



CHILD EARLY MARRIAGE AWARENESS WORKSHOP REPORT 2022

*Photograph by Paromita Chatterjee,
Documentary Photographer*



**Focus: First generation
learning rural girls from
Shreeja india**

*26th May 2022
Kritika Rai, Program Officer
Shreeja India*

www.shreeja.org



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1. Introduction

Child marriage is any marriage where at least one of the parties is under 18 years of age.; i.e., a person below the age of 18. It can also refer to marriages where “both spouses are 18 or older but other factors make them unready to consent to marriage, such as their level of physical, emotional, sexual, and psychosocial development, or a lack of information regarding the person’s life options.” Additionally, “any marriage which occurs without the full and free consent of one or both of the parties and/or where one or both of the parties is/are unable to end or leave the marriage, including as a result of duress or intense social or family pressure,” falls within the definition of child early marriage.

Executive Summary

This is a report on early marriage workshop which had been conducted on 28th April 2022 by Shreeja India to implement strategies to end the practice of early marriage in Dhatrigram, Purba Bardhaman. This report focuses on assesses interventions on the basis of whether Shreeja India can successfully empower girls to achieve greater choice in the decisions that shape the future of Shreeja Girls. This report also shows how Shreeja India’s ‘*Beyond Football*’ program has helped girls overcome social evils such as child marriage. At Dhatrigram 87% of the population of Kalna subdivision live in the rural areas. Only 13% of the population live in the urban areas. Literacy rate of Dhatrigram is 68% according to the census but the literacy rate of tribal population at Dhatrigram is comparatively less. Due to their extreme poverty and lack of knowledge about society, it is not rare for first-generation learner tribal girls to fall prey to child marriage in such circumstances. We realised they needed information on early marriage and other associated social evils that are common in their society during the pre-workshop discussion. Keeping this in mind, Shreeja India Team is omitted to conduct a series of knowledge-based sensitization programs against early marriage and other social evils like trafficking and violence.



2. Details of the Workshop on Early Marriage

Target group: 52 Shreeja Girls from 11- 17-year-old including teachers and coach from the Shreeja Dhatrigram facility had attended the workshop.

Ethical statement: This workshop and survey have been conducted after signing of consent forms by Shreeja Girls which was translated in Bengali. The participants were aware that their identity was being used and they can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind. The purpose and nature of the workshop was explained to the participants. They were aware that their picture and videos recordings will be retained by Shreeja India to access it whenever required.

Duration: 2 hours

Nature of the Workshop:

1. A pre workshop group discussion was conducted to know the views of participants in the early marriage workshop.
2. A presentation was shown sensitizing participants attending the workshop.
3. An interactive quiz was conducted to reinforce the information on the early marriage

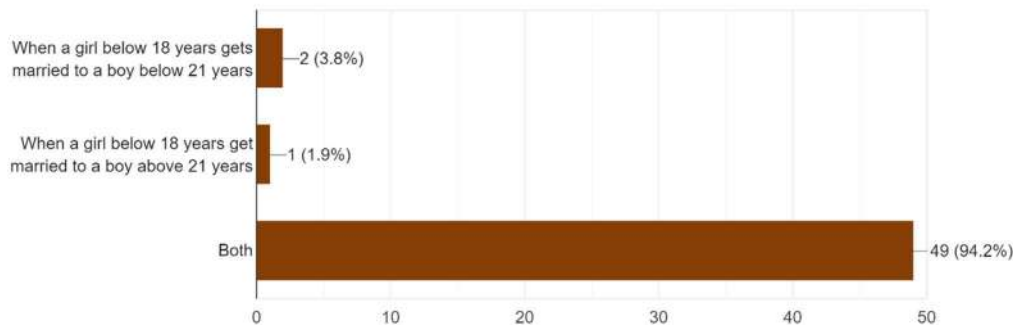
Date: 28th April 2022



3. Analysis

What is considered Child Marriage?

52 responses



When asked what is considered as child marriage after the workshop 94.2% of the participants said that when a girl is below 18 year gets married without her consent is child marriage. The above bar diagram clearly represents that the Shreeja girls have understood what is child marriage.

Causes of Child Marriage:

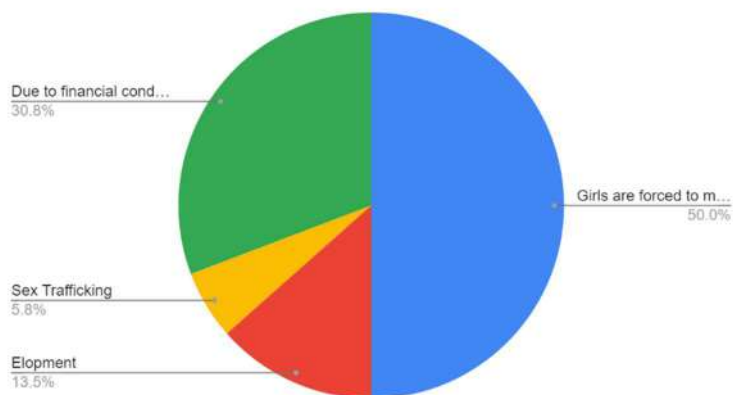
Child Marriage has been a common phenomenon throughout history and is still prevailing in our society for many factors. Some of the reasons are as follows:

- A girl child is generally considered to be a burden in the family
 - Parents and the community have the chance to pay lower dowry when the bride and the groom are young.
 - Child marriages are the easy way out for parents who want their children to accept their choice of partner.
 - Parents want to ensure safety of the girl child from sexual violence and admit their inability as parents to guarantee such safety
 - Parents want to ensure chastity and virginity of the bride.
 - Parents see marriage as a way to secure the girl's future socially and economically.
 - Lack of education and awareness about the consequences of child marriage.



