

**THE GENERAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC
CONDITIONS OF PEOPLE LIVING
IN THE REGION OF DOOARS**



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DECLARATION

I, **Nayanika Chakrabarti**, student of **Basanti Devi College**, hereby declare that the dissertation entitled "**The General Socio-Economic Conditions of the People Living in the Region of Dooars**" being submitted to the **Department of Sociology, Basanti Devi College, Kolkata** is record of original research carried out by me. Any text, figure, method, or result that was not created by me is properly referenced to give credit to the original author(s). All sources of assistance have been assigned due acknowledgement. I also declare that the work, in its entirety or in part, has not been submitted to any other university for any other degree, diploma, or award.

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INTRODUCTION

My research work is on "THE GENERAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF PEOPLE LIVING IN THE REGION OF DOOARS". Social and economic factors are drivers of the conditions in which people live. The socio-economic conditions of a region are determined by factors such as income levels, employment, educational attainment, housing, accessibility to proper medical and sanitary facilities, women's status and gender empowerment, social support and discrimination. These factors have a significant impact not just on an individual's well-being but also on the development of a region.

Place of Study:

Among the whole North Bengal, Dooars is the most enchanting tourism destination, where "nature has kept her doors wide open."

The Dooars are a region of alluvial floodplains in north-eastern India, located south of the outer foothills of Himalayas and north of the Brahmaputra River basin. It derives its name from the Sanskrit word "*dvara*" (door) as it is known for being the gateway to the whole of North-Eastern India, Bhutan, and the hill stations of Sikkim and Darjeeling. This region is about 30 km wide and stretches over about 350 km from the Teesta River in West Bengal to the Dhansiri River in Assam. The region politically constitutes of the plains of Darjeeling Himalayas, the whole of Jalpaiguri district and the Alipurduar district.

There are 18 passages or gateways between the hills in Bhutan and the plains in India. This region is divided by the Sankosh River into Eastern and Western Dooars. The Western Dooars is known as the Bengal Dooars and the Eastern Dooars as the Assam Dooars. There are 6 doors present in Bengal Dooars and 12 doors present in Assam Dooars.

The Dooars' region has an attractive landscape with numerous rivers, *kholas* or *jhoras* and waterfalls present. Among them Teesta, Jaldhaka Murti, Torsha, Sankosh, etc. are some of the important water sources in Dooars.

The economy of Dooars is based on three "T" s – *Tea, Timber and Tourism*. The main industry of the region is the tea industry as thousands of people are engaged in the tea estates and factories. About 150 tea gardens are present in Dooars. Among them, Jiti, Chalsa, Lankapara, Samsing, Newlands, etc. are important tea gardens of Dooars region. Most tea gardens are popular tourist destinations due to their advantageous location. The timber industry flourishes in this region. A number of saw mills, plywood industries and other allied business also act as an important contributor to the economy.

The area is dotted by several national parks and wildlife sanctuaries which attract a lot of tourists from all over India and abroad, making it an important contributor to the economy. Some of them are Gorumara National Park, Buxa Tiger Reserve, Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuary, Jaldapara National Park, etc.

Dooars has a mixed population that includes Bengalis, Adivasis, Nepalis, Biharis, Marwaris, Bhutias, and many other small distinct ethnic communities, however, the major communities are of the Bengalis, Adivasis and the Nepalis. There are many ethnic scheduled caste and scheduled tribe groups like Toto, Garo, Tamang, Lepcha, Santal, Munda, Kharia, Orao, Rai,

etc. Among them, Toto belong to the Primitive Tribal Group (P.T.G.) of India, who live in Totopara. Each of these ethnic groups have their own history, culture, rituals and religion.

The industrial and service sectors in Dooars is underdeveloped. Except, tea, timber and tourism industry, the region is still backward in this regard.

MAP OF DOOARS



PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of my research is to investigate the socio-economic conditions of the people living in the region of Dooars. The socio-economic conditions under study are the income levels, occupation and employment rate, literacy rate, accessibility to proper housing and sanitary facilities, and women's status and gender empowerment. The study also sought to explore the general influence of the tourism industry, as well as the effects of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) on the socio-economic lives of the people in Dooars.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview: The chapter provides a retrospective exploration and systematic review of available literature regarding the socio-economic conditions of the region of North Bengal, Eco-tourism in the region of Dooars, and the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the general socio-economic conditions in India and the tourism industry.

Ananya Biswas (2011): "Socio-Cultural and Economic Background of North Bengal"

In this paper the author analyses various aspects of socio-cultural and economic environment of North Bengal, such as demographic structure, literacy level, occupational structure, resource base e.g., agricultural, forest and mineral resources, etc. The districts in North Bengal have a disproportionate distribution of population due to the uneven topographical condition of the region. Since a majority of men migrate to urban areas from rural areas in search of jobs, the sex ratio in urban areas is lower than in rural areas.

In case of North Bengal, the region is developed in the field of agriculture and plantations. The forests in the region have helped flourish the tourism industry. In case of industrial sector, the region is still backward. This is due to the locational disadvantage and the lack of mineral resources. The key issues in this region are a high percentage of unemployed people and a high rate of dropouts. The tourism and the tea industry, if properly developed, would allow North Bengal to thrive in general. In this regard, the author suggests that the government must take steps to generate employment opportunities in the field of trade, transport and tourism.

Ananya Biswas (2011): "Eco-Tourism in Dooars Region"

In this paper the author discusses about the various tourist resources of the Dooars region, their classification, and the social as well as economic importance of these eco-tourism resources. Eco-tourism is the environmentally responsible travel to natural areas. Ecotourism resources must, therefore, be natural tourist resources. Biosphere reserves, mangroves, deserts, rich flora and fauna, mountains, forests, marine resources, etc. are the main resources of the eco-tourism. Forests and wildlife are well-known as the main eco-tourism resource in the Dooars region. The Dooars' region has an attractive landscape with numerous rivers such as the Teesta, Murti, Sankosh, etc. Tea gardens are an essential ecotourism resource in the Dooars region. Due to locational advantage, most tea gardens are attractive tourist spots, ushering in a new concept of tourism, i.e., "Tea Tourism."

The author highlights the significance of the Dooars region's eco-tourism resources. The eco-tourism resources of the region are a major source of revenue, attracting both foreign and domestic tourists and offering plenty of employment opportunities to many semi-skilled and unskilled people. It helps to conserve the biological and cultural diversity of the region. It also helps to maximize the economic benefit of the host communities particularly those people, who live in and adjacent protected and reserved forest areas. The author concludes that the eco-tourism resource has aided in the development of the eco-tourism sector in the Dooars region, but that good planning and management are required to ensure that the natural environment is well protected.

Ranjan Aneja, and Vaishali Ahuja (2021): "An Assessment of Socioeconomic Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic in India."

In this article, the authors investigate the socio-economic implications of the coronavirus pandemic in India. India being an emerging economy has been affected in every sector. The agriculture and allied sectors have been affected less than other sectors, while the service sector has been severely impacted by a temporary halt in tourism and hospitality, limited transportation and mobility, shutdown of school/colleges, and so on. The manufacturing sector is suffering major losses as a result of global supply chain disruptions.

There have also been significant sociological and psychological issues. Poverty and inequality are anticipated to worsen, having a particularly negative impact on migrants, casual and informal workers. The drop in employment has been found to be biased, with women being more vulnerable to losing their jobs than men. The pandemic has also resulted in a rise of domestic violence and mental health issues. Even in India's developed areas, there is a healthcare crisis due to a lack of testing services, doctors, health equipment, and beds. The author mentions some positive effects as well, but the long-term viability of these effects on air, water, and wildlife is dependent on the post-lockdown environment as well as people's behaviour and habits.

Ranjan Roy (2021): "Impact of lockdown on the economy of North Bengal with special reference to Tourism Industry of Darjeeling district."

The author of this article explores the impact of the lockdown on North Bengal's economy, particularly on the tourism industry in Darjeeling. The tourism industry was adversely affected by the nationwide lockdown enforced to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. The lockdown led to a job crisis for travel and tour agencies, as well as a major loss of income for hotels and lodges. One of the major consequences of the lockdown is that all occupational groups experienced income contraction, with an average 38% decrease in income. Tour managers have the highest income contraction followed by tour guides, drivers, and hotel managers. In order to overcome the significant losses caused by the pandemic, the author recommends that the West Bengal government should implement a comprehensive tourism marketing approach that is environmentally sustainable.

