



Basic Survival Skills among Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Individuals Residing in Srinagar Garhwal, Uttarakhand

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Received: 19.03.2025; Revised: 25.05.2025; Accepted: 02.06.2025

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Abstract: Country like India, where poverty is evident, most of the people have to make enough money to meet their fundamental necessities. The hard truth for those who are socially and economically disadvantaged is that they must earn enough money to eat twice a day. For these individuals, attending school and receiving an education is only a pipe dream. Using the fundamental skills they acquired as a family job; they are able to live in modern society. They earn money to meet their basic requirements while passing on this expertise from one generation to the next. They hardly make enough money to cover the necessities of life since their income is so little. As a result, they practically disregard their schooling and acquire survival-related abilities. This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore the socio-economic conditions of socially and economically disadvantaged individuals and their basic survival skills in Srinagar Garhwal. Data was collected using interviews and non-participant observation to assess their needs related to food, clothing, housing, communication, and education. A purposive sampling method was used to select 12 families as the study sample. The research utilized self-made semi-structured interview schedules and observation schedules as data collection tools. To ensure a comprehensive understanding, data was analyzed using mean calculation, content analysis, and narrative analysis techniques. The results reveal their educational demands, as they don't think the current educational system is appropriate for their skill development. The findings provide valuable insights into the daily struggles of these families, highlighting the need for policy interventions and skill-based education to improve their economic conditions.

Keywords: Socially Economically disadvantaged individuals • Basic survival skills, Educational needs, and Qualitative method.

Introduction

Humans have advanced from the stone age to current era of science and technology thanks to education, which is seen as the process of progress. The restricted definition of education only refers to the formal education that is primarily offered in schools, colleges, and universities; in contrast, education is a continuous process that lasts a lifetime. Beyond time and location, everyone can learn anything from anyone. Education serves as a tool to improve an individual's innate qualities. We must consider two questions: is it essential

for official and informal entities to provide education? Does education have to be equated with a collection of degrees? These are some big questions need to be answered. Sen & Majumder (2022) found that parents from disadvantaged backgrounds recognize education as a means to improve their economic conditions, but they emphasize the need for skill-based learning rather than just formal education. Mishra (2022) also reported that vocational training programs significantly enhance employment opportunities, but a lack



of access to such training in rural areas continues to hinder progress.

The term "socially and economically disadvantaged" refers to individuals or households with low income and limited access to resources, often facing marginalization due to caste, ethnicity, or social status. Unlike "disadvantaged sections" which focus on social factors alone, this group experiences both economic hardship and social exclusion. In India, this includes Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), and Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), who are recognized under various constitutional provisions. These groups often lack access to education, employment, and social mobility. Studies by Chakrabarty & Majumdar (2022) and Datt & Ravallion (2021) highlight how globalization and industrial decline have worsened their conditions, making skill-based education and alternative livelihood opportunities crucial for improving their quality of life and reducing poverty. The Indian government defines socially disadvantaged groups as communities facing historical exclusion due to caste, ethnicity, or social status. These include Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) under Articles 341 and 342, Other Backward Classes (OBCs) under Article 340, and Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), who earn less than ₹8 lakh annually and get a 10% quota in jobs and education as per the 2019 Constitutional Amendment.

Techniques for sustaining life in any type of natural setting are known as survival skills. These methods are intended to supply food, water, and shelter—the three essentials of human existence. In order to enable the continuation of life, the skills also assist appropriate knowledge and social interaction. These are some fundamental abilities that people need to survive in today's world.

1. Food and water arrangements
2. Clothing style
3. Building a home or shelter

4. Communication

5. Education

Food and water are vital for survival, health, and social bonding. Food provides nutrients and energy while expressing culture, and water regulates body functions and prevents dehydration. Clothing protects the body from elements, infections, and reflects cultural identity. Shelter offers safety and comfort, evolving from natural to built homes. Communication—through language and technology—is essential for sharing ideas and social connection. Education develops skills, promotes social and economic progress, reduces poverty, and must adapt to changing global needs to remain effective and relevant.