- Love Affairs and elopements.

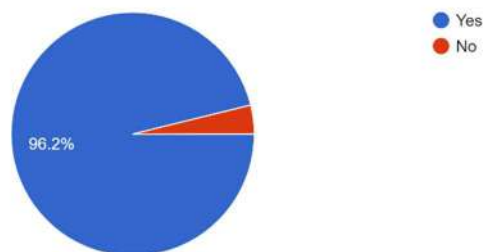
Count of "Mention one cause of child marriage"



According to the majority of participants, their acquaintances and someone they know are pushed by their families to marry. Some of the reasons mentioned above. According to the pie chart above, 50 % believe "girls are coerced into marriage," while 30.8 % believe that they are married off early owing to financial circumstances at home. Elopement is also identified as a factor for early marriage by 13.5 %. When asked about the causes, few people mentioned trafficking, but when asked whether "Can Trafficking Lead to Child Marriage?" 96.2 percent of the participants responded yes, as seen in the chart below. Tribal girls from rural population are vulnerable to "Marriage trafficking". Child marriage perpetuates the exploitation of health, rights and body of adolescent girls. This treatment of young girls is viewed as separate from human

trafficking but in reality, it is a form of trafficking.

Can child marriage lead to trafficking?
52 responses



Consequences of Child Marriage:



- Child marriage denies children their basic rights
- The body and mind of children are put to grave and heinous danger
- Marriage provides the legal sanction for engaging in sexual activity and procreation. It also jeopardizes their health
- Early marriage resulting in early motherhood means placing both the young mother and her baby at risk
- Early child marriage violates the child's right to education
- Child brides often experience a sudden decline in their social networks
- Child marriage opens the door to an endless and vicious cycle of domestic violence, abuse and trafficking.

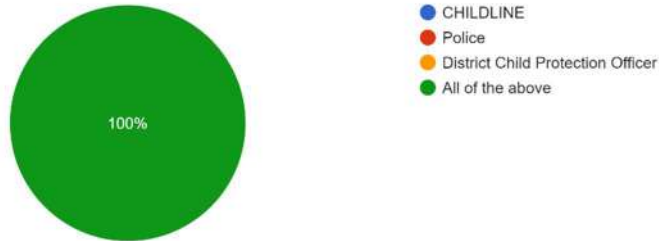
The Present Laws in India concerning Child Marriage:

- The law has threefold purposes: prevention of child marriages, protection of children involved and prosecution of offenders
- Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs) appointed
- This law has declared child marriage to be a cognizable and non-bailable offence.
- An injunction can be issued by the court to prohibit its solemnization and if a marriage is solemnized after the injunction, then such a marriage shall be declared as null and void.
- The law makes child marriages voidable by giving choice to the children in the marriage to seek annulment of marriage
- This law also prescribes punishment for performing, conducting and abetting child marriage.
- Provision for maintenance and residence to female contracting party to child marriage
- Custody and maintenance of children of child marriages



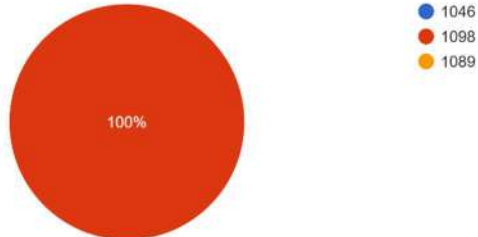
Who can help in case of child marriage

52 responses



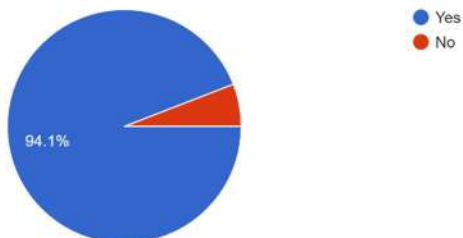
Which number to call if you have to report a child marriage case?

52 responses



Can you be apprehended by police if you before your legal age?

51 responses



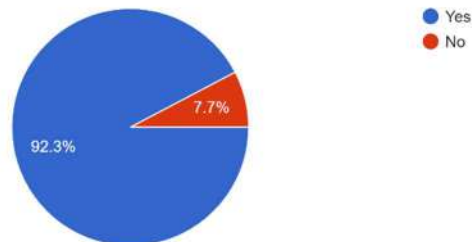
The graphical representation above clearly shows that Shreeja girls are aware of the reliable person who can stop child marriage and apprehend its perpetrators, that if they witness a child marriage case, they can dial 1098 to report the case and also 94% identified that they can be apprehended by the police if they marry before their legal age.



Child Early Marriages makes Women more vulnerable to Violence

Is domestic violence common in child marriage?

52 responses



Early marriage makes women more vulnerable to violence. The above graph shows that 92.3% of the participants agree to “Domestic violence is common in Child marriage”. Domestic violence is one of the social determinants of child marriage in India. Girls who get married off early do not have any decision-making power at home, women for that matter have low bargaining power in the household are more likely to experience violence by an intimate partner.

