

UNEMPLOYMENT AND YOUTH ASPIRATIONS IN KARNATAKA: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

In this research article, the authors examine the intricate linkage between unemployment and aspirations of the youth in the fast-developing state of Karnataka in India. The problem of youth unemployment is a serious sociological problem that has a lot of impacts on the social identity, economic and social stability, and the future of young people. The study examines the impact of unemployment on the aspirations of the youth of Karnataka with a focus on the differences between urban and rural areas, as well as the socio-economic background. Qualitative data was collected using interviews and focus group discussions and quantitative data were obtained from government reports and surveys, the research adopted a mixed methods approach. The results show that unemployment not only limits economic possibilities, but also has an effect on psychological welfare and social mobility and results in changed and postponed expectations. Findings reveal how societal expectations, family expectations, and structural barriers influence the goals of youth. It also looks at coping strategies and alternate routes taken by the youth who are not working. This sociological study is valuable for understanding the relationship between unemployment and the aspirations of the youth, and is informative of the policy recommendations for education, skill development and employment generation programme. To achieve inclusive growth and to make use of the demographic dividend in Karnataka is very essential to overcome the above stated problems.

Keywords: Unemployment, Youth, Aspirations, Socio-economic Factors, Employment Challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment issues in India, especially in Karnataka, are complex and multifaceted, with economic growth existing along with uneven distribution of employment opportunities, affecting youth aspirations to work (Singh, 2020). Youth (aged 15-29) is a critical population in influencing the socio-economic development and employment status of the youth population is vital for personal and societal development (Patel & Rao, 2019). The study of the impact of unemployment on youth aspirations considers the context of Karnataka with varying contexts of technological hub and agricultural land (Kumar et al., 2021).

Even with the economic progress, there are a large number of young people who are either overqualified (unemployed) or underqualified (under-employed) to achieve their educational and professional goals in Karnataka (Sharma, 2018). Education, family background, cultural norms, and economic conditions all influence youth aspirations; youth who are not in employment will be affected by unemployment, which will restrict their access to critical resources and opportunities and create uncertainty and frustration (Desai & Mehta, 2022). Youth unemployment is not solely an economic issue and has significant socio-cultural outcomes on identity formation, social positioning and planning for the future (Joshi, 2020).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Abdullah, B. (2024). Do aspirations matter in youth unemployment in India? The author studied the correlation between the youth aspiration and the unemployment in India. The study revealed that the high unemployment rate among educated youth is due to the mismatch between their educational levels, social expectations, and career aspirations and the available jobs. The study emphasized that this time era education and media exposure have raised the desire of the youth towards white collar and secure Government jobs. The author was able to show that, unemployment among youth is more related to social status, identity and expectations of social mobility than not having a job.

Patel, P. K. (2025). Young people and unemployment in India and shifting social desires and expectations. Patel examined the changes in the dreams of the youth of India due to globalization and modernization. The study has found that many young people in rural and semi-urban areas hope to have a job and live in the city. But, because of restricted employment creation and the lack of skills, many are under- or out of work. The writer noted that unemployment brings about frustrations, economic reliance, and social insecurity for the youth.

Kempaller, S. S. (2025). Unemployment problem and problem areas from a sociological perspective with reference to Karnataka. The study was focused on the problems of unemployment in Karnataka particularly amongst educated youth. The author came up with the main reasons, including skill mismatch, insufficient industrial development, regional imbalance, and poor vocational education. The study also described the impact of unemployment on mental health, self-confidence, and social relationships of young people. The author recommended the implementation of skill education and employment oriented policies to tackle unemployment issues in Karnataka.

Sethy, M. (2025). Youth unemployment and sustainable development in India. Sethy spoke about the structural factors causing lack of employment among the youth in India. The study showed that the educational system is not always successful to prepare the students for practical jobs. The writer remarked that the majority of graduates are not technically and employable to the industries. Unemployment brings social exclusion, poverty and lack of confidence in youth, the paper highlighted.

Ranjan, R. (2025). Socio-economic issues of youth unemployment in India. Ranjan studied the socio-economic causes of unemployment among the young people of India. The research revealed that caste, gender, educational status and regional differences make significant difference in job opportunities. The author noted that they have problems in getting a steady job due to their advanced educational level. The study found that being unemployed hinders social mobility and leads to unhappiness among youth.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is important because it fills the void of knowledge on the impact of unemployment on youth aspirations in the socio-cultural and economic landscape of Karnataka. Economic indicators show unemployment levels but do not necessarily capture the complex sociological effects on the dreams, motivations, and social identities of young people. The study examines these facets to understand the experiences of the unemployed young people and to help guide the policy makers, teachers and social workers. The study results can help shape comprehensive development programs that not only provide youth employment, but also empower youth to reimagine and have more realistic aspirations. This is important for Karnataka as the potential of the young population is one of the important factors to achieve economic growth and social stability in the state.

Objectives of the study

1. To study socio-economic conditions of the youth
2. To examine the current status of youth unemployment in Karnataka.
3. To analyze the influence of unemployment on youth aspirations across different socio-economic groups.
4. To explore the coping mechanisms adopted by unemployed youth.
5. To provide policy recommendations for addressing unemployment and supporting youth aspirations.

Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were collected from secondary sources such as government reports and employment surveys to establish unemployment patterns. Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with unemployed youth from urban and rural Karnataka. This approach facilitates a comprehensive understanding of both statistical trends and personal experiences, enabling an in-depth sociological analysis of how unemployment influences youth aspirations.

