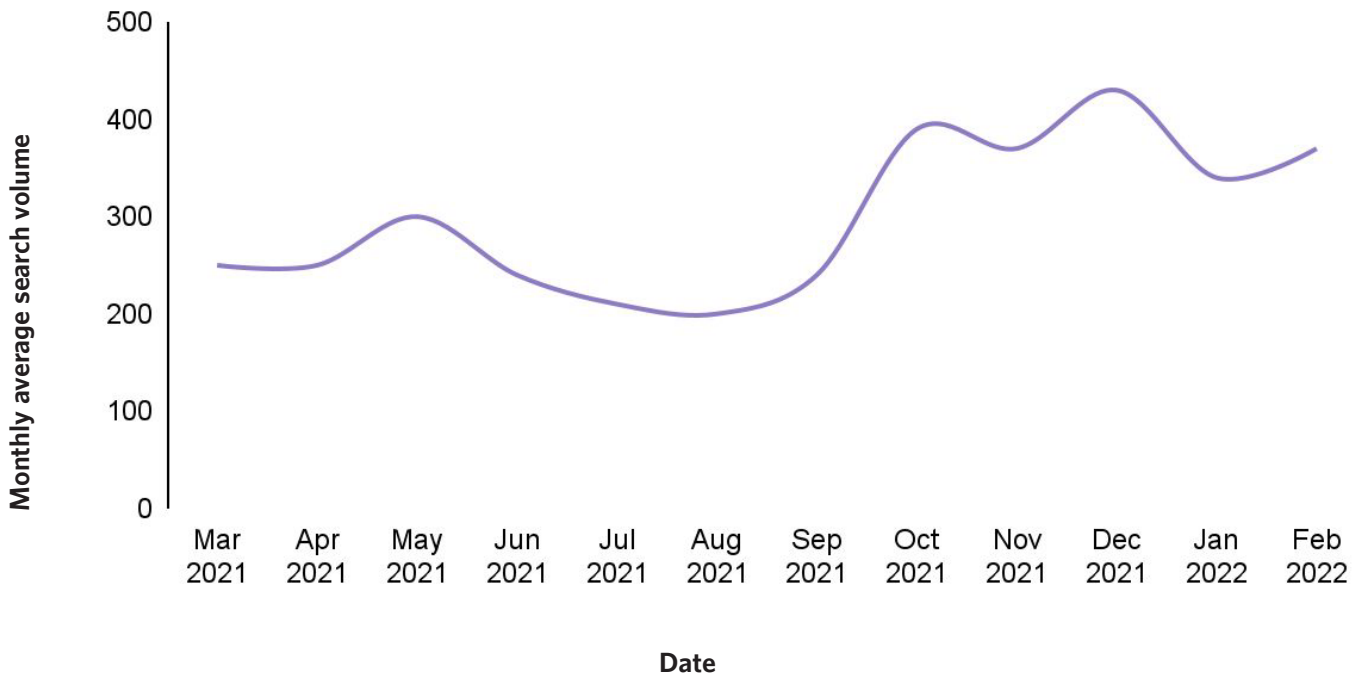
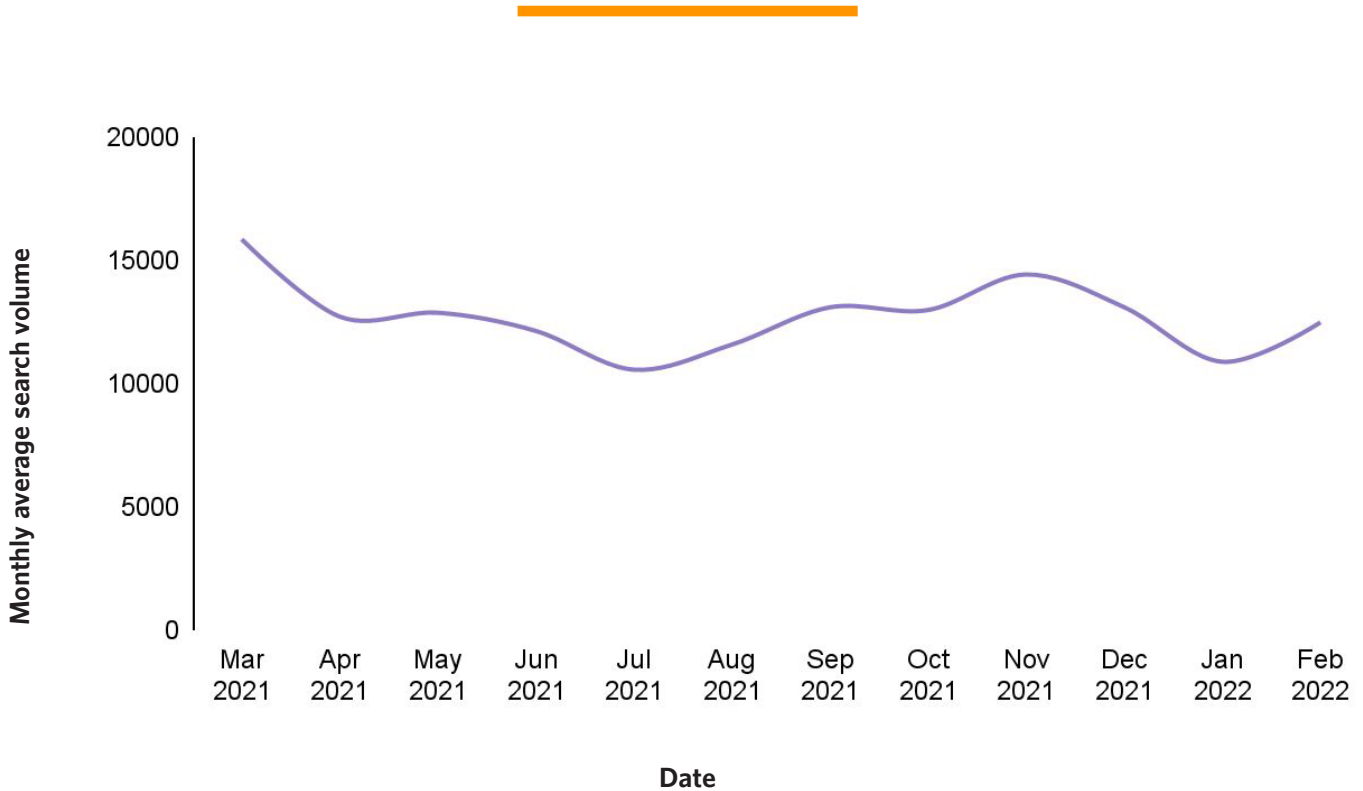




# TIME SERIES CHART OF SON PREFERENCE AND GBSS QUERIES ACROSS COUNTRIES



# TIME SERIES CHART OF SON PREFERENCE AND GBSS QUERIES ACROSS COUNTRIES



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