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Sustainable Development Goals from Rural Entrepreneurs Perspective- A Study of Karnataka

Vanajakshi C

Kirankumar R.
vanajakshirevadiger@gmail.com
rbkiran@kud.ac.in

Abstract

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were framed by the United Nations in the year 2015 to create a prosperous and peaceful life for everyone by 2030, with the slogan of 'leaving no one behind' because the present situation is severe, where everyone is using resources more than their requirements without thinking about future generations. It is everyone's collective responsibility to fulfill the SDGs, which represent the goals for everything on earth. Though it has been a decade since the SDGs were introduced, which are the extension of MDGs (Millenium Development Goals), many people do not know the explicit meaning of SDGs, especially rural people. Therefore, the present study has been undertaken to explore the awareness of SDGs among the Rural Entrepreneurs, identify how essential the SDGs are for Rural Entrepreneurs and the utilization of resources by them while running their entrepreneurial activity, because they are the ones who embrace the risks and can run their enterprises in rural areas by addressing the needs of their locality, where there is more scope for them to fulfill the SDGs. The study employed an empirical research design, and the necessary information for the study was obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The interview schedule was first loaded into the latest version of the KoboToolbox software, and primary data was subsequently collected using it from various villages. This indicates efficient data collection, as it captures location points of the rural areas where the actual data has been collected. The sample size considered for the study is 400 respondents from four districts, namely Belagavi, Dharwad, Gadag, and Haveri, using a snowball sampling technique, who are involved in different micro-entrepreneurial activities, such as food processing, agarabatti, paper and paper products, textiles (power looms), and other manufacturing. Descriptive statistics, such as percentages and frequencies, have been calculated. For analyzing the data, SPSS version 27 and Microsoft Excel have been used. The study's findings highlight that 84.3 percent of the respondents are not aware of the term SDGs; they contribute to a few of the SDGs directly, particularly for Rural Entrepreneurs, through their entrepreneurial operations, which utilize natural, man-made, human, financial, technological, and waste resources. Creating awareness first among Rural Entrepreneurs will definitely help to achieve the SDGs.

Keywords: North Karnataka, Rural Entrepreneurs, Resources, SDGs, Three pillars of sustainability

Introduction

The Present society is not as peaceful as in earlier days; it is full of hectic schedules. Earlier, people used to lead a happy life even though the earnings of a family were not sufficient. However, in recent years, everyone has been leading a more active lifestyle and becoming increasingly demanding in meeting their needs; for this reason, we are now gradually losing our resources. Mensah (2019) stated that the use of resources will increase as the population grows. If the same situation continues, maybe our next generations will not get an opportunity to make use of the available resources as we are using them now. This is indeed a very critical situation that everyone should understand. Nature is created very well naturally, and everyone wishes to enjoy it often, but ignores concerns about the environment and society, and thinks only from their point of view. This shows the lack of awareness among everyone unless they get to know the importance of all resources. To keep the environment in a sustainable manner everywhere, the United Nations has taken this issue as a very serious matter, which is why they have come up with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 169 targets, and 243 indicators, with its 193 countries on 25th September 2015, and set a time frame of 15 years to fulfill those goals with proper actions from time to time. These goals are meticulously designed to take into consideration each part of the whole universe, so that if we focus on one goal, it will support the fulfillment of other goals. These goals are also structured into three pillars of sustainability that everyone can easily understand: economic sustainability, social sustainability, and ecological sustainability (Environmental sustainability). Every action of an individual will have a negative impact on sustainability if they do not take into consideration all three pillars equally while running their activities concerning this matter. Everyone is working towards reaching the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with a very effective slogan of 'Leaving no one behind'. In recent years, entrepreneurship has emerged as a significant field, contributing to society far more than it did in the past (Hosseinzade et al., 2018). Contributions from Rural Entrepreneurs will play a vital role in creating a future for all. Because the majority of the SDGs can be fulfilled by Rural Entrepreneurial activities. As SDGs are applicable all over the world, rural areas should not be neglected. Barot (2025) mentioned in their study that many goals help with the development of rural areas. Rural Entrepreneurs take into consideration all these pillars that equally balance rural areas. Nanda & Satapathy (2023) opined that to achieve sustainability, it is important to conduct a study on Rural Entrepreneurship. Ansari et al. (2013) in their study, they opined that the ultimate solution for sustainable rural entrepreneurship is the development of rural entrepreneurship.

