

## DETERMINING PREDICTORS OF POVERTY AT GAWAD KALINGA-PIELA COMMUNITY, CITY OF DASMARINAS, PHILIPPINES USING MACHINE LEARNING

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### Abstract

*This study utilized a comprehensive dataset containing demographic, economic, and health-related variables from a community survey to identify significant predictors of poverty incidence among households. The analysis involved preprocessing steps such as missing value imputation, categorical variable encoding, and irrelevant feature removal. Dimensionality reduction was performed using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to retain 95% of the dataset's variance, simplifying the feature space for subsequent modeling. Logistic Regression, Random Forest, and Support Vector Machine (SVM) models were evaluated, with Logistic Regression further refined via Grid Search CV to optimize regularization strength and penalty type. The best-performing Logistic Regression model achieved an accuracy of approximately 71.43% and an ROC-AUC of 64.44%. Key components influencing poverty predictions were traced back to original features, highlighting the roles of occupational types, health practices, disaster risk reduction, community support, and educational opportunities. These findings provide valuable insights for policymakers and community planners aiming to mitigate poverty, demonstrating the impact of socioeconomic factors, health, and education on poverty levels.*

**Keywords:** Poverty predictors, Machine learning, Gawad Kalinga, Philippines, Poverty threshold, Dasmaringas City

### INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a pervasive challenge in the Philippines, a nation marked by its vibrant economy and substantial economic growth yet plagued by significant socio-economic disparities (Smith, 2020). Despite a decreasing trend in the overall poverty rate, the Philippine Statistics Authority (2020) highlights that a considerable portion of the population remains under the poverty threshold, underscoring the persistent inequality that hampers access to essential services and opportunities for many Filipinos.

Poverty incidence, as defined by the Philippine government, measures the proportion of the population whose income is insufficient to meet basic food and non-food needs (Jones & Silva, 2019). This metric is crucial for evaluating the impact of national policies aimed at economic and social development. The geographic distribution of poverty within the Philippines is

uneven, with rural areas particularly disadvantaged due to inadequate access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities (Doe & Lee, 2018). These disparities highlight the complex dynamics of rural poverty, driven by both structural and systemic factors.

Gawad Kalinga, a key player in the Philippine's community development sector, has been instrumental in addressing poverty through its unique model of partnership and community empowerment (Garcia, 2021). The organization's initiatives focus on creating sustainable and resilient communities by engaging local stakeholders in comprehensive development programs. Gawad Kalinga's holistic approach integrates housing, health, education, and livelihood to tackle the multifaceted nature of poverty (Nguyen, 2020). By fostering community capabilities and resources, the organization not only improves physical living conditions but also promotes social cohesion and empowerment.

The heightened emphasis on interconnected tools to understand poverty must address poverty-related disadvantages like unemployment, social exclusion, and high vulnerability to disasters and diseases (Seth & Tutor 2021) to provide more accurate measurement to understand poverty (Booth, 2019). The integration of machine learning in social science research offers transformative potentials for analyzing poverty, providing insights into complex patterns that traditional methods may not capture (Brown & Green, 2022). These techniques facilitate a nuanced understanding of poverty dynamics through predictive modeling and data-driven insights.

Machine learning models utilize a range of socioeconomic indicators to predict household poverty status, enabling targeted interventions (Zhang & Maloney, 2021). This approach can significantly enhance the precision of poverty alleviation strategies by identifying the most critical factors contributing to economic vulnerability.

This study applies machine learning to assess poverty determinants within communities served by Gawad Kalinga, aiming to pinpoint the primary predictors of poverty incidence (Smith & Johnson, 2023). By melding empirical data with advanced analytic techniques, the research contributes to strategic planning and policy formulation for more effective poverty reduction.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study aims to determine, using the community profile, the predictors of poverty at Gawad Kalinga-Piela Community, city of Dasmaringas by employing machine learning. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Evaluate the prevalence and distribution of poverty across the community of Gawad Kalinga-Piela Community, city of Dasmaringas.
2. Utilize machine learning techniques to analyze a comprehensive dataset and identify the most significant predictors of poverty among households.
3. Design, train, and refine predictive models using various machine learning techniques to forecast poverty status based on a set of identified predictors, aiming to achieve high accuracy and reliability in the predictions.
4. Translate the findings from machine learning analyses into actionable insights that can inform policy decisions and community planning, aiming to tailor poverty alleviation strategies more effectively to the needs of vulnerable populations.

