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Exploring constraints and policy suggestions for strengthening rural youth participation in agriculture

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Abstract

Rural youth are the most important segment of the country like India where agriculture is the back bone of national economy. But, rural youth now a days, have been losing their interest in agriculture. Instead of being self-employed in agriculture and allied activities, they are now turning to be "Job seekers". The study identified the major constraints hindering rural youth participation in agriculture in Suryapet district of Telangana and documented their suggestions for improving engagement. The findings revealed that economic constraints were the most severe (94.50%), followed by physical (87.42%), social (86.50%), technical (84.00%), and extension-related constraints (82.75%). Key issues included underemployment (93.33%), high cost of cultivation (92.50%), low remunerative prices (87.50%), lack of agricultural management experience (87.50%), lack of appropriate technology (89.17%), and untimely extension services (90.83%). To address these challenges, youth suggested timely access to inputs and information, remunerative pricing, improved irrigation, climate-smart agriculture awareness, regular extension interventions, and formation of rural youth organisations. The results underline the need for stronger economic incentives, technology support, and youth-focused extension strategies to enhance effective participation in agriculture.

Keywords: Rural youth, constraints, suggestions, agriculture, participation, technology adoption

Introduction

Youth is a term used to describe the period of transition from infancy to adulthood, which includes sexual maturation and the development of social and economic independence from parents (Bennell *et al.*, 2007) [2]. The youth are the most powerful segment of a country's population. They are the country's backbone. The proportion of the rural youth population in India is about 67-68 percent of the country's total population. Agriculture is a significant economic sector in India, accounting for around half of all employment and almost one-fifth of the nation's Gross domestic product (GDP). Youth participation in agriculture can help to tackle the problem of unemployment while also achieving our food production goals because agriculture has self-employment potential and is more elastic in its ability to absorb labour. (Barge S.A.,2011) [1].

Youth migration from rural to urban regions in search of work has been on the rise; now, over 30% of the 315 million migrants are under the age of 30. According to a World Bank projection, half of India's population would be urban by 2050. Simultaneously, the proportion of agricultural workers in the entire employment is expected to fall from 58.2 percent in 2001 to 25.7 percent by 2050. According to Swaminathan (2007) [12], The availability of human resources for agriculture and related activities has been diminished due to the migration of young people to metropolitan regions in pursuit of work. India is also losing about 2,000 farmers per day, and the total number of farmers in the country has decreased by 15 million since 1991.

Agriculture continues to play a vital role in India's economy, employing about 44% of the national workforce as of 2023 and contributing around 16.8% to the national GDP. In Telangana, the dependence on agriculture remains comparatively high, with 47.3% of the total workforce engaged in agriculture and allied sectors in 2023-24. In rural Telangana, this dependence is even stronger, where 66.15% of the rural workforce relies on agriculture for livelihood. The sector contributes 15.8% to the state's Gross State Value Added (GSVA), reflecting a gradual structural shift but highlighting agriculture's continued centrality to livelihoods, especially in districts like Suryapet. On the other hand, Agriculture remains undesirable to youth, prompting many to migrate from rural to urban areas in search of better opportunities and a better standard of living. Preethi (2015) [10] in her study observed that lack of necessary timely inputs, lack of irrigation facilities, electricity problem, and scarcity of labour as the most important problems faced by farm youth. Giuliani *et al.* (2017) [4] reported the problems felt by youth as absence of adequate transport infrastructure in their rural areas (47.00%), and lack of efficient irrigation systems (46.00%), for drip irrigation systems, which remain unaffordable for them in most cases. Butt *et al.* (2011) [3] opined for establishment of cottage industry in villages so that maximum numbers of rural youth get employed there and initiate various agricultural developmental programmes for the betterment of rural youth. Hadagali (2013) [5] in his study on aspiration and participation of rural youth in agriculture reported that supply of power to irrigation pumps at least for

12 hours (72.50%), timely supply of fertilizers and plant protection chemicals (66.66%) as the major suggestions given by farm youth practicing agriculture.

