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THE IMPACT OF GLOBAL YOUTH MOVEMENTS ON INDIAN YOUTH (2020–OCTOBER 2026)

A Sociological Study of Political Consciousness, Digital Activism and Social Change

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Abstract

A new wave of youth movements has emerged globally in the third decade of the twenty-first century. Between 2020 and October 2026, young people in various countries staged large-scale protests against corruption, unemployment, inflation, weaknesses in education systems, the crisis of political representation, social inequality, human-rights violations and restrictions on freedom of expression. A distinctive feature of these movements has been the important role played not only by traditional organisations but also by social media, digital networks, online campaigns and decentralised leadership.

Youth activism in Myanmar, Thailand, the United States, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Iran, Bangladesh, Kenya, Indonesia, Nepal, Serbia, Morocco, Madagascar, the Philippines and European countries such as France, Italy and Spain has influenced political and social debates. By October 2026, the movements emerging in Europe had foregrounded the quality of education, the housing crisis, the rising cost of living, employment insecurity and the condition of public services.

This research article presents a sociological study of the possible effects of global youth movements on Indian youth by analysing their nature, causes, forms and consequences. It uses the theories of relative deprivation, resource mobilisation and new social movements, along with the concept of the network society. The study concludes that global youth movements can encourage political awareness, sensitivity towards civil rights, digital participation and aspirations for social change among young people. However, the success of a movement is not confined to protests; it also requires democratic institutions, policy reforms and sustained social participation.

Keywords: Global youth movements, Indian youth, political consciousness, digital activism, social change, public participation, democracy, Generation Z, social justice, globalisation.

Introduction

Young people are among the most active, energetic and dynamic social forces in any society. Their role in bringing change to political, economic, cultural and technological structures has historically been significant. In different countries, young people have contributed substantially to freedom movements, democratic struggles, social justice, human rights, environmental protection and economic equality.

In contemporary global society, youth movements have become broader and more multidimensional than in the past. Earlier movements were primarily shaped by universities, student organisations, trade unions and political parties, whereas digital communication has transformed their structure and methods. Young people can now shape public opinion on social issues, run online campaigns and connect with movements in different countries without being physically present at a single location.

After 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic further exposed economic and social inequalities across the world. Employment opportunities were affected, the digital divide in education became visible, and many young people experienced economic insecurity. Political corruption, restrictions on freedom of expression, unemployment, the environmental crisis and inflation further intensified youth dissatisfaction.

Against this background, a new pattern of youth movements emerged in different parts of the world. Young people were not merely opposing a government or political party; they were demanding accountability in governance, transparency, social justice, better education, employment and a dignified life. The 2022 mass movement in Sri Lanka, the 2024 student movement in Bangladesh and Nepal's 2025 Generation Z movement are notable South Asian examples. These movements demonstrated that young people are not merely spectators in political processes; they can also become active participants in political and social change.

The movements that emerged in France, Italy and Spain in Europe by October 2026 also underlined that young people in developed economies face problems related to education, housing, employment and the rising cost of living. Thus, the foundations of global youth discontent are not confined to any one political system or developing country.

These movements are particularly significant in the Indian context. India is one of the countries with the largest youth populations in the world. Issues related to education, employment, competitive examinations, social inequality, digital opportunities, gender justice, the environment and political representation influence the aspirations of Indian youth. This study therefore seeks to understand how the political consciousness, new techniques of protest and ideas of social change emerging from global youth movements may influence the perspectives and participation of young Indians.

Statement of the Problem

In contemporary global society, young people are gaining new opportunities in education, technological development and access to information. At the same time, they face unemployment, insecure work, economic inequality, social discrimination and political neglect.

Despite the expansion of education, employment matching young people's qualifications is not available to all. Employment insecurity among educated youth, pressure from competitive examinations and limitations on social mobility generate dissatisfaction. Digital technology has provided young people with new means of expression, but it has also contributed to problems such as misinformation, digital surveillance, online polarisation and cyber harassment.

