



Structured Youth Training and Its Influence on Personality and Leadership Development: An Experience-Based Study of the National Cadet Corps (India)

Manisha

Department of National Cadet Corps (NCC), Guru Jambheshwar University of Science and Technology,
Hisar, India.

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19542450>

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted: 27-03-2026

Published: 10-04-2026

Keywords:

Artificial youth development, leadership training, National Cadet Corps, experiential learning, civic values, personality growth Intelligence, Economic Karnataka, Challenges, Opportunities.

ABSTRACT

Youth development programs play a central role in shaping leadership capacity, confidence, resilience, and civic values among adolescents (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Lerner et al., 2015). This experience-based qualitative study draws upon six years of instructional involvement with the National Cadet Corps (NCC) in India across the Army, Navy, and Air wings. The research explores how cadets evolve from initial enrolment to program completion with respect to discipline, leadership behaviour, physical conditioning, communication competence, emotional stability, and social responsibility (Kolb, 2015). Continuous observation indicates that cadets generally require nearly two years of structured exposure to develop essential attributes, whereas graduating cadets consistently demonstrate refined leadership skills, effective interpersonal communication, psychological strength, teamwork ability, and civic awareness. The results highlight the importance of sustained experiential training in promoting comprehensive personality development and readiness for public service (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Masten, 2014). The study contributes original practitioner-based insight into youth leadership formation within a national training framework.

Introduction

Education systems worldwide are increasingly moving beyond academic instruction toward the broader development of character, leadership, resilience, and social responsibility (Kuh et al., 2011; Lerner et al.,



2015). In contemporary societies, young people are expected not only to acquire knowledge but also to develop adaptability, ethical conduct, communication skills, and civic awareness (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Prior scholarship emphasizes that structured youth programs integrating experiential learning and disciplined practice significantly support psychosocial maturity and leadership formation (Kolb, 2015; Yin, 2018).

In India, the National Cadet Corps (NCC) functions as the largest organized youth training institution, operating through its Army, Navy, and Air wings (Ministry of Defence, 2023). Its mandate focuses on building discipline, unity, leadership qualities, adventurous spirit, and a sense of national service among students. Each academic cycle introduces new cadets while senior cadets progress toward certification, creating a natural developmental continuum between beginners and graduates (Ministry of Defence, 2023).

New entrants typically begin training with limited exposure to leadership roles, modest physical endurance, hesitant communication, and low civic orientation. Over time, cadets display visible improvement in confidence, responsibility, teamwork, and social awareness (Lerner et al., 2015). Despite the extensive reach of NCC, systematic academic documentation of these transformations remains relatively sparse. This article therefore presents an experience-based analysis of personality and leadership development among NCC cadets across a structured training period.

Methodology

The study employs a qualitative longitudinal observational approach informed by six years of professional engagement as an NCC instructor (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). Rather than manipulating variables, the research focuses on natural developmental change observed as cadets progress from enrolment to completion of training, typically over three academic years.

Data Collection Process

Data were derived from continuous professional observation in a variety of NCC settings, including:

- Regular parade and instructional sessions
- Leadership appointments and peer supervision duties
- Annual training and adventure camps
- National Integration Camps and Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat activities



- Inter-wing programs involving Army, Navy, and Air wing cadets
- Community service initiatives, disaster preparedness drills, and environmental campaigns

Participants represented diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and included both male and female cadets.

Development Parameters

Cadet growth was examined using qualitative indicators such as:

- Communication confidence and interpersonal behaviour (Kolb, 2015)
- Leadership conduct and decision-making capacity (Lerner et al., 2015)
- Psychological resilience and emotional regulation (Masten, 2014)
- Physical stamina and endurance
- Discipline, punctuality, teamwork, and accountability (Ministry of Defence, 2023)
- Civic orientation, environmental awareness, and disaster response readiness (Eccles & Gootman, 2002)

This experiential framework follows established qualitative inquiry principles (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Results

Differences Between Newly Enrolled Cadets and Senior Cadets

Newly enrolled cadets commonly exhibit uncertainty in leadership roles, hesitation in expression, limited confidence, and inadequate physical conditioning (Lerner et al., 2015). Observations suggest that sustained exposure of nearly two years is required for cadets to absorb fundamental traits such as discipline, adaptability, teamwork, and emotional balance (Kolb, 2015).

