

Economy and rural development

Review article

A literature review of rural youth studies in Latin America and the Caribbean during 2001-2019

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Abstract

This literature review includes 45 research studies focused on Latin American rural youth. The studies were published in peer-reviewed research journals between 2001-2019. The analysis is divided into study approaches, methods, participants, and findings. Four research approaches were identified: 1) rural youth migration, 2) education and/or communication, 3) expectations or future perspectives of the rural youth, and 4) rural youth characterization. Although traditional definitions of *youth* use an age range of 14-25 years, a broad criterion for selecting participants was observed. Regarding methods, the studies used quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method analyses; however, in some cases, elements such as the qualitative research approach, the statistical representativeness (for quantitative studies), and the triangulation strategy in the mixed-method analysis were not mentioned or followed. The findings of the four research approaches coincided with the fact that the rural contexts in Latin America create socioeconomic barriers for rural youth development; therefore, rural youth aspirations are more focused on urban activities. In addition, some authors highlighted the importance of education or extension programs developed by local governments to empower rural youth in Latin America.

Keywords: rural education, rural migration, youth characterization, youth development, youth expectations

Revisión de la literatura sobre estudios de juventud rural en América Latina y el Caribe durante 2001-2019

Resumen

Esta revisión de la literatura se basó en 45 estudios de investigación que se enfocaron en la juventud rural latinoamericana. Dichos estudios fueron publicados en revistas arbitradas entre 2001 y 2019. El análisis de los documentos se dividió en enfoques de investigación, métodos utilizados, participantes y principales hallazgos. Se identificaron cuatro enfoques de investigación: 1) migración rural juvenil, 2) educación y/o comunicación para juventud rural, 3) expectativas y perspectivas de la juventud rural y 4) caracterizaciones de la juventud rural. Aunque las definiciones tradicionales de *juventud* utilizan rangos de edad entre 14 y 25 años, se observó un concepto ampliado dentro de los estudios analizados. Con respecto a los métodos, los estudios utilizaron estrategias cuantitativas, cualitativas y de métodos mixtos. Sin embargo, en algunos casos, no se desarrollaron o se mencionaron elementos como el enfoque de investigación cualitativa, la representatividad estadística (para estudios cuantitativos) o la triangulación en el análisis mixto. Por último, se observó que los cuatro enfoques de investigación coinciden en que el contexto rural latinoamericano impone barreras para la juventud; por tanto, sus aspiraciones están más orientadas hacia las actividades urbanas. Además, algunos autores subrayaron la importancia de la educación y la extensión para el empoderamiento de la juventud rural en América Latina.

Palabras clave: caracterización de la juventud, desarrollo de la juventud, educación rural, expectativas de la juventud, migración rural

Introduction

One of the most recurrent phenomena in rural areas worldwide is population aging. By 2030, the population aged 65 and above will increase (Latin America 71 %), with social, economic, and cultural implications (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2017a). For agricultural activities (in particular) and rural areas (in general), population aging implies not only reduced labor force but also the challenge of engaging young people in production activities (FAO, 2014). The importance of youth engagement in rural activities lies in the role they can play in the future of the rural economy. For example, they can increase productivity by innovating or integrating modern agriculture into traditional farming (older farmers are less likely to adopt new technologies) (FAO, 2014, 2017b).

Regarding literature, although rural development institutions (e.g., FAO and Centro Latinoamericano para el Desarrollo Rural [RIMISP]) have recommended that initiatives focused on the empowerment of the rural youth in Latin America be researched, designed, or evaluated, few researchers have analyzed the level of knowledge reached in this topic. Kessler (2006) reviewed literature in which approaches such as rural youth identity, family and gender relations, educational problems, working world, social and political participation, migrations, and native issues were discussed. This author defined the review as a “first mark of gaps” (Kessler, 2006). Moreover, Guiskin (2019) reviewed the main findings of Latin American rural youth between 2008 and 2018. Elements such as demographic dynamics, socioeconomic characterizations, priority groups, and topics of interest were described and discussed.

As a common element, the authors of these two documents reviewed, discussed, and presented research approaches to Latin American rurality (e.g., education, migration, work). Nonetheless, information such as methods and participants were not reported. Both cases suggested increasing the knowledge of rural youth in Latin America.

This paper aims to fill this gap by presenting a systematic literature review. As an innovative element, this qualitative review focuses not only on research approaches but also on how researchers have conducted studies about this issue (e.g., participants, methods, and main findings). It presents the description, analysis, and discussion of 45 articles published in peer-reviewed journals during 2001-2019.

Materials and methods

Articles published in peer-reviewed journals during 2001-2019 served as the data source. They were searched using the Purdue University online library, Google Scholar, Scopus, and the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO). These datasets were chosen based on the accessibility to download the articles for analysis (i.e., there were no monetary costs for using these datasets). Moreover, these sources ensured a broader range of authors and articles (in comparison to using only one dataset). The following keywords (in English, Spanish, and Portuguese) were used: *rural-youth*, *rural-youth-initiatives*, *Latin-America-and-Caribbean*, *youth-expectations*, *youth-motivations*, and *rural-youth-migration*. Criteria for selecting papers were: 1) published in an indexed journal, 2) approved after a peer-review process, 3) addressed an issue about rural youth of Latin America, and 4) published during 2001-2019.