In this context, the central research problem is to examine the extent to which global youth movements are influencing the political consciousness, social outlook, digital behaviour and aspirations for social change of Indian youth. The study particularly seeks to understand what ideas, organisational methods and forms of democratic participation Indian youth may adopt from global movements.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the nature and forms of major youth movements across the world from 2020 to October 2026.
2. To analyse the political, economic and social causes of global youth movements.
3. To undertake a sociological study of the role of digital media and social networks.
4. To analyse the major causes of recent youth movements in France, Italy and Spain.
5. To understand the possible effects of global movements on the political consciousness and civic participation of Indian youth.
6. To study the role of young people in issues relating to education, employment, social justice and economic inequality.
7. To evaluate the achievements and limitations of global youth movements.
8. To highlight the possibilities for democratic, peaceful and constructive youth participation in Indian society.

Research Methodology

The present study is primarily a descriptive and analytical sociological study based on secondary sources. It draws upon available research articles concerning youth movements in different countries, reports of international organisations, news sources, academic studies and documents relating to social movements. A comparative method has been used to analyse the causes, organisational forms, digital activism and social consequences of movements in different countries.

The conclusions presented in this article regarding the impact on Indian youth are based mainly on theoretical and comparative analysis. No independent field survey or primary interviews were conducted for this article. Therefore, conclusions concerning the direct impact on Indian youth should be understood as possible or potential effects.

Concept and Sociological Meaning of Youth Movements

A youth movement refers to collective efforts in which young people organise themselves and put forward demands to address a social, economic, political, cultural or environmental problem. Youth movements are not merely protests against governments; they are also processes through which social consciousness, civil rights, democratic participation and collective identity are formed.

From a sociological perspective, youth movements can be understood through the following characteristics:

9. Collective consciousness: Young people begin to view a shared problem as a social issue rather than merely an individual problem.
10. Political awareness: Movements make young people aware of power, governance, policymaking and the role of democratic institutions.
11. Social identity: Young people affected by similar problems develop a collective identity.
12. Aspiration for change: Young people demand reforms in established social, political and economic arrangements.
13. Digital organisation: The internet and social media have become important means of publicising, communicating and coordinating movements.
14. Multidimensional participation: Modern youth movements may bring together students, unemployed youth, workers, women, social organisations and citizen groups.

Major Global Youth Movements from 2020 to October 2026

1. United States: Black Lives Matter Movement (2020)

In 2020, following the death of George Floyd while in police custody in the United States, the Black Lives Matter movement assumed a broad scale. Large numbers of young people participated. Its principal objective was to raise a voice against racial discrimination, police violence and institutional inequality.

The movement brought the following issues to prominence globally:

- Racial equality and human rights.
- Accountability of the police system.
- Social justice and civil liberties.
- Formation of public opinion through digital media.
- Political participation of young people.

The movement demonstrated that local discontent, amplified through digital media following a particular incident, can take the form of an international social movement.

2. Thailand: Pro-democracy Youth Movement (2020)

During 2020, students and young people in Thailand organised movements demanding democratic reforms, political freedom and constitutional change. They criticised the traditional political system and emphasised the need for more accountable governance. Digital media played an important role in publicising and organising the movement. Young people presented their demands

through online communication, social-media campaigns and public gatherings. The movement may be regarded as an important example of the development of youth political consciousness in Asia.

3. Myanmar: Movement against Military Rule (2021)

Following the military coup in Myanmar in February 2021, students, young people, teachers, employees and citizen groups launched a broad movement for the restoration of democracy. Young people opposed military rule through civil disobedience, demonstrations and digital campaigns.

- Demand for democratic rights.
- Protection of civil liberties.
- Opposition to military rule.
- Mobilisation of international support through digital media.
- Political activism among young people.

The experience of Myanmar also shows that young people struggling for democratic rights may face serious challenges such as repression, arrest and violence.

4. Nigeria: #EndSARS Movement (2020)

Young people in Nigeria launched the #EndSARS campaign against alleged police brutality, harassment and human-rights violations by the police special unit SARS. Social media played an extremely important role. Young people shared videos, photographs and personal experiences relating to police violence. The movement's main issues included police reform, protection of civil rights, police accountability, and opposition to corruption and institutional repression. It demonstrated that digital platforms can transform social grievances into matters of public debate.

