

# Challenges of Rural Youths in Contemporary Karnataka-A Sociological Perspectives

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## **Abstract:**

India is a rural based country 67 percent of the people residing in rural areas. Traditionally, rural Karnataka was largely agrarian, with agriculture and allied activities forming the backbone of rural livelihoods. Rural youth constitute one of the most dynamic and significant sections of the rural society, playing a vital role in social continuity and economic development. In contemporary Karnataka, rural youths are experiencing rapid changes due to globalization, modernization, technological advancement, and shifting economic structures. These changes have transformed traditional rural life, altering patterns of education, employment, culture, and social relationships. While new opportunities have emerged, rural youths continue to face several structural and social challenges that limit their full participation in development processes. As a result, many rural youths face unemployment or underemployment, forcing them to migrate to urban centres in search of education and jobs. This migration has significant social consequences, including the weakening of family bonds, community networks, and village social institutions. Rural youths are influenced by global media, consumer culture, and urban lifestyles. This exposure often leads to a conflict between traditional values and modern aspirations, Globalization and rapid socio-economic changes have significantly influenced the lives of rural areas. Rural youths are facing multiple challenges arising from structural inequalities such as changing social values, unemployment and underemployment, decline of traditional agricultural livelihoods, educational and digital disparities, rural-to-urban migration, cultural transformation, gender inequality, stress. exposure to global media and urban lifestyles leading to identity conflicts and weakening of traditional social institutions, lack of quality of education, skill and employment opportunities, participation in modern economic processes. Instability due to a lack of human and financial capital, the digital skill gap, and the erosion of traditional social safety nets etc. After globalization rural-urban migration is uncommon. Exposure to the opulent lifestyles of urban influencers creates a sense of relative deprivation. Due to globalization young men engaged in farming are finding difficult to find partners. Brides and their families often prefer grooms with even low-paying private. Language Barrier from Kannada-medium

schooling to English-centric corporate environments remains a primary hurdle for social mobility. Caste, kinship, and the joint family system-are being challenged by global values of individualism and consumerism. The rural youth today is a Global Consumer but a Local Citizen. Globalization promotes individualism, which is slowly dismantling the Joint family system this leading to rural distress. There is values gap between the globalized youth and their traditional parents. This sociological study employs a sociological lens to analyze issues of marginalization, social inequality, and anomie among rural youths. The rural hinterland experiences a corresponding structural transformation and social dislocation.

**Keywords:** Rural youth, Global consumer, De-peasantization, Digital divide, Globalization, Digital capital, Vulnerable employment, Social mobility. Contemporary society, Unemployment, Migration, Cultural change, Sociological perspective.

## 1. Introduction:

India is a rural based country. 65 percent of the people residing in rural areas. Traditionally, rural Karnataka was largely agrarian, with agriculture and allied activities forming the backbone of rural livelihoods. Rural youth constitute one of the most dynamic and significant sections of the rural society, playing a vital role in social continuity and economic development. In contemporary Karnataka, rural youths are experiencing rapid changes due to globalization, modernization, technological advancement, and shifting economic structures. These changes have transformed traditional rural life, altering patterns of education, employment, culture, and social relationships. While new opportunities have emerged, rural youths continue to face several structural and social challenges that limit their full participation in development processes. As a result, many rural youths face unemployment or underemployment, forcing them to migrate to urban centres in search of education and jobs. This migration has significant social consequences, including the weakening of family bonds, community networks, and village social institutions. Rural youths are influenced by global media, consumer culture, and urban lifestyles. This exposure often leads to a conflict between traditional values and modern aspirations, Globalization and rapid socio-economic changes have significantly influenced the lives of rural areas. Rural youths are facing multiple challenges arising from structural inequalities such as changing social values ,unemployment and underemployment, decline of traditional agricultural livelihoods, educational and digital disparities, rural-to-urban migration, cultural transformation, gender inequality, stress. exposure to global media and urban lifestyles leading to identity conflicts and weakening of traditional social institutions, lack of quality of education, skill and employment opportunities, participation in modern economic processes. instability due to a lack of human and financial capital, the digital skill gap, and the erosion of traditional social safety nets etc. After globalization rural –urban migration is uncommon. Exposure to the opulent lifestyles of urban influencers creates a sense of relative deprivation. Due to globalization young men engaged in farming are finding difficult to find partners. Brides and their families often prefer grooms with even low-paying private. Language Barrier from Kannada-medium schooling to English-centric corporate environments remains a primary hurdle for social mobility. Caste, kinship, and the joint family system-are being challenged by global values of individualism and consumerism. The rural youth today is a Global Consumer but a Local Citizen. Globalization promotes individualism, which is slowly dismantling the Joint family system this leading to rural distress. There is values gap between the globalized youth and their traditional parents. This sociological study employs a sociological lens to analyze issues of marginalization, social inequality, and anomie among rural

youths. The rural hinterland experiences a corresponding structural transformation and social dislocation.