Literature review

(Omisore et al., 2017) in their study, they explored the level of awareness, wisdom, and mindset with regard to SDGs among university community members, for which they applied multiple-stage sampling and approached 450 pupils and faculty members to collect the data by preparing a questionnaire in an organized manner. The study came up with the result that 43 percent of the university community members have awareness of the SDGs.

(Arachchilage & Keerthipala, 2020) conducted a study among Australian university staff to identify the attention and viewpoint of SDGs. Data for the study were collected from 37 public universities. The results indicate that respondents' attitude towards the SDGs is positive.

(Paulley and Owede, 2020) in their study, they evaluated the understanding level of SDGs among social science teachers in Nigeria Delta University. The study followed proportionate sampling for gathering the information from the respondents and an independent t-test for analysis. The study found that pre-service teachers' perceptions of educational social science towards the SDGs are not extreme.

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(Fidlerova et al., 2022) took up a study of various business firms in six countries, namely Finland, Slovakia, Italy, Austria, Spain, and Turkey, with the intention of examining their notion towards sustainability and SDGs, for which they designed a questionnaire in more than one language and got 238 responses. There is a difference of opinion among organizations regarding enthusiasm, proficiency, and capacity related to sustainability and SDGs.

(Olugbade et al., 2023) studied the perception of SDGs based on gender and education. The study adopted convenience sampling and approached faculty members from Oyo State universities and collected 233 samples. They used both descriptive and inferential statistics for data analysis. The study found that male collegiate faculty have more consciousness about SDGs.

(Dhaka, 2024) the study highlighted how well the lecturer inspires pupils to involve themselves in accomplishing the SDGs through various paths, including incorporating the SDGs concept into the curriculum, assigning projects, seminars, and activities that help mitigate many problems that address SDGs. They opined that the combined struggle of institutions and teachers lead to great achievements towards sustainability in the forthcoming days.

Objectives of the study

1. To explore the awareness of SDGs among Rural Entrepreneurs.
2. To identify how important SDGs are for Rural Entrepreneurs.
3. To explore the usage of resources by Rural Entrepreneurs.

Methodology of the Study

The study is based on empirical nature and is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data has been collected by preparing an Interview Schedule with the help of KoboToolbox (a tool that is meant for data collection in remote areas in offline mode) from the Rural Entrepreneurs in the rural areas of four districts of Belagavi Division, viz., Belagavi, Dharwad, Gadag, and Haveri. Snowball sampling techniques have been used to approach Rural Entrepreneurs. The sample size of the study is 400, comprising 100 respondents from each district who are engaged in entrepreneurial activities such as food processing, agarabatti, paper and paper products, textiles (power looms), and other manufacturing, which includes potting, bamboo hamper making, and eco-friendly soil idol making. Descriptive statistics, such as percentages and frequencies, have been calculated. For analyzing the data, SPSS version 27 and Microsoft Excel have been used.

Analysis and discussion

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

		Frequency	**Percentage**
Gender	Male	182	45.5
	Female	218	54.5
Age	21-30	57	14.2
	31-40	148	37

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	41-50	102	25.5
	Above 50	93	23.3
Educational Qualification	Below SSLC	181	45.3
	SSLC	87	21.8
	PUC	49	12.3
	Graduation	52	13.0
	Post Graduation	7	1.8
	Diploma	9	2.3
	ITI	13	3.3
	Others	2	0.5
Marital Status	Single	18	4.5
	Married	372	93
	Widow/Widower	10	2.5
Type of Family	Joint	94	23.5
	Nuclear	306	76.5

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 above shows the demographic profile of the respondents, where 54.5 percent of the respondents are females and 45.5 percent are males. 37 percent of the respondents belong to the 31-40 years of age group, followed by 25.5 percent of the respondents who belong to the age group of 41-50. 45.3 percent of the respondents have an educational qualification below SSLC. 93 percent of the respondents are married, and there are 76.5 percent nuclear families in the studied rural areas. These results indicate that many of the respondents are female, belong to the age group of 31-40, have completed SSLC, are married, and have a nuclear family.

