

LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION AND YOUTH CRIME: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

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Abstract: *The concept 'Youth crime' is considered as a significant problem across the country of India. In the past as well as in the present day societies, different nature of crime cases are being executed like murder, theft, rape, kidnapping, robbery, attempt to murder, cheating etc. where the youths generally get involved. In this research paper, an attempt has been made to study the different elements of the life skills education and their need and significance for reducing crime with reference to the youth criminality. The concept Life skills education generally refers to the education which enables an individual to deal effectively with the different challenges of life. The main objectives of the present research paper is to examine the nature of crime and the responsible factors behind youth criminality and to examine different elements of life skills education and its necessity and significance for reducing the rate of crime.*

Keywords: Life skills education, Youth, Crime, Youth crime, Youth criminality

I. Introduction

The concept of Life skills education helps to carry out and strengthen psychosocial skills of individuals in culturally and developmentally appropriate way, contributes to promotion of personal and social development, prevention of health and social problems, and the protection of human rights. Strengthening life skills education enables people to cope and recover after accidents, violence, incidents of suicide, natural and man-made disasters or during armed conflict, war or epidemics. The life skills education helps the youth to deal with the different challenging situations of life. The Inter-Agency Meeting on Life Skill Education was held at World Health Organization (WHO) headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland on 6 & 7 April 1998. The Meeting considered that life skills are essential for the promotion of healthy child and adolescent development, primary prevention of some key causes of child and adolescent death, disease and disability, socialization, preparing young people for changing social circumstances. Life skills education also contributes to basic education, gender equality,

democracy, good citizenship, child care and protection, quality and efficiency of the education system, the promotion of life-long learning, quality of life, and the promotion of peace. It was also suggested that the learning of life skills might contribute to the utilization of appropriate health services by young people. The mentioned areas of primary prevention for which life skills are considered essential include, crime and delinquency , adolescent pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, violence, child abuse, suicide, problems related to the use of alcohol, tobacco and other psychoactive substances, injuries, accidents, racism, conflict, environmental issues etc. A positive attitude is essential to cope with the rapid changes which happen in the life of a young adolescent in the areas of body, mind and soul. Different values need to be experienced at different levels and internalized through development of appropriate expression. Young people need to think about them, reflect on them and carry them into their personal and social lives. They need to be able to see the effect of their behaviour and choices and develop into socially conscious citizens. The taxonomy of education and instructional objectives of education are divided into three domains - cognitive (knowing/hand), Affecting (feeling/heart) and Psychomotor (doing/hand). Prof. B.S. Bloom of the Chicago University (USA) is considered to be pioneer in this field. For the overall development of an individual as mind, body and soul he mentioned three domains is very much essential (Borbora & Goswami, 2005).

Youth crime is a concept which refers to the different criminal activities where the young people are involved. It is a serious social problem because day by day the rates of the crime are increases in very fast. In the past as well as in the present day societies, different nature of crime cases are executed like murder, theft, rape, kidnapping, robbery, attempt to murder, cheating etc. where the youths generally get involved. In the transitional period of childhood to adolescence and adolescence to maturity, youth are generally faced so many changes in their life. Many violent upheavals of youth personalities are thus to be expected in the transitional period. Therefore, a Sociological study is necessary to examine the need and significance of life skills education with special reference to youth crime. Because most of the youths are influenced by the materialist world due to the influence of different social processes like urbanization, industrialization modernization, westernization, and globalization which play a vital role in changing their attitude. As consequence, a gap between old generation and new generation has emerged which leads to the intergenerational conflict between them. Now-a-days it is a very serious and challenging issue for the society to protect the young generation from moral unrest and degradation. Therefore, in this present research

paper an attempt has been made to study the different elements of life skills education towards the development of positive attitude of young generation.

A. Significance of the Study

The term Youth is considered as a category of human society. The age group in between the 18-35 years is the most crucial, since it constitutes the passage for an individual from young age to matured adulthood with all experiences that helps to take any decisions later. It is the period in which family, professional, economic, social aims and purposes are appeared. It is seen that most of youth are morally degraded due to the over attachment with the materialistic world and they gradually avoid to giving the importance in the idealistic interpretation of different aspect of life as positive emotions such as love, sympathy, hope, gratitude, pro-social behaviour, empathy, sympathy altruism, etc. As a result the youths frequently get involved in the conflicting situations. Therefore it is very much significant to study the importance of life skills education for the overall development of the youth. So, a field based research work has been conducted on youth crime to find out the different risk factors of crime and also an attempt has been made to examine the importance of life skills education.

B. Statement of the Problem

Life Skills education motivates the Youth to live in smooth conditions in the society. It persuades them to understand the different root causes of crime which enable them to escape from getting involved in the illegal activities. Now-a-days most of the youths are connected directly or indirectly with different criminal activities due to the impact of socio-economic conditions of life like disharmonious family environment, extramarital affairs of their parents, parental separation, defective socialization process, alcohol addiction, negative influence of peer group, problem of unemployment and poverty etc. In response to the different root causes of crime and involvement of youth in different criminal activities, the present study proposes to investigate the need and importance of Life Skills Education for Youth generation.

C. Objectives of the study

The objectives of the present study are:

- a. To examine the nature of crime and different responsible factors of youth criminality.
- b. To examine the educational background of the youth criminals.
- c. To examine the different elements of life skills education.
- d. To examine the need and significance of life skills education for reducing the rate of crime.

II. Theoretical Perspectives

A theoretical perspective is a set of assumptions about reality that underlies the questions during research and the kinds of answers out at as a result. In this context, present research has applied two theoretical approaches to examine the nature of crime and the responsible factors of crime. These are mentioned below:

2.1. Differential Association Theory

In criminology, differential association is a theory developed by Edwin Sutherland proposing that through interaction with other individuals, they can learn the values, attitudes, techniques, and motives for criminal behaviour.

1. Criminal behaviour is learnt in a process of communication with the members of small intimate group, which favours violation of legal norms.
2. In his formulation, learning indicates two things, viz. the technique of committing the crime and motives, drives, rationalization and attitudes favourable to violation of law.

2.2. Bonger's Economic Theory

According to this theory, William Bonger mentioned that

1. Lack of proper parental care, uncongenial family and neighbourhood, atmospheres, beliefs etc. are also considered to be responsible for all sorts of criminal behaviour.
2. Individual factors, some economic conditions such as poverty, deprivation and unemployment exert pressures on individuals to commit crimes particularly for economic gain.

III. Methodology of the Study

For the purpose of the present study, the researcher has selected total 400 youth offenders from both categories male and female, between the age group of 18 to 35 years who were lodged in four jails of upper Assam, viz. Dhemaji District Jail, Lakhimpur District

Jail, Dibrugarh Central Jail and Jorhat Central Jail. Descriptive research design has been applied for the research work. The accidental purposive sampling method has been used for selection of the respondents from the respective jails. The interview schedule was prepared to collect the information from the respondents. Both primary and secondary data were collected for the study. Primary data were collected from the offenders by face to face interview method and the secondary data were collected from books, journals and different websites. The age group of the respondents were classified on the basis of their educational backgrounds which divided into four categories such as 18 to 22, 23 to 28, 29 to 33, 33 years above. On the basis of their educational backgrounds, the respondents were divided as literate up to primary level, high school to matriculation, above matriculation, below graduate, above graduate and the illiterates.

IV. Result and Discussion

Regarding individual perceptions on crime, an individual personality structure is formulated as well as changed at different stages of life like childhood, adolescence, adulthood, Youth and old age. Particularly, during transitional period, youths try to achieve something of their own and thereby become socially and economically independent themselves. But it is found that a gap exists between aspiration and achievement that destroy their aims and objectives of life. Sometimes Youth get involved into the different anti-social activities due to different forms of personal or social circumstances. Youth crime is the result of frustrations and deprivations which may arise from failure to achieve goals, desires and aspirations. It is observed that the frustration among the youths create a tendency to break the 'social bonds' with the groups which try to control their social behaviours. However, the breaking of social bonds depends upon youth's own personality structure. One, who is committed towards the social norms, continues to remain attached to the family, and since he/she has the ability to adjust to any situation, he/she is not likely to break bond with the groups they are associated with. In other words, the breaking or weakening of the social bonds may be considered as one of the vital causes of a youth's criminal behaviour (Ahuja, 1996). The negligence in psychological attachment between individuals within societal norms and values may sometimes develop criminal attitudes irrespective of individuals' marital status.