This illustrates how digital platforms can rapidly amplify collective grievances and mobilise public participation; the political consequences of social-media communication, including misinformation and populist mobilisation, have also been examined by Yadav and Kashyap (2026).

5. Sri Lanka: Aragalaya Movement (2022)

A major mass movement emerged in Sri Lanka in 2022 because of the economic crisis, shortage of foreign currency, scarcity of fuel and food, inflation and political corruption. The movement was called Aragalaya, meaning struggle or people's struggle. Young people, students and citizens protested against the government. Protesters gathered in the Galle Face area of Colombo and demanded government accountability and political change.

Its major causes were: (1) a severe economic crisis; (2) inflation and shortages of essential commodities; (3) allegations of political corruption; (4) unemployment and economic insecurity; and (5) declining public trust in the government.

As a result of the movement, then-President Gotabaya Rajapaksa had to leave the country and later resigned. The Sri Lankan movement illustrates how an economic crisis can turn into political discontent. However, economic problems were not automatically resolved after the change in leadership.

6. Iran: Women, Life, Freedom Movement (2022)

Following the death of Mahsa Amini in Iran, the Women, Life, Freedom movement emerged on a wide scale in 2022. Along with women, young people, students and other citizens participated. Its principal demands included women's freedom, protection of individual rights, gender equality, freedom of expression and opposition to repressive state policies.

The movement gave renewed momentum worldwide to issues of women's rights and individual freedom. Sociologically, it is an important example of the relationship between gender inequality, state power and individual freedom.

7. China: White Paper Movement (2022)

In 2022, protests took place in several Chinese cities against COVID-19 restrictions and strict lockdown policies. University students and young people participated. Some protesters held up blank white sheets of paper as a symbolic protest against censorship and controls on expression. The sociological significance of this movement lies in the fact that even symbolic protest can communicate a broad political and social message.

8. Bangladesh: Student Movement (2024)

In 2024, students in Bangladesh began a widespread movement against the quota system in government jobs. Although it began with the issue of job reservations, it later developed into broader discontent relating to employment, equal opportunities, political accountability and governance. Young people publicised the movement through social media and organised demonstrations at universities and public places.

The principal causes included the quota system in government jobs, demands for equality in employment opportunities, concerns about unemployment among educated youth, political accountability and dissatisfaction with governance.

The movement involved widespread violence and loss of life. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina left office and was compelled to leave the country and take refuge in India. The Bangladeshi experience demonstrates that a student movement can become the basis of broad political change, but the creation of stable and inclusive institutions after a political transition is also essential.

9. Kenya: Youth Movement (2024)

In 2024, young people in Kenya staged widespread protests against a proposed Finance Bill. They opposed tax increases, inflation, economic inequality and the government's financial policies. Digital media played an important role: young people explained provisions of the bill on social media, ran online campaigns and coordinated demonstrations.

The main issues were the increasing tax burden, inflation and economic inequality, allegations of corruption, government accountability, and employment and economic opportunities for young people. Following widespread protests, President William Ruto announced that the controversial Finance Bill would be withdrawn after reconsideration.

10. Indonesia: Youth Protest Movement (2025)

During 2025, protests took place in Indonesia over corruption, political privileges, economic inequality and government policies. Young people questioned the privileges of the political elite, the rising cost of living and the use of public resources. Digital platforms helped young people organise and bring these issues into public discussion.

11. Nepal: Generation Z Movement (2025)

In September 2025, young people in Nepal protested against corruption, nepotism, political privileges and restrictions imposed on social media. The participation of Generation Z was particularly notable. The social-media restrictions intensified dissatisfaction, and the movement quickly developed into broad political opposition.

Its principal issues were political corruption; nepotism and privileges of those in power; lack of employment opportunities; social media and freedom of expression; and youth participation in governance. Violence and loss of life occurred during the movement, and then-Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli resigned. According to an analysis by the Carnegie Endowment, inequality, the alienation of young people from political power and a crisis of accountability were common factors in the movements in Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

12. Serbia: Student Movement (2024–2026)

After the collapse of a railway-station roof in Serbia, students and citizens began protests against corruption and in support of accountability. The movement centred on accountability in public institutions, corruption and political transparency. Students organised demonstrations, public meetings and other collective activities through universities. The movement placed considerable pressure on the political leadership. This example shows that an incident relating to public safety can become the basis of a wider movement for institutional accountability.