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Table 2: Enterprise Related Information

		Frequency	Percentage
Type of Activity	Agarabatti	22	5.5
	Food processing	243	60.8
	Paper and Paper Products	25	6.3
	Textiles (Power looms)	37	9.3
	Other manufacturing	73	18.3
Year of the Enterprise	Less than 5 years	154	38.5
	5-10 years	72	18
	10-15 years	43	10.75
	Above 15 years	131	32.75
Annual Income	Below 50,000	127	31.75
	50,000- 1 Lakh	114	28.5
	1-3 Lakhs	83	20.75
	3-5 Lakhs	41	10.25
	5-10 Lakhs	23	5.75
	10-15 Lakhs	8	2
	Above 15 Lakhs	4	1

Source: Primary Data

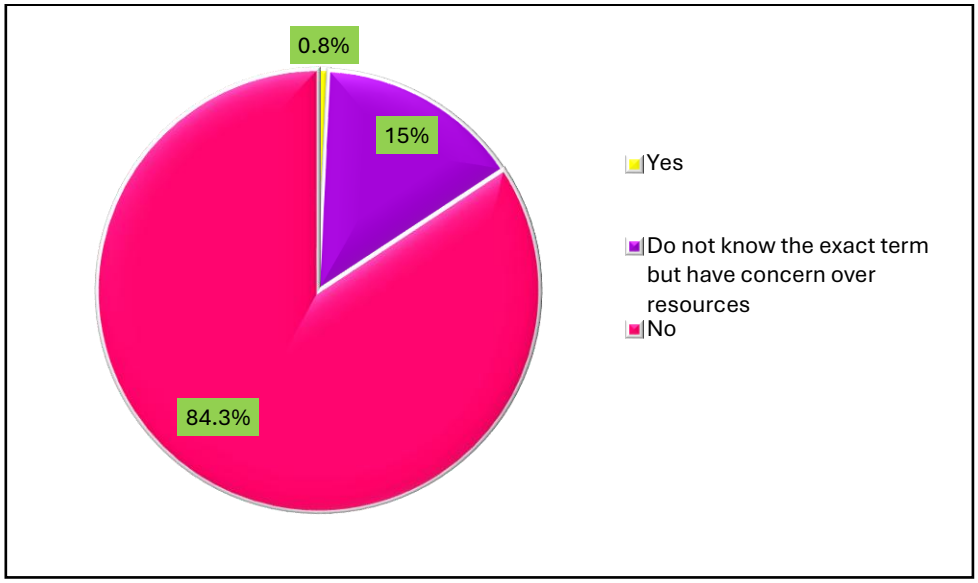
Table 2 depicts the information that is related to the enterprise. 60.8 percent of the respondents are engaged in the food processing activity, which is the highest among the other entrepreneurial activities. 38.5 percent of the respondents have less than 5 years of experience in running their enterprise, followed by 32.75 percent of the respondents who have more than 15 years of experience. 31.75 percent earn an annual income of rupees 50,000, followed by 28.5 percent of the respondents whose annual income is between 50,000-1 lakh rupees. These results indicate that the majority of the respondents are involved in food processing activity, have less than 5 years of experience, and have less than rupees 50,000 as their annual income.

Awareness of Sustainable Development Goals

It is essential to have awareness regarding what is happening in society now and then. Sometimes, we never come across the emerging concept that was introduced long ago, maybe because of little

interest in those things, a hectic schedule, being unable to understand what it exactly means, being illiterate, or not being active on any social media through which emerging concepts can be known. The same thing is happening with the most emerging concept, which is the SDGs. Though eleven years have passed since the inception of the SDGs, many people are still unaware of them, or even though they are leading a sustainable life, they might not have heard the exact term sustainability or SDGs, especially in rural areas. By keeping this issue in mind, the present study emphasized awareness of SDGs among rural entrepreneurs. The following Figure 4.17 shows how familiar rural entrepreneurs are with the term SDGs

Figure 1: Awareness about the term Sustainable Development Goals



Source: Fieldwork

Of the 400 respondents, 84.3 percent of the respondents are not aware of the term SDGs. 15 percent of the respondents do not know the exact term but have concern over resources. Only 0.8 percent of the respondents are aware of the term SDGs. These results indicated that most of the respondents are unaware of SDGs, and they mentioned during the fieldwork that they are hearing about this term for the first time.

Sources of knowing the term Sustainable Development Goals

There are many sources, such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television, seminars, conferences, non-government organizations, government, and workshops, through which one can understand emerging concepts, where the SDGs are not an exception to this. Table 3 shows how respondents got to know about the term SDGs.