The primary objective of this study is to identify significant predictors of poverty within the Gawad Kalinga-Piela Community in the city of Dasmaringas by employing machine learning techniques. Specifically, this study aims to leverage a comprehensive dataset encompassing various demographic, economic, and health-related variables to develop predictive models that can accurately forecast poverty status among households. By focusing on the key determinants of poverty, this research seeks to provide actionable insights that can inform targeted interventions and policy decisions to alleviate poverty effectively.

Additionally, the study aims to evaluate the prevalence and distribution of poverty across the Gawad Kalinga-Piela Community. Through detailed data analysis, the study will explore the socio-economic characteristics of households and their correlation with poverty incidence. The use of advanced machine learning models, including Logistic Regression, Random Forest, and Support Vector Machines (SVM), will enable the identification of the most significant predictors of poverty, offering a data-driven approach to understanding and addressing the multifaceted nature of poverty.

Finally, the study intends to translate the findings from the machine learning analyses into practical recommendations for policymakers and community planners. By highlighting the critical factors influencing poverty and their interplay, the research aims to support the development of tailored poverty alleviation strategies. This will ensure that resources are effectively allocated to the most vulnerable populations, thereby enhancing the overall impact of poverty reduction initiatives within the community.

## METHODOLOGY

### A. Data Gathering and Data Sources

The study focused on predicting poverty incidence among households, a variety of variables were used, each chosen for its potential to provide insights into the socio-economic status and living conditions of the families involved. The data were gathered using a face-to-face survey using Google survey and collated using Excel. Here is a breakdown of different types of variables included in the dataset and their relevance to the study:

General Feature	Variable	Relevance
Demographic Variables	Age and Gender	Critical for demographic segmentation and understanding the distribution of resources within a household. Different age groups and genders may face varying risks of poverty (Williams, 2019).
	Civil Status	Influences economic stability and access to shared resources within households. Marital status has been linked to economic outcomes and poverty risk (Smith & Peterson, 2020).
	Household Size	Larger families might face greater economic challenges due to higher living costs (Johnson et al., 2018).
Economic Variables	Employment Status and Occupation	Key indicators of economic stability. Employment type and sector can determine income stability and

		susceptibility to economic downturns (Brown & Green, 2022).
	Total Household Income	Directly measures the economic capability of a household to meet its basic needs, central to determining poverty status (Lee & Nguyen, 2021).
	Sources of Income	Diversity in income sources can mitigate risk during economic downturns (Zhang, 2019).
Education Variables	Highest Educational Attainment	Higher educational levels correlate with better employment opportunities and higher income potential (Morris & Western, 2022).
	Access to Educational Facilities	Essential for improving socio-economic outcomes, particularly in rural areas (Davis & Patel, 2021).
Health Variables	Access to Healthcare	Vital for preventing chronic illnesses from escalating into economic crises for families (Kumar & Singh, 2020).
	Nutritional Information	Poor nutrition can be both a cause and consequence of poverty, affecting health and productivity (Garcia & Maloney, 2021).
Housing and Infrastructure Variables	Type of Housing	Reflects economic status and stability; temporary structures often indicate poorer conditions (Harris & White, 2019).
	Access to Utilities	Basic amenities are indicators of quality of life and socio-economic status (Thompson et al., 2020).
Social and Community Engagement Variables	Participation in Social Programs	Often necessary for the poorest households to meet basic needs, indicating reliance on external support (Roberts & Harris, 2018).

	Community Development Activities	Active involvement can improve community ties and resilience, reducing vulnerability to poverty (Gomez & Patel, 2021).
Psychological and Perceptual Variables	Perceptions of Well-being and Economic Security	Subjective measures that can provide insight into households' views on their economic stability and outlook, which are predictive of economic behaviors (Allen & Shah, 2022).

### B. Datasets Pre-processing Techniques

Dataset pre-processing, analysis, visualizing, splitting, modelling, and evaluation were done using Jupyter Python.

The following techniques were used during the pre-processing of the dataset:

Dataset Status	Dataset concern	Technique applied
Null Values	"Income" has missing values	Imputation
Nominal variables	"gender"	One-hot encoding
Irrelevant Features	"Name"	Feature exclusion based on relevance
Multi-collinearity	"Total Monthly Income" and "Average Monthly Income"	Removal of redundant features
Dimensionality Reduction	From numerous socio-economic indicators in the dataset, PCA was used to reduce these features into principal components that explain 95% of the variance, thus focusing on the most significant underlying patterns in the data.	Principal Component Analysis

### C. Choosing the Target Feature

1. **Income Data Aggregation:** The step involved compiling income data for each household member to establish a comprehensive measure of total household income. Specific columns in the dataset were identified and summed to represent the aggregate income, which included ``36_tatay_kita_buwan`` (Father's monthly income), ``36_nanay_kita_buwan`` (Mother's monthly income), and similar columns for children and other household members. This step was crucial for determining the economic capacity of each household and forming the basis for further analysis.
2. **Poverty Classification:** Using the aggregated total household income, households were then classified into two categories based on a defined poverty threshold of PHP 12,700. Households with a total income below this threshold were labeled as '1' (indicative of poverty), while those above were labeled as '0' (not in poverty). This binary classification facilitated a targeted analysis of factors influencing poverty, allowing for a focused investigation into the socio-economic dynamics affecting impoverished households.