OBJECTIVES

1. To find out about the overall socio-economic conditions of people living in the region of Dooars.
2. To observe the impact of Tourism on the socio-economic life of people living in the region of Dooars.
3. To know whether there are any existence of gender discrimination or biasness in socio-economic life prevailing in the region.
4. To observe the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the socio-economic conditions of people living in the region of Dooars.

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

Overview: The theoretical overview demonstrates an understanding of the theories and concepts that are relevant to the topic of our research and that relate to the broader area of knowledge being considered.

The Formalism and Substantivism Debate

'Formalism' and 'Substantivism' refers to the two schools of thought in Economic Sociology which was split into these two groups since mid-1950s. The distinction between 'formal' and 'substantive' meaning of economics was first propounded by Austro-Hungarian economic sociologist Karl Polanyi (1886-1964) in his work *The Great Transformation* (1944). According to Polanyi, the *formal* meaning of economic derives from the logical character of the means-ends relationship. It refers to a definite situation of choice, namely, that between the different uses of means induced by an insufficiency of those means. The second, *substantive* meaning simply refers to the study of how humans make a living from their social and natural environment. The substantive meaning of economics is seen in the broader sense of provisioning. Polanyi's view is that only by adopting the substantive meaning of 'economic', we will be able to provide the social sciences with the necessary categories for an investigation of all real economies of the past and present.

Karl Marx's Labour Theory of Value

Karl Marx (1818–83) is a German philosopher, economist and sociologist. He established the theoretical foundation for Marxism. Marx's materialism and his consequent focus on the economic sector led him rather naturally to the work of a group of political economists (for example, Adam Smith and David Ricardo). He lauded their basic premise that labour was the source of all wealth. This ultimately led Marx to his Labour Theory of Value, in which he argued that the profit of the capitalist was based on the exploitation of the labourer. The capitalists pay the workers less than the value that the workers produce and keep the rest for themselves. This practice is defined by Marx's central concept of *surplus value*, which is defined as the difference between the value of the product when it is sold and the value of the elements consumed in the formation of that product (including the worker's labour). This surplus value is appropriated by the capitalist, who uses it to enhance his own lifestyle and power and, above all, to reinvest in the ongoing process of capital accumulation and expansion. In other words, the ability of capital to generate profit rests on the exploitation of the proletariat. This underlying contradiction leads to class conflict between the proletariat and bourgeoisie, which eventually will result in revolution because proletarianization will swell the ranks of the proletariat.

Emile Durkheim's The Division of Labour in Society

Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) was a famous French philosopher and sociologist. In his doctoral dissertation, *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893), Durkheim traced the development of the modern relation between individuals and society. According to him, modern society is not held together by the similarities between people who do basically similar things. Instead, it is the division of labour itself that pulls people together by forcing them to be dependent on each other.

Durkheim argued that "*the economic services that it can render are insignificant compared with the moral effect that it produces and its true function is to create between two or more people a feeling of solidarity*". In the process, it also establishes social and moral order within a society. Durkheim described how social order was maintained in societies based on two very different forms of solidarity – *Mechanical solidarity* and *Organic solidarity* – and the transition from 'primitive' societies to 'advanced' industrial societies. In primitive societies Mechanical solidarity among people who act and think similarly, as well as a collective conscience, is what allows social order to be maintained. Modern society, in Durkheim's view, is held together by the specialization of labour and their need for the services of many others. This is what he defined as Organic Solidarity. Division of labour, says Durkheim, is the process that will help keep society integrated.

Max Weber's Rational Capitalism:

Max Weber (1864 – 1920) was a German sociologist, historian, and political economist. In his classic essays "*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*" (1904-05), Weber presented his key ideas on capitalism. For Weber, capitalism "*involves the pursuit of profit, and forever renewed profit, by means of continuous, rational, capitalistic enterprise*". He termed this form of capitalism as "*Rational Capitalism*". Rational capitalism, according to him, is a uniquely western development. The idea of rationality involves the organization of human life in such a manner that greater efficiency and productivity can be attained. While Weber considers the capitalistic labour market to be important for the development of capitalism and has profound structural consequences for society, he provides little analysis of this. Unlike Marx, Weber viewed ideas especially religious ideas, as important component in the development of capitalism. The Protestant Ethic, according to Weber, is one of the sources that bred rational capitalism. He defines that the Protestant Ethic is the combination of dedication to disciplined work and acquisition, along with a life of denial of pleasure and spontaneity in enjoyment of life. Profits were not wasted on worldly pleasures. They were reinvested so that they could be purposefully used to further expand business. Western capitalism, thus, pursued profit as an end in itself and work as a moral injunction. This led to the crucial development of the spirit of capitalism - the rational pursuit of gain.

Georg Simmel's The Philosophy of Money

Georg Simmel (1858-1918) was a German philosopher and sociologist. In *The Philosophy of Money* (1907), Simmel enunciated some general principles about value that served as the basis for his analysis of money. Simmel treated money as a specific phenomenon linked with a variety of other components of life, including exchange, ownership, greed, individual freedom, the style of life, culture, the value of the personality, etc. In general, he argued that people create value by making objects, separating themselves from those objects, and then seeking to overcome the "distance, obstacles, difficulties". He found that objects that were too close or too far away for people to obtain are not considered valuable. In the economic realm, money serves both to create distance from objects and to provide the means to overcome it. Money is also an important medium in the creation of social ties between people. Society is just not a collection of individuals, and neither can be conceived without the other. Through money relationships between people is established.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology is the rationale for application of particular research methods. It refers to a set of procedures that guide the use of *Research Design*.

Research Design constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data. William Zikmund (1988) describes research design as "a master plan specifying the methods and procedures for collecting and analysing the data".

Here the purpose of my research is to investigate the socio-economic conditions of the people living in the region of Dooars. Therefore, I have found it justified to apply *Exploratory Research* and *Explanatory Research*.

Exploratory Research studies issues about which either little or no information is available. It attempts to gain better understanding of different dimensions of a problem.

Explanatory Research explains the causes of social phenomena. It is mainly concerned with the "why" factor about a phenomenon.

In the study that I conducted, I used the *Field Research Method*.

Field Research Method is the type of research which takes place in a natural setting, use observation (in most cases), and have very little structure imposed upon the setting by the observer.

Following are the techniques that have been used under the Field Research Method:

❖ Questionnaires

A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a set of questions intended to capture responses from respondents in a standardised manner. Questions in a questionnaires can be categorised into two types – *open-ended questions* and *close-ended questions*. In my research, I mostly employed closed-ended questions and only a few open-ended questions.

Close-ended questions are those where respondents are presented a set of pre-defined answers and the respondents choose from those set of answers.

Open-ended questions are those questions which require the respondent to elaborate on their perspective.

❖ Sampling

Sampling is the process of selecting a subset (called a "sample") of a population of interest for purposes of making observations and statistical inferences about that population. There are two types of samplings – *Probability Sampling* and *Non-Probability Sampling*.

In my study I have chosen to use two forms of Non-Probability Sampling – *Purposive Sampling* and *Snowball Sampling*.

In **Purposive Sampling** the researcher uses their own judgment about which respondents to choose, and picks only those who best meet the purposes of the study.

In **Snowball Sampling** existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances. Thus the sample group is said to grow like a rolling snowball.

❖ Interview

Interview is a two-person conversation, initiated by the researcher for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information from the respondents. Interviews can be *Structured* or *Unstructured*. In my research I have used **Structured** format of interview.

During **Structured Interview** the researcher asks the pre-drafted questions. Here, they cannot change the questions, or their sequence.

❖ Observation

Observation is the systematic viewing of a specific phenomenon in its natural setting for the specific purpose of gathering data for a particular study. There are two chief types of observation: *Participant* and *Non-Participant*. In my study I followed the *Non-Participant Observation* method.

In **Non-Participant Observation** the observer does not participate in group activities and does not pretend to be a member of the group.

❖ Analysis of Data

The analysis is the ordering of data into constituent parts in order to obtain answers to research questions. Data is analysed using different techniques such as *Qualitative* and *Quantitative* techniques.

Quantitative Analysis is mainly based on statistical assessment the responses of respondents in terms of frequencies.

Qualitative Analysis is mainly based assessments of the ideas expressed by the respondents. It involves identifying common and differing patterns of ideas of respondents to establish a certain theme of analysis.

