



A Study on Life Skills Amongst Children in Conflict with Law

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Abstract

Background: Children who engage in offensive behaviours are titled in the Juvenile Justice Act 2015 as children in conflict with law. The root of delinquent behaviours among children lies both in the nature and nurture of the children, often learnt early in their life either from the family or the society around them. The crimes committed by juveniles across the country are totally alarming. It is crucial to recognize, prevent and limit the risk factors which push youngsters towards adopting habits that may hurt them personally, their family and their larger society. Life skills play an important role in preventing delinquent behaviours. Effective prevention and rehabilitation provide opportunities for the children to adjust, reform and return to adulthood resourcefully with maturity. The purpose of this study is to examine the life skills of Tamilnadu government homes for juveniles with delinquent behaviours. **Methods:** A descriptive research design was utilized with the goal of determining the respondents' level of life skills and identifying any associations between those skills and specific sociodemographic characteristics. The study's samples were chosen using the survey method at government observation residences in Tamilnadu over a certain length of time. Data were gathered using the Life Skills Assessment Scale developed by A. Radhakrishnan Nair in 2010. The gathered data were statistically processed and analysed. In conclusion, it was found that the majority of the respondents have high Life Skills, they have both parents, were from urban areas, were from nuclear families and worked while studying. Social work practices have a vital role in introducing effective and appropriate life skills to enhance productivity and reintegrate the juvenile into the mainstream of society with dignity.

Keywords: Life Skills, Psychosocial Factors, Children, Delinquency

Introduction

The Juvenile delinquents who engage in offensive behaviours have been redefined in the Juvenile Justice Act 2015 as children in conflict with law. The severity of an offence was classified as minor, serious, or heinous. After a preliminary evaluation by the Juvenile Justice Board, children between the ages of 16 and 18 may be tried as adults in cases of heinous crimes. A juvenile who had violated the law will be temporarily placed in an observation home while the investigation is ongoing. The juveniles will be segregated and rehabilitated

based on the type of offence and especially on their age, gender, physical, mental and psychological aspects. A child who is found to have committed an offence by the Juvenile Justice Board will be placed in a Special Home. A Place of Safety will be set up for children above the age of 18 years or children of the age group of 16-18 years who are accused or convicted of committing a heinous offence. The Place of Safety will have separate arrangements and facilities for under-trial children and convicted children. The greatest way to assist juveniles who were having legal issues is to involve them in the rehabilitation process rather than just treating them like misbehaving or problematic youngsters who need to be disciplined. The human rights of children should be recognized and upheld. Juvenile justice takes into account that youngsters have a greater chance of reformation and implements a strategy for developing their capacities through diverse community-based reformative methods.

Life skills enhance the psychosocial competence of children with delinquent behaviours at government homes, facilities and make them take the right decision, enrich creative and critical thinking, enhance their problem-solving ability, and interpersonal communication skill, guides to manage their stress and emotions effectively, empathise others and develop healthy interrelationship with inmates and caretakers and to adapt the change in life with an optimistic approach. Life skills are psychosocial competencies which enable children confronting law at government homes to develop adaptive and positive behaviour to deal effectively with difficult situations and insecure environments. Also, life skills help children conflicting laws to overcome their difficulties. It is a lifelong process which helps the children from their childhood to enter their adulthood with maturity. Life skills interconnect both mental and social processes such as problems solving skills and deal with interactions skills among children conflicted with laws at government homes. Basically, children conflicted with laws at government homes have a very poor family atmosphere, where the parents neither spend quality and quantity time with them nor teach them morals and ethical values. Life skill education will make them survive in society as good human beings.

Review of Literature

Patty Vonsik (2010) studied reducing delinquency through enhanced life skills. The aim of the study was to explore the decrease of the expansion of delinquent rate through life skills. The research study has through with court service officers, professionals, staff, co-facilitator, and juveniles through life skills model activities in five stages. The result shows that the majority of the respondents reported life skills enhancement program was positive and supportive and that they believed life skills can reduce delinquent activities among children which influenced children's present and future life also majority stated that criminality was a generational issue.

Annie Singh and Subhasis Bhadra (2014) studied on "Developing a Behaviour Health Promotional Model for Life Skills Education (LSE) for Juvenile Delinquents." The aim of the study is to address the need for practical techniques to resolve behavioural health issues. The current study examined the behavioural problems of juvenile delinquent children in observation homes in India. The intervention is done through the life skills module. The findings of the research study revealed that life skills education intervention is provided to juvenile delinquents, which promote behavioural health aspect with the effective and active learning method.

Research Methods and Materials

Objectives

1. To know the sociodemographic details of the respondents of the study
2. To measure the Level of life skills of the respondents of the study.
3. To find the significant relationship between the sociodemographic factors like age, family type, domicile, place of stay for correctional aspects and life skills of the respondents.

Hypotheses

- i) The Age is significantly different to the Life Skills of the respondents.
- ii) The Place of Stay is significantly different to the Life Skills of the respondents.
- iii) The Domicile is significantly different to the Life Skills of the respondents.
- iv) The Family Type is significantly different to the Life Skills of the respondents.

Universe and Sample for the study

178 juveniles who are in confrontation with the law at government homes in Tamil Nadu make up the universe of the current study. The researcher used the Census Method to include all children in government homes who had legal issues within the specific time period for this study.

Research Design

With respect to their socio-demographic characteristics, the current study sought to assess the level of life skills that were present among children who were in trouble with the law in government homes in Tamilnadu. The differences in the variables used to create the hypotheses were also tested. The descriptive research design was therefore used for this study.

Description of the Tool

Life Skills Assessment Scale (LSAS), by A. Radhakrishnan Nair in 2010 is the multi-dimensional Life Skills Assessment Scale that has 100 items. Each of these is a statement with a 5-point scale for the respondent to choose the appropriate response from: Always true of me, Very true of me, Sometimes true of me, Occasionally true of me, and Not at all true of me. There are both positive and negative items in it. The ten core life skills that make up the World Health Organization's recommended framework for the most significant and fundamental life skills served as the foundation for the life skills assessment scale.

Self Awareness is the awareness of oneself, which includes the understanding of one's personality, traits, strengths and shortcomings, as well as preferences and dislikes. Children who have *empathy* find it easier to tolerate and comprehend those who are different from them. Children who are capable of *effective communication* can convey their thoughts, aspirations, and anxieties verbally and nonverbally. Adolescents who communicate well learn how to approach others for assistance and guidance when they need it. An adolescent learns how to interact with others in a positive way through *interpersonal relationships*. They also learn to terminate relationships in a healthy way, to live a socially acceptable life. Children who are capable of *creative thinking* are better able to adapt to the many problems they face throughout life. It allows them to research potential solutions and weigh their implications. Both problem-solving and decision-making are aided by this ability. Children can critically evaluate knowledge and experiences when they use *critical thinking*. Recognising the

influences on attitudes and conduct from factors like family values, peer pressure, and media pressure is also helpful. The ability to make decisions helps children to make wise judgements about their lives, such as choosing a career or spouse, the sort and amount of food they should eat, and other choices. It teaches them to make decisions only after carefully weighing all available options and their implications. **Problem Solving** enables the person to get out of the uncomfortable situation and accomplish one's needs without using anger, coercion, defiance, aggressive behaviour or force. It is a process to bring an opportunity for a positive act and helps children to solve their problems by using creative and critical thinking. **Coping with emotions** – children who are adept at managing their emotions can recognise and comprehend their own and others' feelings, as well as the negative impact they have on behaviour. They can also respond to emotions in the right way, especially when they are uncontrollable emotions like overwhelming sadness and rage. **Coping with Stress** - recognising the causes of stress and comprehending its effects are made possible by learning how to cope with it. This skill provides the strength to face positive or negative stressful situations and look for solutions that are most beneficial for their progress.

Procedure

The 178 children who made up the sample were given the tools with their consent. Before administering the instrument to the respondents, rapport was built with the juveniles. Following an explanation of the study to the juveniles, the researcher gave the Life Skills Assessment Scale to the respondents in government special homes and government observation homes in Tamil Nādu.

Analysis and Key Findings

Table No. 1: Socio-demographic Information

Socio Demographic variables	N	%
Age in years		
11-15	9	5.1
16-20	169	94.9
Education qualification		
Illiterate	1	0.6
Primary	21	11.8
Middle	60	33.7
High	61	34.3
Higher	35	19.7
Place of Stay		
Special Home	52	29.2
Observation Home	126	70.8
Parent Status		
Both alive	99	55.6
Father died	40	22.5
Mother died	9	5.1
Separated	21	11.8
Domicile		

Rural	66	37.1
Urban	112	62.9
Family Type		
Joint	53	29.8
Nuclear	125	70.2

Source: Primary data

- ❖ The table reveals that the vast majority of respondents, 94.9 percentage were between the ages of 16 and 20 years and only 5.1 percent were between the ages of 11 and 15 years.
- ❖ In the table above, it is seen that 34.3% of respondents have completed high school. 33.7 percentage of them have studied middle school level of education, 19.7 percentage of them have studied higher secondary school level of education and 11.8 percentage of them have studied primary school level of education. 0.6 percentage of them were illiterate.
- ❖ According to the data above, 70.8 percent of respondents were sent to an observation home, while 29.2 percent were sent to a special home.
- ❖ According to the table1, it was found that 55.6 percent of respondents have both parents, 22.5 percent of respondents' fathers have passed away, 5.1 percent of respondents' mothers have passed away, and 11.8 percent of respondents' parents are not together.
- ❖ According to the above table1, 62.9 percent of respondents are from urban areas, while 37.1 percent are from rural areas.
- ❖ The table1 clearly shows that more than half of the respondents (70.2%) were from nuclear families, while 29.8% were from joint families.