Objective of the study

1. To study the food quality and food habits among the socially economically disadvantage individuals.
2. To study the clothing style among the socially economically disadvantage individuals.
3. To study the quality of residence among the socially economically disadvantage individuals.
4. To study the basic communication skills for survival in society among the socially economically disadvantage individuals.
5. To identified the educational needs for their survival among the socially economically disadvantage individuals.

Research questions

1. What will socially economically disadvantaged individuals eat and by which process they manage to cook it?
2. What is the clothing style of socially economically disadvantaged individuals?
3. What is the way of living of socially economically disadvantaged individuals and how it affects their health?
4. How they communicate with society members for their survival?
5. What is the role of education for the survival of socially economically disadvantage



individuals?

Delimitation of the study

1. The study will be confined to area of Srinagar Garhwal.
2. The study will be conducted on socially economically disadvantage individual residing in Srinagar.
3. Basic survival needs will be restricted with the concept of food, water, cloths, residence, communication and education.

Research Methodology

Research design: Qualitative approach of research was used for this study. Interview and non- participant observation method was used for information regarding food, cloths, residence, communication and educational needs.

Population : Socially economically disadvantaged individuals living in Srinagar Garhwal were defined as population.

Sample and sampling : 12 families were selected by purposive sampling method.

Tools : Self-made semi-structured interview schedule and observation schedule was used for the study.

Techniques for analysis : Appropriate qualitative such as Mean, Content analysis and Narrative analysis methods were used to analyze the data.

Results and Interpretation

Food and water arrangements by socially economically disadvantaged individuals.

Food items consumed in daily diet

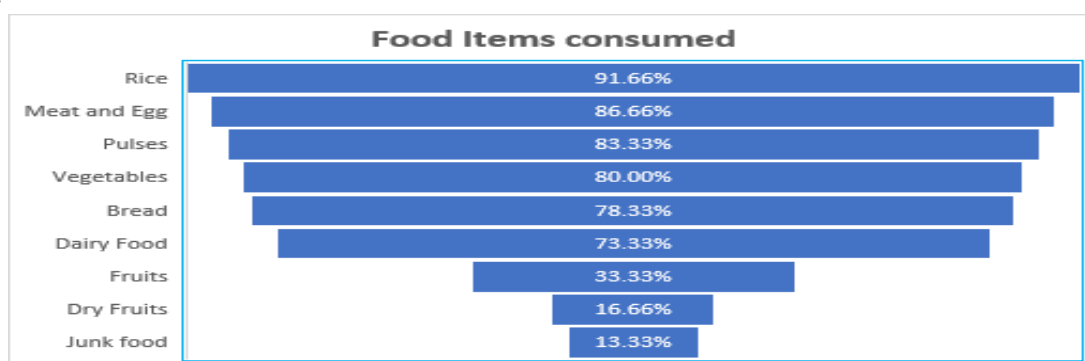


Fig. 1- Food items consumed in daily diet.

The most common cheap staple meal consumed by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals living in Srinagar Garhwal is rice, which is consumed by 91.66% of the population. 86.66% of individuals include meat and eggs in their daily diets, and they frequently choose to eat less expensive cuts of meat, organ meats, eggs, and dried fish. Due to their affordability and nutritional value, 83.33% of people eat pulses including black gram, chickpeas, and lentils, which are a significant source of protein. 80% of people eat vegetables, which are an essential component of meals. They typically choose seasonal, reasonably priced vegetables including spinach, potatoes, onions, tomatoes, and gourds. Since wheat is easily available in Srinagar Garhwal in reasonable price, 78.33%

of economically disadvantaged people eat bread and other wheat-based dishes like chapati and parathas. Although fresh dairy products can occasionally be expensive for low-income families, 73.33% of people consume dairy products, such as milk, curd, and buttermilk. Only 33.33% of people use fruits in their diets, and they usually choose less expensive options like papayas, guavas, and bananas. Due to their high cost, even fewer people 16.66% eat dry fruits like cashews, raisins, and almonds. Although just 13.33% of people consume junk food, they choose to eat inexpensive street foods like samosas, momos and quick noodles sometimes.