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Table 3: Sources of Knowing the term Sustainable Development Goals

Sources	Frequency	Percent
	397	99.3
Nongovernment Organizations	2	0.5
Social media (WhatsApp/Facebook/Instagram)	1	0.3
Total	**400**	**100.0**

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 indicates that two respondents are familiar with the term SDGs from a Nongovernment Organization, and only one respondent is known from social media. Out of the remaining respondents, some are not at all aware of it, and some opined that they do not know the exact term but have concern over resources.

Respondents Awareness Regarding SDG-Related Concepts

Some concepts address the SDGs, which are the three pillars of sustainability (Economic sustainability, social sustainability, and Environmental sustainability), localization of SDGs by the Gram Panchayat, 9 themes of localization of SDGs, and initiatives taken by government and non-government organizations for achieving the SDGs. Table 4 shows the respondents awareness regarding SDG-related concepts.

Table 4: Respondents Awareness Regarding SDG-Related Concepts

		Frequency	Percent
Are you aware of the three pillars of sustainability?	No	400	100.0
Are you aware of the initiative taken by the Gram Panchayat for the Localization of SDGs under the guidance of the Ministry of Panchayat Raj?	No	400	100.0
Are you aware of the 9 themes of Localization of SDGs?	No	400	100.0
Have you ever attended any of the awareness programs on SDGs organized by the Government or NGOs?	No	400	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Rural Entrepreneurs in the study area opined that they are not aware of the three pillars of sustainability, the initiative taken by the Gram Panchayat for the Localization of SDGs under the

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guidance of the Ministry of Panchayat Raj, the 9 themes of Localization of SDGs, and have not attended any of the awareness programs on SDGs organized by the Government or NGOs. These results indicate that 100 percent of the respondents do not have any awareness regarding the SDG-related concept, except for those three respondents who have heard the term SDGs.

Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals by Rural Entrepreneurs

As the SDGs were introduced to create a more sustainable society, promote economic benefits, and foster a peaceful environment, it is essential to understand them thoroughly so that a better future can be envisioned by all. (Kumar et al., 2014) opined that the SDGs are very broad and not easy. Rural entrepreneurs, especially, have to get more clarity on these goals for creating a better future in rural areas, where there is more scope for their entrepreneurial activities, and they address the majority of the problems of rural areas, such as poverty, unemployment, and environmental pollution(Zeeshan & Kappiarathel, 2023). Rural Entrepreneurs can address the problems that are faced by rural people with the use of local resources. The following points explain how Rural Entrepreneurs will contribute to the SDGs.

1. Economic growth: The growth of an economy depends on the earnings of every individual from every part of the nation. This represents one of the SDGs, which is Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG8), which emphasizes creating disciplined work, equal pay, and proper working conditions for all workers that motivate them to work enthusiastically. Rural Entrepreneurs with their entrepreneurial activities in the study area opined that they have created job opportunities for rural people, and they also wish to create more job opportunities for others in the future.

2. Concern about the environment: Every activity of an individual has a severe impact on the environment these days because everyone wishes to fulfill their needs without having concern about the environment. This issue reflects Life Below Water (SDG14) and Life on Land (SDG15) that need to be taken into consideration while running their activities. Rural Entrepreneurs activities will have more concern about the environment because they use locally available resources, create the best out of waste, and recycle the waste.

3. Welfare of society: The entrepreneurial activities that take place in their locality ensure that they are going to be beneficial to people living in society. This perspective can be well addressed by SDGs concerning society, such as No Poverty (SDG1), Zero Hunger (SDG2), and Good Health and Well-being (SDG3). Being a Rural Entrepreneur, one can become a job creator and concentrate on the welfare of their locality because not everyone will become a successful entrepreneur. One can take initiative and set up an enterprise by availing the financial and training support given by the government and non-government institutions.

4. Co-operation from locality: This point focuses on fulfilling the Partnership for Goals (SDG17), which requires support from all like-minded people. Rural Entrepreneurs can fulfill this goal by collaborating with other entrepreneurs in their localities. Without support from the people, nothing can be achieved. Respondents in the study area opined that the majority of the people will support them. This shows more unity among rural people. A sustainable future can be built in the rural areas and also reach the target of the 2030 agenda if they work with each other (Barot, 2025).

5. Women empowerment: Women can become self-independent if they are given equal opportunities like men in society. This will contribute to Gender equality (SDG5) by Rural Entrepreneurs, where they can create opportunities for other women to work in their enterprises, which in turn helps them run their families without depending on men. There are 54.5 percent female Rural Entrepreneurs in the

study area who are running an enterprise with lots of courage and strong determination to become self-reliant. (Debnath et al., n.d.) opined that female entrepreneurs not only generate income, but they can also contribute to the SDGs.