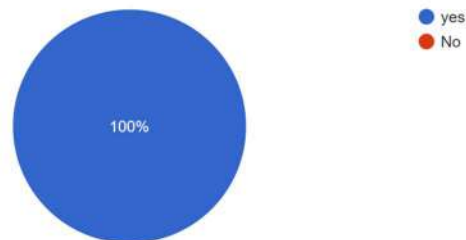
Child Early Marriage Robs girls of their Agency

Marriage at a young age prevents both girls and boys from exercising agency in making important life decisions and securing basic freedoms, including pursuing opportunities for education, earning a sustainable livelihood and accessing sexual health and rights, among others. More broadly, early and child marriage reinforces existing inequalities between men and women and among different economic classes, castes, and religious and ethnic groups. Child marriage is accompanied by early and frequent child birth resulting in higher mortality rates and can also result in suicide.



Child Early Marriage is a violation of Human Rights

Is child marriage a violation of human rights?
51 responses



The above pie chart shows that participants agree that “Child marriage is a violation of human rights. Marriage is seen as a way to bring certainty and insurance to an otherwise volatile environment. As a way to avoid greater uncertainty and as a way to mitigate risks, families are most likely to marry their children young. Women with low levels of education and adolescents ages 15 to 19 are at higher risk of violence than better educated or older women. The impact of early marriage on education, as girls are forced to drop out of school and on the health of young women, especially linked to early pregnancy. These two problems are essential to address, but there are other impacts that are also important. Education is a basic human right and we at Shreeja India want all girls to have their rights and Early marriage should not disrupt one’s education.

Poverty often drives Child Marriage

Economic gains through the marriage of a daughter may also motivate rural families. Most of the families have large family sizes. With such families, most parents are unable or unwilling to take care of their children. Early marriages are therefore seen as opportunities to reduce this burden. Others who cannot feed or send their children to school, give young girls off marriage to older men. Some parents arrange marriages between their children and their creditors as a way of settling debts. Consequently, poverty drive child marriage in a considerable way.



4. Conclusion

These findings reveal that although the majority has rendered the right answers and therefore are appropriately sensitized about child marriage, yet there are others who need a little more time and support to grasp the concept and associated details in a better manner. Hence, Shreeja India has planned more follow up programs on child marriage in the near future. At Shreeja India, we understand the value of sharing the right information about child marriage among first generation learning tribal children from rural population. We also realize that this would need a sustainable approach to bring about an attitude change among the girls. We are therefore planning to continue our endeavor in this regard with a series of varied yet reinforcing awareness programs on child and early marriage among Shreeja children.



5. Acknowledgement

Shreeja India would like to thank Somasree Basu, Program Manager at Shreeja India whose expertise contributed greatly to the development and delivery of this workshop along with Kritika Rai, Program Officer who assisted in conducting the workshop.

Many thanks to the participants (Shreeja Girls) present in the workshop for their cooperation, patience and, enthusiasm to do better. The completion of this research would not have been possible without their participation. Thanks to our teachers in the Shreeja center who had volunteered to help with the workshop. They are always there to help the students individually.

We would also like to express our gratitude to Professor Soudeep Deb, Assistant Professor of Decision Sciences and Young Faculty Research Chair at Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore and Archi Roy, PhD in Mathematical Science from IISER Pune for their help and guidance.

6. References

<https://blog.iplayers.in/laws-child-marriage-india/>

<https://www.lexsyndicate.com/post/child-marriage-a-look-at-the-personal-laws-in-india>



7. Questionnaires

Child Marriage Awareness Questions | বাল্যবিবাহ সচেতনতামূলক প্রশ্ন

(Tick the right answer) | (সঠিক উত্তরে টিক চিহ্ন দাও)

1 mark each for the right answer|(প্রতিটা উত্তরের জন্য ১ নম্বর নির্ধারিত)

1. What is considered child marriage?

- a. When a girl below 18 years gets married to a boy below 21 years
- b. When a girl below 18 years get married to a boy above 21 years
- c. Both

১. কোনটি বাল্যবিবাহ বলে বিবেচিত হয়?

ক. যখন ১৮ বছরের কম বয়সী মেয়ে ২১ বছরের কম বয়সী ছেলের সাথে বিবাহবন্ধনে আবদ্ধ হয়।

খ. যখন ১৮ বছরের কম বয়সী মেয়ে ২১ বছরের বেশি বয়সী ছেলের সাথে বিবাহবন্ধনে আবদ্ধ হয়।

গ. উভয়ই।

2. Mention one cause of child marriage.

২. বাল্যবিবাহের একটি কারণ উল্লেখ কর।

3. Can child marriage lead to trafficking?

- a. YES b. NO

৩. বাল্যবিবাহ কি পাচারের কারণ হতে পারে?

ক. হ্যাঁ খ. না

4. Is domestic violence common in Child marriage?

- a. YES b. NO

৪. বাল্যবিবাহতে গার্হস্থ্য হিংসা কি সাধারণ?

ক. হ্যাঁ খ. না

5. Is child marriage legal?

- a. YES b. NO



৫. বাল্যবিবাহ কি আইনত বৈধ?

ক. হ্যাঁ খ. না

6. Can you be apprehended by police if you marry before your legal age?

a. YES b. NO

৬. আইনি বয়সের আগে বিয়ে করলে কি তুমি পুলিশের হাতে ধরা পড়তে পারো?

ক. হ্যাঁ খ. না

7. Which number to call if you have to report a child marriage case?

a. 1046

b. 1098

c. 1089

৭. বাল্যবিবাহের অভিযোগ জানাতে হলে কোন নাম্বারে করতে হবে?

ক. ১০৪৬

খ. ১০৯৮

গ. ১০৮৯

8. Is child marriage a violation of human right?

a. YES b. NO

৮. বাল্যবিবাহ কি মানবাধিকার লঙ্ঘন করে?