Once papers were selected, variables such as year of publication, participants (i.e., human subjects), objectives, methods, results, conclusions, and keywords were analyzed and organized into a data matrix (Excel file). Based on it, and following an inductive approach, articles were manually coded (by one researcher) and categorized into four groups (table 1). A unique category was assigned to each paper.

Table 1. Definition of categories (approaches) addressed by articles

Category	Definition	Example
Rural youth migration	Processes of demographic migration from rural to urban areas or economic migration to non-agricultural rural activities	"Expulsion and retention factors in the migration decision of rural youth in Manizales, Colombia" (Méndez Sastoque, 2016)
Rural youth expectations and/or future perspectives	Youth's perceptions about their future	"Young rural people and postsecondary transitions: expectations and strategies for accessing higher education" (Villegas Quispe, 2016)
Education and communication (rural extension)	Studies about education, extension, or knowledge transfer processes to rural youth	"Pedagogy and virtual education in a rural extension program" (Parra & Méndez, 2005)
Rural youth characterization	Analysis or diagnosis of rural youth characteristics	"Livelihoods of young people in a rural and indigenous area of Mexico" (Juárez et al., 2011)

Source: Elaborated by the authors

Approaches were coded to facilitate the reading of results and tables: (migration = A; expectations = B; education and communication = C; characterizations = D). For each group (table 1), an analysis was conducted based on methods (i.e., articles were divided into quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method), objectives, participants, results, findings, and implications. Definitions were used to perform the analysis on those papers that followed qualitative approaches, as follows:

- 1) *Narrative research*: "Understood as a spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected." (Creswell, 2007, p. 53).
- 2) *Phenomenology*: "Describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon, focusing on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007, p. 57).
- 3) *Grounded theory*: "The intent of this kind of study is to move beyond description and to generate or discover a theory, an abstract analytical schema of a process" (Creswell, 2007, p. 62).
- 4) *Ethnography*: "... is a design in which the researcher (based on observations) describes and interprets the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group" (Creswell, 2007, p. 68).

5) *Case study*: "... involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system" (Creswell, 2007, p. 73).

Results and discussion

After conducting the search, 45 articles from 13 Latin America and the Caribbean countries, published between 2001 to 2019, met the selection criteria. The studies were conducted in the following contexts: Argentina (2), Bolivia (1), Brazil (14), Chile (2), Colombia (12), Costa Rica (1), Cuba (2), Ecuador (3), Mexico (7), Peru (2), Venezuela (2), the Caribbean (1), and Latin America at large (1). According to the content and objectives in the articles, they were grouped into four categories: 1) 12 rural youth migration, 2) 15 as education and/or communication (rural extension), 3) 13 as expectations or futures perspectives, and 4) five as rural youth characterization. The results are presented by category, purpose, location (generalizability), method, participant, and relevant finding.

Rural youth migration approach

Locations and perspectives

Twelve research studies focused on youth migration (from economic and sociology disciplines) were conducted in Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, and Chile (table 2). The perspectives of migration addressed were rural-urban migration (6-A; 7-A; 8-A; 10-A), international migration (Mexico to the United States) (3-A; 5-A), and internal migration among rural areas (2-A; 9-A; 12-A). Some papers combine more than one perspective (1-A; 4-A; 11-A).

Methods

These studies performed qualitative (1-A; 2-A; 4-A; 8A), quantitative (3-A; 5A; 12A), and mixed-method analyses (6-A; 7-A; 9-A; 10-A). Based on Creswell's (2007) definition or division of qualitative approaches, a case study was conducted in the document coded as 4-A. The three other qualitative analyses (1-A; 2-A; 8-A) were descriptive, whose method of inquiry did not match Creswell's categories. Concerning the mixed-method analysis, concurrent designs were employed in three studies (6-A; 7-A; 9-A) and a sequential design (quantitative-qualitative) in one document (10-A). Even though these four articles presented and discussed both qualitative and quantitative data, they lacked data triangulation (i.e., how qualitative and quantitative data were integrated to understand or explain the issue).

Participants

Differences in the criterion to select participants were observed (e.g., age, education level, or participation in any specific activity such as agriculture). Five research studies focused on education level; four collected data from high-school students (3-A; 4-A; 10-A; 12-A) and one from undergraduate students (8-A). Moreover, two other papers used the criterion of age; one selected

participants aged 12-25 (6-A) and the other young people aged 14-25 (5-A). Finally, five papers presented neither age limitation nor education level to select the participants. These papers discussed rural youth migration from a general perspective (1-A; 2-A; 7-A; 9-A; 11-A).

Generalizability

Concerning the geographic implications of these research studies, two articles were country-oriented. The study coded as 11-A presented a general discussion about rural youth migration in Colombia, while 1-A discussed the same issue for Mexico. The other ten research studies were territorially oriented, in which data collection took place in one specific region (e.g., municipality, province, or department).

