

Understanding the Socio-Economic Dynamics of the Marginalized Meo Community in Ujina Village of Nuh District, Haryana

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INTRODUCTION

Marginalized communities in India face systemic social, economic, and educational exclusion due to their historical, caste-based, and socio-political disadvantages (Makwana and Elizabeth, 2022). These groups, often include Dalits, Adivasis, and religious minorities, encounter restricted access to resources and opportunities, resulting in persistent poverty, limited educational attainment, and minimal representation in decision-making structures. Those Communities which are excluded from the core aspects of social, economic, educational, or cultural life called marginalized community (Sevelius et al., 2020). The intricate interaction of institutional systems, cultural norms, and historical legacies defines India's socio-economic landscape (Dodamani and Dr. Subaschandra C Natikar, 2020). Power imbalances between social groupings are the cause of marginalization (Rendon et al., 2021). Any community's ability to adapt to the contemporary shifts in society is reflected in its social dynamism (Singh and Singh, 2009).

Socio-economic dynamics of any community influences social mobility, quality of life, and community resilience. Theories on socio-economic dynamics emphasize the complex interplay between economic structures and social factors that shape individuals' opportunities and outcomes within society. Structural-functionalism views socio-economic dynamics as a system of interdependent parts, where economic institutions influence social stability and cohesion (Vasin, 2023). Socio-economic systems are expansive frameworks centered around people, where decision-making plays a crucial role, and human subjective consciousness significantly impacts the functioning of these systems. Symbolic interactionism highlights how socio-economic status affects individuals' self-perception and social interactions, shaping their aspirations and behaviors (Mills, 2021). The process of marginalization either generates socio-economic inequalities or intersects across multiple areas of deprivation (Jahan, 2016). Marginalized or disadvantaged communities often face multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination and inequality shaped by their unique identities and social factors (Lal, 021).

The purpose of this research study is to examine the socio-economic dynamics of the Meo community in study area. The Meo, also called Mev or Mewati Muslim, self-identify as a distinct socio-cultural ethnic community. This research seeks to understand the unique social and economic conditions affecting the community, with a focus on factors such as income, employment, education, and social mobility. Given the historical marginalization of the Meo community, this study aims to shed light on the challenges and resilience patterns that shape their lives.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Marginalization is a multifaceted process where

Abstract: *This study investigates the socio-economic dynamics of the marginalized Meo community in Ujina village, Nuh District, Haryana, a historically disadvantaged group facing systemic exclusion. The objectives are to examine the community's socio-economic status, focusing on factors such as income, employment, education, and social mobility, and to identify the challenges and resilience patterns within the community. The research employs a quantitative methodology, using purposive and snowball sampling techniques to select 120 participants. Data collection involved face-to-face in-depth interviews and electronic surveys, analyzed using SPSS 27.0.1 software. Bivariate analysis was conducted to explore relationships among socio-economic variables. Findings reveal significant gender disparity, with males constituting 64.1% of the sample. Education levels are low, with 72.5% lacking formal education, affecting socio-economic mobility. Employment data indicate a heavy reliance on agriculture (44.1%), with minimal representation in formal sector jobs (2.5%). The income distribution shows a modest economic standing, with the majority earning between 30,000 and 39,999 rupees monthly. Correlation analyses suggest that higher educational attainment is linked to better occupational opportunities and greater participation in household decision-making; although the impact on mobility and asset ownership is limited. This research highlights the compounded effects of historical marginalization and systemic discrimination on the Meo community. The study underscores the need for targeted interventions to improve educational access, enhance skill development, and create economic opportunities to foster social inclusion and economic empowerment for this marginalized group.*

Keywords: Marginalization, Meo community, Socio-economic dynamics, Ujina Village

individuals or groups are systematically excluded from mainstream social, economic, political, and cultural life. According to Silver (1994), marginalization stems from structural inequalities, such as economic disparities and power imbalances that limit access to essential resources and opportunities. These inequalities are often perpetuated by historical and institutional factors, reinforcing the exclusion of certain communities (Silver, 1994). The interplay between gender and socio-economic factors within the Meo community constitutes another essential focus of academic inquiry