As this is primarily a quantitative study, the data is analysed statistically in order to provide a concise, comparative, and collective understanding of the topic. Diagrammatic representations such as *Bar Graphs* and *Pie Charts* have been used to illustrate statistical data.

- **Bar Graphs** present data as rectangular bars whose lengths are proportionate to the values they represent. The bars can be plotted vertically or horizontally.
- A **Pie Chart** is a circular statistical graphic, which is divided into slices to illustrate numerical proportion.

DATA ANALYSIS

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

1. DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Q2: TABLE 1.1: AGE OF RESPONENTS

AGE GROUP	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (<i>f</i>)	PERCENTAGE
10-19	1	2.17%
20-29	18	39.13%
30-39	16	34.78%
40-49	5	10.86%
50-59	1	2.17%
60-69	3	6.52%
70-79	2	4.34%
TOTAL	46	100%

From the above table, it can be seen that the majority of the 46 respondents are in the age group of 20-29 (39.13%), followed by respondents in the age groups of 30-39 (34.78%), 40-49 (10.86%), 60-69 (6.52%), 70-79 (4.34%), 50-59 (2.17%) and 10-19 (2.17%).

Q3: TABLE 1.2: GENDER RATIO OF RESPONDENTS

GENDER	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (<i>f</i>)	PERCENTAGE
MALE	35	76%
FEMALE	11	24%
TOTAL	46	100%

From the above table, it can be seen that out of 46 total respondents, 11 (24%) were female, while 35 (76%) were male.

Q5: TABLE 1.3: OCCUPATION OF RESPONDENTS

OCCUPATION	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (<i>f</i>)	PERCENTAGE
BUSINESS	11	23.91%
DRIVER	3	6.52%
FARMER	1	2.17%
FOREST GUARD	4	8.69%
HOTEL EMPLOYEE	4	8.69%
HOUSEWIFE	1	2.17%
LABOURER	3	6.52%
PLANTATION WORKER	2	4.34%
FOOD STALL OWNER	7	15.21%
FOOD STALL WORKER	4	8.69%
TOTO DRIVER	6	13.04%
TOTAL	46	100%

From the above table, it can be seen that majority of the respondents were involved in Business (23.91%). Other occupations in which my respondents were involved are Food Stall Owners (15.21%), Toto drivers (13.04%), Food Stall Workers (8.69%), Forest Guards (8.69%), Hotel

Employees (8.69%), Drivers (6.52%), Labourers (6.52%), Plantation worker (4.34%), Farmer (2.17%) and Housewife (2.17%).

Q6: TABLE 1.4: MARITAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS

MARITAL STATUS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	PERCENTAGE
MARRIED	38	83%
UNMARRIED	8	17%
TOTAL	46	100%

From the above table, it can be seen that out of 46 total respondents, 38 (83%) are married, while 8 (17%) are unmarried.

Q7: TABLE 1.5: NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS' WITH A RATION CARD

RATION CARD	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	PERCENTAGE
ABOVE POVERTY LINE RATION CARD	22	47.82%
BELOW POVERTY LINE RATION CARD	13	28.26%
N.A	11	23.91%
TOTAL	46	100%

From the above table, it can be seen that 22 (47.82%) of the respondents have Above Poverty Line Ration Card, while 13 (28.26%) have Below Poverty Line Ration Card. Only 11 (23.91%) of the respondents have neither of the cards.

Q8: TABLE 1.6: NUMBER OF FAMILY MEMBERS OF RESPONDENTS

NUMBER OF FAMILY MEMBERS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	PERCENTAGE
1-5	24	52.17%
6-10	17	36.95%
11-15	4	8.69%
16-20	1	2.17%
TOTAL	46	100%

The above table shows that majority of the respondents have 1 to 5 members (52.17%) in their family, followed by respondents with 6 to 10 family members (36.95%), 11 to 15 family members (8.69%), and 16 to 20 family members (2.17%)

Q9: TABLE 1.7: NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND DEPENDENT FAMILY MEMBERS OF RESPONDENTS

NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND DEPENDENT FAMILY MEMBERS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	PERCENTAGE
1-4	32	69.56%
5-8	9	19.56%
9-12	5	10.86%
TOTAL	46	100%

The above table shows that majority of the respondents have 1 to 4 children and dependent family members (69.56%), followed by respondents who have 5 to 8 children and dependent family members (19.56%), and respondents who have 9 to 12 children and dependent family members (10.86%).

2. ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF RESPONDENTS

Q10: TABLE 2.1: MONTHLY INCOME OF RESPONDENTS

MONTHLY INCOME	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	PERCENTAGE
UNDER RS. 5,000	10	21.73%
RS. 5,000 – 10,000	25	54.34%
ABOVE RS. 10,000	10	21.73%
N.A	1	2.17%
TOTAL	46	100%

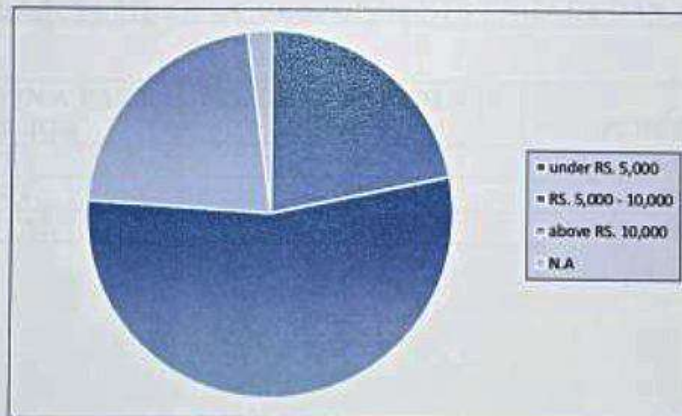


Figure 1: The monthly income of the respondents

From the above table and pie chart, it can be seen that majority of the respondents earn between Rs. 5,000 to 10,000 (54.34%). The remaining respondents earn either less than Rs. 5,000 (21.73%) or more than Rs. 10,000 (21.73%). Only one respondent (2.17%) has no income.

Q11: TABLE 2.2: TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT OF RESPONDENTS

TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	PERCENTAGE
SEASONAL	21	45.65%
PERENNIAL	24	52.17%
N.A	1	2.17%
TOTAL	46	100%

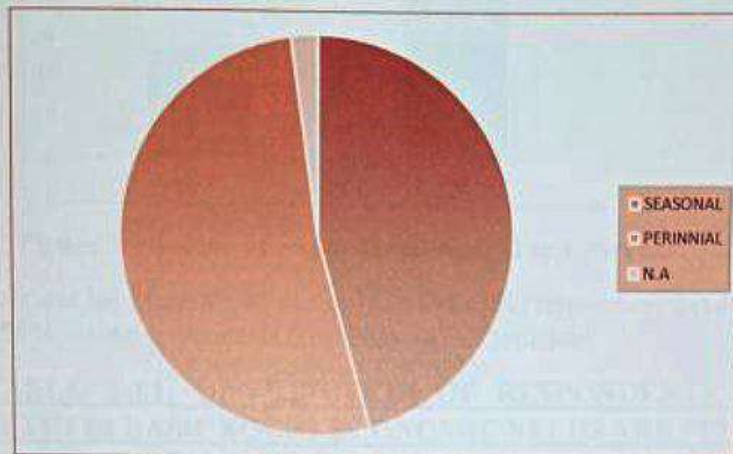


Figure 2: Type of employment of the respondents

From the above table and pie chart, it can be seen that majority of the respondents work all year round (52.17%), while the remaining respondents work seasonally (45.65%). Only one respondent (2.17%) is unemployed.

Q12: TABLE 2.3: NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS ENGAGED IN A PART TIME JOB

ENGAGED IN A PART TIME JOB	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	PERCENTAGE
YES	14	30.43%
NO	32	69.56%
TOTAL	46	100%

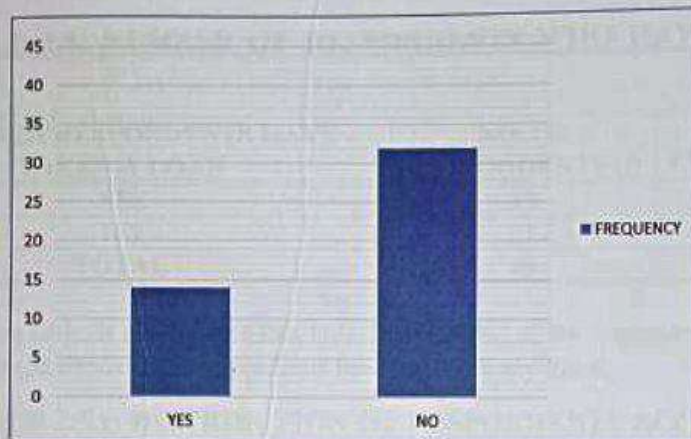


Figure 3: Number of respondents engaged in a part time job

The above table and bar graph shows that only 14 (30.43%) respondents have a part time job, while 32 (69.56%) of the respondents do not have a part time job.