Principal findings

Most of the authors coincide on the fact that the rural youth migration process occurs due to a lack of agricultural production factors (e.g., capital, land, and labor) (3-A; 4-A; 6-A; 9-A; 10-A; 11-A; 12-A). These researchers emphasized that agriculture (the main economic activity in rural areas) does not provide enough income for youth to increase their living standards. Thus, the decision to live in rural areas could result in poverty and marginalization. Another research study concluded that an important factor promoting youth migration from rural areas was searching for educational opportunities (8-A); due to the low offer of higher education in rural areas, youth migrate to urban areas. In addition, some authors highlighted that migration is an expected effect of demographic transitions (2-A; 7-A), in which youth's identity seems to be built on the imaginarity of urban areas. This demographic change can have different effects depending on characteristics such as gender or ethnicity. For instance, for ethnic rural populations, the migration process implies creating urban ethnic settlements, which could be defined as *ethnicities of displacement* (1-A).

Table 2. Main components of the articles focused on rural youth migration

Code	Author(s) (year)	Country	Participants	Method	Purpose	Relevant findings
1-A	Urteaga (2008)	Mexico	Mexican indigenous people	Qualitative	To conduct an ethnographic review about indigenous peoples between 1950-2000	Being young, Indian, or a migrant are border positions to the extent that the actors' meanings of these three terms are being built within a new area outside the borders that until recently seemed fixed and immutable, which still serve as important references in the construction of their ways of life
2-A	Castro- Escobar (2016)	Colombia	Youth from the Colombian coffee- growing region	Qualitative	To describe attributes of the internal migration patterns in the municipalities located in the Colombia coffee- growing region	Trends associated with the population rebuilding phenomenon are: 1) migration can undermine the demographic structure, and 2) the effect of urban concentration and its conurbations in major cities is reinforced
3-A	Amavizca et al. (2017)	Mexico	High-school students	Quantitative	To analyze the migration processes of the adolescent population	There are personality trait differences between adolescents who wish to migrate and those who wish to stay in their countries of origin
4-A	Méndez Sastoque (2016)	Colombia	High-school students and recently graduated youngsters	Qualitative	To identify the retention and expulsion factors of young people, members of farming families, in the rural area of Manizales	Regardless of the decision, whether to stay or leave, the young person should do so in possession of several tools that enable a dignified life project either in the country or the city
5-A	Mercado- Salgado and Nava- Rogel (2013)	Mexico	Youngsters aged between 15 and 24	Quantitative	To describe the quality of life and expectations regarding U.S. migration of rural young people living in the northeastern state	By improving the quality of life of rural youth population, their migration expectations would be lower and gender equality would increase
6-A	Mendonça et al. (2013)	Brazil	Family farmers from Alto Jequitinhon a, Minas Gerais	Mixed	To analyze the emigration trajectories of two generations of farmers	Compared to previous generations, fewer young people remain in rural areas. But this does not endanger the reproduction of the family unit, as successors continue to exist, although they tend to take over the productive unit with more age and education than previous generations

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7-A	Jurado and Tobasura (2012)	Colombia	Youngsters from the Colombian coffee-growing region	Mixed	To understand how demographic, migratory, and productive transitions contribute to building the youth's identities and life projects in rural environments of the Colombian coffee-growing region	Although rural environments tend to be highly valued as a desirable living space, the identity of rural young people seems to be built on the imagery of the city
8-A	Zago (2016)	Brazil	Undergraduate students from the Santa Catarina region	Qualitative	To identify social transformations in rural areas, demand for higher education, and socio-professional destinations of children from small farms	Migration is supported by the limited extent of land for children wishing to stay in agriculture, low income, and adverse working conditions
9-A	Enríquez (2017)	Ecuador	Youth from three regions	Mixed	To explore the working conditions of agriculture as the main determinants of rural migration in three regions	Precarious working conditions, low income, and labor exploitation in agriculture are the leading causes for migration and the abandonment of agriculture
10-A	Vásquez and Vallejos (2014)	Chile	High-school students	Mixed	To analyze territorial mobility processes experienced by rural youth	Youth perceived that it is not necessary to migrate to have a good living standard. However, employment opportunities for young people are limited in their local territories; most of the employment is related to agriculture
11-A	Plazas (2011)	Colombia	Colombian youth	Qualitative	To describe rural migration processes in Colombia	Causes of migration are the crisis in the sector represented by land, poverty, violence, education, and job opportunities. These situations have led young people to see illicit crops and domestic service as the best options for economic independence
12-A	Eche (2018)	Ecuador	High-school students	Quantitative	To analyze migration and generational renewal in the indigenous family farming as part of the <i>desagrarization</i> process	Problems such as migration, the change of economic activity, and the scarce generational renewal demonstrate <i>desagrarization</i> in the indigenous family agriculture, producing demographic, economic, and labor changes

Source: Elaborated by the authors

Education and/or communication

Locations and perspectives

Fifteen articles about formal and/or non-formal education, communication, and/or extension processes were identified (table 3). These studies were conducted in Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico, Brazil, Bolivia, and Chile. An additional research study focused on Latin-American youth (in general). Regarding the general purpose of these studies, the main topics were relationship between work and education (or their impact) (1-B; 9-B; 15-B), school projects for rural students (entrepreneurship) (2-B; 7-B), students' or teachers' traits, such as self-management, motivation, or aspirations (3-B; 11-B), general discussions or analysis about rural education policies (5-B; 8-B), students' barriers to their future (4-B; 6-B; 14-B), virtual education and social media (12-B; 13-B), and rethinking education concepts for a new rurality (i.e., switching traditional education concepts for alternative training from school and local rural communities) (10-B).

Methods

Eleven out of 15 articles employed qualitative analysis (1-B; 2-B; 3-B; 4-B; 5-B; 6-B; 8-B; 9-B; 12-B; 13-B; 14-B). Based on Creswell's division, six studies were case studies (1-B; 4-B; 6-B; 9-B; 12-B; 13-B), two were ethnographic research (2-B; 14-B), and one was a phenomenological study (3-B). Those that reported ethnography as a methodological approach conducted participant interviews; this suggests that these research studies were not aligned with Jones et al. (2013) recommendations for this kind of qualitative approach.

Regarding other qualitative approaches, the research coded 6-B addressed a hermeneutic critique (Simpson, 2021) about the new rurality and education in Latin America. Study 8-B was a general qualitative descriptive analysis of access to higher education policies for rural students in Brazil. The article coded as 11-B carried out a qualitative analysis to evaluate attitudes, motivations, and decisions of contemporary rural young smallholders (this study played a simulation game to collect data). The studies that followed mixed-method analysis (7-B, 10-B, and 11-B) did not report either the type of design (e.g., concurrent or sequential) or qualitative and quantitative data triangulation. Finally, one document (15-B) made a quantitative analysis using descriptive statistics.

Participants

Depending on the purpose of each research, participants were selected based on different criteria. Papers coded as 1-B, 2-B, 7-B, 10-B, 11-B, and 14-B only studied rural school students. In contrast, research study 3-B collected data from rural school teachers. In contrast, some other papers included more than one kind of participant. For example, research studies 4-B, 9-B, and 10-B included not only students, but also households and/or school teachers for collecting data. On the other hand, research studies 6-B, 8-B, 13-B, and 15-B used age as a criterion; these papers did not limit the participants' selection to any education institution.

Table 3. Main components of the articles focused on education and/or communication

Code	Author(s) (year)	Country	Participants	Method	Purpose	Relevant findings
1-B	Serrano Guzmán et al. (2015)	Colombia	Rural school students	Qualitative	To study the adverse effect of child labor on the academic performance of adolescents involved in the family's production chain in rural communities and remark on the student's perception of the added value provided by education	There is a lack of motivation in some of the students surveyed. This fact is reinforced by a lack of discipline in the household to formulate a future life project
2-B	Cifuentes Garzón and Rico Cáceres (2016)	Colombia	Rural high-school students	Qualitative	To characterize the social representations of rural youth against educational production projects and entrepreneurship in the context of the new rurality	Findings show how youth conceive productive pedagogical projects from the perspective of identity, territoriality, productivity, and education, and how they recognize entrepreneurship as an attitude of excellence, creation of a new project, and aspiration for a better future
3-B	García (2014)	Venezuela	Six rural teachers	Qualitative	To analyze academic self-management through strategic planning in rural schools	Factors affecting self-management are teaching initiative, leadership, or management, working capital or investment, land availability, strategic planning, zonal support, climate, weather, community participation, demand, assessment of products, relevant permits, provision of equipment and tools, and technical assistance
4-B	Hernández and Raczynski (2014)	Chile	Rural students, students' parents, and teachers	Qualitative	To analyze the transition to secondary education and the educational trajectories of students in rural localities	Students have high aspirations and a favorable disposition towards secondary education. However, factors such as a lack of financial resources, poor support and orientations from schools during the transition, the deficit of information handled by students and their families are barriers to satisfying their desires
5-B	Miranda Camacho (2011)	Latin America	ND	Qualitative	To analyze some of the principal curriculum contents, which should be taken into consideration for plans and training for rural teachers	Nine challenges were identified (because of the length, these challenges are not described in the table)

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6-B	Silva (2002)	Brazil	Rural youth between 15 and 25 years	Qualitative	To describe projects intending to diminish drop-out and illiteracy rates	There was a combination of the <i>anticipation of sexuality, work, and the emergence of needs</i> that marked the <i>present moment</i> for youth. Young people leave school because they must find a job to complete family income or because their school does not offer them professional prospects
7-B	Pancierá et al. (2012)	Brazil	Twenty-three rural students	Mixed	To describe the professional projects of university students who live in a rural area	Most of the young university students in the studied area (75%) live in rural communities, but intend to work, study, and live in urban areas in the future
8-B	Redin (2017)	Brazil	Rural youth	Qualitative	To analyze educational policies of access to higher education, which were introduced in Brazil, particularly the program <i>Universidade para Todos (Prouni)</i> , and its relations with rural youth, which is an economic disadvantage	The Prouni program provided an opportunity to the rural youth to attend higher education in private institutions. However, most rural youth remain in unfavorable conditions, mainly due to the cultural capital inherited from their peasant history in which reading, access to books, and studying conflict with the work in the fields
9-B	Punch (2004)	Bolivia	Households and school children aged 8 to 14	Qualitative	To indicate how the structural constraints of primary education impact young people's school-to-work transitions	Although many children enjoy their experience at school and appreciate the opportunity to gain literacy and numeracy skills, formal education is unlikely to increase their future livelihood options
10-B	Ramos (2015)	Colombia	A rural school	Mixed	To present a formal stance to rethink and transform teaching practices, changing traditional concepts of education, and opening new alternatives training from school and local rural communities	Migrant populations of coffee growers prevail. Although these populations have important knowledge of agricultural systems or rural traditions, the economic hegemony ignores their potential to contribute to new generations' knowledge
11-B	Meza-Jiménez et al. (2016)	Mexico	Forty-six teens from rural school	Mixed	To identify and reflect on the opinions, actions, and motivations of 14–17 year old students in the <i>Sepultura Biosphere Reserve</i> in Chiapas to use agricultural and natural patrimony (PAN, for its acronym in Spanish) in the future	The study a) identified at least four discourses of the teens regarding the use of PAN, and b) revealed teens' preferences for land use, levels of diversification and intensification, and disposition toward dominance/subordination, competition, cooperation, coordination, equity, and solidarity that emerge from their decision-making regarding PAN

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12-B	Parra and Méndez (2005)	Colombia	Agricultural extensionists	Qualitative	To seek alternative models for university extension where pedagogy develops professional competence	Virtual communication represents an instrument for establishing a new social relationship. The university-region relationship is strengthened, giving it greater continuity and quality
13-B	Lima and Dos Santos (2012)	Brazil	Youngsters aged 17-26	Qualitative	To understand how youth, subject to the contingent condition of access to material and symbolic information, support a proposal that defends local development via communication strategies on a global social network	Youth are embedded in the dynamics of social media, but the technological mediations do not help them create international collectives
14-B	Alves and Dayrell (2016)	Brazil	High-school students	Qualitative	To discuss some aspects of the educational process of rural students	Reaching high school was an outstanding achievement for students with a family history of low educational level. However, the dream to go beyond come across frustrations such as poor learning conditions in rural areas and a meaningless curriculum that is inconsistent with the reality they live in
15-B	Santos (2017)	Brazil	Young people aged 15 to 29 living in the countryside	Quantitative	To explore connections between the different types and stages of labor integration and the educational conditions of the subjects	There are linkages between the forms of labor integration, the age at which it occurs, and the years of studies gathered by people living in the countryside

Source: Elaborated by the authors

Principal findings

Studies that focused on the relationships between work and education (or their impact) concluded that there could be discouragement and a lack of motivation among rural youth because the absence of family discipline prevents them from formulating a future life project (1-B). In addition, although many children enjoy and appreciate their experience at school, formal education is unlikely to increase their future livelihood options (9-B). Other results suggest a positive correlation between the forms of labor integration and the years of studies gathered by rural youth (15-B).

Research studies focused on school projects for rural students (i.e., entrepreneurship) concluded that rural youth perceive them as an aspiration for a better future (2-B). Regarding their life project and future, although they are rural youth, their projects are more focused on urban activities (7-B).

Regarding those documents centered on students' or teachers' traits (i.e., self-management, motivation, or aspirations), it was identified that educational socio-environmental games are tools that promote students' and teacher's motivations toward agricultural and natural patrimony topics (11-B). Moreover, teaching initiative, leadership or management, working capital or investment, land availability, and strategic planning were associated with rural teachers' self-management (3-B). In the same way, papers related to virtual education and social media concluded that rural youth are embedded in social media (13-B), and these tools represent an instrument for establishing a new social relationship (12-B).

Those studies about rural students' barriers found that factors such as low family income or poverty (4-B; 6-B), poor support from their schools (4-B), or low quality or decontextualized education (4-B; 6-B; 14-B) do not allow them to accomplish their goals or dreams. Finally, the paper focused on rethinking education concepts for the new rurality (10-B) concluded that school achievement indicators with agricultural empowerment promote interdisciplinary activities for rural students, helping them to understand local issues from different perspectives.

Rural youth's expectations or prospects

Locations and perspectives

Thirteen articles related to rural youth perspectives or expectations were identified (table 4). These articles addressed this topic from three sub-categories: 1) general factors related to rural youth's expectations and perspectives (1-C, 5-C, 6-C, 7-C, 9-C, 12-C); 2) the relation between agriculture activities or initiatives and the rural youth's perspectives (i.e., how participants perceive agricultural activities as a career alternative for their future) (2-C, 3-C, 4-C, 8-C, 10-C, 13-C); and, 3) factors related to rural youth's civic engagement (i.e., how participants are actively involved in social activities that concern their communities) (9-C). Research studies were conducted in Peru, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, and Mexico. The document coded as 11-C provided a general discussion about the Caribbean rural youth.

Methods

Eleven articles involved a qualitative analysis. Three studies reported ethnographic elements during data collection (e.g., observations or interactions) (1-C; 10-C; 12-C). Two studies (10-C and 12-C) mentioned (explicitly) a combination between ethnography elements and other methodological approaches (e.g., interviews). In contrast, study 1-C defined its method as ethnography; however, it reported data collection or analysis interviews. As discussed before, it could be suggested that this was not an ethnographic study, as defined by Creswell (2007) and Jones et al. (2013). Based on Creswell's categories for qualitative analysis, cases studies analyses were conducted in two research studies (3-C; 4-C) and a grounded theory in one (6-C). Finally, five documents carried out a general qualitative analysis.

Regarding quantitative analysis, one document (2-C) conducted logistic regressions to analyze general factors concerning rural youth development; it collected data from a random sample ($N = 400$). Among all studies discussed in our paper, this is the second study that used probabilistic sampling. Compared to other strategies, this kind of sampling allows researchers to generalize results and

identify sociodemographic differences (Bornstein et al., 2013). Finally, another research study was a mixed-method analysis (9-C). Just as other mixed-method research discussed before, the authors did not mention the type of design or how qualitative and quantitative data was triangulated.