Marginalization is frequently understood as a multifaceted process that restricts specific groups from fully engaging in social, economic, and political Research by Sen (2000) highlights how these socio-economic disadvantages are interlinked, contributing to a cycle of poverty and exclusion. The lack of access to quality education restricts upward mobility, while limited healthcare access exacerbates health disparities (Turshen, 2001). The role of social capital in mitigating the effects of marginalization has been extensively studied. Putnam (2000) argues that strong community networks can enhance social cohesion and provide marginalized groups with access to resources and support systems. However, marginalized communities often have weaker social capital due to systemic discrimination and social isolation, further entrenching their socio-economic disadvantages (Putnam, 2001).

The socio-economic dynamics of marginalized communities have been the subject of extensive research, with a focus on understanding the underlying factors contributing to their marginalization and the mechanisms that perpetuate their socio-economic conditions. The health outcomes of marginalized communities are disproportionately worse compared to more privileged groups. Marmot (2005) emphasizes the social determinants of health, pointing out that socio-economic status significantly impacts health outcomes. Chronic stress, often experienced by marginalized individuals due to their socio-economic conditions, contributes to higher rates of chronic diseases and mental health issues (Marmot, 2005).

METHODOLOGY

This study is entirely based on quantitative research. This study was conducted in early 2024 to understand the different socio-economic dynamics of the Meo community in Ujina village of Nuh district in Haryana. The target population was selected through the purposive (or selective) and snowball sampling techniques. These sampling techniques were employed to identify and target the particular Meo community population from heterogeneous population in the study area to meet the need of our research. Primary data were collected through the face-to-face in-depth interviews or electronic surveys, respecting cultural sensitivities and ensuring language appropriateness.

The data collection involved one-on-one, in-depth interviews conducted by the two authors. The quantitative data of the 120 participants were analyzed through the quantitative software SPSS 27.0.1. Bivariate analysis was applied to explore relationships among the socio-economic variables used in this study, providing further insights.

RESULTS

The demographic characteristics of the sample from the Meo community in Ujina village reveal significant insights into their socio-cultural composition. A total of 120 individuals participated in the study, with a notable gender disparity: 64.1% were male while 35.8% were female.



Figure 1: Study area map of Ujina Village, Nuh District

This gender imbalance may reflect broader societal norms and roles within the community, where traditional expectations could influence participation in such studies. In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents fell within the 26-36 age range, accounting for 31.6% followed by the 36-45 age groups, which comprised 22.5%. The presence of younger individuals (15-25 years) is minimal, with only 10.8%, suggesting a possible trend of older individuals being more represented in community engagement or a lack of youth involvement in such studies. Additionally, the age groups above 55 years constituted 15.8%, indicating that a significant portion of the community consists of middle-aged and older adults.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic characteristics	Frequency n= 120	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	77	64.1%
Female	43	35.8%
Age		
15-25	13	10.8%
26-36	38	31.6%
36-45	27	22.5%
46-55	23	19.1%
Above 55	19	15.8%
Married Status		
Married	83	69.1%
Single	17	14.1%
Widow	13	10.8%
Separated/ Divorced	7	5.8%
Level of Education		
No formal education	87	72.5%
Primary education	17	14.1%
Secondary education	11	9.1%
Territory education	5	4.1%