## 2. Meaning of Rural Youth:

Rural youths in Karnataka refer to young individuals-generally in the age group of 15 to 30 years-who live in the rural areas of Karnataka. They are socially, economically, and culturally rooted in village life. They typically come from agrarian or semi-agrarian backgrounds and are engaged in or connected with agriculture and allied activities of rural occupations. Preserving local culture, language, and traditions. From a sociological perspective, rural youths in Karnataka represent a transitional generation. They are exposed to modern influences like education, technology, media, and urban lifestyles. This dual exposure shapes their aspirations, attitudes, and life choices. Rural youths are vital social group, navigating between tradition and modernity in contemporary rural Karnataka

## 3. Historical Background of the Study:

Historically, rural Karnataka has been predominantly agrarian, with agriculture and allied activities. Forming is the backbone of village India. **Before independence**, Indian rural community was largely self-sufficient, organized around land, caste, Religion, family, and community institutions. Youths were traditionally engaged in farming, cattle rearing, handicrafts, and local caste based occupations, with limited emphasis on formal education. **After independence**, land reforms, irrigation projects, and rural development programs brought gradual change. The Green Revolution in certain regions of Karnataka improved agricultural productivity but also increased inequality between large and small farmers. From the 1990s onwards, Globalization era started. It leads economic liberalization, Privatization and globalization. It accelerated social and economic transformations in Indian rural society. Mechanization of agriculture, market-oriented farming, and expansion of education altered traditional rural livelihoods. In **contemporary** times, rural youths in Karnataka are increasingly exposed to modern education, technology, and urban influences. However, the decline of agriculture-based employment and uneven rural development have created new challenges such as unemployment, migration, and cultural change. This historical transition forms the background for understanding the present challenges faced by rural youths in Karnataka from a sociological perspective.

The historical background of rural youth in Karnataka is a journey from traditional agrarian stability to globalized uncertainty. This evolution can be categorized into three distinct sociological phases; **The Pre-Liberalization Era (Pre-1991)**: Before the 1990s, rural Karnataka was characterized by a relatively self-contained social structure. Agrarian Succession: In districts like Mandya and Mysuru, rural youth followed a predictable life path. Sociological studies from the late 1970s showed that youth identity was firmly anchored in caste Religion and joint family landholding. **The Land Reform Legacy**: The 1970s land reforms under Devaraj Urs created a new class of owner-cultivators. Social Cohesion: Village life revolved around the Katta (communal platforms) and traditional festivals (Jatre), where youth roles were clearly defined by seniority and kinship. **The Transition Phase (1991–2010)**: The Rise of Silicon Plateau the 1991 economic reforms and the subsequent IT boom in Bengaluru marked the beginning of a structural disconnect for rural youth. Bengaluru transformed into a global tech hub, it began to act as a vacuum, sucking in labor from the rural hinterlands. **The Green Revolution Fatigue**: By the mid-90s,

the benefits of the Green Revolution in the Krishna-Cauvery basins began to plateau. Stagnant crop prices and rising input costs led to the first waves of "distress-driven" migration among youth. **Farmer Movements:** This period the older generation fought for agricultural rights, the youth were increasingly looking toward private education as an exit strategy from the village. **The Contemporary Globalized Era (2010–Present):** The Digital Rurban the current phase is defined by the total integration of rural areas into global information networks. **The Smartphone Revolution:** Post-2016, the mass availability of cheap data bridged the information gap but widened the aspiration gap. Rural youth in now share the same digital pop culture as urban youth, despite the vast difference in their physical infrastructure. **De-Peasantization:** Agriculture has shifted from a primary identity to a last resort. youth moving to Bengaluru for precarious gig work and returning to the village when the city becomes unaffordable.