13. Morocco: Generation Z 212 Movement (2025)

Young people in Morocco protested over the quality of education, health services, employment and public facilities. They questioned why ordinary citizens were not receiving quality education and healthcare despite major development investments. The movement encouraged debate about the fair distribution of public resources and social priorities.

14. Youth Movements in Madagascar and the Philippines (2025)

In Madagascar, disruptions in electricity and water supplies, along with dissatisfaction with governance, gave rise to youth protests. In the Philippines, demonstrations took place over alleged corruption in flood-control projects and misuse of public resources. These movements made clear that youth discontent arises not only from ideological or political issues but also from basic facilities connected with everyday life. According to the 2026 CIVICUS report, economic hardship, corruption, lack of opportunities and weaknesses in public services were major factors behind youth movements in different countries.

A New Wave of Youth Movements in Europe: France, Italy and Spain (September–October 2026)

In September and October 2026, a new wave of protests was seen in several European countries. Along with young people, teachers, workers, farmers, transport employees and other citizen groups participated. These movements were still continuing. A distinctive feature was that issues such as education, employment, housing and inflation became linked with wider political discontent.

1. France: Education, Inflation and the Crisis of Political Representation

In September 2026, students in France began demonstrations against weaknesses in the public education system. On 17 September 2026, students at a school in the Créteil area boycotted classes in protest against teacher shortages and poor educational conditions. Gradually, the movement spread to other areas. By October 2026, large numbers of students, teachers, workers and citizen groups had joined. A Georgetown University analysis viewed the expansion of the movement as an expression of wider discontent relating to public education and government accountability.

The main causes were: (1) shortages of teachers and support staff in many schools, directly affecting educational quality; (2) poor school infrastructure, including overcrowded classrooms, deteriorating buildings and inadequate facilities; (3) concerns about university admission procedures and equality of opportunity in higher education; (4) the rising cost of fuel, transport and daily necessities, placing pressure on young people and low- and middle-income families; (5) a crisis of political representation, with some young people feeling that political leaders did not give adequate importance to their problems; and (6) demands for adequate investment in education and other public services.

The article also states that migrants from outside France were considered by some to be a factor behind the escalation of violence and widespread looting. The student movement gradually became a broader social movement, with trade unions and groups associated with the Yellow Vest movement also participating. This shows how discontent over a specific educational problem can become linked with wider socio-economic dissatisfaction. (Georgetown School of Foreign Service, 2026)

2. Italy: Unemployment, Inflation and Problems with Public Services

During October 2026, students and workers in Italy demonstrated over issues related to education, employment, wages and the cost of living. Along with young students, teachers, transport workers, farmers and labour organisations participated.

The major causes of protest in Italy were: (1) employment insecurity and dissatisfaction with the lack of stable jobs and better wages; (2) rising costs of daily necessities, affecting young people's economic future; (3) low expenditure on education, with students demanding greater public investment in schools and universities; (4) the housing problem, as rising rents and housing costs in large cities made it difficult for students and young employees to establish independent lives; (5) priorities in public expenditure, with some protesters questioning the greater priority given to defence and military spending over education, health and social welfare; and (6) demands for

political accountability and policies that prioritise young people's future, employment and social security.

An especially notable feature of the Italian movements was that common concerns among students and workers generated wider solidarity. Protests took place in many cities across the country in October 2026.

3. Spain: Housing Crisis and Rising Rents

A major cause of demonstrations in Spain around October 2026 was the housing crisis. Rising rents in large cities, tourism-oriented housing arrangements, limited affordable housing and evictions increased social discontent. An eviction involving an 87-year-old woman in Madrid at the end of September 2026 became a subject of widespread public discussion and brought questions about tenant protection and housing availability to the fore.