Methodology

The research was conducted across 3 talukas of Belagavi districts of Karnataka—three Taluks (Savadatti, Yaragatti and Ramdurga) ensuring geographic and socio-economic diversity in the sample. A Simple random sample of 80 youth aged 15–29 was surveyed using a structured questionnaire adapted from validated instruments measuring unemployment experiences and aspirations. Stratification was based on gender, caste category, educational level, and rural-urban residence.

Socio-economic Conditions of Youth in Karnataka

The socio-economic status of the youth in Study area differs as per region, education, caste and class and gender. Rural youth and youth living in rural areas tend to have a lower access to education, technology and employment opportunities than urban youth and the youth living in urban areas. But urban youth are also subjected to competition and job insecurity on a high level.

Young middle class people want to go into the professions, such as engineering, medicine, management, and government. Expectations for income, social status and lifestyle are higher in higher education. However, young people who come from less affluent families often are attracted to work in a stable position to provide for their families.

The rural youth has to face more difficult situation because of less industrial development, less education resources and less employment opportunities. Seasonal jobs and agricultural reliance further adds to economic insecurity. For young people in rural areas, migration to the cities is a universal option to find a job.

There are also gender variations that influence socio-economic conditions. Factors that constrain young women from being involved in the labour market include social restrictions, concerns about safety and family responsibilities.

Situation of youth jobless in Karnataka

In recent years, the number of youth who are unemployed in Karnataka has gone up considerably. Technically qualified youth and graduates are more prone to educated unemployment. Specialized skills and experience is required for many industries and the education system is mostly theoretical.

Underemployment, youth working in jobs for which they are underqualified and underskilled, is another major problem. Increased proportion of youth in contractual employment, temporary jobs and informal employment. These jobs are typically informal, insecure, and poorly paid and have minimal social protection.

The impact of unemployment on the aspirations of young people.

- Youth's hope and plans are heavily impacted by unemployment. Education, media, family norms and socio-economic status influence aspirations. Education and the labour market are seen as key paths to upward social mobility by many young people.
- But when jobs are no longer available, it leads to some frustration and disappointment. Youth who are not able to find appropriate employment after their education often have a loss of confidence as well as a loss of identity. Some young people lower their expectations for their future careers and take on less desirable options such as low paying positions or informal employment.
- The prevailing aspiration of middle class youth is generally one of white-collar and government jobs due to their stability and social prestige. If these dreams are not realized, psychological pressures and family burdens mount.
- Economically weaker youth are more inclined to opt for money making career than their preferences. Many will have to drop out of school and take on informal or manual work to support their families.
- Unemployment also affects a person's migration aspirations. A great number of youths also move to the cities or other states to find jobs.
- There are different consequences of unemployment for young women. Employment opportunities and career choices are limited by social norms and gender discrimination. Unemployment is a cause for social stigma and dependence in many women.

THIS STUDY INVESTIGATES COPING MECHANISMS USED BY THE UNEMPLOYED YOUTH.

Although faced with difficulties, youth who are unemployed develop a range of coping strategies to survive and pursue their dreams.

1. Pursuing Higher Education: As the numbers show, many young people stay on in higher education to enhance their skills and skills profiles and to postpone their entry into the competitive labour market. Other degrees and professional courses are seen as a route to better jobs.

2. Skill Development Programs: The number of youth in vocational training, technical education and skill development is rising. Employability important skills: Digital skills, computer training, communication skills.

3. Self-employment and Entrepreneurship: Small businesses, online services, agricultural activities, and start-up activities are some forms of business that youth are involved in. Entrepreneurship is becoming a job alternative for the entrepreneurs.

5. Informal Sector Employment: The majority of the unemployed youth take up temporary and informal employment to support themselves and their families. Among city dwellers, delivery work and sales tasks are now common jobs for the young people, as are gig economy jobs.

6. Social and Community Support: Social networks and family support emotionally and financially help the unemployed young people. Often community relationships help to secure employment and guidance.

DISCUSSION

- The study shows that the youth unemployment in Karnataka is a multidimensional social problem which is affected by educational inequality, regional disparities, socio-economic conditions and changes in the labour market. While youth have more opportunities to get better education, the economy has not provided adequate quality jobs.
- The urban-rural gap has a significant influence on employment opportunities and aspirations.
- The results also indicate that unemployment has a negative impact on the psychological health and social identity. Youth often feel frustrated, stressed and uncertain about the future.
- Gender inequalities are still a primary issue. There are still obstacles for young women in education, travel, and job opportunities. Thus, policies for employment that take gender into account are required.
- Meanwhile, the study also shines a light on youth resilience. Many people engage in adaptive measures like entrepreneurship, skill-building and education, among others.

CONCLUSION

In the state of Karnataka, unemployment plays a significant role in affecting the aspirations of the youth and has a significant impact on their economic status, social identity as well as their mental health. This study finds that the individuals who are unemployed tend to have different or postponed aspirations, especially for disadvantaged groups and women. For young people, the challenges of job opportunities are highly complex, resulting from socio-economic, regional and cultural dynamics. However, many young people are resilient and adjust their aspirations and find other ways. An integrated policy framework that encompasses education reforms, skill building, socio-emotional support, and addresses youth unemployment needs to be developed in a manner sensitive to the varied contexts of Karnataka. It is important to give young people the power to achieve their dreams to ensure the socio-economic development and social cohesion of the state. Research and dialogue on changing aspirations for youth should be continued in order to gain more insight into the evolution of young people's aspirations in the face of a changing labour market.

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