The investigation therefore, is an attempt to determine the constraints faced by participation of rural youth in agriculture and their suggestions to overcome such constraints.

Methodology

The Ex-post facto research design was followed for carrying out the study. For drawing the sample for the study multistage sampling technique *viz.*, purposive and random sampling were used. The research study was conducted in Suryapet district of Telangana. Out of 23 mandals in

Suryapet district, 02 mandals with highest youth population namely Huzurnagar and Matampally were chosen for the study on purpose. Two villages from each mandal were chosen for the study based on their high youth population. As a result, four villages were chosen for research and from each selected village thirty rural youth were randomly selected making the sample size of 120 respondents, which are shown in the following Table 1.

For ascertaining the constraints, rural youth were asked open ended question to state the difficulties faced by them in adopting agriculture as an occupation. The suggestions offered to overcome constraints were ranked on the basis of number and percentage of respondents who reported respective suggestions.

Table 1: Selected villages from selected Mandals in Suryapet district

S. No.	Name of the Mandal	Name of the Village	Total number of Rural youth	No. of Rural youth selected
1	Huzurnagar	Lingagiri	351	30
		Gopalapuram	189	30
2	Matampally	Anjilipuram	587	30
		Anandnagar	489	30
Total			1616	120

Results and Discussion

Constraints faced by rural youths in adopting agriculture as an occupation

Constraints mean the difficulties faced by the rural youth while participating in agriculture as occupation. The

intensity of each constraint was computed in percentage according to the frequency of rural youth against the constraints and finally the rank was assigned on the basis of percentage. The outcomes were displayed in Table 2.

Table 2: Constraints faced by rural youths in adopting agriculture as an occupation

Physical constraints	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Rank
Inadequate availability of labour	78	65.00	87.42	II
Pests and diseases problem	81	67.50		
Inadequate technical know- how of chemicals	77	64.17		
Inadequate and untimely supply of seeds and fertilizers	101	84.17		
Under employment	112	93.33		
Inadequate power supply	58	48.33		
Lack of Agricultural management experience	105	87.50		
Economical constraints	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Rank
High cost of cultivation	111	92.50	94.50	I
High labor cost	98	81.67		
Persistence of old debt	78	65.00		
Price fluctuations	85	70.83		
Low remunerative price for the produce	105	87.50		
Lack of agricultural insurance	90	75.00	84.00	IV
Technical constraints	Frequency	Percentage		
Lack of appropriate technology and its use	107	89.17		
Nonavailability of improved farm inputs	84	70.00		
High cost of new technology	87	72.50	86.50	III
Lack of knowledge of packages and practices	90	75.00		
Lack of knowledge on mandi rate	52	43.33		
Social constraints	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Rank
Lack of faith by seniors of the family	80	66.67	82.75	V
Decreased landholding size due to division of family	98	81.67		
Early marriage	67	55.83		
Lack of inclination regarding traditional job	89	74.17	82.67	VI
Participation in other social activities	110	91.67		
Lack of rural youth organization	75	62.50		
Extension related constraints	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Rank
The untimely reaching of the message	109	90.83	82.67	VI
Irregular visits of RAEOs	78	65.00		
Demonstration and training related problem	80	66.67		
RAEO's only contact with large farmers	64	53.33		
Other constraints	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Rank
Migration of youth	88	73.33	82.67	VI
Lack of support from government and other organizations	62	51.67		
Fluctuation in climate	98	81.67		

As seen from the Table 2 the major important constraints faced by the rural youth in adopting agriculture as an occupation were: The most critical constraints encountered by the rural youth were economic constraints (94.50%), followed by physical constraints (87.42%), social constraints (86.50%), and technical constraints (84.00%), and extension related constraints (82.75%).

Economically rural youth were facing the high cost of cultivation (92.50%) because of the increase in prices of Agricultural inputs followed by low remunerative price for the produce (87.50%) and high labour cost (81.67%), which made them turn away from agricultural practices. Rural youth also identified a lack of agricultural insurance

(75.00%) and price fluctuation (70.83%) as limitations.