Participants

Along with the condition of being rural youth (12-29 years old), some studies used other criteria to define participants. Three studies were conducted with families belonging to rural settlements or cooperatives (3-C; 4-C; 5-C). Two other research studies focused on young farmers (8-C; 13-C). Moreover, study 6-C defined participants based on gender (only females were included in the study). Of all the papers included in our analysis, this is the only document focused on rural youth females. According to Díaz and Fernández (2017), given the gap of opportunities and barriers between young males and females in Latin America, it is necessary to investigate this issue. Finally, a research study (1-C) was conducted with rural youth who finished secondary school a year before the study.

Generalizability

According to the scope of each study, research results can be generalized at three levels. First, study 11-C had a regional-continental analysis, in which discussion or findings are oriented toward Latin American policies. Second, research studies 2-C and 9-C have analysis and discussions with national orientation (i.e., Argentina and Ecuador, respectively). Finally, other studies were oriented toward youth in a specific local community (e.g., province, settlement, municipality).

Principal findings

In general terms, research studies that focused on rural youth's expectations concluded that there are multiple desires in youth's life. Thus, projects are planned in different ways to *be someone* (7-C). In some situations, these projects implied the destabilization of traditional subjectivities or practices established in their communities (e.g., agricultural activities) (12-C). Regarding the relation between schools and youth's expectations or perspectives, institutions play an essential role in awakening vocational interests (beyond formal learning) (6-C). However, youth face economic, cultural, and educational constraints (1-C; 6-C). They are commonly marginalized in work structures (13-C). Regarding family influences, there is a strong relationship between them and youth's expectations. Thus, rural young people are willing to continue their family activities (e.g., agriculture) (3-C; 4-C; 5-C). Despite this desire, limited job opportunities or low-income force youth to leave their family property or their original plan (5-C). Concerning the relation between agricultural initiatives or programs and youth's perspectives, belonging to cooperatives, settlements, or families of farmers increases the willingness of rural youth to pursue agricultural activities in the future (2-C; 8-C; 10-C).

Table 4. Main components of the articles focused on expectations or futures perspectives

Code	Author(s) (year)	Country	Participants	Method	Purpose	Relevant findings
1-C	Villegas Quispe (2016)	Peru	Young people who finished secondary school the previous year	Qualitative	To analyze the young people's expectations and strategies to carry out their life projects	Expectations and educational strategies are mediated by a complex combination of economic, cultural, and educational factors that constrain youth transitions
2-C	Sili et al. (2017)	Argentina	Four hundred young people from Argentina	Quantitative	To analyze the factors that influence the rural youth engagement in agricultural activities	Belonging to farming families and studies related to the agricultural activity are key factors that allow youth to settle in rural areas and engage in agriculture
3-C	Boessio and Doula (2016)	Brazil	Rural families that belong to an agriculture cooperative	Qualitative	To investigate the perception of rural young children of families associated with an agricultural cooperative of encouraging institutions for their stay in agriculture	Youth is interested in staying in rural and family activities. Compared to the family stimulus, the cooperative incentive does not motivate youth to stay at rural areas
4-C	Lopes and Carvalho (2016)	Brazil	Youth from a rural settlement organized by the Landless Rural Workers Movement in Brazil	Qualitative	To discuss the (re)construction of rural youth life projects based on a case study of a settlement project organized by the Landless Rural Workers Movement	The activities carried out and oriented to the settlement itself strengthen the relationship of the settler with the space in which he lives. Despite living in the countryside of a large city, rural youth have a strong connection with the countryside
5-C	Costa and Ralisch (2013)	Brazil	Twenty-seven young people from a rural settlement in Brazil	Qualitative	To know the desires, future perspectives, and reality experienced by the young residents of the rural settlement	Participants have great interest in living and working in their parents' farms, but the limitation of the family earnings in agricultural activities and a lack of own income force young people to seek new opportunities
6-C	Pizzinato et al. (2017)	Brazil	Forty-eight rural women from countryside areas in Brazil	Qualitative	To promote reflections about the education and future perspectives of rural young women living in the countryside of Rio Grande do Sul	The school has a function beyond formal learning, being a space for leisure and coexistence, building identities and projecting for the future beyond the professional field. However, it also notes a lack of jobs addressed to this population

(Continue on next page)

(Continuation of table 4)