#### 4. Review of Literature:

Several sociological studies have examined the impact of globalization and social change on rural youth in India and Karnataka. Studies on rural development indicate that globalization has intensified rural-urban inequalities, particularly in access to education, skills, and technology. Existing literature also emphasizes the role of education and the digital divide, noting that rural youths often lack quality schooling and digital resources, which restrict their participation in the modern labour market. Migration studies reveal that rural-to-urban migration among youth is driven by economic distress and aspiration for better opportunities, but frequently results in informal employment and social insecurity in urban areas. The Agrarian Crisis and "De-peasantization" Recent literature, Gunashekhar et al., 2024; Karanth, 1995, highlights a significant shift in the rural occupational structure of Karnataka. Migration Dynamics: Warriar, 2024; The Migration Story move beyond simple push-pull factors to explore the Circular Migration phenomenon. Failure and Return: The Digital Divide and Connected Marginalization Contemporary studies, Prathika & Swapna, 2025, investigate the paradox of high connectivity in a technologically advanced state. Gender and Social Barriers Scholarly work on marginalized communities in Karnataka (IJCRT, 2025) emphasizes that globalization is not experienced equally.

#### 5. Statement of the Problem:

In contemporary Karnataka, rural youths are undergoing rapid social, economic, and cultural changes due to globalization, modernization, and uneven development. Although globalization has created new aspirations and awareness among rural youths, it has not provided equal opportunities for education, employment, and skill development. The decline of agriculture-based livelihoods, limited non-farm employment, poor quality of rural education, and the digital divide have resulted in unemployment, underemployment, and large-scale rural–urban migration. Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is to understand the socio-economic, cultural, and psychological challenges faced by rural youths in contemporary Karnataka and to analyze how globalization and social change have shaped their lives from a sociological perspective.

#### Theory Used:

This study on the challenges of rural youths in contemporary Karnataka is guided by the following key sociological theories are **Structural Functionalism**

This theory views society as a system of interrelated parts working together for stability. In this study, it helps explain how traditional rural institutions played functional roles in integrating rural youths. Helps to know the impact of globalization and modernization on rural youths. Conflict theory focuses helps to understand the inequality and power relations in Indian rural society. It is used to analyze how globalization and uneven development benefit urban and elite groups while marginalizing rural youths and class-based exclusion. **Anomie Theory Émile Durkheim:** It explains the sense of normlessness and confusion experienced by rural youths when traditional values weaken and new global aspirations emerge. **Theory of Wait-hood (Alcinda Honwana)** This is the central concept for understanding the contemporary rural youth. Many graduates in rural Karnataka spend years waiting for a government job, for a better harvest, a chance to migrate to Bangalore and other prime cities in Karnataka.

**Methodology Used:** This is descriptive research based on secondary data collected from sources such as books, journals, research articles, government reports, census data, and published studies related to rural youth research publications, and web-based resources.

## 6. Objectives of the Study:

- ❖ To understand the socio-economic background of rural youths in contemporary Karnataka.
- ❖ To examine the impact of globalization on Indian rural youths.
- ❖ To analyze the challenges faced by rural youths in contemporary Karnataka.
- ❖ To analyze government policy and recommendations to develop Rural youths

## Statistics of Youths In Rural Karnataka;

India is a second highly populated country in the world . On the Base 2011 census report data total rural population were 833 million ( both male and female). India has 378 millions young population. About two thirds live in rural areas. According to 2011 census male in Rural Karnataka was 18.93 million and 18.54 million were female. Rural youths were (Below 29 years) 10.59 Millions and females' were 10.05 millions.

## Challenges of Rural Youths in Contemporary Karnataka:

Rural youths in contemporary Karnataka face multiple challenges due to globalization, modernization, and uneven rural development. These challenges affect their economic stability, education, social life, and overall well-being. From a sociological perspective, the major challenges are as follows: Using a sociological lens, the research identifies three primary areas of struggle: economic marginalization resulting from the decline of traditional agrarian livelihoods; cultural hybridity, where youth navigate the friction between traditional communal values and Western consumerist ideologies; and the technological divide that prevents the translation of digital access into tangible social mobility.

**Globalization:** Globalization has emerged as a powerful force transforming social, economic, and cultural life across the world. While it has generated new opportunities as well as challenges for rural youths globalization leads challenging like, economic insecurity, unemployment, educational and digital gaps, cultural erosion, migration, psychological stress, and social inequality. Globalization often marginalizes rural youths by prioritizing urban-centric development and skill-intensive labour markets.