### D. Data Splitting, Model Training, and Evaluation

Following the initial data preprocessing and setup, focus was made on the application of machine learning techniques to predict poverty incidence. This section of the methodology outlines the systematic approach taken to split the data, train various models, and evaluate their performance.

1. **Data Splitting.** The dataset was divided into training and testing sets to ensure both the robustness and generalizability of the models. A common practice of using 70% of the data for training and the remaining 30% for testing was adopted. This division provides a substantial amount of data for training the models while reserving enough unique instances to validate model performance accurately. Consequently, out of the preprocessed dataset, 128 samples were allocated to the training set and 56 to the testing set.
2. **Model Training:** Several machine learning models were trained to identify the best performer for predicting poverty incidence. The models selected represent a range of approaches in machine learning, tailored to binary classification tasks:

Model	Justification
Logistic Regression	Logistic Regression is a statistical model that in its basic form uses a logistic function to model a binary dependent variable. In the context of binary classification, this model is advantageous due to its simplicity and the interpretive aspect of the model coefficients, which clarify the influence of unit changes in predictor variables on the probability of occurrence of the outcome (Hosmer Jr, D. W, et.al., 2013).
Random Forest	Random Forest is an ensemble learning technique that builds multiple decision trees and merges them together to get a more accurate and stable prediction. The strength of Random Forest lies in its ability to handle large data sets with higher dimensionality. It can handle thousands of input variables without variable deletion and is highly effective against overfitting. Despite its simplicity, it has shown to outperform more complex classifiers (Breiman, L.,2001).
Support Vector Machine (SVM)	Robust classification technique that finds the optimal hyperplane that maximizes the margin between two classes. It is particularly powerful in high-dimensional spaces and effective when the number of dimensions exceeds the number of samples, which makes it suitable for text classification and other areas of research where high dimensionality is a common issue (Cortes, C., & Vapnik, V. ,1995).

### 3. Model Evaluation

After training, the models were evaluated based on their performance on the testing set. Performance metrics included accuracy, precision, recall, and the ROC-AUC score. These metrics provide a comprehensive view of model effectiveness, encompassing overall

accuracy, the balance between sensitivity and specificity, and the trade-off between true positive rate and false positive rate.

This rigorous approach to model training and evaluation ensures that the selected models are both accurate and reliable, providing trustworthy insights for predicting poverty incidence and guiding future policy interventions.

E. Visualization Techniques

To show relationship among features better, the following dataset visualization techniques were shown.

Report	Technique	Objectives
Poverty threshold	Histogram	Show poverty threshold distinction among surveyed households
Household size and Poverty status	Bar Chart	Show poverty status based on household

F. Ethical Considerations

The study followed research ethics protocols on the conduct of survey. Data were also preprocessed using programming language fully.

**RESULTS**

A. Data features relationships

Figure 1 shows how the imposed standard of poverty threshold (<PhP12,700) separates the household survey based on the total household income. Total household income was computed by deriving the sum of the income of all the household members. Results showed that more households surveyed are below the poverty threshold.

Figure 2 shows poverty status based on household income and household size which also shows that poverty threshold does not associate with household size but rather income.

**Figure 1.** Distribution of Total Household Income showing Poverty Threshold

**Figure 2.** Poverty Status by Household size

B. Data Modeling and Evaluation

Tables 1, 2, and 3 shows the results of modeling and evaluation of the dataset using Logistic regression (LogReg), Random Forest (RF), and Support Vector Machine (SVM).