Table No.2 Level of Life Skills

Problem Solving		
Low	2	1.1
High	176	98.9
Decision Making		
Low	36	20.2
High	142	79.8
Creative Thinking		
Low	2	1.1
High	176	98.9
Critical Thinking		
Low	21	11.8
High	157	88.2
Effective Communication Skill		
Low	43	24.2
High	135	75.8
Interpersonal Relationship		
Low	16	9
High	162	91
Self Awareness		
Low	28	15.7
High	150	84.3

Empathy		
Low	7	3.9
High	171	96.1
Coping with Emotion		
Low	77	43.3
High	101	56.7
Coping with stress		
Low	144	80.9
High	34	19.1
Life Skill (Over All)		
Low	5	2.8
High	173	97.2

- ❖ The above table2, it was revealed that the majority of the respondents 97.2 percentage have high level of life skills, while 2.8 percentage of the respondents have low levels of life skills.
- ❖ Majority 79.8 percent of the respondent have high decision-making ability.
- ❖ Nearly all 98.9 percent majority of the respondents have problem solving ability
- ❖ Majority 98.9 percentage of the respondents have high creative thinking.
- ❖ Majority 88.2 percentage of the respondents have high critical thinking ability
- ❖ Majority 75.8 percentage of them have effective communication skills
- ❖ Majority 91.0 percentage of the respondents have high interpersonal skills.
- ❖ Majority 84.3 percentage of the respondents have high self-awareness
- ❖ Majority 96.1 percentage of the respondents have high empathy.
- ❖ Majority 56.7 percentage of respondents have high ability to cope with emotions.
- ❖ Majority 80.9 percent of the respondents have low ability to cope with stress

Table No.3 Mean difference between key socio-demographic factors and Life Skills

S.No	Independent Variables	Level of Life Skills				
		Mean	SD	Df	t value	stat. result
1.	Age					
	11-15years	327.67	14.85	176	-1.863	P<0.05
	16-21years	340.03	19.59			
2.	Place of Stay					
	Special Home	337.71	20.032	176	-0.742	P>0.05
	Observation Home	340.10	19.368			
3.	Domicile					
	Rural	334.73	17.312	176	-2.488	P<0.01
	Urban	342.16	20.310			
4.	Type of family					
	Joint	340.28	17.370	176	0.390	P<0.01
	Nuclear	339.03	20.442			

Table no.3 reveals that an independent sample t-test was performed to compare the differences between independent variables such as age, place of stay, domicile, family type, and level of life skill.

Hypothesis tested:

H0(1): In terms of the respondents' life skills, there is no significant difference in age (**Null hypothesis Rejected**)

H1(1): Regarding the respondents' life skills, there is a significant difference in age. (**Research Hypothesis Accepted**)

H0(2): Regarding the respondents' life skills, there is no significant difference between the place of stay. (**Null hypothesis Accepted**)

H1(2): Regarding the respondents' life skills, there is a significant difference between their place of stay. (**Research Hypothesis Rejected**)

H0(3): There is no significant difference between Domicile and respondent's Life Skills. (**Null hypothesis rejected**)

H1(3): There is a significant difference between Domicile and respondent's Life Skills. (**Research Hypothesis Accepted**)

H0(4): There is no significant difference between respondents' Type of Family in terms of Life Skills. (**Null hypothesis rejected**)

H1(4): There is a significant difference between respondents' Type of Family in terms of Life Skills. (**Research Hypothesis Accepted**)

Discussion

The research findings revealed that most of the children in conflict with law were between the age group of 16-20 years and they exhibit offensive behaviours and become children confronting the laws. The majority of the children in conflict with law live with both of their parents and the child from urban areas exhibits criminal behaviours which confronts the law, due to disputing social lifestyle factors. More children are in government observation homes than in government special homes, which reveals that children in their formative years commit minor crimes, and juvenile justice care provides opportunities for reforming those children, so they can get reintegrated with their families and society with dignity. Children are more likely to depart from school due to peer pressure, family situation, stop attending high school, and engage in offensive and criminal behaviours. There was a significant difference between the age and life skills of the respondents. There was a high significant difference between the types of family and life skills of the respondents. There was a high significant difference between the domicile and life skills of the respondents. There was no significant difference between the place of stay and the life skills of the respondents.

Conclusion

From this research, it was found that three-fourths of the respondents have a high level of life skills. Age, place of stay, and family type all significantly affect the respondents' life skills. With regard to the respondents' life skills, there is no discernible variation in the respondents' places of stay. Preventing children from committing offences is an essential part of crime prevention in society. Prevention initiates community-based programmes by attempting to address the problem from its root of origin in the family and the community. The life skills can be incorporated as Rehabilitative programmes at Observation Homes, Special Homes and Place of Safety in the daily timetable schedules for children confronted with law and being rehabilitated at government homes. This moulds these Children as responsible citizens of

society. Social work methods and interventions are suggested to incorporate life skills among these children for their holistic well-being.

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