

Resurgence of Hope and Wellbeing Through Fashion Education in Prisons

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Abstract

Purpose: This research project was conducted in the women's jail 6, Tihar Complex, as a planned intervention for a need-based program for skill development. A fashion education program was identified and implemented over a period of six months with certain basic modules in Indian wear. India has 141 central prisons with capacity of 200,000 inmates. Major reasons for committing crime include illiteracy, lack of appropriate skills to earn a livelihood, deprived backgrounds, physical and sexual abuse, and alcohol and drug dependence.

Social implications: An initiative was undertaken to establish a Fashion and Textiles Training Centre in women's central Jail 6 in Tihar, Asia's biggest prison complex, in February 2017. The program was designed and implemented with several planned outcomes: economic and social empowerment, which would inculcate feelings of self-worth and self-esteem, rehabilitation in society, and reducing the chance of returning to a life of crime post-release.

Methodology: The present paper focuses on (a) Setting up infrastructure, design of course curriculum and assessment, mentoring and counseling of inmates undergoing training, industry projects, and presentations in the form of fashion shows; (b) Fashion education as a means of correctional behavior, and the challenges and issues faced during training in prisons; (c) Case studies highlighting the impact of training, including increased income, measurable skill enhancement, reduction in stress levels, revival of hope in inmates, a holistic life within and outside prison, and reduction in return cases; (d) Impact of fashion education on other beneficiaries.

Findings: Fashion education has brought positive change in the behavior of inmates in their rehabilitation. The use of hands, mind, and creativity works as a correctional tool and has a therapeutic effect. Inmates worked on industry projects in a team, which resulted not only in a positive change in thinking, but also healthy relationships among each other. The inmates started to appreciate each other. In addition, the positive feedback from outsiders is invaluable and boosts inmates' self-esteem and confidence.

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Research limitations: Many inmates may have to leave the program as they are released in between the duration of the program. Regular counseling and communication with inmates is a must to run the course successfully.

Originality: 100%

Keywords: correctional behavior, empowerment, fashion education, prison as a community, skill development.

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