



## Life Skill Education for Juvenile Delinquency Adolescents in Indian Scenario

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### Abstract

Life skills are the reason why psychosocial competencies individuals are able to optimize their potential, regulate their emotional health and social relationships, and make informed choices. Life skills education leads to positive behavior. Juvenile delinquency is a growing concern among adolescents in India, influenced by socio-economic disparities, family dynamics, peer pressure and lack of proper guidance. India is an emerging country and the National Crime Records Bureau Report 2007 statistics make it clear that even though the juvenile misbehaviour is apparently low, there can be dire consequences in case it is not addressed as it is in the present case (Haque, 2012). Life skills education (LSE) has emerged as an important intervention to address behavioural issues, enhance emotional resilience and equip young individuals with problem-solving abilities. Young adolescents require life skills education as adolescence is a transition period that bridges childhood and adulthood and during which major physical, cognitive and psychological changes take place that need to be addressed. Although the teaching of life skills has never been ignored in the Indian educational system, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 have established more importance on it in the twenty-first century. The present paper attempts to explore the initiatives of life skills programs in India in the 21st century and explores the role of LSE in reducing juvenile delinquency by analyzing its impact on cognitive, emotional and social development.



**Key Words:** Life Skill Education, Juvenile Delinquency Adolescents, India, Rehabilitation, Psychological Competencies, NEP 2020

## Introduction

Simply put, life skills are the competences that assist in the mental well-being and competency of the youths as they deal with the challenges of life. The World Health Organization (1999) defines life skills as the adaptive and positive behavior skills that help an individual to cope with the demands and challenges of daily life.

The United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2007) defines life skills as a behavior change or behavior development strategy that aims at addressing a balance of three aspects which are knowledge, attitude, and skills. The ten basic life skills strategies and techniques that the UNICEF, UNESCO, and WHO identified as life skills are problem solving, critical thinking, effective communication, decision making, creative thinking, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness building, empathy, coping with stress and emotions. It has been established that life skills are a critical means of developing the psychosocial, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and resilience skills that may be applied to handle the day-to-day challenges and participate in positive community living.

Juvenile delinquency refers to criminal behaviors committed by individuals under the age of 18. In India, the issue has garnered significant attention due to the increasing rate of juvenile crimes, which range from petty thefts to serious offenses. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, gives more focus on rehabilitation and reintegration rather than punishment. Life Skill Education (LSE) has emerged as a crucial tool in this rehabilitation process, helping adolescents develop problem-solving abilities, emotional intelligence, and resilience.

## Juvenile Delinquency Adolescent in India

Juvenile delinquency refers to illegal or antisocial behaviors by individuals under 18. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reported over 40,000 juveniles apprehended in 2017 for various crimes, with 72% aged between 16-18 years. Factors contributing to juvenile delinquency in India include:

- **Socioeconomic Background:** Poverty, unemployment, and lack of education increase vulnerability (Mukherjee & Das, 2020).



- **Family Environment:** Dysfunctional families, abuse, and neglect contribute to deviant behavior (Gupta & Sharma, 2018).
- **Peer Influence:** Adolescents often engage in delinquent activities due to negative peer pressure (Rao, 2019).
- **Substance Abuse:** Drug and alcohol consumption exacerbate behavioral problems (Sharma, 2021).

Addressing these root causes is crucial for effective intervention and prevention strategies.

### **Role of Life Skills Education (LSE)**

The aim of LSE is to develop psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that enable individuals to effectively deal with the challenges of daily life. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 1999), these competencies help maintain mental, social, and emotional balance. According to UNICEF, life skills involve a balance of knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral skills, such as decision-making, problem-solving, communication, self-awareness, empathy, and stress management. LSE plays a vital role in personality development, social integration, and self-reliance including:

- |                             |                              |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Self-knowledge           | 2. Critical thinking         |
| 3. Original thought         | 4. Making decisions          |
| 5. Solving problems         | 6. Communicating effectively |
| 7. Interpersonal relations. | 8. Compassion                |
| 9. Managing stress          | 10. Managing                 |

Implementing LSE aims to promote mental well-being and competence among adolescents, equipping them to face life's complexities

### **Life Skill Education Interventions for Juvenile Delinquents**

Life skills education (LSE) plays a crucial role in the rehabilitation of young offenders. According to Singh et al. (2022), LSE makes them more resilient and encourages them to adopt pro-social behavior. Kumar (2021) found that adolescents participating in LSE programs in correctional homes demonstrated improved social adaptation and emotional control.



- **Behavioral Improvement:** LSE has been effective in decreasing recidivism among juvenile delinquents, promoting pro-social development, and aiding in their reintegration into society.
- **Psychosocial Competence:** Training in life skills has been shown to enhance psychosocial competencies, self-esteem, and emotional intelligence among adolescents.
- **Preventive Measures:** Besides making teenagers self-confident and self-esteemed, LSE has proved to be successful in curbing a wide range of problems such as substance addiction, teen pregnancy, violence, and bullying.

### Case Studies and Implementation in India

- **Observation Homes Initiative:** In Maharashtra, structured LSE programs in juvenile homes improved reintegration rates by 40% (Desai, 2020).
- **NGO Interventions:** NGOs such as Prayas and Salaam Baalak Trust have been using LSE programmes, which have reduced recidivism (Mehta and Verma, 2019).

### Challenges in Implementing LSE for Juvenile Delinquents

- **Lack of Trained Professionals:** Limited availability of counsellor's and educators (Reddy, 2021).
- **Resistance to Change:** Some juveniles exhibit reluctance to participate (Sharma & Patel, 2020).
- **Resource Constraints:** Financial limitations hinder program expansion (Bose, 2018).

### Recommendations for Effective LSE Implementation

- **Government Policy Support:** Integrating LSE into juvenile justice programs (Goel, 2021).
- **Capacity Building:** Training educators and counsellor's (Verma, 2022).
- **Community Involvement:** Engaging families and communities in rehabilitation efforts (Joshi, 2020).

### Conclusion

A number of issues are also faced in the successful implementation of LSE. Lack of resources, issues in training of teachers, and lack of support to change can reduce its



effectiveness. Nevertheless, some of the issues that hinder the successful implementation of the LSE programs include poor teacher training, scarcity of resources and resistance towards change. These issues have to be solved under the multi-stakeholder cooperation which entails the government, non-governmental organizations and the community. In addition, it is crucial to make LSE programs more effective and sustainable by strengthening policy frameworks, funding them more, and making juvenile offenders in India more involved in them (Goyal, 2021; Joshi, 2020). The rehabilitative approach as opposed to the punitive approach is vital in influencing the future of the at-risk adolescents positively so that they can effectively fit into the society.

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