Graduating cadets display consistent leadership maturity, clarity in communication, physical robustness, stable emotional responses, and a strong sense of civic responsibility (Masten, 2014; Ministry of Defence, 2023). These outcomes reflect the cumulative influence of prolonged structured training.

Leadership and Decision-Making Growth



At entry level, cadets possess minimal familiarity with command systems and responsibility-based roles. Through progressive appointments, tactical training, and hierarchical engagement, cadets learn to supervise peers, resolve conflicts, and make timely decisions (Lerner et al., 2015). Senior cadets demonstrate improved judgment, accountability, ethical awareness, and confidence under pressure (Kolb, 2015).

Communication and Cultural Adaptability

Many beginners experience anxiety when addressing groups or coordinating with unfamiliar peers. NCC training incorporates structured debates, presentations, drill commands, and group discussions that gradually improve articulation and confidence (Kolb, 2015).

Participation in national-level camps promotes cultural understanding and linguistic flexibility. Interaction with cadets from different regions enhances social intelligence, mutual respect, and national integration (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Ministry of Defence, 2023).

Psychological Resilience Through Adventure Training

Adventure-based components such as trekking, rock climbing, endurance drills, and field exercises strengthen both physical and psychological capacity (Masten, 2014). Cadets learn to manage discomfort, uncertainty, and fatigue. Over time, fear-oriented reactions shift toward problem-solving behaviour, emotional regulation, and mental toughness. Senior cadets exhibit greater stress tolerance compared to newcomers (Kolb, 2015).

Civic Awareness and Social Commitment

Service orientation is a core value of NCC training. Cadets actively participate in cleanliness drives, tree plantation programs, disaster management exercises, blood donation camps, and public awareness campaigns (Ministry of Defence, 2023). Disaster preparedness sessions equip cadets with first-response leadership ability. Observations reveal a gradual movement from individual concern to collective social responsibility (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

Integrated Personality Development

Inter-wing collaboration and national exposure cultivate empathy, ethical conduct, crisis management, and leadership confidence (Lerner et al., 2015). By the end of training, cadets emerge as disciplined,



socially conscious, resilient individuals capable of constructive contribution to society and national development (Masten, 2014; Kolb, 2015).

Discussion

The observations reinforce theoretical perspectives on experiential learning and positive youth development (Kolb, 2015; Lerner et al., 2015). Continuous engagement in structured environments allows cadets to translate experience into reflective leadership behaviour (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Unlike short-term interventions, NCC's sustained model enables deep internalization of discipline, teamwork, and civic ethics (Ministry of Defence, 2023).

Adventure learning, service exposure, and leadership responsibility function as developmental mechanisms that transform adolescents into capable and socially responsible adults. The contrast between new and graduating cadets illustrates the necessity of long-term structured engagement for meaningful personality development (Masten, 2014; Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

This experience-based investigation demonstrates that systematic youth training through the National Cadet Corps significantly enhances leadership competence, communication skills, emotional resilience, physical fitness, and civic awareness (Kolb, 2015; Lerner et al., 2015). While new cadets require nearly two years to establish foundational qualities, graduating cadets show advanced maturity, responsibility, and national consciousness (Ministry of Defence, 2023).

By integrating discipline, experiential learning, leadership exposure, and community service across its Army, Navy, and Air wings, NCC offers an effective model for holistic youth development and national integration (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Masten, 2014).

Limitations and Future Directions

As the study relies on qualitative practitioner observation, the findings may involve interpretive subjectivity and limited generalization (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Future research may adopt mixed-method approaches using standardized instruments, longitudinal tracking, and comparative analysis to further validate the long-term impact of structured youth training on professional achievement and civic participation (Yin, 2018).

References



1. Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE.
2. Eccles, J. S., & Gootman, J. A. (2002). *Community programs to promote youth development*. National Academies Press.
3. Kolb, D. A. (2015). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* (2nd ed.). Pearson.
4. Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J. H., & Whitt, E. J. (2011). *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter*. Jossey-Bass.
5. Lerner, R. M., Lerner, J. V., Bowers, E. P., & Geldhof, G. J. (2015). Positive youth development and relational–developmental systems. In R. M. Lerner (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology and developmental science* (7th ed.). Wiley.
6. Masten, A. S. (2014). *Ordinary magic: Resilience in development*. Guilford Press.
7. Ministry of Defence, Government of India. (2023). Aims and objectives of NCC. <https://www.mod.gov.in>
8. Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE