

From the Classroom to the Conflict Zone: How Student Mediators Are Quietly Reshaping Justice

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Introduction



- ❑ Mediation is a voluntary, confidential, non-adversarial method of resolving disputes where a neutral third party (mediator) helps the parties communicate, identify interests, and reach a mutually acceptable agreement.
- ❑ **Core elements:** voluntariness, neutrality, confidentiality, party autonomy, and facilitated communication.

Mediation shifts the focus from “winning” to “understanding”, it treats disputes as shared problems to solve rather than battles to win.



Research Objectives

1. To examine the functioning of mediation clinics within legal education institutions.
2. To analyze the role and impact of student mediators in promoting access to justice.
3. To analyse the integration of mediation into the Indian legal education framework.
4. To identify the challenges faced by student mediators in clinical practice.
5. To propose measures for strengthening mediation training and institutional support in legal education institutions.



Research Questions

1. How do mediation clinics bridge legal education and community engagement?
2. In what ways do student mediators contribute to access to justice?
3. How has mediation been integrated into India's legal education framework?
4. What key challenges and learning experiences shape student mediators?
5. How can universities institutionalize mediation training effectively?



Research Methodology

This presentation adopts a *doctrinal and analytical approach*, drawing insights from case studies, from mediation initiatives in India.





Why Mediation matters?

- Eases court backlog and reduces cost and delay.
- Restores relationships, especially in family and community disputes.
- Trains lawyers in communication, empathy, and ethics.
- Promotes access to justice in underserved communities.



From Classrooms to Conflict Zones

- Student mediation clinics act as bridges between legal education and community engagement.
- They help students learn to replace judgment with understanding and use dialogue as a form of justice.
- Each mediation experience becomes more than an academic task, it turns into a real-life lesson that shapes empathy, integrity, and professional ethics.
- Students develop key skills such as active listening, neutrality, communication, and conflict resolution.
- They begin to view the law not only as a means of punishment but as a tool to restore relationships and promote harmony.



- These clinics expose students to real human stories, families in distress, communities in conflict, and individuals seeking dignity and closure.
- Through these interactions, students learn patience, compassion, and the human side of justice.
- Mediation clinics also build civic responsibility and social awareness, encouraging students to contribute to peacebuilding efforts.
- They empower young law students to become professionals who value understanding over argument and dialogue over dispute.
- Ultimately, student mediation clinics create a generation of lawyers who not only know the law but also understand the people the law is meant to serve.

How India is adopting Mediation?

- India has pursued court-annexed and community mediation through judicial and policy initiatives since the early 2000s.
- Mediation is being integrated into legal education, clinical legal programs, and family dispute resolution initiatives.
 - **Key policy driver:** The Supreme Court's Mediation & Conciliation Project Committee (MCPC) and recent Bar Council of India directions to include mediation in law curricula.
- **Pre-1996:** ADR ideas existed (arbitration, customary dispute resolution).
- **2002–2005:** Introduction and implementation of Section 89 of the Civil Procedure Code, 1908, which provided a legal framework for Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), including mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and Lok Adalats, encouraging courts to refer cases for amicable settlement outside the courtroom.

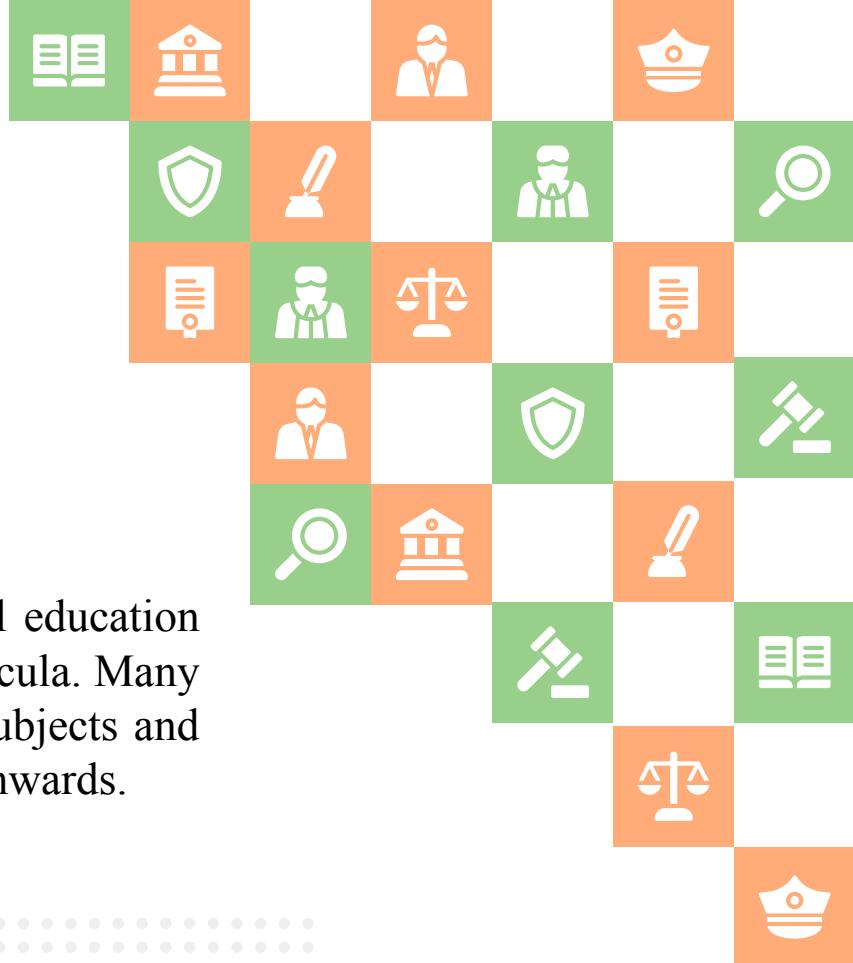


- **9 April 2005:** Supreme Court constituted the Mediation & Conciliation Project Committee (MCPC) to promote mediation nationally.
- **2005 onwards:** Court-annexed pilot mediation programmes introduced, starting with the Delhi Pilot Project and later expanded across various states.
- **2023 – The Mediation Act, 2023:** Enacted on **15th September 2023** to:
 - a) Provide a comprehensive legal framework for mediation in India.
 - b) Promote pre-litigation mediation for civil and commercial disputes.
 - c) Ensure enforceability of mediated settlement agreements.
 - d) Encourage establishment of mediation councils and centres.
- **2024–2025:** The Bar Council of India (BCI) mandates inclusion of a standalone Mediation paper in law curriculum from the academic year 2024–25 onwards, including clinical training and practical exposure.



Bar Council of India & Legal Education

The Bar Council of India issued comprehensive legal education directions in 2024–25 integrating meditation into curricula. Many law colleges were directed to implement mediation subjects and clinical training from the 2024–25 academic session onwards.



How Indian Universities have adopted Mediation?

- **NLSIU (Bengaluru):** Long-standing Legal Services Clinic and mediation courses integrated in curriculum.
- **NLIU / NLU legal aid clinics:** Active clinical mediation projects (examples across NLUs).
- **Galgotias University & Amity / Saveetha / Sharda collaborations:** Mediation centres (real-world implementation partnerships).
- **Many private and state law schools** have set up campus mediation centres and family dispute resolution clinics; some report high resolution rates in early years.



Students Role in Mediation

- **Direct practice:** student mediators conduct intake, shuttle/transformative mediation sessions, and follow ups under supervision.
- **Community outreach:** awareness camps, legal literacy and ADR promotion.
- **Interdisciplinary work:** collaborating with psychologists, social workers, police and NGOs.
- **Research & policy:** students document data, draft policy notes, and evaluate clinic outcomes.

Students gain practical skills (communication, neutrality, ethics) and produce social value, they are both learners and service providers.

Indian Case Studies

Case 1 — Family Dispute Resolution Clinic (FDRC) — Noida / Galgotia Partnership

- Police–university FDRC model handling family disputes at police stations and community centres.
- Sector-108 FDRC reported ~170/200 resolved cases in 2024 — shows high on-site resolution capacity.
- Student volunteers from Galgotias University conduct intake, counselling, and mediation under academic supervision.

Case 2 — NLSIU Legal Services Clinic mediation work

- NLSIU's Legal Services Clinic provides pro bono mediation, legal advice and student training; a long-running model of university-led legal aid.



Case 3 — Galgotias University legal aid & mediation clinic

- Campus clinic partnered with Noida police for FDRCs and community outreach; example of cross-sector collaboration.

Case 4 — Saveetha School of Law — MAADHYAM-SSL Mediation Centre (2025)

- New campus mediation centre launched July 2025 to train students and provide community mediation services.

Case 5 — Family Dispute Resolution Clinics (various state pilots / research examples)

- FDRCs across states show immediate, localized dispute resolution, often with psycho-social support and legal advice; studies report success in early interventions.



Why Mediation should be mandated in Legal Education?

- **Skill formation:** Teaches negotiation, active listening, ethical neutrality, essential lawyer skills.
- **Access to justice:** Clinics extend dispute resolution to marginalized groups and reduce court burden.
- **Policy alignment:** BCI directions already push for curricular inclusion, mandates ensure uniform implementation.
- **Public value:** Student mediators achieve tangible community outcomes (e.g., FDRC resolution rates).





Challenges Faced by Student Mediators

Emotional intensity of disputes can be overwhelming.

Skepticism from parties due to the mediators' young age.

Difficulty maintaining neutrality while empathizing.

Lack of institutional recognition for their work.

Yet, these challenges also deepen their understanding of justice as both a skill and a value.



Conclusion



- Mediation clinics symbolize the transformation of legal education, from rote learning to real-life impact.
- The silent efforts of student mediators are reshaping justice systems, proving that empathy and dialogue can achieve what litigation often cannot.

“This is not merely mediation, it is a quiet revolution led by the next generation, turning silence into conversation and conflict into understanding.”

Recommendations

- Inclusive measures involving students, senior members, and professors.
- Mandatory establishment of mediation clinics in all Indian universities.
- Curriculum integration of Mediation as a core subject.
- Mandatory mediation clinic for practical exposure.
- Supervised clinical practice with minimum hours and case portfolios.
- Monitoring and evaluation through a national database.
- Interdisciplinary training (counselling, psychology, community work).
- Formal collaborations with police, NGOs, and FDRCs.
- Funding and recognition by BCI and State Legal Services.



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Thank You