Socially economically disadvantage people eats their meals twice in a day which they



brought from local market. They buy it daily and cook it on chula with help of woods. They cover their food properly, as there surrounding is unhealthy it will affect their uncovered food. They live in an open tent which invite thousands of houses flies and other insects. They taking a lot of precautions still the surrounding is unhealthy for them. Their cooked food also gets infected due to unhygienic environment.

Water supply arrangements

Water supply arrangement is found to be quite insufficient in their house. There is no facility of tap water. They use public tap which is quite inadequate and unhygienic also. Due to which many water borne infections like jaundice, dysentery, pain in stomach is found commonly among them. Some families live on river banks. They use river water for drinking and other household work. River water is also

contaminated due pollution hence making them more prone illness.

Clothing style of Socially economically disadvantage people

Out of 12 families 7 belongs to Rajasthan which affect their clothing style. Traditional dress for women is lehanga, choli and odhani. But residing in Srinagar for forty years they get used to wear suits in daily routine. Traditional dress for men is kurta and tehmat. They wear it on daily routine as it is comfortable as compared to women traditional dress. They buy their cloths of daily purpose from local market and traditional dress from Saharanpur and Dehradun. They ware clean clothes. Members of other 5 families of Socially economically disadvantage people are migrant of Saharanpur. In these family women wear suits and men wear dhoti kurta and pant t-shirt.

Residence of the socially economically disadvantage individuals.

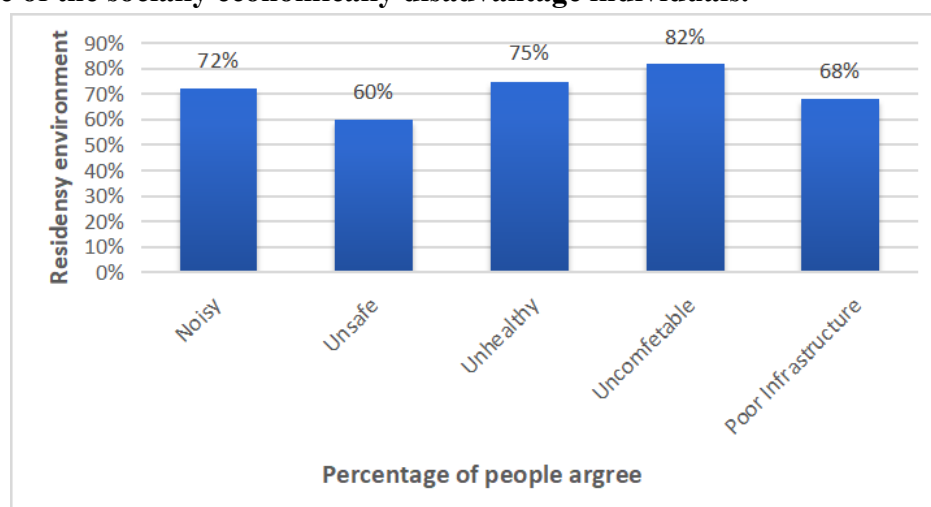


Fig. 2- Socially economically disadvantage people's residency environment

Housing is one sector of socially economically disadvantage group which is not very gloomy. 7 families make use of the vacant space on sides on roads. They have temporary house made of woods and plastic sheets where no supply of electricity is available. Their house is not giving them all comforts but still they feel safe from any type of criminal activity. There is no facility of toilet in their house,

they use public toilets by paying charge. The environment near their house is noisy and unhealthy for them. As it is near road noise of running busses, car, motor cycle creates noise and pollution. They pay a sum of rupees 600 per month to municipalities as a house rent. Out of 12, 5 families also have temporary house built on river banks, but they have permanent house in Dehradun, they live in



Srinagar only for work. They don't pay any charge of money to live on river banks. There is no supply of electricity in their houses, they use touch at night. The environment around their house is so pollutant and unhealthy as it is full of dust and garbage.

Mode of Communication of the socially economically disadvantage individuals.

Out of 12 Socially economically disadvantage families, members of 7 families use Hindi Garhwali to communicate with other members of society. Their mother tongue is Rajasthani still they learn other languages too by their surroundings. Their pronunciation is good and clear, they can easily talk to other

members with confidence. Remaining families use Hindi as their communication language as it is their mother language is Hindi, but it is observed that they were talking in other language also. They also learn local language Garhwali. Socially economically disadvantage children sing local Garhwali folk songs. Socially economically disadvantage people communicate easily with local people but sometime face difficulties with outsiders who don't know Hindi. They use cell phones to communicate with their relatives and know how to make a simple call as well as video call.

Table-1. Mode of communication with number of user

Language	No. of users	Total Percentage
Hindi	57	95%
Rajasthani	44	73.33%
Garhwali	16	26.66%
English	2	3.33%

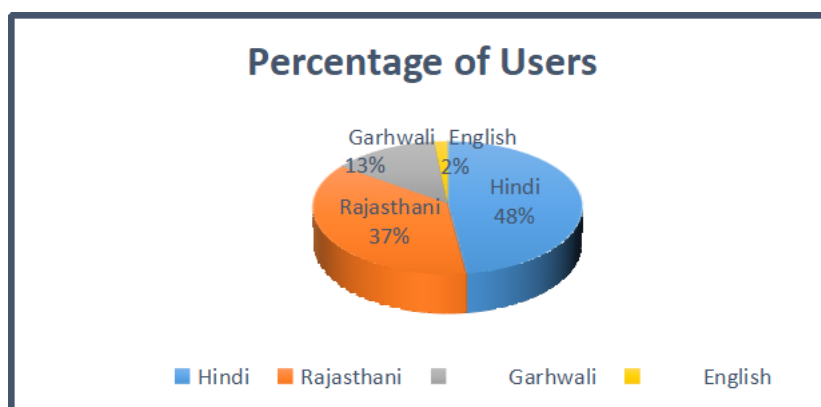


Fig. 2- Language used by Socially economically disadvantage people.

Educational status of socially economically disadvantaged individuals.

Current education level

Table-2. Educational status of socially economically disadvantaged individuals

S.No.	Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Qualification	12 th	1	1.66%
		10 th	3	5%
		8 th	6	10%
		Primary	15	25%
		Illiterate	35	58.33%
Total			60	100%



2	Family Type	Nuclear	45	75%
		Joint	15	25%
Total			60	100%
3.	No. of Responder	Male	16	26.66%
		Female	20	33.33%
		Children	24	40%
Total			60	100%

The demographic information sheds light on the backgrounds of the respondents. According to the respondents' age and gender breakdown, 40% were children, 33.33% were women, and 26.66% were men. Out of the 60 respondents, 75% were part of nuclear families and 25% were part of joint families. Regarding educational background, only 1.66% had finished the 12th grade, 10% had studied through the eighth grade, and 5% had studied through the tenth. Furthermore, 25% of the

respondents had finished primary school, while 58.33% were illiterate.

There are 24 children in of socially economically disadvantage group out of which 8 are school student and taking education in government primary school which are 33.33% of total children. There are 4 children who does not continued their education after 5th class which is 16.66% of total children. 12 children out of total were not taking any kind of education they are 50% of total children.