ক. হ্যাঁ খ. না

9. Who can help in case of child marriage?

a. CHILDLINE

b. Police

c. District Child Protection Officer

d. All of the above

৯. বাল্যবিবাহ সংক্রান্ত বিষয়ে কে সাহায্য করতে পারে?

ক. চাইল্ডলাইন

খ. পুলিশ

গ. জেলা শিশু সুরক্ষা কর্মকর্তা

ঘ. ওপরের সবকটা

10. When is the right time to marry?

a. Right after attaining the legal age of marriage

b. After attaining legal age of marriage but after becoming economically independent

c. At 17 years

১০. বিবাহের সঠিক সময় কখন?

ক. বিবাহের আইনি বয়স পেরনোর ঠিক পরে।

খ. বিবাহের আইনি বয়স অর্জন করে অর্থনৈতিকভাবে স্বাধীন হওয়ার পর।



গ. ১৭ বছর বয়সে।



Report on

Child Marriage Awareness Program

(Focus: First Generation Learning Rural Girls in West Bengal)



I. Child Marriage in India?

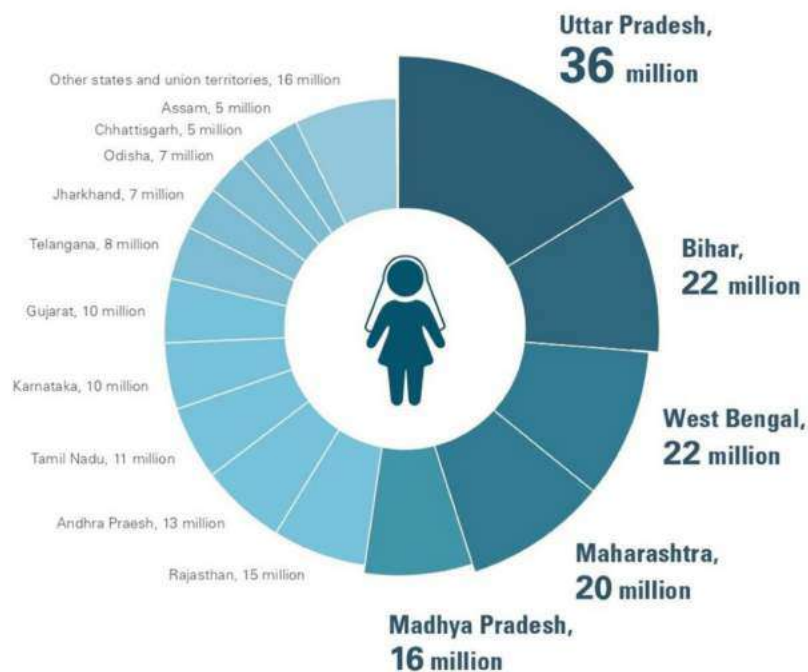
Child marriage refers to any formal marriage or informal union between a child under the age of 18 and an adult or another child.⁽¹⁾

India is world's second most populous country & already hosts the world's largest number of child brides. One in three of the world's child brides live in India. Of the country's 223 million child brides, 102 million were married before turning 15. Moreover, the highest prevalence of child marriage is reported amongst Scheduled Tribe girls (15%) & by Scheduled Castes (13 %).⁽³⁾



West Bengal, Bihar, Tripura have nearly 40% prevalence of child marriage, the highest in India (NFHS & UNICEF)^{(3) (4)}. Some other States high in Child marriage cases are Rajasthan, Jharkhand, and Odisha. Alarmingly, over 500 cases of child marriages have been reported since mid-March 2020 in West Bengal during the pandemic induced lockdown period. Here, East Burdwan and West Burdwan topped the list.

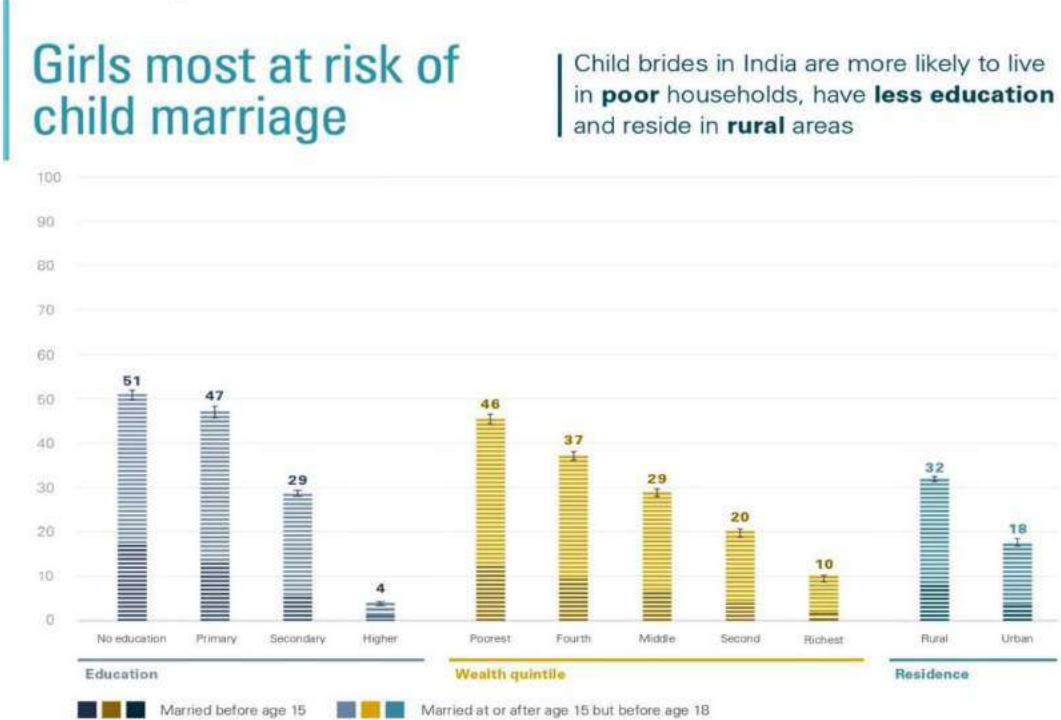
Fig 1: Number of girls and women who were first married before the age of 18 years, by State⁽³⁾