**Table 1.** Logistic Regression performance.

Metric	Class 0 (Above Poverty Line)	Class 1 (Below Poverty Line)	Overall
Accuracy			71.43%
ROC-AUC			64.44%
Precision	67%	73%	
Recall	40%	89%	
F1-Score	50%	80%	

**Table 2.** Random Forest performance.

Metric	Class 0 (Above Poverty Line)	Class 1 (Below Poverty Line)	Overall
Accuracy			64.29%
ROC-AUC			51.11%
Precision	50%	65%	
Recall	5%	97%	
F1-Score	9%	78%	

**Table 3.** Support Vector Machine performance.

Metric	Class 0 (Above Poverty Line)	Class 1 (Below Poverty Line)	Overall
Accuracy			64.29%
ROC-AUC			50.00%
Precision	0%	64%	
Recall	0%	100%	

F1-Score	0%	78%	
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In the study of poverty incidence prediction using machine learning techniques, three models were critically evaluated: Logistic Regression, Random Forest, and Support Vector Machine (SVM). The assessment focused on their accuracy, recall, precision, and ROC-AUC scores to discern their suitability for deploying in varying contexts of poverty assessment.

Logistic Regression emerged as the most effective model, exhibiting superior balance in performance metrics. It achieved an overall accuracy of 71.43% and a ROC-AUC score of 64.44%, demonstrating commendable proficiency in identifying households below the poverty line with a recall of 89% and precision of 73%. However, its capability to accurately classify households above the poverty line was relatively weaker, suggesting a potential area for model refinement to enhance its universal applicability.

Random Forest showed a high sensitivity to identifying impoverished households, evidenced by a recall of 97%. However, this was offset by a considerable number of false positives, as indicated by the precision of 65%. Moreover, its performance in classifying non-impooverished households was markedly poor (precision of 50% and recall of 5%), pointing to a significant model bias towards the majority class, which could limit its utility in balanced datasets or where false positives carry a high cost.

The Support Vector Machine (SVM) displayed the most pronounced limitations, particularly failing to recognize any non-impooverished households correctly, which resulted in a zero precision and recall for this class. While it perfectly identified impoverished households (100% recall), the lack of discriminatory power makes it unsuitable for practical applications without substantial adjustments and optimizations in feature handling and model tuning.

Comparative analysis reveals that while Logistic Regression offers a robust baseline model for poverty prediction, both Random Forest and SVM require considerable modifications to address their respective deficiencies. Logistic Regression's strengths lie in its balanced performance, making it suitable for initial screening tools in poverty mitigation efforts. In contrast, Random

Forest and SVM might only be considered after strategic adjustments or within specific operational frameworks that tolerate or can rectify their biases.

### C. Further Assessment of Logistic Regression

In this investigation, the application of Logistic Regression was meticulously tuned to enhance its predictive accuracy regarding poverty incidence. By utilizing Grid Search with cross-validation, the study explored various hyperparameters, particularly focusing on regularization strength ( $C$ ) and the type of regularization ( $\text{penalty}$ ). This systematic approach sought to identify an optimal configuration that balances model complexity with performance to prevent overfitting while maintaining a robust generalization capability.

The tuning process revealed that a regularization strength ( $C$ ) of 0.1 with an L2 penalty, utilizing the Saga solver, provided the best results. This configuration resulted in a cross-validated accuracy of approximately 65.69%, a modest improvement that highlights the challenges and intricacies of modeling socio-economic phenomena such as poverty.

Following the tuning, the performance of the Logistic Regression model was further assessed through detailed visualizations, including an ROC Curve (Figure 3) and a Confusion Matrix (Figure 4). The ROC Curve, which exhibited an area under the curve (AUC) of approximately 0.78, demonstrated a commendable ability of the model to discriminate between households below and above the poverty line. This suggests that the model, while not perfect, has a substantial capacity to differentiate between the two classes, which is critical for effective poverty intervention strategies.

The Confusion Matrix provided additional insights into the model's predictive performance, confirming its strength in correctly identifying true positives—households below the poverty line. This capability is crucial for applications where the cost of failing to identify impoverished households is significant.

**Figure 3.** Logistic Regression model further assessed using ROC Curve.

**Figure 4.** Logistic Regression model further assessed using Confusion Matrix.

**D. Determining predictors to poverty incidence**

In the exploration of predictors of poverty incidence, advanced machine learning techniques, including Logistic Regression, have been employed to identify key socioeconomic factors that significantly influence household economic status.

The study utilized Logistic Regression to harness the predictive power of a multitude of variables condensed through PCA, which poses inherent challenges in direct feature interpretation. By examining the coefficients assigned to the top five principal components, significant insights were garnered about the underlying factors most predictive of poverty. Components 45, 24, 101, 80, and 121 were identified as having the strongest influence. To trace these components back to tangible socioeconomic indicators, the loadings of these components were scrutinized, revealing their correlation with specific original features.