Q12 (i): TABLE 2.3.1: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON WHETHER THEIR BASIC SOCIO-ECONOMIC NEEDS ARE FULFILLED BY THEIR PART TIME JOB

WHETHER THEIR BASIC SOCIO-ECONOMIC NEEDS ARE FULFILLED BY THE PART TIME JOB	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	PERCENTAGE
YES	13	92.85%
NO	1	2.17%
TOTAL	14	100%

From the above table, it can be seen that 13 (92.85%) of the 14 respondents with part-time jobs are able to meet their basic socio-economic needs, while one respondent (2.17%) is still unable to fulfil their basic socio-economic needs with the part-time job.

Q13: TABLE 2.4: NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS WITH A SAVINGS BANK ACCOUNT

RESPONDENTS WITH A SAVINGS BANK ACCOUNT	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	PERCENTAGE
YES	35	76%
NO	11	24%
TOTAL	46	100%

From the above table, it can be seen that 35 (76%) of the respondents have a savings bank account, while 11 (24%) of the respondents do not have a savings bank account.

Q14: TABLE 2.5: NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE TAKEN A LOAN

WHETHER RESPONDENTS HAVE TAKEN A LOAN	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	PERCENTAGE
YES	19	41.30%
NO	27	58.69%
TOTAL	46	100s%

From the above table, it can be seen that only 19 (41.30%) of the respondents have taken a loan, while 27 (58.69%) of the respondents have not taken any loans.

Q14(i): TABLE 2.5.1: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THEIR SOURCE OF LOAN

SOURCE OF LOAN	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	PERCENTAGE
COMMERCIAL BANKS	4	21.05%
PUBLIC BANKS	9	47.36%
POST OFFICE	0	0
MONEY LENDER	0	0
RELATIVE	0	0
FRIEND	0	0
GOVT. WELFARE SCHEMES	7	36.84%

From the above table, it can be seen that out of the 19 respondents who have taken a loan, the majority (47.36%) have done so through a public bank, followed by government welfare schemes (36.84%) and commercial banks (21.05%).

Q15: TABLE 2.6: NUMBER OF HOURS WORKED BY RESPONDENTS PER DAY

WORKING HOURS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	PERCENTAGE
6-10	30	65.21%
11-15	11	23.91%
16-20	1	2.17%
21-24	4	8.69%
TOTAL	46	100%

From the above table, it can be seen that majority of the respondents work between 6 to 10 hours per day (65.21%). The remaining respondents work 11 to 15 hours per day (23.91%), 21 to 24 hours per day (8.69%) and 16 to 20 hours per day (2.17%).

Q16: 2.7: LIVING AND SANITATION CONDITIONS

Q16(i): TABLE 2.7.1: RESIDENTIAL AREA OF THE RESPONDENTS

RESIDENTIAL AREA	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (<i>f</i>)	PERCENTAGE
VILLAGE	45	97.83%
TOWN	1	2.17%
CITY	0	0
TOTAL	46	100%

The above table shows that the majority of the respondents live in villages (97.83%) and only one respondent lives in a town (2.17%).

Q16(ii): TABLE 2.7.2: TYPE OF HOUSING OF THE RESPONDENTS

TYPE OF HOUSING	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (<i>f</i>)	PERCENTAGE
OWN HOUSE	44	95.65%
RENTAL HOUSE	0	0
PROVIDED BY EMPLOYER	1	2.17%
ON VESTED LAND	0	0
GIVEN BY GOVT.	1	2.17%
TOTAL	46	100%

The above table shows that the majority of the respondents have their own houses (95.65%). The remaining respondents live in houses provided by their employer (2.17%) and houses given by the government (2.17%).

Q16(iii): TABLE 2.7.3: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON THE AVAILABILITY OF LATRINE IN THEIR RESIDENCE

AVAILABILITY OF LATRINE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (<i>f</i>)	PERCENTAGE
WITHIN PREMISE	24	52.17%
NOT WITHIN PREMISE	22	47.82%
TOTAL	46	100%

The above table shows that 24 (52.17%) respondents have a latrine within their house, while 22 (47.82%) respondents do not have a latrine within their house.

Q16(iv): TABLE 2.7.4: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON THE AVAILABILITY OF DRINKING WATER IN THEIR RESIDENCE

AVAILABILITY OF DRINKING WATER	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (<i>f</i>)	PERCENTAGE
WITHIN PREMISE	21	45.65%
NOT WITHIN PREMISE	25	54.34%
TOTAL	46	100%

The above table shows that 21 (45.65%) respondents have a drinking water available in their house, while 25 (54.34%) respondents do not have drinking water available in their house.

Q17: TABLE 2.8: EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS

EDUCATIONAL STATUS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (<i>f</i>)	PERCENTAGE
LITERATE	40	86.95%
ILLITERATE	6	13.04%
TOTAL	46	100%

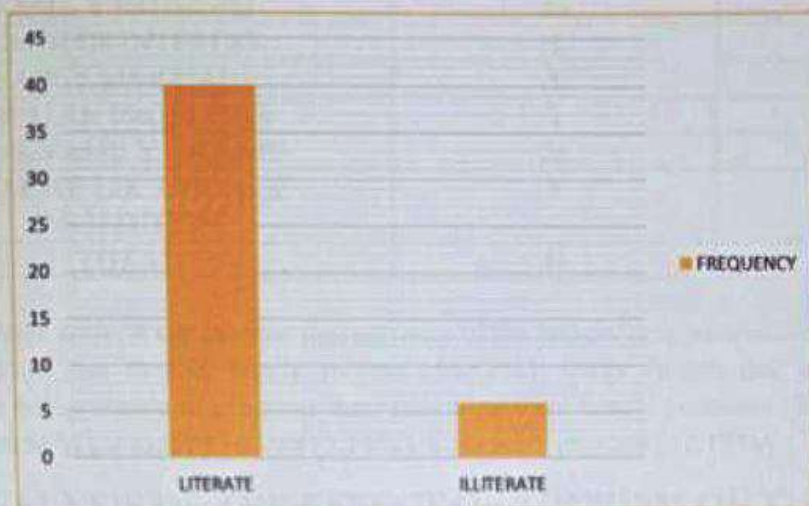


Figure 4: The educational status of the respondents

From the above table and bar graph, it can be seen that 40 (86.95%) of the respondents are literate, while only 6 (15.04%) of the respondents are illiterate.

Q17(i): TABLE 2.8.1: EDUCATION QUALIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS

EDUCATION QUALIFICATION	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (<i>f</i>)	PERCENTAGE
PRIMARY SCHOOL	13	32.5%
MIDDLE SCHOOL	14	35%
HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL	9	22.5%
COLLEGE	4	10%
UNIVERSITY	0	0
TOTAL	40	100%

The above table shows that, out of the 40 literate respondents, majority of them have completed their education up to middle school (35%), followed by those who have completed their education up to primary school (32.5%), higher secondary school (22.5%), and college (10%).

Q17(ii): TABLE 2.8.2: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS' BASED ON THE TYPE OF SCHOOL THEY ATTENDED

TYPE OF SCHOOLING	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (<i>f</i>)	PERCENTAGE
PUBLIC	39	97.5%
PRIVATE	1	2.5%
TOTAL	40	100%

From the above table, it can be seen that, out of the 40 respondents, 39 (97.5%) have gone to a public school, while only one respondent has gone to a private school (2.5%).

Q18: TABLE 2.9: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS' BASED ON THE CONSTRAINTS THEY FACED IN COMPLETING THEIR EDUCATION

MAJOR CONSTRAINTS FACED BY RESPONDENTS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (<i>f</i>)	PERCENTAGE
FAMILY PROBLEM	13	28.26%
LACK OF INTEREST	1	2.17%
EARLY MARRIAGE	5	10.86%
HEALTH PROBLEMS	1	2.17%
LOW FAMILY INCOME	26	56.52%
REMOTE LOCATION OF INSTITUTION	0	0
TOTAL	46	100%

From the above table, it can be seen that majority of the respondents were unable to complete their education due to low family income (56.52%). Other factors that contributed to respondents being unable to complete their education were family problems (28.26%), early marriage (10.86%), a lack of interest (2.17%), and health problems (2.17%).

3. ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECT OF TOURISM ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF RESPONDENTS

Q19: TABLE 3.1: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS ON TOURISM'S ABILITY TO CREATE NEW JOB OPPORTUNITIES

RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS ON TOURISM'S ABILITY TO CREATE NEW JOB OPPORTUNITIES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (<i>f</i>)	FREQUENCY
YES	32	69.56%
NO	14	30.43%
TOTAL	46	100%

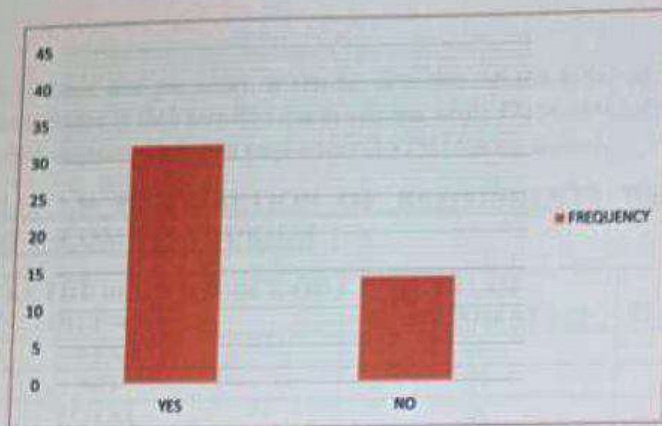


Figure 5: The distribution of respondents' opinions on tourism's ability to create new job opportunities

From the above table and bar graph, it can be seen that 32 (69.56%) of the 46 respondents do believe that tourism can create new job opportunities, while only 14 (30.43%) disagree with the statement.

Q20: TABLE 3.2: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS' BASED ON THE EFFECT OF TOURISM ON THEIR EARNINGS

THE EFFECT OF TOURISM ON RESPONDENTS' EARNINGS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	PERCENTAGE
INCREASED	28	60.86%
STAGNANT	17	36.95%
N.A	1	2.17%
TOTAL	46	100%

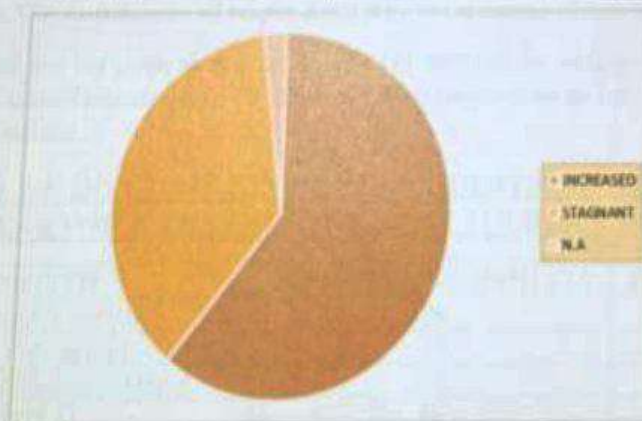


Figure 6: The distribution of respondents' based on the effect of tourism on their earnings

From the above table and pie chart, it can be seen that 28 (60.86%) of the respondents experienced an increase in their earnings due to tourism, while 17 (36.95%) of the respondents' income remained stagnant. Only one respondent (2.17%) has no income.

Q21: TABLE 3.3: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WHOSE MAIN SOURCE OF INCOME IS TOURISM

TOURISM AS THE MAIN SOURCE OF INCOME	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (<i>f</i>)	PERCENTAGE
YES	19	41.30%
NO	27	58.69%
TOTAL	46	100%

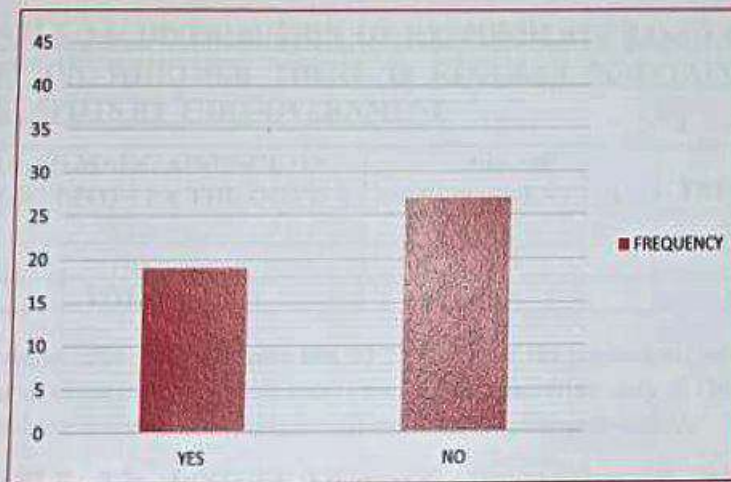


Figure 7: The distribution of respondents who main source of income is tourism

The above table and bar graph shows that only 19 (41.30%) of the 46 respondents depend on tourism as a source of income, while 27 (58.69%) of the respondents do not depend on tourism as a source of income.

Q22: TABLE 3.4: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS' RESPONSE ON THE TIME OF YEAR WHEN THEY SEE THE MOST TOURISTS

MONTH	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (<i>f</i>)	PERCENTAGE
JANUARY-APRIL	16	34.78%
MAY-AUGUST	10	21.73%
SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER	20	43.47%
TOTAL	46	100%

From the above table, it can be seen that majority respondents see the most tourists during the months of September to December (43.47%), followed by the months of January to April (34.78%) and May to August (21.73%).

Q23: TABLE 3.5: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON THE SOURCE OF INCOME IN THE OFFSEASON

SOURCE OF INCOME	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	PERCENTAGE
SAME JOB	29	63.04%
ANOTHER JOB	9	19.5%
UNEMPLOYED	8	17.39%
TOTAL	46	100%

From the above table, it can be seen that 29 (63.04%) of the respondents have the same job during the offseason, while 9 (19.5%) of the respondents have to find new jobs during this time. During the offseason, 8 (17.39%) of the respondents were unable to find work and were thus unemployed.

Q24: TABLE 3.6: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON THEIR OPINION ON WHETHER THERE IS REGULAR MAINTAINENCE OF TOURIST SPOTS BY THE GOVERNMENT

REGULAR MAINTAINENCE OF TOURIST SPOTS BY THE GOVT.	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	FREQUENCY
YES	13	28.26%
NO	33	71.73%
TOTAL	46	100%

From the above table, it can be seen that 33 (71.73%) of the respondents believe that the government does not maintain tourist spots on a regular basis. While only 13 (28.26%) of the respondents believe that tourist spots are well-maintained by the government.

Q25: TABLE 3.7: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON WHETHER THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED DIFFICULTY OR DISTURBANCE AS A RESULT OF TOURISTS

WHETHER RESPONDENTS HAVE EXPERIENCED DIFFICULTY OR DISTURBANCE BECAUSE OF TOURISTS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	FREQUENCY
YES	27	58.7%
NO	19	41.3%
TOTAL	46	100%

The above table shows that 27 (58.7%) of the respondents have not faced any sort of difficulty or disturbance due to tourists. Only 19 (41.3%) of the respondents claim to have faced difficulty or disturbance due to tourists.

Q26: TABLE 3.8: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON THEIR ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC SCHEMES

ACCESS TO GOVT. SCHEMES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	FREQUENCY
YES	16	34.8%
NO	30	65.2%
TOTAL	46	100%

From the above table, it can be seen that only 16 (34.8%) respondents have access to socio-economic schemes provided by the government, whereas 30 (65.2%) respondents do not have any access to these schemes.

4. ANALYSIS OF THE EXISTENCE OF GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN THE RESPONDENTS' SOCIO-ECONOMIC LIVES

Q27: TABLE 4.1: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON WHO MAKES THE DECISIONS IN THEIR FAMILY

DECISION MAKER IN THE FAMILY	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	PERCENTAGE
FATHER	19	41.30%
MOTHER	4	8.69%
SIBLING	1	2.17%
HUSBAND	2	4.34%
BOTH THE SPOUSES	1	2.17%
SELF	19	41.30%
TOTAL	46	100%

From the above table it can be seen that in majority of the families, decisions are made by either the respondents' fathers (41.30%), or themselves (41.30%). Other members of the family who make decisions include mothers (8.69%), husbands (4.34%), siblings (2.17%), and, in one case, both spouses (2.17%).