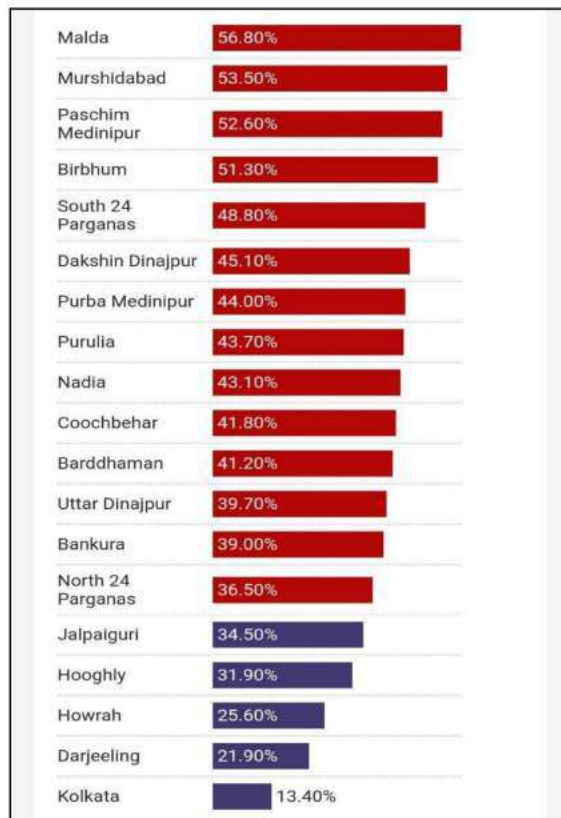
(Please Note: The present awareness program was conducted in October 2021. On December 15, 2021, the Union Cabinet cleared the proposal to raise the legal age of marriage for women from 18 to 21 years. This move would bring the legal age of marriage for women at par with men which is 21 years.)⁽²⁾



FIG. 2: Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18, by education, wealth quintile and residence ⁽³⁾



District wise prevalence of Child Marriage in West Bengal (Source: NFHS, 2020) ⁽⁴⁾





Causes of Child Marriage ^{(3) (6)}:

Child Marriage has been a common phenomenon throughout history and is still prevailing in the society for many factors. Some of the reasons are as follows:

- A girl child is generally considered to be a burden in the family
- Parents and the community have the chance to pay lower dowry when the bride and the groom are young.
- Child marriages are the easy way out for parents who want their children to accept their choice of partner.
- Parents want to ensure safety of the girl child from sexual violence and admit their inability as parents to guarantee such safety
- Parents want to ensure chastity and virginity of the bride.
- Parents see marriage as a way to secure the girl's future socially and economically.
- Lack of education and awareness about the consequences of child marriage.
- Love Affairs and elopements.

Consequences of Child Marriage ^{(3) (6)}:

- Child marriage denies children their basic rights
- The body and mind of children are put to grave and heinous danger
- Marriage provides the legal sanction for engaging in sexual activity and procreation. It also jeopardizes their health
- Early marriage resulting in early motherhood means placing both the young mother and her baby at risk
- Early child marriage violates the child's right to education
- Child brides often experience a sudden decline in their social networks
- Child marriage opens the door to an endless and vicious cycle of domestic violence, abuse and trafficking.

The Present Laws in India concerning Child Marriage ⁽⁷⁾:

- The law has threefold purposes: prevention of child marriages, protection of children involved and prosecution of offenders
- Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs) appointed
- This law has declared child marriage to be a cognizable and non-bailable offence.
- An injunction can be issued by the court to prohibit its solemnization and if a marriage is solemnized after the injunction, then such a marriage shall be declared as null and void.
- The law makes child marriages voidable by giving choice to the children in the marriage to seek annulment of marriage
- This law also prescribes punishment for performing, conducting and abetting child marriage.
- Provision for maintenance and residence to female contracting party to child marriage
- Custody and maintenance of children of child marriages

II. Awareness Program on Child Marriage

Dates: 04-10-21 | Administration of Pre and post awareness program Q on Child Marriage |

Duration: 2 hours

Participants:

- Shreeja Girls from Rajnagar Block, Birbhum – 50 girls (*Refer to Chart 1 for details*)
- Sreekumar Mukherjee (Teacher)
- Aditi Mondal (Teacher)
- Ria Sarkar (Teacher)
- Asit Sarkar (Teacher)
- Tarapada Mardi (Teacher)
- Mandira Hembram (Teacher)



Chart 1: Participants of the Program:

SI	NAME	SI	NAME
1	Sumitra Hansda	26	Somnath Murmu
2	Sundori Hemram	27	Sagun Tudu
3	Akash Murmu	28	Lalita Tudu
4	Shrabani Hansda	29	Oli Marandi
5	Premlata Murmu	30	Lilima Murmu
6	Emeli Murmu	31	Prajapati Soren
7	Purnima Hemram	32	Taramoni Soren
8	Ajanta Marandi	33	Lalita Marandi
9	Chandana Baski	34	Anjali Hemram
10	Sumita Marandi	35	Ruma Murmu
11	Bazarmuni Tudu	36	Urmila Mardi
12	Kakuli Soren	37	Pramila Murmu
13	Alimani Soren	38	Neha Mardi
14	Kalpana Hansda	39	Ruma Murmu
15	Sumi Murmu	40	Priya Mardi
16	Sharmila Hansda	41	Susmita Mardi
17	Kusumful Soren	42	Sumitra Murmu
18	Nimmani Hansda	43	Mina Hansda
19	Shrabani Besra	44	Sima Marandi
20	Mallika Murmu	45	Paneswari Soren
21	Sundori Kisku	46	Shibani Murmu
22	Sumitra Murmu	47	Minati Baski
23	Chandana Tudu	48	Surumoni Marandi
24	Bipranath Soren	49	Rupali Tudu
25	Sumanta Hembram	50	Balika Soren

Purpose: Birbhum (35.2%) is the second district after Murshidabad (39.9%) with the highest prevalence of child marriage. In such a scenario, it is not uncommon for the first-generation learner tribal girls of Rajnagar Block villages to easily fall prey to child marriage owing to their acute poverty, ignorance of family and community, lack of available resources and information about child marriage and other associated social evils which are much prevalent in their community. Keeping this in mind, Shreeja India Team committed to conduct a series of knowledge based sensitization programs on Child Marriage and other social evils like trafficking and violence, etc.

Methodology:

A. The program commenced with an interactive session on child marriage, the concept, reasons and consequences of the same. Girls came forward and shared their personal experiences related to child marriage. A power point presentation was simultaneously shown to support the discussion

B. A separate discussion was done about the potential solutions available to evade or stop child marriage. This included giving the participants information regarding the available resources, stakeholders who can help them and the role of Childline (1098 toll free number)

C. The participants were then shown a informative video (story) on Child marriage by Action Aid (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WrmRqm6VBI0>). They were asked to reflect upon the same and give their feedback after. Their feedback revealed that they could connect with the content regarding the challenges they face concerning child marriage. This made them further come out and share the anecdotes from their homes and villages concerning the same topic.



III. Post- Workshop Questionnaire was administered among the participants to document the impact of the first awareness program on Child Marriage.

Child Marriage Awareness Questions

(Tick the right answer)

1 mark each for the right answer

1. What is considered child marriage?

- a. When a girl below 18 years gets married to a boy below 21 years
- b. When a girl below 18 years get married to a boy above 21 years
- c. Both