**Unemployment and Underemployment;** Job opportunities in villages are scarce and mostly confined to agriculture or informal work, leading to seasonal unemployment and unstable incomes. Poverty and Economic Insecurity Low household income restricts access to higher education, healthcare, technology, and entrepreneurship opportunities, trapping youth in a cycle of poverty. In 2024 study on rural Karnataka identified a Composite Vulnerable Employment indicating that 67.5% of rural youth face moderate to highly unstable work. Constant exposure to global urban lifestyles on social media creates a psychological gap. Rural youth feel poor not because they lack basics, but because they cannot attain the global standard of living. The decline of agriculture-based livelihoods, mechanization, small landholdings, and climate uncertainty have reduced employment opportunities in rural areas. Many rural youths remain unemployed or are engaged in low-paying, seasonal, and informal work.

**Educational Inequality;** Limited access to quality schools, colleges, vocational training, and digital facilities places rural youths to compared urban youths. Poor infrastructure and lack of experienced and skilled teachers.

**Digital Divide and Regional Imbalances;** Inadequate internet connectivity, lack of digital devices, and low digital literacy restrict rural youths from accessing online education, government schemes, and employment opportunities. lack of digital devices, and low digital literacy prevent rural youth from accessing online education, jobs, and e-governance services.

Karnataka is an IT powerhouse, the Internal Digital Divide remains a significant hurdle. The North-South Divide also exist. The challenges are not uniform across the state Kalyana Karnataka (North Karnataka) districts like Raichur and Kalaburagi, Bidar, Ballari, Koppal etc, rural youths are migrating during the off-season, face exploitation in cities, and return to the village with no new skills.

**Migration and Urban Exploitation;** Due to lack of local opportunities, rural youths migrate to urban areas. However, they often face job insecurity, low wages, unsafe living and working conditions. Due to lack of local opportunities, rural youth migrate to cities, often facing exploitation, poor living conditions, job insecurity, and loss of social support.

**Cultural Change and Identity Crisis;** Rural youths exposure to global media and urban lifestyles has altered traditional values and aspirations. Rural youths often experience identity conflict while balancing traditional expectations and modern ambitions. Psychological Stress Unfulfilled aspirations, unemployment, and social pressure lead to stress, frustration, anxiety, and in some cases substance abuse and depression among rural youths.

**Gender Inequality;** Rural young women face challenges like, lack of equal opportunity to participate in employment, education, and their decision making and bargaining power, marriage, encouragement, wage disparity, etc.

**Political and Social Marginalization;** Rural young women have limited participation in politics and decision-making. Youth-related rural issues often receive inadequate policy attention.

**Skill-Market Mismatch:** Many Rural youths are not have industry-relevant technical skills or English proficiency required for high-paying urban jobs. Migration to cities like Bengaluru often leads to entry-level roles in the gig economy jobs like delivery, security, etc. These jobs offer immediate cash but zero social security, career progression, or long-term stability.

**Stigma of Farming and De-peasantization:** Agriculture is no longer able to attract youths. Youths are disengaging from farming due to high risks and a perceived lack of dignity. The young women not show interest to marry agriculturist men and low Social Status. Research in the Chikkaballapur and Mandya regions shows that many rural women and their families reject grooms who are "full-time farmers," regardless of their landholding. Rural youth are moving away from ancestral farming.

**Lower Status:** Even a low-paying private job in a city like Mysuru or Bengaluru is perceived as having higher social status than being an independent farmer, it leads to forced migration (Pushing factors of migration) to hike social status.

**Weakening of Community feeling: and rural youths:** Erosion of Traditional Safety Nets Globalization promotes individualism, which is slowly breaking down the, Kinship relationships Family bondages, Joint Family and caste-based communal supports. Its leading to increased mental health issues and isolation in rural pockets. Traditional caste or village-based support systems are weakening, leaving youth to face global economic shocks like a pandemic or market crash) entirely on their own.

**The Urban-Rural Nomad:** They are never fully accepted in the city due to high costs and lack of housing, but they no longer fit into the village social structure, leading to a sense of double alienation. The move toward nuclear families mean youth no longer have the "buffer" of the joint family during times of economic failure.