Q28: TABLE 4.2: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS' RESPONSE ON WHETHER WOMEN ARE ALLOWED TO WORK AT THEIR OWN CHOICE

RESPONDENTS' RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	PERCENTAGE
YES	25	54.3%
NO	21	45.7%
TOTAL	46	100%

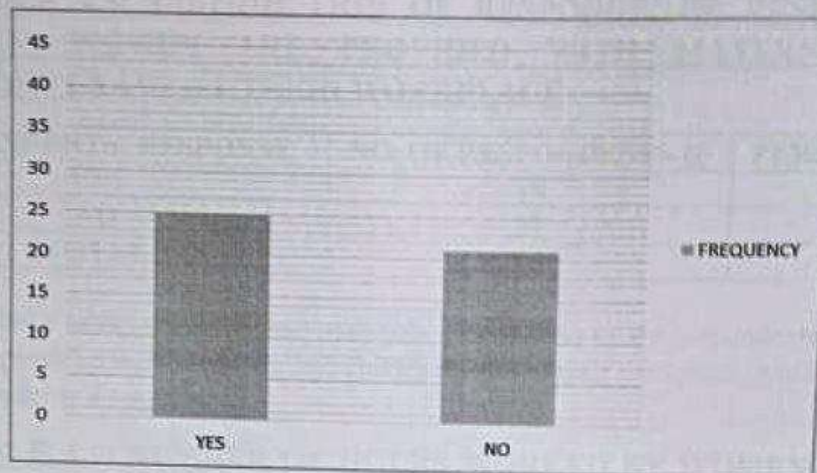


Figure 8: The distribution of respondents' responses based on whether women are allowed to work at their own choice.

From the above table and bar graph, it can be seen that 25 (54.3%) of the respondents believe that women are allowed to work at their own will, while 21 (45.7%) of the respondents disagree.

Q29: TABLE 4.3: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS' RESPONSE ON WHETHER WOMEN ARE FORCED TO WORK DUE TO FINANCIAL INCONVENIENCE

RESPONDENTS' RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (<i>f</i>)	PERCENTAGE
YES	8	17.39%
NO	38	82.6%
TOTAL	46	100%

From the above table, it can be seen that only 8 (17.39%) of the respondents believe that women are forced to work due to financial inconvenience, while 38 (82.6%) of the respondents disagree.

Q30: TABLE 4.4: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS' RESPONSE ON WHETHER WOMEN ARE SAFE WORKING NIGHT SHIFTS

RESPONDENTS' RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (<i>f</i>)	PERCENTAGE
YES	21	45.76%
NO	25	54.34%
TOTAL	46	100%

From the above table, it can be seen that 21 (45.76%) of the respondents believe that women are safe working in night shifts, while 25 (54.34%) of the respondents disagree.

Q31: TABLE 4.5: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS' RESPONSE ON WHETHER WOMEN ARE PROVIDED WITH MATERNITY AND CHILDCARE LEAVE AT THEIR WORKPLACE

RESPONDENTS' RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (<i>f</i>)	PERCENTAGE
YES	19	41.3%
NO	27	58.7%
TOTAL	46	100%

From the above table, it can be seen that only 19 (41.3%) of the respondents believe that women are provided with maternity and childcare leave at their workplace, while 27 (58.7%) of the respondents disagree.

Q32: TABLE 4.6: NUMBER OF HOURS WORKED BY WOMEN ON JOBS OTHER THAN HOUSEHOLD WORK

WORKING HOURS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (<i>f</i>)	PERCENTAGE
5-11	20	43.47%
12-23	21	45.7%
24	5	10.86%
TOTAL	46	100%

The above table shows the majority of women work 12 to 23 hours per day (45.7%) on jobs other than household work, followed by women who work 5 to 11 hours per day (43.47%) and even some who work 24 hours per day (10.86%).

5. ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF RESPONDENTS

Q34: TABLE 5.1: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON WHETHER THEY WERE UNEMPLOYED DURING THE LOCKDOWN

WHETHER RESPONDENTS WERE UNEMPLOYED DURING THE LOCKDOWN	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (<i>f</i>)	PERCENTAGE
YES	36	78.26%
NO	10	21.73%
TOTAL	46	100%

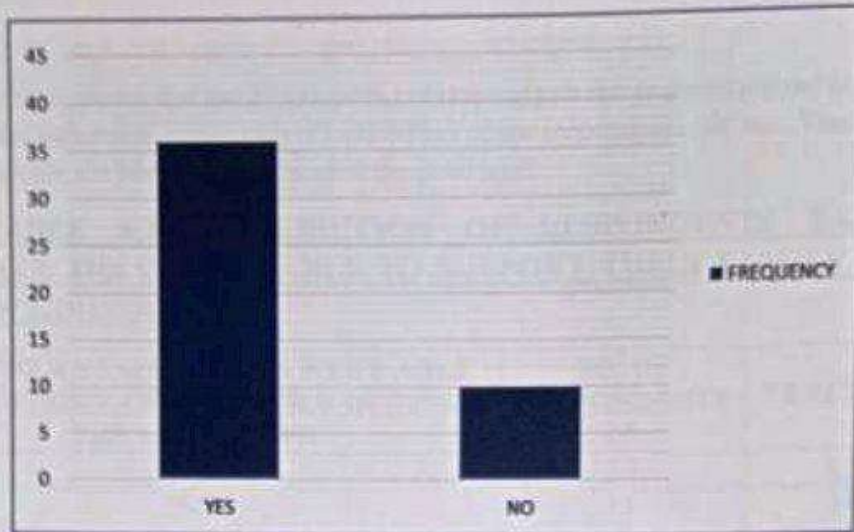


Figure 9: The distribution of respondents based on whether they were unemployed during the COVID-19 Pandemic

From the above table and bar graph, it can be seen that only 10 (21.73%) of the respondents were employed during the lockdown, while 36 (78.26%) of the respondents were unemployed.

Q34(i): TABLE 5.1.1: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO EXPERIENCED A DECREASE IN THEIR INCOME DURING THE PANDEMIC

WHETHER RESPONDENTS EXPERIENCED A DECREASE IN THEIR INCOME DURING THE PANDEMIC	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (\emptyset)	PERCENTAGE
YES	4	8.69%
NO	42	91.30%
TOTAL	46	100%

From the above table it can be seen that only 4 (8.69%) of the respondents saw a decrease in their income during the pandemic, while 42 (91.30%) of the respondents did not.

Q35: TABLE 5.2: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON WHETHER THEY WERE UNDEREMPLOYED IN A JOB THEY GOT DURING OR AFTER THE LOCKDOWN

WHETHER RESPONDENTS WERE UNDEREMPLOYED IN A JOB THEY GOT DURING OR AFTER THE LOCKDOWN	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (\emptyset)	PERCENTAGE
YES	27	58.69%
NO	17	36.95%
N.A	2	4.34%
TOTAL	46	100%

The above table shows that the 27 (58.69%) of respondents felt underemployed in the job they got after the lockdown, while only 17 (36.95%) of the respondents did not. Two (4.34%) of the respondents did not get any jobs after the pandemic.

Q36: TABLE 5.3: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON WHETHER THEY WERE ABLE TO SUPPORT THEIR FAMILY DURING THE LOCKDOWN

WHETHER RESPONDENTS WERE ABLE TO SUPPORT THEIR FAMILY DURING THE LOCKDOWN	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	PERCENTAGE
YES	30	65.2%
NO	16	34.8%
TOTAL	46	100%

From the above table it can be seen that 30 (65.2%) of the respondents were able to support their families during the lockdown, whereas 16 (34.8%) of the respondents were unable to do so.

Q37: TABLE 5.4: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON WHETHER THEY USED THEIR SAVINGS TO SUPPORT THEIR FAMILY DURING THE LOCKDOWN

WHETHER RESPONDENTS USED THEIR SAVINGS TO SUPPORT THEIR FAMILY DURING THE LOCKDOWN	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	PERCENTAGE
YES	29	63.04%
NO	15	32.61%
N.A	2	4.34%
TOTAL	46	100%

From the above table it can be seen that 29 (63.04%) of the respondents used their savings to support their families during the lockdown, while 15 (32.61%) of the respondents did not. Two of respondents do not have any savings.