Source: Primary survey by authors, 2024

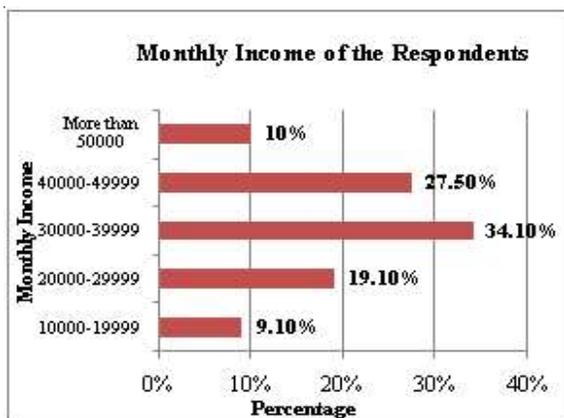
The marital status data highlight that a majority of respondents are married (69.1%) suggesting that family structures play a critical role in the community. A smaller proportion, 14.1%, identified as single, while 10.8% were widows, and 5.8% were separated or divorced. This distribution underscores the importance of marital ties in the Meo community and may reflect cultural values that prioritize marriage and family. Regarding education levels, a stark reality emerges: 72.5% (87 individuals) reported having no formal education, which points to significant educational challenges within the community. This lack of formal education may contribute to the socio-economic marginalization faced by the Meo community, as it limits access to better employment opportunities and enhances

vulnerability to poverty. Only 14.1% attained primary education, 9.1% completed secondary education, and a mere 4.1% (achieved tertiary education. This data indicates a critical need for educational interventions to improve literacy and skills within the community, which is essential for their socio-economic development.

The data indicate that a majority of households have between six to nine members, representing 52.2%, followed by those with three to five members at 21.6%. Large families are prevalent, with 19.1% comprising more than ten members, highlighting the extended family structure's role and reflecting cultural values that may prioritize joint family living. Only a small fraction, 6.6%, consists of one or two members, suggesting that nuclear family arrangements are less common. Regarding family structure, the data reveal that most households (69.1%, or 83 families) are joint families, while nuclear families constitute 30.8%. This joint family preference underscores the traditional social fabric in the Meo community, where extended family systems are typical, likely providing mutual support and shared resources.

This could also reflect economic necessity, as larger households may pool resources to meet their needs. Occupationally, the community is heavily involved in agriculture, with 44.1% working as farmers. This reliance on farming indicates a rural, agrarian lifestyle, where land and agricultural practices likely form the basis of economic stability. Business is the second most common occupation, accounting for 28.3, suggesting some diversification within the community as members seek alternative income sources. Skilled labor represents 17.5% (21 individuals), but government employment remains low at only 2.5% (3 individuals), reflecting limited representation in secure, formal sector jobs. Another 7.5% (9 individuals) are involved in other forms of employment, further indicating the economic challenges and limited job diversification in the community.

Income data reveal a moderate income distribution, with 34.1% earning between 30,000-39,999 rupees monthly and 27.5% earning between 40,000-49,999 rupees. A smaller group, 19.1% earns between 20,000-29,999 rupees monthly, while only 10% earn more than 50,000 rupees. At the lower end, 9.1% earn between 10,000-19,999 rupees monthly, suggesting that a section of the population remains at a subsistence level, with limited financial security. These income brackets point to an overall modest economic standing in the community, with a need for initiatives aimed at improving financial opportunities and stability. This highlights a critical need for improved healthcare infrastructure and outreach in the area to address these gaps in health accessibility.



RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC VARIABLES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The table 3 shows Pearson correlation coefficients between various variables related to women's empowerment and socio-economic participation, such as occupations, household decision-making, education level, mobility, and asset ownership. There is a moderate positive correlation between occupations and participation in household decision-making ($r = 0.441, p < 0.001$). This suggests that as women take on more formal occupations, their involvement in household decisions increases. The significant p-value (0.000) shows that this correlation is statistically significant. There is a moderate and significant positive relationship between occupations and the level of education ($r = 0.460, p < 0.001$). Higher educational attainment is associated with better occupational opportunities for community, showing that education is key to improving employment prospects. This weak correlation suggests that occupations do not have a strong impact on women's mobility. The p-value of 0.406 shows that this relationship is not statistically significant ($r=0.109, p > 0.406$). There is a very weak and non-significant relationship between occupations and asset ownership ($r=0.098, p > 0.457$).