6. Sustainable production and job opportunities: Jobs are essential to survival and prosperity. Rural entrepreneurs will make this possible by producing eco-friendly products and creating job opportunities for local people. Every production generates wastage that can be used for some other purposes in one way or the other way. For example, wood powder will be used to prepare incense sticks.

7. Retaining Indigenous culture: Different regions have their own culture. Rural areas are blessed with a rich cultural heritage that fascinates people from different locations. Rural Entrepreneurs can make use of indigenous knowledge and culture while producing the products. Because not all the products are manufactured in the same locality.

8. Mitigation of migration: Migration has become a major issue, where many people switch over to urban areas if they are not able to stay in rural areas because of the lack of employment opportunities. This can be reduced by taking entrepreneurship as an opportunity to create employment opportunities for others. There are many Rural Entrepreneurs who have emerged in recent years

Usage of Resources by Rural Entrepreneurs

Resources are divided into two types, namely man-made and natural resources. Man-made resources are those that are created by human beings, such as buildings, machinery, dams, bridges, vehicles, and many more. Natural resources are again categorized into two types, namely renewable and non-renewable resources. Renewable resources are those that are available endlessly. E.g., Sun, water, air. Non-renewable resources are very difficult to recover or cannot be replenished over time once they are depleted. E.g., coal, oil, minerals, natural gas. These resources are used by every individual in one way or the other way in their everyday lives. Because of the overutilization of these resources, they are being depleted gradually without thinking about the future. That is why sustainable development focuses on protecting these resources by fulfilling all 17 SDGs. Whereas even Rural Entrepreneurs use resources as the basic requirements to carry out their entrepreneurial activities. The following are the resources that Rural Entrepreneurs widely use based on the nature of their activities.

Natural Resources: These are the resources that are available naturally, which are the wonderful creations of God. Rural Entrepreneurs use natural resources such as land, air, sunlight, water, and power to produce goods. These are the most required resources to run any type of entrepreneurial activity.

Man-made Resources: These resources are made out of natural resources that are used by rural entrepreneurs, such as buildings for establishing an enterprise, vehicles for dispatching the goods, roads for safe transportation, machinery for producing goods, and many more.

Human Resources: This is one of the important sources where Rural Entrepreneurs employ skilled and semi-skilled laborers to work in enterprises. To elevate an enterprise to the next level, the efforts of every laborer are essential. Rural Entrepreneurs in the study area agreed that they assign work based on their knowledge and skills.

Technological Resources: Rural Entrepreneurs can enhance the value of their products by using the latest technology that is feasible for them. They get technological knowledge by undergoing some

training and workshops. After gaining the knowledge from the training and workshops, they impart the same to their workers.

Financial Resources: This is one of the major resources where Rural Entrepreneurs gather money from friends, family members, and moneylenders, borrow from banks, invest their own funds, and other sources such as sangha and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to run their activity. Rural Entrepreneurs opined that they require funds throughout the year, which they gather from multiple sources. The highest source that they often opt for is from sanghas that are in existence in their locality. They felt this was the most convenient source among other sources because it can be availed very easily.

Wastage as a resource: Rural entrepreneurs with their entrepreneurial skills create the best items by using wastage as a resource, which is the best practice, does not require any additional financial support, and helps to protect the environment also.

Conclusion and scope for further study

There must be a set of protocols and frameworks to achieve anything. In the same way, to achieve the SDGs, the United Nations has provided us with the blueprint for reaching the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development everywhere. It has explained all SDGs, targets, and indicators in a very broad manner that everyone must understand to reach the destination, which is time-consuming as well; that is why the time frame has been set for 15 years. Therefore, concerning this matter, the present study has tried to explore the awareness among Rural entrepreneurs, the importance of SDGs from the viewpoint of Rural Entrepreneurs, and the usage of resources by them in their entrepreneurial activities. The main concern of SDGs is to keep the environment free from pollution, ensure societal welfare, and economic benefit by using the resources optimally so that they can be preserved for generations in the future. As there is a lack of awareness among the respondents, even though they have been come into existence long back, they cannot take a step forward to fulfill the SDGs until they are informed to do so by the concerned institutions by framing some guidelines and monitoring the same on a timely basis. This creates seriousness among them, and they work on it. The present study covered the Belagavi division in North Karnataka; further, similar study can be explored in South Karnataka.

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