The analysis revealed that the principal components correlated strongly with a diverse set of features:

1. Component 45 highlighted the impact of dietary habits, occupational activities, and disaster risk awareness on poverty levels.
2. Component 24 was significantly influenced by health practices, educational initiatives, and community involvement, underscoring the multifaceted nature of socioeconomic well-being.
3. Component 101 and Component 80 further emphasized the role of occupational diversity and community support systems in shaping economic stability.
4. Component 121 pointed to the importance of environmental projects and educational support services in community development.

***Socioeconomic Implications***

The correlation between these components and specific features such as employment types, health practices, and disaster preparedness paints a detailed picture of the socioeconomic dynamics at play. For example, features like "*8\_Tatay\_pinagkakaabalahan\_KARPENTERO*" (Father's occupation: Carpenter) or "*36\_tatay\_pinagkakakitaan\_CUSTOMER RELATION SERVICE*" (Father's income from customer relation service) indicate the type of employment and the economic sector involved. Specific occupations may correlate with income levels typical for those jobs. For instance, carpentry might be associated with irregular income depending on the demand for construction work, affecting the household's economic stability. These occupations may be linked with variable income, affecting stability, and increasing vulnerability to poverty. Similarly, robust disaster preparedness and active community involvement can mitigate potential economic downtrends following adverse events, highlighting the protective role of social and infrastructural resilience against poverty.

The inclusion of "*26\_Disaster Risk Reduction\_2,4,5,6*" suggests awareness and preparedness for natural disasters, which can be crucial in regions prone to such events. Households better prepared for disasters might face less economic fallout when such events occur, affecting their poverty status less severely.

### ***The Role of Education and Health***

Entries like "*23\_Suhestyon\_MAG-EHERSISYO ARAW ARAW*" (Suggestion: Exercise daily) and "*17\_Health\_care\_1,3,4,5,6*" reflect the household's focus on health and wellness. Regular exercise and access to healthcare can indicate a higher quality of life and potentially more resources at disposal, suggesting a lower likelihood of poverty. Conversely, frequent mentions of health-related needs might indicate health burdens that strain financial resources. Moreover, regular health monitoring and fitness activities reflect a community's proactive stance towards maintaining health standards, which correlates strongly with economic well-being and reduced poverty incidence.

Suggestions about education, such as "*47\_suhestyon\_LAHAT NG KABATAAN AY MATANGGAP SA SCHOLARSHIP AT MAKATAPOS NG PAG-AARAL PARA MAKATULONG SA PAMILYA AT*

*PAMAYANAN*" (All youth should receive scholarships and complete education to help their families and community), highlight the role of education in economic mobility. Households emphasizing education likely view it as a pathway out of poverty, and their ability to access and prioritize education can be a strong predictor of their economic resilience.

Educational opportunities and health initiatives emerge as pivotal elements. The emphasis on scholarships and educational achievements as pathways out of poverty underscores the transformative power of education.

### ***Community Involvement and Support***

Features like *"47\_suhestyon\_IF THE GOVERNMENT CAN PROVIDE MORE SUPPORT TO THE COMMUNITY, THEN LOTS OF CHILDREN WHO WANTS TO STUDY WILL BE ABLE TO ACHIEVE THEIR DESIRED DREAMS"* indicate the perceived need for external support. This can reflect on the community's overall economic conditions and the individual household's reliance on external aid for basic needs and advancement, often a sign of economic vulnerability.

These features together paint a picture of the socioeconomic landscape of the households. They indicate varying levels of income stability, health and wellness practices, community and governmental support, disaster preparedness, and educational opportunities—all factors that significantly impact a household's risk of falling into or remaining in poverty.

## **CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

This analysis not only sheds light on the specific predictors of poverty but also illustrates the complex interplay between various socioeconomic factors. The research employed several machine learning models; namely, Logistic Regression, Random Forest, and Support Vector Machine (SVM), to analyze predictors of poverty. This analysis not only sheds light on the specific predictors of poverty but also illustrates the complex interplay between various socioeconomic factors. The findings advocate for targeted interventions in income, education, health, and disaster readiness to effectively combat poverty. Future studies could expand on

this foundation by exploring additional variables and employing ensemble models to enhance predictive accuracy and reliability. This study serves as a crucial step toward a more nuanced understanding of poverty, providing a robust analytical framework for policymakers and social scientists aiming to devise effective poverty alleviation strategies.

Future research should explore advanced ensemble methods that could leverage the strengths of each model, potentially leading to more accurate and reliable predictions. Additionally, employing techniques like cross-validation, resampling, and feature engineering could further refine each model's capacity to handle diverse datasets and complex variable interactions inherent in socioeconomic data. This study underscores the importance of tailored model selection and calibration in machine learning applications to poverty studies, ensuring that the chosen methodologies align with specific research objectives and operational constraints.

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