Table 3: Correlation matrix showing relationship among the different socio-economic variables

Socio-Economic Characteristics of		Occupation	House-hold Decision Making	Education	Mobility	Ownership of assets
Respondents						
Occupation	Pearson Correlation	1	.441**	.460**	0.109	0.098
	Sig.		0	0	.406*	0.457
Participation in household decision making	Pearson Correlation	.441**	1	.276*	0.111	0.098
	Sig.	0		0.033	0.397	0.457
Level of Education	Pearson Correlation	.460**	.276*	1	.358**	0.063
	Sig.	0	0.033		0.005	0.63
Freedom of movements and mobility	Pearson Correlation	0.109	0.111	.358**	1	0.207
	Sig.	.406*	0.397	0.005		0.112
Ownership of assets	Pearson Correlation	0.098	0.098	0.063	0.207	1
	Sig.	0.457	0.457	0.63	0.112	
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).						

Source: Computed by Authors

This suggests that having a formal occupation does not necessarily translate into higher ownership of assets among the women surveyed. The positive correlation here suggests that higher education is moderately associated with greater participation in household decision-making and this relationship is statistically significant though weaker than other variables. ($r=0.276, p < 0.033$). The weak correlation between these two variables indicates that women's participation in household decision-making is not closely linked to their freedom of movement. The p-values suggests this is not statistically significant ($r= 0.111, p > 0.397$).

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DISCUSSION

The socio-economic dynamics of the Meo community from Ujina village reveals several socio-economic dynamics that influence community participation and development. The significant gender disparity, with males comprising 64.1% of the sample, reflects traditional gender norms that may limit women's visibility in such studies and, potentially, their access to resources. This aligns with findings on gendered participation patterns in rural communities where patriarchal structures dominate. The educational data, however, indicate critical challenges, with 72.5% lacking formal education, which severely restricts access to socioeconomic mobility and employment opportunities.

A recent study by the Asian Development Research Institute (2023) in Azampur Shankar Village, located in the Seemanchal region's Purnia district, revealed that Muslims make up a majority (60.66%) of the local households. The study also highlighted low educational levels across the population, with most individuals involved in primary sector activities, particularly agriculture (Asian Development Research Institute, 2024). Social exclusion remains a significant issue for the Meo community, who often experience discrimination based on their ethnic and religious identity. This marginalization limits their participation in social, economic, and political spheres. The entrenched social hierarchies and biases have led to a lack of representation and advocacy for their rights and needs. Addressing these systemic barriers requires a comprehensive approach, including policy reforms and community engagement initiatives to promote inclusion and equality.

CONCLUSION

The Meo community in Ujina village, characterized by a rich cultural heritage, faces significant socio-economic challenges shaped by historical, cultural, and systemic factors. Limited access to quality education, inadequate employment opportunities, and social marginalization persist as key issues. Educational infrastructure deficits and economic constraints result in high dropout rates, particularly among females, while restricted skill development opportunities confine many to low-paying, informal labor sectors. Social biases further hinder integration into broader economic systems. The historical context of socio-political exclusion, combined with structural barriers such as land fragmentation and inadequate infrastructure, has hindered the community's progress.

The intersectionality of gender exacerbates the marginalization of Meo women, who encounter additional socio-cultural constraints. Despite efforts by governmental and non-governmental organizations, critical gaps remain. Tailored interventions emphasizing education, skill development, and social awareness are crucial to fostering economic and social mobility. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and inclusive approach that integrates the community's unique socio-cultural identity into development strategies. Future research should focus on participatory methodologies to ensure that the voices of the Meo community are central to policy-making processes, thereby fostering sustainable socio-economic development.

This approach will contribute to reducing the socio-economic disparities faced by the Meo community and enhancing their overall well-being.

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