Q38: TABLE 5.5: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON WHETHER THEY EXPERIENCED AN INCREASE IN THE PRICES OF COMMODITIES DURING THE PANDEMIC

WHETHER RESPONDENTS EXPERIENCED AN INCREASE IN THE PRICES OF COMMODITIES DURING THE PANDEMIC	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	PERCENTAGE
YES	41	89.13%
NO	5	10.86%
TOTAL	46	100%

The above table shows that 41 (89.13%) of the respondents experienced an increase in the prices of commodities during the pandemic while only 5 (10.86%) of the respondents did not.

Q39: TABLE 5.6: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON WHETHER THEIR CHILDREN WERE ABLE TO ACCESS ONLINE EDUCATION DURING THE PANDEMIC

WHETHER THE RESPONDENTS' CHILDREN WERE ABLE TO ACCESS ONLINE EDUCATION DURING THE PANDEMIC	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	PERCENTAGE
YES	34	73.9%
NO	12	26.1%
TOTAL	46	100%

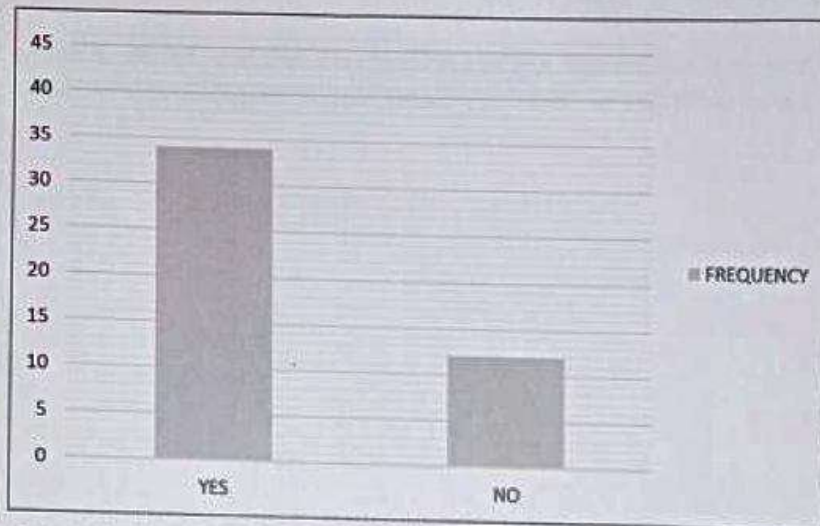


Figure 10: The distribution of respondents based on whether their children were able to access online education during the Pandemic

From the above table and bar graph, it can be seen that 34 (73.9%) of the respondents' children or siblings were able to access online education during the pandemic, whereas 12 (26.1%) of the respondents' children or siblings were unable to.

Q40: TABLE 5.7: NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS WHO ARE AWARE OF THE GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES PROVIDED DURING THE PANDEMIC

WHETHER THE RESPONDENTS ARE AWARE OF THE GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES PROVIDED DURING THE PANDEMIC	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (f)	PERCENTAGE
YES	22	47.8%
NO	24	52.2%
TOTAL	46	100%

From the above table it can be seen that only 22 (47.8%) of the respondents were aware of the government subsidies that were provided during the pandemic, while 24 (52.2%) of the respondents were unaware.

Q41: TABLE 5.8: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE USED ANY OF THE GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES MADE AVAILABLE DURING THE PANDEMIC

WHETHER THE RESPONDENTS HAVE USED ANY OF THE GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES PROVIDED DURING THE PANDEMIC	NO. OF RESPONDENTS (<i>l</i>)	PERCENTAGE
YES	26	56.52%
NO	20	43.47%
TOTAL	46	100%

From the above it can be seen that 26 (56.52%) of the respondents had used government subsidies which were provided during the pandemic, while 20 (43.47%) of the respondents had not.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Q19(i): Is tourism capable of creating new job opportunities?

Tourism is one of the main industries in Dooars and is often the primary source of income for many locals. 32 of the 46 people we had interviewed agreed that tourism could indeed create new employment opportunities.

One of my respondents Juma Rai (Age:46, Female, Educational Qualification: Higher Secondary, works in a grocery store in Rocky Island) shared, *"By constructing homestays, we can provide job opportunities to locals who can work there as cooks, maids, caretakers, etc."*

Another one of my respondents Apu Ray (Age:29, Male, Educational Qualification: Higher Secondary, works as a Forest Guard in Dakshin Dhupjhura) says, *"Promoting villages as tourist spots would provide jobs for villagers who would otherwise have to travel outside of their villages for work. They could start their own restaurants, hotels, or work as tour guides."*

Many of the respondents interviewed believe that employing semi-skilled and unskilled locals to work as tour guides, nature guides, drivers and in other jobs which cater service to tourists would not only increase the local workforce but also enable the development of the region's infrastructure.

Q33: What are the problems that both males and females are facing in your society?

While the Dooars region's economy thrives due to the tea industry, the region remains underdeveloped in both the industrial and service sector. The region is also underdeveloped infrastructurally.

According to one of my respondent Ajit Roy (Age:32, Male, Educational Qualification: Graduate, works as a Forest Guard in Murti), *"Even with proper educational qualifications, most of us are unable to get decent paying job. It is also difficult for us to get jobs with a stable income."*

Similarly, one of my respondents, Manser Ali (Age:35, Male, Educational Qualification: Middle School, works as a Toto driver) shared, *"The roads in the region are not well maintained, making it a lot difficult to travel, especially during the monsoon season."*

Another respondent Shobhi Rain (Age:65, Female, Educational Qualification: Middle School, works in a Tea Plantation in Samsing) shares, *"There are no proper housing and water facilities available here."*

Similarly another respondent Ananta Mondal (Age:26, Male, Educational Qualification: Graduate, works in a resort) shared, *"There is a lack of proper network facilities which make it difficult for us to communicate with family members who live out in the city."*

Many of the respondents reported difficulty in finding suitable jobs which provide them with a stable income. The improper maintenance of roads, a lack of proper housing and water facilities, as well as a lack of medical, educational, and network facilities also pose a serious problem for them.

Q42: What more cooperation are you expecting from the government?

As discussed above, the Dooars region is underdeveloped in both the industrial and service sectors. Many people who are unable to complete their education are forced to work in low-wage jobs. While the government provides basic subsidies to locals, there is a lack of infrastructural development.

According to one of my respondent Ajit Roy (Age:32, Male, Educational Qualification: Graduate, works as a Forest Guard in Murti), *"As my job is seasonal and heavily reliant on tourists, the government should give a minimal fixed income so that we can save money to support our family during the offseason."*

Another respondent Juma Rai (Age:46, Female, Educational Qualification: Higher Secondary, works in a grocery store in Rocky Island) shared, *"The installation of network towers would be beneficial to the area."*

Similarly, one of my respondents, Bimal Roy (Age:25, Male, Educational Qualification: Graduate, works as a Toto driver) shared, *"It would be useful for us if the government constructs safe, paved roads that could be used in all weather conditions."*

Many respondents expect the government to provide more job opportunities that can provide a steady income throughout the year. Many other respondents believe that the development of medical and network facilities, as well as the construction of proper roads for commuting, will aid in the region's development.

CONCLUSION

My dissertation on “**The General Socio-Economic Conditions of the People Living in the Region of Dooars**” was conducted in order to gain insight on the socio-economic conditions of the people living in the region of Dooars such as their income levels, occupation and employment rate, literacy rate, accessibility to proper housing and sanitary facilities, and women’s status and gender empowerment. In my study I also sought to explore the general influence of the tourism industry, as well as the effects of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) on the socio-economic lives of the people living there.

The socio-economic conditions of a region has a substantial impact not only on an individual’s well-being but also on a region’s development. In my research, I found that the majority of respondents we interviewed are literate. However, most of them were unable to complete their education, with many dropping out in middle school due to their low family income and the necessity to find work to support their families. In my research, I also discovered that the majority of the respondents worked in low-wage jobs, with most of them earning less than Rs.10,000 per month. While majority of the respondents have their own home, the living conditions there are quite poor, with majority lacking access to proper drinking water and many lacking a latrine in their home. Thus, the overall socio-economic condition of people residing in the Dooars region is moderately poor.