2. Mention one cause of child marriage.

3. Can child marriage lead to trafficking?

- a. YES
- b. NO

4. Is domestic violence common in Child marriage?

- a. YES
- b. NO

5. Is child marriage legal?

- a. YES
- b. NO

6. Can you be apprehended by police if you marry before your legal age?

- a. YES
- b. NO

7. Which number to call if you have to report a child marriage case?

- a. 1046
- b. 1098
- c. 1089

8. Is child marriage a violation of human right?

- a. YES
- b. NO

9. Who can help in case of child marriage?

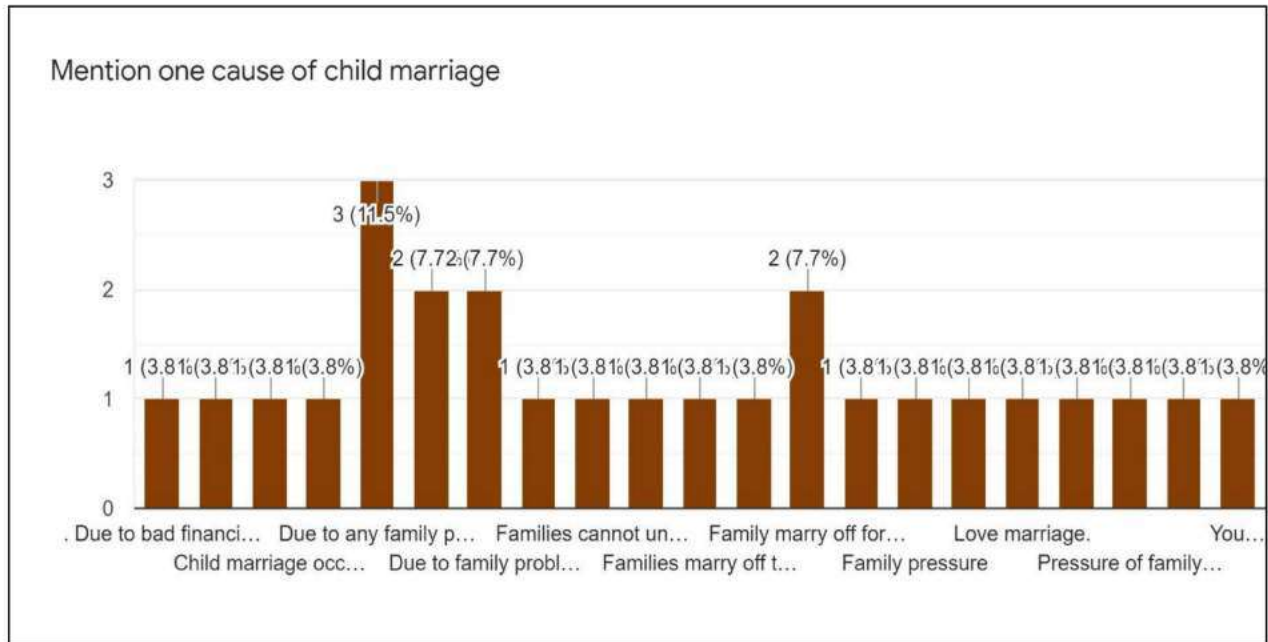
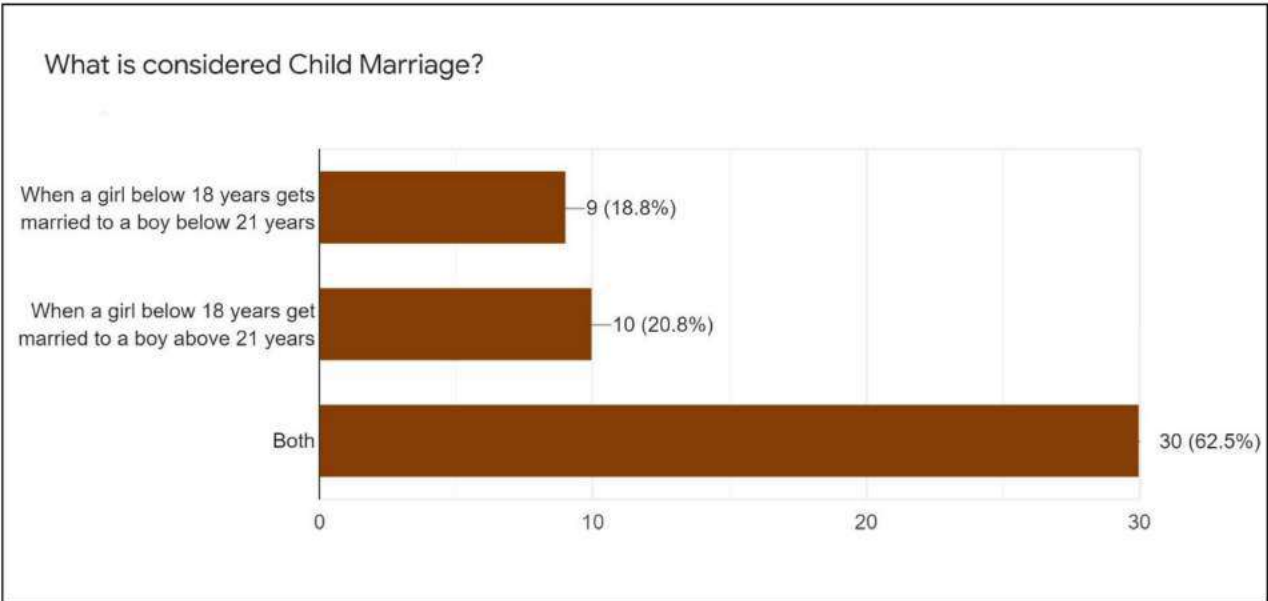
- a. CHILDLINE
- b. Police
- c. District Child Protection Officer
- d. All of the above

10. When is the right time to marry?

- a. Right after attaining the legal age of marriage
- b. After attaining legal age of marriage but after becoming economically independent
- c. At 17 years

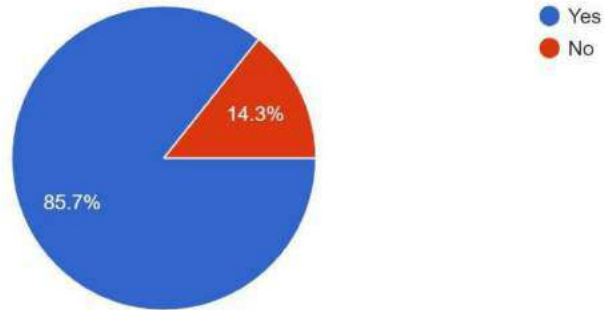


Graphical Representation of the Responses from the Participants:

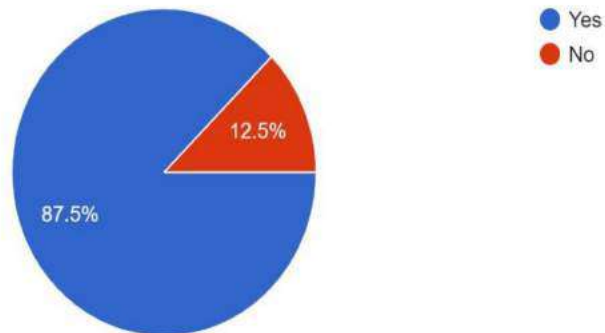




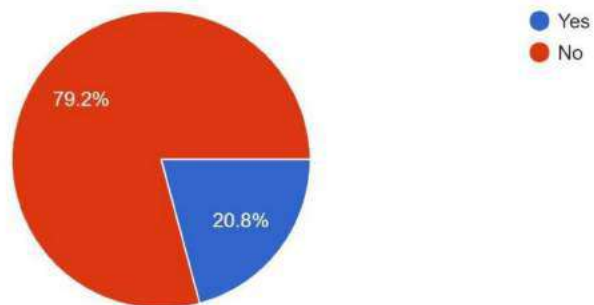
Can child marriage lead to trafficking?



Is domestic violence common in child marriage?