**Agricultural Distress and health issues:** Dependence on traditional farming, low productivity, climate uncertainty, rising input costs, and debt discourage youth from continuing in agriculture. Poor Health and Nutrition Limited healthcare facilities, malnutrition, lack of awareness about mental health, and substance abuse negatively affect productivity and well-being.

**Social, Gender and Health issues:** Rural youths. Rural youth often have limited exposure to diverse career options, entrepreneurship, competitive exams, and global opportunities. Rural youth have limited participation in decision-making, leadership roles, and policy formulation. Poor roads, transport, electricity, drinking water, and sanitation hinder education, employment, and overall quality of life. Psychological Stress and Frustration Continuous struggles related to unemployment, financial pressure, and social expectations lead to stress, anxiety, and loss of motivation. Caste, religion, class and gender-based discrimination restrict equal access to education, employment, and leadership opportunities, especially for Weak Implementation of Government Schemes Although many youth-oriented schemes exist, lack of awareness, bureaucratic hurdles, and corruption limit their real impact.

- ✓ **Policy Recommendations:**
- ✓ **Agri-Entrepreneurship Hubs:** Moving beyond subsistence farming to "Agri-tech" can restore the dignity of labour. Establishing rural incubators for value-addition (e.g., food processing in North Karnataka) can keep youth productive within their own ecosystems.
- ✓ **Bridging the Capital Gap:** Vocational training must move beyond basic literacy to include digital production skills (e-commerce, remote services) and soft skills (professional English) to equalize the playing field with urban peers.
- ✓ **Strengthening Rural Institutions:** Organizations like RUDSETI (Rural Development and Self Employment Training Institute) and the Viksit Bharat – G RAM G initiatives of 2025 should be leveraged to provide long-term mentoring rather than just short-term training.
- ✓ Strengthening Rural Education, Improve quality of government schools with trained teachers, digital classrooms, and updated curricula. Introduce career guidance, skill-based education.
- ✓ Promotes employment and skill generation at the local level. Promotes non-farm employment such as agro-processing, food storage, dairy, fisheries, and rural services. Strengthen G RAM G . Skill Development and Vocational Training programmes to rural youths.
- ✓ Encourage local industries, cooperatives , establish rural job placement and career centres at the taluka level. Provide easy access to credit, subsidies, and startup grants.
- ✓ Address health issues like stress, and substance abuse among youth. Promotes sports, cultural activities, and youth clubs, leadership training and civic education. Programmes. Ensure access to nutrition and reproductive health services.
- ✓ Participation youth in in local self-government institutions and form youth committees and village development forums.
- ✓ Social Inclusion and Equity Target programs for marginalized groups, minorities, and economically weaker sections. Eliminate caste, gender, and region based discrimination.
- ✓ Nutshell The challenges of rural youth cannot be solved by isolated schemes. A holistic approach combining education, employment, skill development, digital inclusion, gender equality, and youth participation is essential for empowering rural youth and achieving inclusive and sustainable development.

## 7. Conclusion:

The challenges of rural youths in contemporary Karnataka are deeply rooted in structural inequalities and social transformation. In conclusion, rural youth occupy a crucial position in the social and economic development of contemporary India and Karnataka in particular. However, they continue to face multiple and interconnected challenges such as inadequate education and skill training, limited employment opportunities, agrarian distress, migration pressures, gender inequality, and poor access to health and digital infrastructure. These challenges are not merely individual problems but are deeply rooted in structural inequalities, regional disparities, and policy gaps Addressing these issues requires inclusive rural development, skill-based education, employment generation, digital access, and youth empowerment programs to ensure sustainable social progress. This study reveals a generation caught in a complex and Globalization has acted as a powerful catalyst, dissolving traditional village boundaries while simultaneously creating new forms of socio-economic stratification.

To rectify challenges of the rural youths requires a holistic and inclusive approach. Strengthening rural education, creating sustainable local employment, promoting skill-based and technology-driven livelihoods, encouraging rural entrepreneurship, and ensuring digital and social inclusion are essential steps. Equally important is the need to recognize rural youth as active agents of change by involving them in local governance, decision-making processes, and community development initiatives. A sociological perspective highlights that empowering rural youth is not only an economic necessity but also a social responsibility. When provided with adequate opportunities, dignity, and support, rural youth can contribute significantly to reducing rural-urban inequalities, Therefore, investing in rural youth today is an investment in the future stability, growth, and social harmony of rural society as a whole.

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