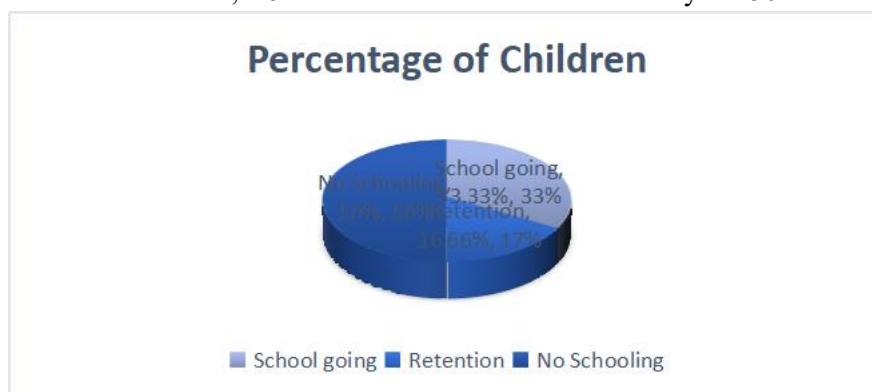


Fig. 3- education status of socially economically disadvantage children.

All school going students are at primary level hence it can be easily concluded that socially economically disadvantage group are aware about education in last 10 years. Effect of time and globalization can be seen on all families irrespective of the facts that they had changed their traditional vocation or not. They want to send their children to schools but still they don't feel that current school education is enough to develop their basic skills which they

use in their vocation. Beside economic status it is another reason to take less interest in school education. Children above age 12 are deprived of education they help their parents in their work. Socially economically disadvantage group do not take interest in secondary and higher education as they think it is not according to their needs. According to them four hands earns more than two. Child can help in work and play a role in earning.

Awareness level toward government education policies

Table-3. Awareness toward government education policies with percentage.

Awareness Level	No. of Respondents	Total Percentage
Aware	18	30%
Unaware	42	70%
Beneficiaries	6	10%

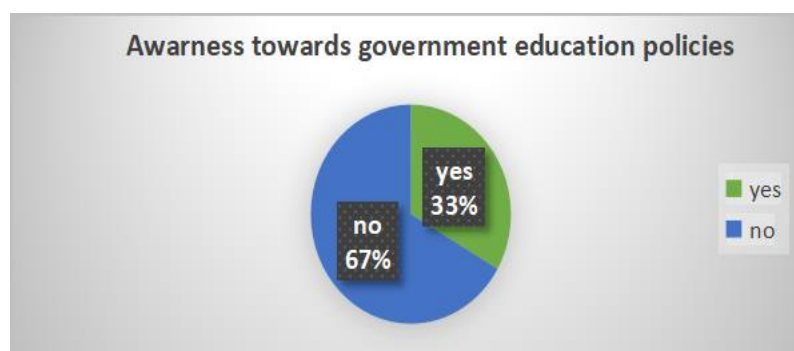


Fig. 3: Awareness of Socially economically disadvantage people for government education policies.

Parents of socially economically disadvantage children wants to educate them but due to their economic issues were unable to send them to schools. Even they don't aware about any government education policies. Only 30% of socially economically disadvantage individuals have information about government education policies. Out of which, 6% have availed the benefits of these educational policies. There are 70% of the total, who were not aware about any government education policies.

Educational needs of the Socially economically disadvantages individuals in respect to their vocation.

Out of 12 families, 7 families of socially economically disadvantage people were follow their traditional vocation as iron smith. Currently it is not enough to fulfilling their basic needs. Recent decrease in agriculture activities in Srinagar Garhwal directly affect their income compared to past years, when main source of income of Garhwal comes from agricultural activities now new technologies and methods are used in agriculture due to which demands for hand-made tools decreased. There is direct effect of time period and globalization they are much aware of things around them, but still, they don't know much about government policies for them. Those who are aware still don't have basic documentations to get benefits of government education as well as other policies too.