The main causes were: (1) sharp increases in rents, making independent housing difficult for young people; (2) a shortage of affordable housing for students, employed young people and low-income families; (3) evictions, which made housing security an important social issue; (4) pressure from tourism, as short-term rentals and tourism-based housing in some major tourist areas were considered factors affecting local housing availability and prices; and (5) social and economic insecurity, since obtaining employment was no longer sufficient—young people also wanted stable housing and economic independence.

Housing-related movements in Spain made clear that housing is not merely an economic commodity; it is a foundation of social security, dignity and independent living.

Comparative Study of the Movements in France, Italy and Spain

France: Weaknesses in the education system, teacher shortages, inflation and public services were the main causes. Protesters demanded quality education, better facilities and accountable governance.

Italy: Employment insecurity, inflation, low investment in education and housing were major causes. The demands included better wages, investment in education and restoration of social security.

Spain: The housing crisis, rising rents and evictions were major causes. The demands included affordable housing, tenant protection and social justice.

Although the movements in these three countries had different local causes, they also displayed shared trends. Uncertainty about the future, economic insecurity, institutional neglect and a desire to participate in public policymaking were prominent among young people. A Reuters report of October 2026 highlighted youth dissatisfaction in Europe as a broad problem linked with education, employment, housing, corruption and the cost of living. (Reuters, 28 October 2026)

Major Causes of Global Youth Movements

1. Unemployment and Economic Insecurity

A major cause of youth movements is the lack of employment opportunities. Even after receiving an education, young people may be unable to obtain stable and dignified employment, generating

dissatisfaction. In many countries, young people have to depend on temporary, low-paid and insecure work. This affects economic independence and future planning.

2. Corruption and Lack of Political Accountability

Dissatisfaction among young people has increased over political corruption and the misuse of public resources. Demands for political accountability and transparency have been prominent in movements in Nepal, Bangladesh, Indonesia and other countries.

3. Inequality in the Education System

Education is an important means of social mobility. However, differences in educational quality, equality of opportunity and the relationship between education and employment become sources of dissatisfaction among young people. Recent movements in France and Italy, which demanded greater public investment in education, provide examples.

4. Inflation and the Cost of Living

Rising prices of food, fuel, transport, rent and healthcare affect the economic lives of young people. This factor was important in the movements in Sri Lanka, France and Italy.

5. Social and Economic Inequality

Unequal distribution of resources, unequal opportunities and the privileges enjoyed by political and economic elites create a sense of deprivation among young people.

6. Restrictions on Freedom of Expression

In some countries, restrictions on the internet, social media and public protest have mobilised young people. The experiences of Nepal and Myanmar are important in this context.

7. Gender Inequality and Human Rights

Iran's Women, Life, Freedom movement illustrates how young people can bring questions of social freedom, gender justice and human rights into political debate.

Digital Media and the Changing Nature of Youth Movements

Industrialisation, urbanisation, modernisation and globalisation have affected traditional social institutions. In the twenty-first century, the digital revolution has emerged as a major force of social change. The internet, smartphones, social media, video calls, online platforms and artificial intelligence have played an important role in changing everyday life, communication and the nature of social relationships.

The extensive use of digital technology is one of the most important features of contemporary youth movements. The internet, social media and mobile communication have changed the traditional boundaries of movements. Earlier, movements depended on organisations, newspapers and public meetings to reach a wider audience. Today, young people can reach thousands of people through digital media in a very short time.

1. Role of Social Media

Facebook, X, Instagram, YouTube, Telegram, WhatsApp and other platforms help circulate information related to movements. Through these media, young people share information about

demonstrations, criticise government policies, run online petition campaigns, shape public opinion, share images and experiences related to movements, and obtain information about movements in different countries (Gupta & Pandey, 2026)

2. Hashtag Movements

Campaigns such as #BlackLivesMatter and #EndSARS have shown that hashtags can make a social problem a subject of global debate. A hashtag can be more than a publicity tool; it can also become a symbol of collective identity and digital solidarity.

3. Digital Networks and Decentralised Leadership

Modern youth movements often do not have a single central leader. Different groups plan and coordinate movements through digital networks. This develops new forms of leadership, but it can also make negotiation, decision-making and accountability more complex.