Suggestions made by rural youth to overcome the constraints faced by them

Considering the constraints faced by the respondents and to overcome them in participation of rural youth in agriculture as occupation successfully, they were asked open ended questions to give valuable suggestions. The suggestions offered were ranked on the basis of number and percentage of respondents who reported respective suggestions. The suggestions given by the rural youth were collected, summarized and presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Suggestions elicited to overcome the constraints from rural youth (n=120)

Physical suggestions	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Rank
Adequate and timely supply of fertilizers	78	65.00	85.83	IV
Awareness programmes on agriculture for youth	95	54.17		
Adequate and timely supply of quality seed	89	40.83		
A regular supply of power	72	51.66		
Supply of pheromone traps	87	55.83		
Practice updating information	94	70.00		
Economical suggestions	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Rank
Crop insurance should be made easy	82	68.33	95.50	II
Stability in price	102	85.00		
Timely Financial support	85	70.83		
Prices of crops should be changed according to the farmers' convenience	113	94.16		
Technical suggestions	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Rank
Training should be given on the latest technologies	87	72.50	97.00	I
Timely availability of farm inputs	98	81.66		
New technology provided at minimum cost	83	69.16		
Particular concerns should be taken on climate change	120	100.00		
Social suggestions	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Rank
Youth must incline traditional job	67	55.83	83.40	VI
Seniors should guide rural youth	78	65.00		
Establishing rural youth organization	107	89.16		
Farmer should be given proper respect in the society	73	60.83		
Experience persons must help rural youth in adopting agriculture as a profession	92	76.66		
Extension related suggestions	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Rank
Extension officers should motivate farmers for Kisan credit card, Kisan call centre and Kisan mobile advisory	87	72.50	93.66	III
Scientists should visit the farm and solve problems with proper demonstrations	104	86.67		
Agriculture fairs, exhibitions, and health camps should be organized at the panchayat level	91	75.83		
Farmer should take help of DD KISAN channel, television and radio	97	80.83		
The KVK should organize training according to the farmer's needs	101	84.16		
Knowledge about ICTs	82	68.33		
Other suggestions	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Rank
Village leadership must improve on a ground-level basis touching the root problems of the farmers	65	54.16	84.33	V
Establishing Agri-rural youth clubs focusing on agriculture	77	64.16		
Training on skill development should be provided	89	74.16		
Unused land of the village should be made available for rural youth on lease for agriculture	74	61.67		
Timely diffusion of the adoption process for enhancing agriculture	103	85.83		
Attracting rural youth in agriculture programmes should be conducted to discourage rural youth	98	81.67		
Migration				

Table 3 revealed suggestions to overcome physical constraints. It indicated that out of 120 respondents, seventy percent of rural youth were suggested for the provision of updated information (70.00%), followed by adequate and timely supply of fertilizers (65.00%) and collection of pheromone traps (55.83%). Around 94.16 percent of respondents suggested remunerative crop prices to help improve their socio-economic status. 85.00 percent of rural youth said stability in the price for different commodities.

70.83 percent of them suggested timely financial support, followed by the easy accessibility of crop insurance (68.33%). Under social suggestions, most of the rural youth suggested establishing rural youth organizations (89.16%), and expert guidance by progressive farmers (76.66%).

Conclusion

The findings clearly indicate that rural youth in Suryapet district face a combination of economic, physical, technical,

social, and extension-related constraints that collectively hinder their effective participation in agriculture. Economic issues such as high cultivation costs, low remunerative prices, and rising labour expenses emerged as the most critical barriers, while physical constraints like underemployment and limited access to timely inputs further reduce their engagement. Technical gaps, lack of appropriate technologies, low confidence in farm management, and inadequate extension support also contribute significantly to their reduced involvement. The suggestions provided by youth such as ensuring timely availability of inputs, improving irrigation facilities, offering regular skill-based training, strengthening market linkages, enhancing extension services, and creating youth-focused organisations highlight a strong willingness to participate in agriculture if a supportive ecosystem is provided. Addressing these constraints through targeted policies and youth-centric interventions is crucial for enhancing their participation and revitalizing the agricultural sector in the region.

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