Present Research work revealed that many changes occurred due to the socio-economic condition of the life of youth which sometimes forced them to involve in anti social activities. Overall statistics of the present research are given below:

Table No. 1: Nature of Crime versus Responsible Factors of Respondents

Nature of Crime versus Responsible Factors of Respondents										
Nature of Crime	Family Conflict	Alcohol Addiction	Poverty	Unemployment	Peer Group Pressure	Neighbourhood Conflict	Media Impact	Land Disputes	Others	Total
<i>Murder</i>	38	33	2	2	12	9	5	21	1	123
<i>Rape</i>	-	11	-	-	8	3	4	1	2	29
<i>Sexual Harassment</i>	5	13	2	1	7	2	6	3	-	39
<i>Theft</i>	4	1	19	5	9	3	2	-	-	43
<i>Kidnapping</i>	1	1	5	2	5	6	2	-	4	26
<i>Robbery</i>	-	3	1	3	6	1	5	-	3	22
<i>Attempt to murder</i>	15	25	-	-	11	8	1	19	-	79
<i>Cheating</i>	-	4	11	2	5	-	1	-	1	24
<i>Others</i>	2	1	2	4	3	-	1	-	2	15
Total	65	92	42	19	66	32	27	44	13	400
Percentage	16.25%	23%	10.5%	4.75%	16.5%	8 %	6.75%	11%	3.25%	100%

From the study it has been found that the highest percentage 23% Alcohol addiction caused to commit crime by the respondents. The second highest 16.25% and 16.5% of the respondents revealed that they involved in criminal activities due to the impact of family conflict and peer group pressure respectively. 11% of the respondents demonstrated that problem of land distribution between intra families & inter family caused to grow conflicts which assist to involve in crime. 10% of the respondents showed that poverty strained them to involve in crime. 8% of the respondents revealed that neighbourhood conflict condemned them to commit crime. 6.75%, 4.75 % and 3.25% of the respondents revealed that impact or influence of media, unemployment and other factors motivated the respondents to committed crime. To examine the relevance of theoretical approaches of Sutherland's differential

association theory, it was reflect that each person adopts the criminal patterns consciously or unconsciously from the others. The differences of criminals in personality qualities or nature of the crimes lead an individual to adopt an attitude and behaviour of crime. Therefore the motives, drives, rationalisations, and attitude of individuals are developed due to the different factors which motivated them towards different anti-social activities. The Bongger's economic theory of explanations is also reflected in the present study. Present study has revealed that due to the poor economic conditions, most of the respondents are involved in criminal activities. The poor people are involved in crime due to absence of necessities or present of discrimination attitude between rich and poor.

From the respondents' viewpoints the present research work revealed some of the major factors of crime which are briefly mentioned below:

Family environment and parental behavior are important risk or protective factors for involvement in crime because they influence on youth development. Youth who experienced severe or harsh parental practices, their increased rates of conduct different problems, substance abuse, depression and anxiety and violent crime in adulthood is higher compared to those whose parents did not use physical punishment. Parental criminality appears to be strongly correlated with an increased risk of a youth of developing conduct problems and later criminal involvement. The web of family relationships include dimensions such as love, respect, friendship, hate, resentment, jealous, rivalry and disapproval have found major causes of crime. According to the views of the respondents, it has been found that the disorganized family environments, inharmonious relation between husband and wife, extra-marital affairs are the main causes within the families that are responsible for causes behind committing crime.

Both peer group pressure and the alcohol addiction are found as the major factors of crime. The sympathy, emotional attachment, sentiments of the relationship between the friends those have already attached with criminal activities, these all become major factors of crime. It is found that maximum sexual related murder cases have been executed due to result high peer group pressure and the alcohol addiction.

Economic condition of an individual is determined the status of the society. From this study, it is found that maximum respondents are belonged to the very poor economic backgrounds. Most of the respondents don't have even sufficient land property to support

their families. The poor economic conditions have stimulated the individual on crime occurrence and also served as a sensible instrument to motivate towards crime.