4. Limitations of Digital Activism

Digital activism is also associated with serious challenges:

- Spread of misinformation and rumours.
- Online hate and polarisation.
- Digital surveillance and threats to privacy.

The dual character of digital platforms—as instruments of mobilisation and mechanisms that may enable surveillance—has been discussed by Yadav and Kashyap (2025).

- Unequal access to the internet and digital devices.
- The gap between temporary support on social media and actual participation.
- The inability of online activism to translate into real policy change.

Therefore, while digital activism should be recognised as an important means of democratic participation, its limitations must also be understood.

Major Sociological Theories of Global Youth Movements

1. Relative Deprivation Theory

This theory is associated with sociologist and political thinker Ted Robert Gurr. In his book Why Men Rebel (1970), Gurr explained that social discontent does not arise only from actual poverty; a gap between people's expectations and available opportunities can also cause dissatisfaction. When young people receive higher education and aspire to a better life but do not obtain employment, economic independence and social respect, a feeling of relative deprivation may develop. The movements in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, France and Italy can be understood through this theory.

2. Resource Mobilisation Theory

McCarthy and Zald explained the importance of organisational capacity and resources in social movements through resource mobilisation theory. According to this theory, movements do not succeed merely because of discontent; organisation, leadership, communication, financial resources and public support are also necessary. In modern youth movements, digital networks,

online communities, student organisations and social institutions have become important resources.

3. New Social Movement Theory

Thinkers such as Alain Touraine and Alberto Melucci understood modern social movements not merely as economic struggles but in relation to issues of identity, culture, freedom, the environment and quality of life. Iran's women's rights movement, youth movements relating to the environment and campaigns for gender justice can be analysed through this theory.

4. Network Society Theory

Manuel Castells explained the social power of information technology and communication networks through the concept of the network society. According to him, information and communication networks influence social and political relationships in modern society. The role of digital networks in global youth movements is an important example of this theory. Through online media, young people in different countries become familiar with one another's movements, slogans and organisational methods.

5. Political Opportunity Structure

According to this perspective, the development of social movements is influenced by political institutions, the nature of governance, civil liberties and political opportunities. Where young people have the freedom to protest peacefully, organise and express themselves, movements can pursue policy change through democratic institutions. In repressive conditions, movements may become more risky.

Impact of Global Youth Movements on Indian Youth

The social, economic and political significance of India's youth population is considerable. Indian youth influence the country's future through education, employment, technological development and democratic participation. The impact of global youth movements on Indian youth can be observed at several levels.

1. Development of Political Consciousness

Global movements provide Indian youth with an opportunity to understand that political participation is not limited to voting in elections. In a democracy, citizens have the right to question policies, demand answers from elected representatives and present their demands peacefully. The movements in Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh have broadened discussion among young people about government accountability, corruption and political transparency. This helps Indian youth understand local and national problems in a wider democratic context.

2. Awareness of Employment and Economic Opportunities

Demands for employment, fair wages and economic security have been prominent in global youth movements. Employment is also an important issue for Indian youth. Difficulties in finding work after higher education, insecure employment and gaps between skills and market demand affect young people's aspirations. The movements in Italy and France encourage an understanding that

employment is not merely about obtaining a job; it also includes fair wages, social security, dignity at the workplace and stability in the future.

3. A Critical Outlook towards the Education System

The quality of education and public investment have been major issues in recent movements in France and Italy. In India too, equal access to education, the quality of government institutions, the digital divide, the cost of higher education and employment-oriented education are important questions. Global movements may inspire Indian youth to view education not merely as an individual achievement but as a social right and a means of ensuring equal opportunity.

4. Digital Activism and Online Public Opinion

Global movements have demonstrated that young people can use social media to bring social issues into public debate. Indian youth also express views on digital platforms about education, employment, the environment, women's safety, corruption and social justice. This process can expand digital citizenship and online political participation. However, digital activism will be meaningful only when based on factual information, responsible communication and democratic conduct.

Research on social media and modern populism further highlights how online platforms shape political communication, public opinion and democratic participation (Yadav & Kashyap, 2026). At the same time, their potential use for surveillance and mass mobilisation calls for critical digital awareness (Yadav & Kashyap, 2025).