7-C	Alves and Dayrell (2015)	Brazil	A group of young people from a rural municipality of Minas Gerais state	Qualitative	To analyze the life projects of a group of young people from a rural municipality of Minas Gerais state and reflecting on the importance of this category to the contemporary discussion on youth	Young people had different ways of organizing their life projects. Most of them are related to the desire to be <i>someone in life</i>
8-C	Gili Diez (2013)	Argentina	Young farmers	Qualitative	To understand life experiences concerning the transition to adulthood of young producers	Three critical milestones in the transition to adult life of young producers were observed: the entry into horticultural work, secondary education, and, finally, access to property
9-C	Schmitt (2010)	Ecuador	Citizens from rural communities in Ecuador	Mixed	To analyze socioeconomic, political, and cultural sources of civic engagement	Volunteering strongly depends on cultural tradition. Additionally, a pure application of OECD theoretical assumptions and operationalization is misleading when analyzing social processes in developing countries
10-C	Hernández et al. (2018)	Cuba	Rural youth from Cuba	Qualitative	To propose an action plan that encourages the permanence of youth in the rural environment through their integration into agricultural cooperatives to satisfy their needs and improve their quality of life	Agricultural cooperatives play an essential role in the participation of young people in local development
11-C	Webster et al. (2013)	Caribbean region	General analysis	Qualitative	To offer a model of promoting youth development in the Caribbean through agriculture investment	It is necessary to promote agriculture as an alternative for rural youth career development. Experiments in some countries are a good starting point but need to be enhanced by Caribbean social nuances and culture
12-C	Aquino-Moreschi and Contreras-Pastrana (2016)	Mexico	Young people from Oaxaca, Mexico	Qualitative	To analyze how young people construct and experience youth in different communities in the North Sierra of Oaxaca	Youth have inherited the struggles of their predecessors and generally maintain a solid commitment to their communities. The results also propose other ways to be young that destabilize subjectivities or strong community engagement
13-C	Silva Cantillo (2009)	Colombia	Farmers from Boyacá, Colombia	Qualitative	To explore the dynamics of rural youth in a context where they are forced to exert a productive role, even when there are no conditions to do so	Youth simultaneously faces disarticulation of the labor structures of the rural sector and barriers to labor insertion within other scenarios. Amid the uncertainty, the illicit economy is one of the closest exits to ensure a future. In other cases, youth wait and seek a moment of luck to adopt a stable social role

Source: Elaborated by the authors

Characterization or diagnosis of rural youth

Locations and perspectives

Five research studies related to the diagnosis or the analysis of rural youth characteristics were found (table 5). These studies were conducted in Cuba (1-D), Mexico (2-D), Chile (3-D), Peru (4-D), and Colombia (5-D). The main topics addressed by these studies were: 1. Rural youth socio-political, economic, and ethnicity identity (1-D and 4-D) and 2. Diagnosis of rural youth challenges and potentials (2-D, 3-D). The document coded as 5-D addressed both perspectives.

Methods

All studies were qualitative analyses. Two of them reported approaches that match with those reported by Creswell (2007). The study coded as 2-D followed a case study, in which the “case” was made up by rural youth indigenous from a community in Chiapas, Mexico. Moreover, the study coded as 4-D reported an ethnography as an approach to inquiry; however, because interviews were developed to collect data, its method could match with a different approach, as suggested by Creswell (2007). Concerning the studies coded as 1-D, 3-D, and 5-D, descriptive qualitative analyses were followed.

Participants

Studies coded as 1-D, 3-D, and 5-D addressed a comprehensive national analysis for Cuban, Colombian, and Chilean rural youth, respectively; therefore, no primary data was collected. On the other hand, the two other studies supported their analysis on data collected from rural youth, as follows: 1) The study coded as 2-D collected data from rural Mexican youth indigenous (not reporting the total number of participants) and 2) the study coded as 4-D along with the ethnographic analysis conducted in a rural community in Peru collected individual data from 18 rural youth.

Principal findings

Regarding studies focused on the rural youth identity, authors concluded that the concept of “rural youth” goes beyond a definition based on age and context and is closely related to youth participation in economic, political, and social activities in rural contexts (5-D). Nonetheless, it is also suggested that this participation is underdeveloped, so youth experience limits to become part of rural communities (2-D, 4-D). Finally, regarding the gender gap, it was concluded that being female in rural contexts supposes a disadvantage for social, economic, or political participation (1-D). On the other hand, those studies focused on the diagnosis of rural youth challenges and potentials concluded that rural youth could participate in agricultural labors and socio-political and economic activities (e.g., public administration) (2-D). To take advantage of this, they must be empowered and supported (3-D).

Table 5. Main components of the articles focused on Rural youth characterization

Code	Author(s) (year)	Country	Participants	Method	Purpose	Relevant findings
1-D	Rodríguez (2017)	Cuba	Cuban rural youth (general)	Qualitative	To classify the youth of Cuba's countryside in terms of their sociopolitical participation, employment, gender, and ethnicity	Rural youth political participation is underdeveloped. Moreover, rural economic activities are the foremost opportunity for rural youth employment. Finally, the national gender gap is one of the most critical issues to work on
2-D	Juárez et al. (2011)	Mexico	Youth indigenous from Chiapas, Mexico	Qualitative	To know the direction of reproduction strategies of young people to current changes in society, culture, and the economy	The lifestyles of the younger generation are different from that of their parents. Moreover, reproduction strategies of new generations are directed towards agricultural, labor, and pluri-active strategies
3-D	Duhart (2004)	Chile	Chilean rural youth (general)	Qualitative	To diagnose the potentials and challenges of rural youth	It is necessary to empower this population to address rural youth challenges, promoting their participation in economic, political, and social activities
4-D	Rodríguez (2009)	Peru	Rural youth from Chaquira, Peru	Qualitative	To analyze and think about the social space of rural youth as spaces that enable or hinder the formation of participatory citizens	Rural youth establish connections with the school based on what they conceive as social value. The school provides them with values, content, and skills to have greater possibilities of future social insertion. Moreover, there are economic and cultural conditions that limit the full participation of young people in their village
5-D	Osorio (2005)	Colombia	Rural youth from several regions in Colombia	Qualitative	To explore some practices of collective action carried out for rural young people during adverse conditions	Being rural in Colombia transcends parameters of age and context. Being rural youth requires collective to have a <i>social position</i> to be <i>visible</i>