Study found that media is also a factor of crime. According to the view points of the respondents some media related factors of crime are like the use of mobile phone, internet, broadcasting different shows and violent movies etc,

Study revealed that land conflict is a major factor of crime. Some factors behind land conflicts are like partition of family land, forcible occupation of agriculture land, boundary disputes between neighbors, share of cropping fields and falsified sale of land into multiple parties etc. It is also found that anger and aggressiveness of individuals provoked them to commit crime.

4.1. Educational Standard of the Respondents

In this paper an attempt also has been made to study the educational background of the respondent to examine the criminal behavior of the respondents.

Figure 1: Nature of Crime v/s Education Standards of the Respondents

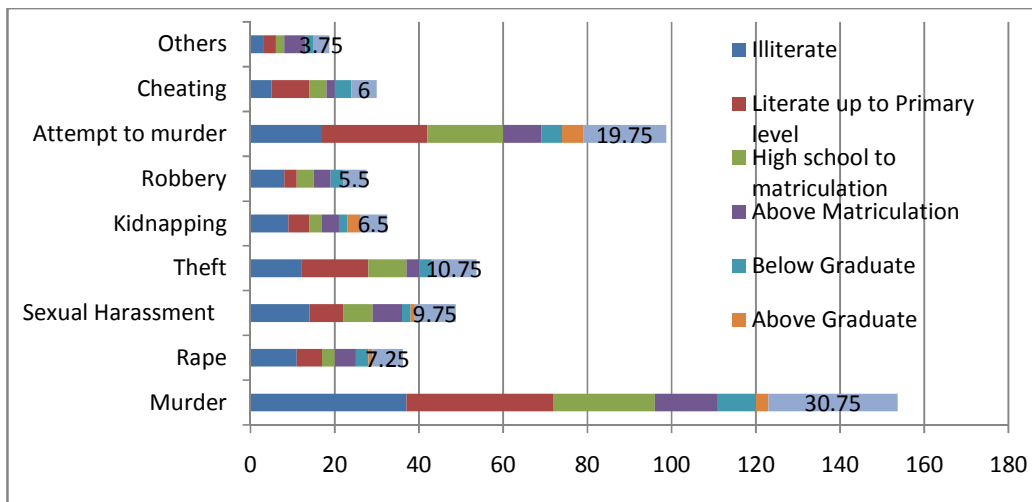
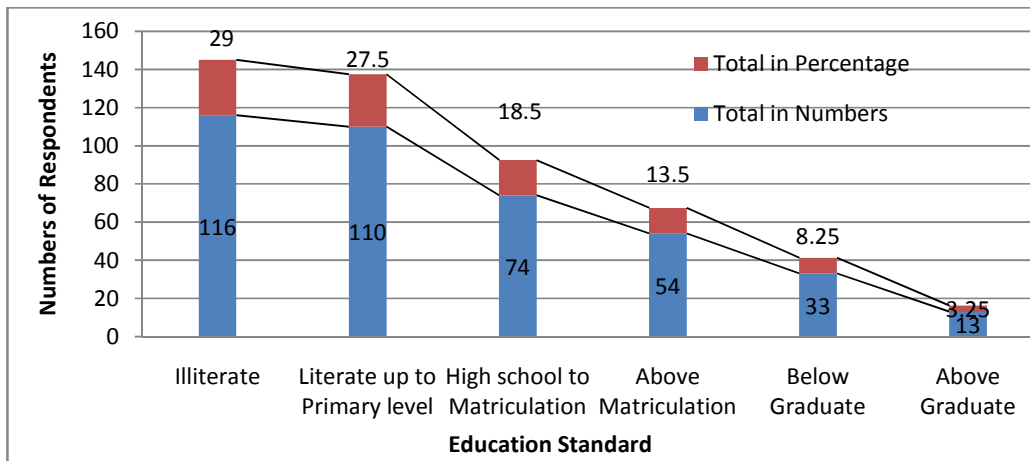


Figure 2: Nature of Crime v/s Education of the Respondents in Percentage



Out of the total 400 respondents it was found that 27.5% respondents are belonged to the category of literate up to primary level standards, 18.5% respondents are belonged to high school to matriculation standards, 13.5% respondents are belonged to above matriculation standards, 8.25% respondents are from below graduate standards, 3.25% are found from above graduate standards and 29% respondents are illiterate. The educational standard of the offenders has shown a dissatisfactory picture.

