

## Issues Related to Health Facilities in Prison Hospitals - A Case Study of Welikada and Bogambara Prisons in Sri Lanka

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### Abstract

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. This concept is critical in the context of prisoners' rights, particularly their right to health. Inmates frequently suffer from severe physical and mental health issues, including infectious diseases, sexually transmitted infections, fevers, and skin conditions. Despite the longstanding presence of prison hospitals in Sri Lanka, such as the one established at Welikada Prison in 1941, there is a notable lack of empirical studies on the functioning and challenges of these facilities. This study specifically investigates the health facilities in prison hospitals, focusing on Welikada Prison, with a secondary reference to Bogambara Prison, prior to its closure. The study aimed to identify key issues in prison hospital management and assess the roles of administration and health staff in addressing these challenges. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through surveys and interviews with hospital staff and administrators, and direct observations. The study found that while 44% of inmates reported satisfactory services, 60% highlighted inadequate sanitary conditions. Key issues identified include a shortage of medical facilities, insufficient medicine supplies, and an understaffed workforce, leading to significant challenges for inmate healthcare. The study also revealed that some prisoners were admitted without genuine health concerns, including political detainees occupying hospital space. The overcrowding in prison hospitals exacerbated the spread of viral diseases, further violating prisoners' rights. These findings emphasize the urgent need for effective management and improved healthcare services in prison hospitals, with particular attention to the role of counseling in addressing inmate health needs.

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