5. Consciousness of Social Justice and Equality

Global movements have raised issues such as racial discrimination, gender inequality, ethnic oppression and economic disparities. Inequality of opportunity based on caste, class, gender, region and community exists in Indian society. Through global experiences, Indian youth can develop a broader perspective on social justice and equal opportunity.

Unequal access to digital resources and artificial intelligence may reproduce existing social hierarchies. The concepts of algorithmic capital and algorithmic inequality offer a useful sociological perspective for understanding these emerging forms of stratification (Mitra & Kashyap, 2026).

6. Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality

Iran's Women, Life, Freedom movement and other global campaigns for women's rights have given international prominence to women's freedom, safety and equality. Indian youth can understand through these movements the importance of gender equality and women's participation in education, employment and public life.

7. Environmental Awareness

Issues relating to climate change, pollution, biodiversity and environmental justice have also been important in global youth movements. Climate change, water scarcity, air pollution, forest conservation and sustainable development are highly relevant to Indian youth. Inspired by global

environmental movements, young people can conduct local campaigns for environmental protection and public awareness.

8. Awareness of Housing and Quality of Life

Recent movements in Spain have presented housing as an issue connected with social security and civil rights. In Indian cities too, students, employed young people and migrant workers face challenges relating to affordable housing, rent and safe places to live. Global housing movements can therefore encourage debate among Indian youth about urban quality of life and housing justice.

Potential Challenges for Youth Movements in Indian Society

While drawing inspiration from global movements, Indian youth need to take their own social, cultural, economic and political circumstances into account.

1. Social Diversity

India is an extremely diverse society in terms of caste, religion, language, region and class. Therefore, the problems faced by all young people are not identical. The circumstances of rural, urban, Adivasi, Dalit, minority, female and economically weaker young people differ.

2. Digital Divide

All young people in India do not have equal access to internet facilities, digital devices and digital literacy. Online activism therefore cannot represent all sections equally.

3. Political Polarisation

Youth movements may be influenced by party competition and ideological polarisation. As a result, genuine social issues may be pushed into the background.

4. Misinformation and Rumours

The circulation of unverified information on social media can affect the credibility of movements and social peace.

5. Violence and Damage to Public Property

Peaceful protest is a democratic right, but violence and damage to public property can weaken the objectives of a movement.

6. Lack of Institutional Change after a Movement

Large movements sometimes bring immediate political change, but the subsequent processes of policy reform, administrative transparency and social justice may remain weak. Therefore, the success of a movement should not be judged only by a change of government or the resignation of an official.

Achievements of Global Youth Movements

Global youth movements have influenced social and political debate at several levels. First, young people have helped bring issues such as corruption, unemployment and social inequality to the centre of public discussion. Second, digital technology has broadened the organisation of movements and the circulation of information. Third, movements in different countries have increased international civic solidarity and awareness of democratic rights. Fourth, some

movements have compelled governments to reconsider policies, led officials to leave office or secured policy concessions. Fifth, youth movements have established education, health, housing, employment and social security as major subjects of political debate.

A 2026 analysis by Gateway House refers to youth movements in 39 countries between January 2024 and June 2026. According to it, policy concessions and resignations of officials occurred in some countries, while the demands of protesters remained unmet in many others. This shows that the outcomes of movements are not uniform. (Gateway House, 2026)

Limitations of Global Youth Movements

Despite their social strength, youth movements have certain limitations:

- Lack of leadership: Decentralised movements may face problems of clear leadership and representation.
- Lack of long-term programmes: Demands may be clear during a movement, but practical plans for resolving the problems may remain weak.
- Political instability: Establishing institutional stability after a change of government can be difficult.
- Repression and violence: In many countries, protesters have faced police action, arrest and violence.
- Digital limitations: Popularity on social media does not guarantee actual social support or policy change.
- Differences in group interests: Students, workers, farmers and other groups participating in a movement may have different priorities.

Thus, lasting success requires clear demands, democratic leadership, dialogue, organisational discipline and policy alternatives.

