
Correction Methods Available for the Convicts in Sri Lanka Compared with American Methods of Correction

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Different corrections methods are available for post-convicted criminals in Sri Lanka. It was decided to perform a study to identify the post-conviction correction methods and types available in Sri Lanka and their contribution for the rehabilitation of the convicts and to compare those with USA. A descriptive cross-sectional study based on latest secondary data on the convicts of Sri Lanka in 2016 published by Statistics Division of Prison Headquarters and other relevant secondary data published by Department of police, Department of probation, community correction etc was conducted. There were five types of post-conviction correction methods. Four were non-imprisonment corrections; (1) 'Suspension of the sentences of imprisonment', (2) Supervision of 'Island registered criminals (IRC)', (3) 'Probation' and (4) 'Intermediate sanctions'. The fifth type is the imprisonment. The first method is 'Suspension of the sentences of imprisonment' and number of convicts were not published in 2016. The second method is periodic supervision of IRC and there had been 4462 in 2014 but data were not published for 2016. Similarly, in USA, the sex offenders are registered and supervised. The third method was 'Probation' and there were two types of corrections; probation orders and probation hostels with certified schools for 12-16 years minor offenders and the number of convicts in 2016 was not published. In USA, the 'U.S. Probation and Pre-trial Services System' is the community corrections arm. The fourth method was 'Intermediate sanctions' and the types available were 'Community-based correction orders' and 'Order to pay fines, compensation or restitution'. The number of convicts who were granted intermediate sanction in 2016 in Sri Lanka was not published. However, the majority (53%) of convicted prisoners in 2016 were 'Fine defaulters'. In addition to those, several intermediate sanction types are available in USA: 'Intensive Supervised Probation', 'Boot Camps' 'Shock Incarceration' 'Halfway Houses' and 'Home Confinement'. The other method of post-conviction correction was 'Imprisonment'. The number of post-convicted prisoners in Sri Lankan prisons in 2016 was 24,060. Of them 96% were males, 59% were between 22 and 39 years of age, 85% had studied less than grade 8, 51% were Buddhists and 76% were married. Significant number (44%) had committed narcotic drug offences. Majority (90%) were admitted from Magistrate courts. The post-convicted prisoners were directly admitted to remand prison (48%), closed prison (52%) or Training school for youth offenders (TSYO) (0.01%, n=14). Of them, based on their behaviour within the prison, 456 were sent to the open prison camp and 588 to work camps. Based on the offence committed, 180 were serving death sentence and 23 were serving life imprisonment. None of them were executed in 2016. However, in the USA, 20 executions were done in 2016. Another method of correction was rehabilitation and all the convicts were given some kind of rehabilitation. For further rehabilitation, there were different release methods for the prisoners; 'Work release scheme', 'Home leave scheme' and 'License scheme (parole)'. The 'Final discharge' is done on bail, payment of fines, on pardon or after serving the sentence. Above correction methods and types showed that almost all the convicts were given some kind of rehabilitation at different levels. Further, the rate of imprisonment in Sri Lanka (115/100,000) is about 4 times lesser than the USA (450/100,000). In Sri Lanka, majority of the convicts were married, young adult, Buddhist, males who has studied less than grade 8 standard and they do not have the capacity to pay the fines, compensations or restitution. Hence, imposing large fines may further increase the number of prisoners and the burden to the government. Therefore, in the developments of criminal justice system, it is prudent to take evidence-based decisions.

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