Source: Elaborated by the authors

Discussion

Rural youth research approaches

The first three categories identified (rural youth migration, rural youth education and communication, and rural youth expectations or perspectives) coincided with results discussed by Kessler (2006) in a review about rural youth in Latin America. Regarding the migration approach (addressed by 26 % of studies that were analyzed), because of its impact on the sociodemographic development in Latin American countries and the rural youth decision-making process, it has been highlighted as a relevant issue by international development institutions (e.g., Cazzuffi & Fernández, 2018; Economic

Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC], 1995; ECLAC et al., 2012; Guiskin et al., 2019). Moreover, approaches related to rural youth education and/or communication and rural youth expectations (addressed by 15 and 13 studies, respectively) were recommended as a topic to work on (or to research about) by FAO and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2014). In summary, most of the studies focused on these three approaches are aligned with institutional, social, and regional requirements. The fourth approach (rural youth characterization or diagnosis) is aligned with the need for having reliable and updated data to undertake initiatives for rural development in developing countries (Contreras et al., 1998). Rural youth analysis papers, such as Guiskin et al. (2019) and Cazzuffi & Fernández (2018), are examples of the utility of this type of diagnosis to make public policy recommendations.

Methods

As described, most of the studies included in this review made a qualitative analysis (73 %). From the theoretical perspective, it is possible to explore rural issues and generate research findings using this inquiry method, especially in marginalized contexts (Harvey, 2010). However, a relevant element among documents with a qualitative analysis is that one-third of these studies did not report the inquiry approach (as explained by Creswell, 2007). This fact could suppose a limitation for generalizing research findings. For qualitative methods, the research rigor is strongly connected to the justification of the methodological choice (Carter & Little, 2007).

Moreover, another issue identified in qualitative ethnographic studies is that some of them based their analysis on data collected via interviews. Although we are not saying that they did not conduct analyses with ethnographic elements, their data collection procedure was not aligned with conventional methods of ethnographic studies, as defined by Jones et al. (2013). Regarding studies in which a quantitative analysis was used (i.e., quantitative and mixed-method analyses), only two of them reported a probabilistic sample, which implied a limitation for making statistical inferences from the results obtained by authors. In this sense, FAO (2015) suggested that it is essential to use surveys with statistical representativeness for studies with rural populations in Latin America. Finally, studies that performed a mixed-method analysis did not state how qualitative and quantitative data were contrasted or compared (aka, data triangulation). This triangulation is a key element in the analysis and conceptualization of this kind of method (Fielding, 2012) and should be conducted and stated in mixed-method studies.

Participants

The observed differentiation in the criterion to select participants could be associated to the breadth of the *youth* concept, especially in the rural context. Although youth is defined in general terms *as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years* (United Nations, 1981), some authors have increased this range up to 29 (Román, 2003) or 40 years (Becerra, 2002). Based not only on the age-perspective but also on the sociological analysis, the definition of youth implies a contextual dynamic, in which aspects such as family relations, education, labor, and socio-political participation, play an essential role (Kessler, 2005). As such, the definition of research participants focused on youth depends on the context.

Findings

As a common element to the four approaches identified, authors concluded and suggested that rural contexts put up barriers for rural youth. That is, because of a lack of resources (e.g., land, jobs, family support, and income), rural youth motivations and expectations are more oriented toward urban activities. Therefore, they envisioned migration (to urban areas) as a real (or better) alternative for their career advancement. These findings were aligned with the unequal development between urban and rural areas in Latin America, which means unequal access to social opportunities for those living in rural areas (especially young people). This social inequality is defined as a social boundary (Lamont & Molnár, 2002). Authors such as Berdegué et al. (2015), Kay (2006), and De Janvry and Sadoulet (2000) have explained the socioeconomic gap between urban and rural areas in Latin America as the main factor for migration or reduced economic opportunities for rural youth.

Another relevant finding was the importance of the education or extension activities to engage rural youth in rural activities. A study conducted by FAO & UNESCO (2004) concluded that, because of the singularities of the rural context, rural youth require education programs focused on specific rural issues (e.g., agriculture or natural resources), helping them to bridge the gap with urban people.

Conclusions

In general, the documents included in this review addressed relevant topics concerning rural youth in Latin America. Four approaches identified have not only been discussed by the scientific community, but also highlighted by public policy institutions as topics to research about (to empower and support rural youth). Researchers should consider these findings to broaden the knowledge related to rural youth in Latin America.

Regarding the discussion of methods and methodologies (which is the innovative element of this manuscript in comparison to previous papers), although authors used different strategies, elements such as the qualitative inquiry approach, the statistical representativeness (for quantitative studies), and the triangulation strategy in the mixed-method analysis were not correctly followed. We recommend that future studies strengthen methodological issues to ensure representativeness, generalizability, or reliability. Finally, it can be concluded that rural areas create barriers for rural youth development; therefore, public policies should bridge the gap between urban and rural areas.

The main limitation of our review was that there are not enough studies per country to conduct multi-level analysis (i.e., analyze differences for each approach among countries).

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Disclaimers

The authors agree with the publication of this article and declare no conflicts of interest that affect the results of this study.

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