Remaining 5 Families has changed their traditional vocation with time. they use it as supplementary with other occupation to survive. They were snake catcher but currently sells jadi butti, called ayurvedic medicine also and tied lemon and chillies to sell which people use as a protection sign in their houses and cars. They sell it by going door to door and sometime they sell it to other shopkeepers. Their traditional vocation was not filling their basic needs and as now a days government have band to catch snakes and no one can have it as a pet in their house. Catching snakes is illegal. So, whenever people call them to catch a snake which comes in their house accidentally, they go on their own risk and after catching it they leave the snake in jungle or in another safe place. It is the main reason to opt other vocations as their vocation of snake catching is illegal in India.

Most of the socially economically disadvantage families were aware about the importance of education. According to them education is needed today in society but school education is not sufficient for them, they need such type of education which will enhance their skills which will improve their economic conditions. Most of the parents want their children gets good education and take other occupation rather than their traditional occupation and other temporary vocations. They want to see them in government jobs like police, clerk etc.

Conclusion :



In Srinagar Garhwal, socially and economically deprived families endure poor housing and water conditions that severely affect their health and well-being. Due to the lack of clean tap water, they rely on unsafe public taps, often leading to waterborne diseases like dysentery and jaundice. Their homes, built from plastic sheets and wood, lack basic amenities such as electricity and toilets, and are exposed to noise and pollution from nearby roads. While some families pay rent to the municipality for roadside plots, others live rent-free in unsanitary conditions along riverbanks. These unsafe and unhygienic environments pose significant health risks and compromise human dignity. Despite these hardships, most families recognize the importance of education for their children. They emphasize the need for skill-based learning that can lead to stable income, as traditional livelihoods like iron smithing and snake catching have become unsustainable due to mechanization and legal bans, as Bhowmik (2019) noted. Parents aspire for their children to secure government jobs rather than continue traditional work. However, the lack of access to vocational training, awareness of welfare schemes, and difficulties in obtaining necessary documentation limit their ability to achieve these goals. Urgent government intervention is needed to provide clean water, proper sanitation, adequate housing, and access to skill-development programs to uplift these families. This study's findings align with the research by Sen & Majumder (2022), who observed that disadvantaged parents view education as a pathway to economic improvement, but prioritize skill-based learning over traditional academics. Similarly, Mishra (2022) found that vocational training improves employment prospects, yet limited access in rural areas remains a major barrier. To address these challenges, both government and NGOs should focus on expanding vocational training and raising awareness about available support systems, including

financial aid and educational grants. Efforts must also be made to help families obtain necessary documents such as income and caste certificates and Aadhaar cards to access these benefits. Additionally, promoting alternative employment avenues—like handicrafts, self-help groups, and tourism—can provide a stable income. These initiatives can break the cycle of poverty and create better opportunities for future generations.

Significance of the study

This study highlights the socioeconomic challenges faced by impoverished families in Srinagar Garhwal due to industrialization, legal restrictions, and the decline of traditional occupations such as iron smithing and snake collecting. It underscores the urgent need for skill development, vocational training, and alternative employment to support these communities. Many families are unaware of government welfare schemes or lack proper documentation to access them, revealing a gap in policy awareness and access. The study calls for targeted awareness campaigns, simplified documentation processes, and policy interventions to bridge this divide. It also emphasizes the role of education, noting that parents aspire for their children to secure government jobs rather than continue traditional work. However, formal education alone is insufficient—there is a pressing need for skill-based learning aligned with current economic realities. The study provides valuable insights for policymakers, NGOs, and welfare organizations to design programs that support livelihood security, promote education, and preserve traditional knowledge. By addressing these issues, the study advocates for social inclusion, sustainable development, and poverty alleviation in rural India.

Acknowledgement

I sincerely thank Prof. Rama Maikhuri and the faculty of the Department of Education,



H.N.B. Garhwal University, for their support. I am especially grateful to Assistant Professor Siddharth Lohani, whose guidance and inspiration sparked my interest in this study.

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