Tourism is the fastest developing industry worldwide. It generates income not only through revenue but also by employing a large number of people in both skilled and unskilled sectors. Tourism is one of the main industries in Dooars and it has a direct and indirect impact on the socio-economic conditions of the residents. Despite the fact that many of the respondents do not rely on tourism as their primary source of income, the majority believe it has the potential to create new job opportunities. However, I discovered during my research that tourism did, in fact, have a positive impact on their incomes, with many respondents stating that their earnings increased during the tourism season. Many interviewees reported that, while tourism has been economically beneficial to the region, effective planning and management are required to ensure that tourist attractions are well preserved. Many of the respondents felt that hiring locals to work in tourist-related jobs would not only enhance the local workforce but also lead to development of the region’s infrastructure.

Gender equality and women’s empowerment have large impact on the development of a region. In my research, I discovered that the majority of women were permitted to work at their own will, and many decided to start working at an early age to help support their families. While women are economically empowered, the majority do not have the independent freedom to make household decisions because the male members of their family have the final say. Thus, gender discrimination is a persistent aspect of the people’s socio-economic lives.

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic and consequent lockdown had a devastating effect on people all around the world, including India. During the pandemic, the majority of respondents had lost their jobs. The temporary halt in tourism and hospitality, shutdown of tea plantations, reduced transportation, shutdown of schools/colleges, as well as local businesses have severely affected the residents of Dooars. Many of the people I spoke to claimed that they were the sole earners in their families, which put them under a lot of stress and forced them to rely on their

savings to support their families. Many of the respondents reported difficulty finding suitable jobs after the pandemic that provided a stable income, and they felt underemployed and underpaid in the jobs they got following the pandemic. Because of the nationwide school closures during the pandemic, the majority of the respondents' children or siblings were heavily reliant on online schooling. The respondents also experienced an increase in prices of commodities which put more stress on their finances. Thus, the pandemic had a very negative impact on the socio-economic lives of the people living in Dooars.

While the government provides basic subsidies to residents, there is a lack of infrastructural development in terms of road maintenance, adequate housing and water amenities, as well as adequate medical, educational, and network facilities. The lack of these facilities is indeed a severe problem for the residents, as well as a hindrance to the region's economic development. Even though the tea industry contributes to Dooars' economic growth, the region's industrial and service sectors remain underdeveloped. The major obstacles to the development of these sectors here include a lack of entrepreneurial knowledge about industrial activities, lack of raw materials, a bad marketing network, lack of financing and governmental support, underdeveloped infrastructural facilities, and undulating terrain.

As a result of my research, I have come to the conclusion that the socio-economic conditions of the people of the Dooars is moderately poor, as the majority of respondents are stuck in low-wage jobs and the living conditions are insufficient to sustain good living standards. Women in the region, despite being economically independent, do not have much freedom in making decisions in their households. The government's lack of developmental initiatives and lack of promotion of the tourist spots in the Dooars has hampered not just the residents' but also the region's social and economic progress. Another major impediment to the region's economic and social development is the lack of industries and civic amenities, as well as underdeveloped infrastructure. The COVID-19 pandemic caused the majority of respondents to lose their jobs, placing a significant financial burden on them in terms of supporting their families. While the opening of tourist sites and tea gardens has helped people earn some money, many people are still unable to find secure, well-paying jobs.

SUGGESTIONS

On the basis of the findings of the study, the following strategies are highly suggested for the development of the livelihood of the people of Dooars:-

- There are many people who discontinued their education due to financial problems. So the government should introduce vocational training programs for better utilisation of existing human resources.
- The region's infrastructure, such as roads, water, toilets, electricity, network towers, and transportation, should be improved so that the respondents' standard of living can improve.
- The government should offer loans to locals so that they can open their own homestays, ecolodges, restaurants and businesses.
- As many of the locals in Dooars work in low wage jobs, the government should invest in areas such as IT and ITES, healthcare, manufacturing, and so on to develop the industrial and service sectors and increase job opportunities.
- The government should promote villages in Dooars as tourist spots as it is seen that rural tourism can improve civic amenities like communication, sanitations, transport facilities and standard of living for the people in general.
- The government should promote Dooars as an eco-tourism destination. This would not only ensure that natural and protected areas such as forests and wildlife parks are preserved, but it would also aim to maximise economic benefit for local communities, particularly those who live near natural and protected regions.

LIMITATIONS

Every researcher faces certain limitations when conducting their research. Similarly, while conducting the field work, I faced certain limitations as well:-

- There was a problem reaching a larger number of respondents because the entire study was a time-bounded field study conducted over a three-day period.
- There were many people who denied to give an interview.
- Many respondents rushed through their answers when I interviewed them, especially in the tea plantation and food stalls, as they were multi-tasking between their work and answering my questions.
- At some point, getting respondents became difficult because some of the people had already answered for another interviewer and were annoyed or asked us to come back later.

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PICTURES FOR REFERENCE



QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name:
 2. Age:
 3. Sex:
 4. Address:
 5. Occupation:
 6. Marital status:
 7. Do you have a Govt. card: APL Card / BPL Card
 8. Number of family members:
 9. Number of dependent members and children in your family:
 10. What is your monthly income?
A. under RS 5,000 B. RS 5,000 – RS 10,000 C. Above RS 10,000
 11. Is your occupation - seasonal / perennial
 12. Are you engaged in any other part time job?
A. YES B. NO
- If YES, then is this job fulfilling enough to secure all your basic socio economic needs?
- A. YES B. NO
13. Do you have bank account for savings purposes?
A. YES B. NO
 14. Do you borrow / loan?
A. YES B. NO
- If YES, then from whom?
- Commercial banks / Public banks / Post office / money lenders / Relatives / Friends / Govt. Welfare Schemes
15. How many hours do you work?
 16. Living and sanitation conditions
 - (i) Residential Area :Village / Town / City
 - (ii) Type of housing : Own house / Rental house / Provided by employer / On vested land (Future Possession) / Given by govt. through govt. scheme.
 - (iii) Availability of latrine: within premise / not within premises
 - (iv) Availability of drinking water facility : within premise / not within premise
 17. Educational Status
A. Literate B. Illiterate

(i) If literate, level of education:

Primary/ Middle School/ Higher Secondary School/ College/ University

(ii) What type of school did you go to: (a) Private (b) Public

18. Did you face any major constraints in your education?

- a. Family problem c. Lack of interest e. Low family income
b. Early marriage d. Health problems f. Remote location of institution

19. Do you think tourism in this region is capable of creating further new employment opportunities?

A. YES B. NO

If YES, How?

20. How does the increase in tourism effect your earning?

A. Increased B. Stagnant

21. Whether their main source of income is tourism?

A. YES B. NO

22. Which time of the year do they have more tourist?

23. What is their source of income in offseason?

24. Is there regular maintenance of tourists spots by the Govt. ?

A. YES B. NO

25. Do you face any difficulties or disturbances from the tourists?

A. YES B. NO

26. Are you able to access all the socio – economic schemes of Govt. allotted for you?

A. YES B. NO

27. Who makes the decision in your family ?

Mother / Father / Husband / Wife / Self

28. Are the women allowed to work by their own choice?

A. YES B. NO

29. Are the women forced to work due to financial inconvenience?

A. YES B. NO

30. Are the women secured / free to work at night shifts ?

A. YES B. NO

31. Do women get maternity and child care leave benefit in their workplace?

A. YES B. NO

32. How long the women are involved in working other than household work ?

33. What are the problems that both males and female are facing in your society ?

34. Did you go through a period of unemployment during covid lockdown ?

A. YES B. NO

If NO, did you see a decrease in your monthly income? A. YES B. NO

35. Were you underemployed in an occupation or job that you got during or after pandemic?

A. YES B. NO

36. Were you able to support your family during the lockdown period efficiently?

A. YES B. NO

37. Did you use any of your savings that to support your family during lockdown?

A. YES B. NO

38. Has there been an increase in the prices of food, garments, taxes, etc. due to this covid 19 pandemic?

A. YES B. NO

39. Were you or any children in your family was able to access online education in schools/colleges remained closed due to pandemic situation?

A. YES B. NO

40. Are you aware of any of the subsidies that the Govt had provided during covid 19 pandemic situation?

A. YES B. NO

41. Did you avail any of these subsidies/facilities provided by the Govt?

A. YES B. NO

42. What more cooperation are you expecting from the Govt?