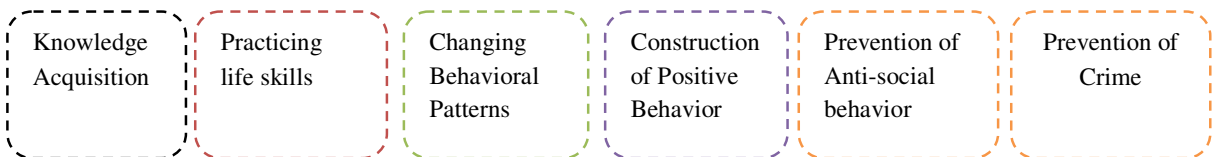
4.2. Elements of Life Skills Education

Life skills education enables the holistic development of values, skills and knowledge in the learner, which assists young people to protect themselves and others in a range of risk situations. Holistic development generally refers the development of the body, mind and soul of an individual. The surrounding social, cultural, political, and economic and other issues need to be reflected as well as the local environment. The life skill is dealing with conflict that cannot be resolved, dealing with authority, solving problems, self-awareness, self-esteem, creative thinking, decision-making, critical thinking, dealing with stress, negotiation, clarification of values, resisting pressure, coping with disappointment, planning ahead, making and keeping friends/relationships, cooperation, empathy, assertiveness, active listening, respect, tolerance, trust, sharing, sympathy, compassion, sociability. Above mentioned terms are the different elements of life skills which enable youth to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into actual abilities – i.e. "What to do and how to do it". Life skills for psychosocial competence need to be distinguished from other important skills that youth acquire during life like reading, numeracy, technical and practical "livelihood" skills. Life Skills are the abilities that help in promotion of mental and social well being, and

competence in young children to face the realities of life. The ultimate aim of education is the overall development of a child's personality which cannot be achieved without exposing students to various Life Skills. In the reference to the crime scenario of the society and the involvement of youth in crime the knowledge about different elements of life skill education and its applicability is required to change the behaviour patterns of youth offenders.

4.3. Need and Significance of Life skills Education

Everyone and anyone who wants to lead a peaceful and meaningful life, needs Life Skills. They are applicable to all children and adolescents in schools since, young people in this age group seem to be most vulnerable to different behaviour related problems. Life Skills are thus needed for the promotion of good and positive well being, rather than as an intervention aimed only at those already at risk. A diagram has been prepared regarding the importance of life skills education on crime prevention.



Many research studies have already demonstrated that Life Skills Education is very effective in promoting positive attitudes and behaviours among the young adolescents, development of knowledge, abilities, promoting healthy decision making process, preventing negative and high risk behaviours such as different criminal activities, promoting greater sociability, learning anger control mechanism, Increasing self-esteem and self confidence, improving academic performance etc. so that well designed and well delivered Life Skills Programme can help young adolescents become more responsible, healthy and resilient during the period of both adolescence and adulthood. In reference to the different nature of crime and factors of crime the present study revealed that the life skills education is very much necessary to the youth generation for overall positive development. The life skills education helps to synergising their mind, body and soul as well as knowledge, attitude and skills.

V. Conclusion

From this study, it is concluded that youth offenders have been influenced by some negatives constraints such as family conflict, failure to achieve goal, unemployment, gap between expectation and achievement, defective socialization process, anger, depression ,etc.

which motivated them to involve in the different anti- social activities. So that life skills education is needed for the positive development of the Youth to effectively deal with different situation of life and overcome to the negative consequences. Because the education of life skills education provides the strategies of problem solving, cope with stress and decision making process. To reduce the crime rate from the youth generations life skills education such as learning of positive emotions like love, hope , gratitude, forgiveness ,resilience, self-efficacy, self competence, self –determination and positive identity are very much essential.

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