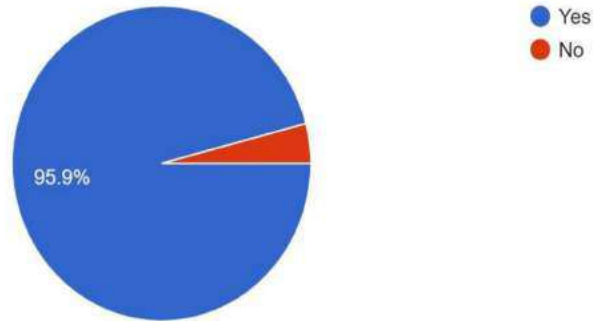


Is child marriage legal?

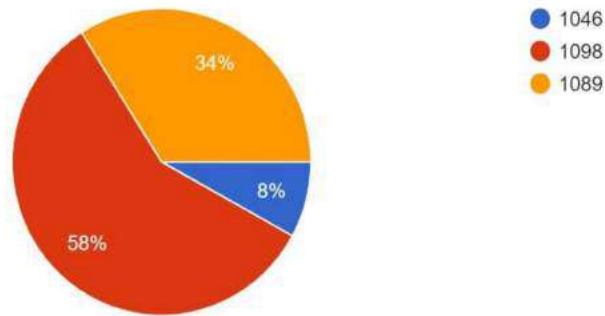




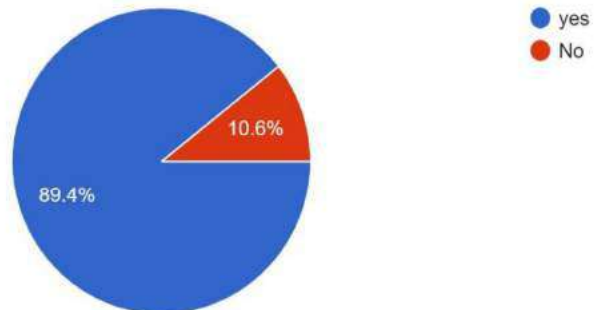
Can you be apprehended by police if you before your legal age?



Which number to call if you have to report a child marriage case?



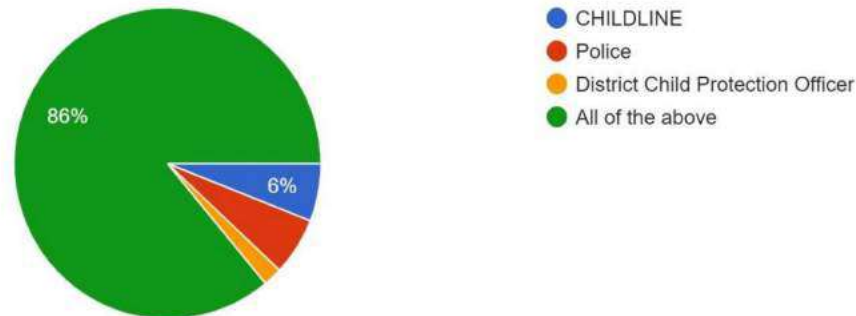
Is child marriage a violation of human rights?



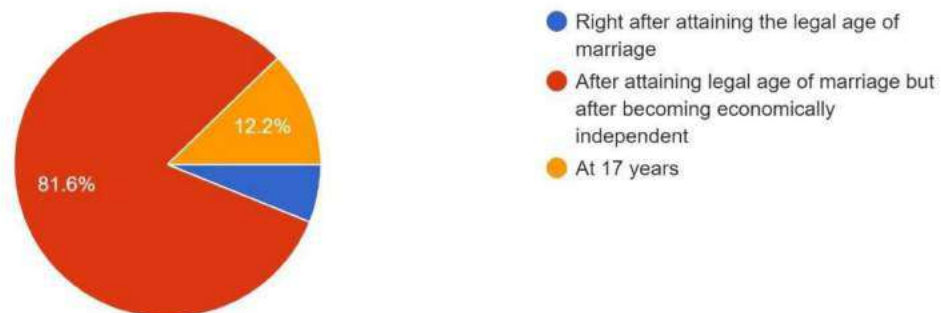


Who can help in case of child marriage

50 responses



When is the right time to marry?



Inference:

From the results of the questionnaire given to the participants, it was revealed that the awareness program did have a positive impact on the Shreeja children. 63% of the children are completely aware of the concept of child marriage. Interestingly, while stating one cause of child marriage, most of them mentioned 'Due to family pressure' and 'Due to economic problem in the family'. 86% of the participants stated that they do believe that child marriage can lead to trafficking while 88% said that domestic violence is common in child. 79% of the children correctly said child marriage is illegal and 96% agreed that child marriage is a crime and one committing the same or encouraging the same will be apprehended by Police. 58% correctly identified the Childline toll free number 1098 as an intervention tool to stop child marriage. 89% of them also correctly said that child marriage is a violation of human rights. As another positive output of the program, 86% of the participants correctly stated that Childline, Police and District Child Protection Officer, all of them can be approached to stop child marriage and apprehend its perpetrators. Interestingly and positively, 82% of the children correctly agreed that every child should marry not only after attaining the legal age but also after becoming economically independent. These findings reveal that although the majority has rendered the right answers and therefore are appropriately sensitized about child marriage, yet there are others who need a little more time and support to grasp the concept and associated details in a better manner. Hence, Shreeja India has planned more follow up programs on child marriage in the near future.



Conclusion:

At Shreeja India, we understand the value of sharing the right information about child marriage among first-generation learning tribal children from rural population. We also realize that this would need a sustainable approach to bring about an attitude change among the girls. We are therefore planning to continue our endeavour in this regard with a series of varied yet reinforcing awareness programs on child marriage among Shreeja children.

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