Policy and Social Suggestions for Indian Youth

On the basis of the experiences of global youth movements, the following suggestions may help make youth participation in India more constructive and democratic:

15. Quality education: The public education system should be strengthened to provide equal and quality education to young people from all sections of society.
16. Employment-oriented skill development: Higher education should be linked with employment, entrepreneurship and the needs of a changing economy.
17. Youth representation: Meaningful youth participation should be increased in policymaking, local governance, universities and public institutions.
18. Digital literacy: Young people should be trained to verify information, protect digital rights and engage in responsible online communication.
19. Democratic dialogue: Discussion, debate and a culture of peaceful dissent should be encouraged in universities and educational institutions.
20. Social justice: Equal opportunities and inclusive policies should be developed to reduce inequalities based on caste, class, gender and region.

21. Housing and social security: Affordable housing and social security arrangements should be strengthened for students, migrant youth and low-income young workers.
22. Women's participation: Equal participation of women in youth movements and public decision-making should be ensured.
23. Environmental protection: Young people should be actively involved in activities relating to climate change, water conservation and sustainable development.
24. Peaceful civic activism: Young people need to be made aware of constitutional rights, democratic processes and methods of peaceful protest.

Major Findings of the Study

The comparative study leads to the following findings:

- Between 2020 and October 2026, economic insecurity, corruption, unemployment, social inequality and political accountability were major issues in global youth movements.
- The role of social media and digital networks has become extremely important in modern youth movements.
- Global youth movements are not limited to developing countries; young people in developed countries such as France, Italy and Spain have also protested over education, housing and inflation.
- Although the local causes of movements differ across countries, shared aspirations for economic security, social justice and political participation are visible.
- Global youth movements have the capacity to make young people more aware of democratic rights and government accountability.
- Digital activism has expanded the reach of movements, but it has also created challenges involving misinformation, surveillance and online polarisation.
- In the Indian context, education, employment, social justice, housing, the environment and political representation are issues that can be understood comparatively through global experiences.
- The success of a movement is not determined only by protests or a change in political power; subsequent policy and institutional reforms are also important.
- The participation of women, workers and other social groups can provide youth movements with a broader social base.

The inclusion of migrant and marginalised communities is also important. Research on migrant tribal workers engaged in brick kilns documents economic vulnerability and cultural change under migratory conditions, offering a relevant perspective on the inequalities that youth-centred social change agendas must recognise (Rai & Kashyap, 2026).

Conclusion

The study of global youth movements from 2020 to October 2026 makes clear that young people have emerged as an important force for change in contemporary society. In different countries, young people have raised their voices on issues relating to corruption, unemployment, inflation, weaknesses in education systems, political neglect, social inequality and civil liberties.

The movements in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal presented new dimensions of youth political activism in South Asia. Movements in Kenya and Indonesia brought questions relating to economic policies, corruption and public accountability to the forefront. The movement in Iran highlighted women's freedom and human rights. Meanwhile, the movements in France, Italy and Spain during September–October 2026 demonstrated that young people in developed countries also face problems relating to education, employment, housing and the rising cost of living.

The most important feature of these movements has been the use of digital technology. Social media has provided young people with opportunities to obtain information, express opinions, organise and establish dialogue at the international level. This has expanded traditional forms of political participation.

In the Indian context, the significance of these movements lies in the fact that Indian youth are also connected with questions of education, employment, social justice, women's safety, digital rights, the environment and political representation. The experiences of global movements can provide Indian youth with an opportunity to understand these issues in a broader social and democratic context.

However, the form and outcome of a movement in another country cannot be directly applied to Indian society. India's social diversity, constitutional system, federal structure and economic circumstances are distinctive. Therefore, the activism of Indian youth should be based on local problems, democratic values and peaceful social change.

Ultimately, global youth movements are not merely expressions of discontent; they also express aspirations for a better society, a just order and accountable governance. If youth power is connected with education, employment, democratic participation and constructive social activities, it can become an important foundation for social change and sustainable development.

Thus, the sociological study of global youth movements is highly relevant for understanding the changing role of young people, political consciousness and the possibilities of social change in Indian society.

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