

A comparative study on parole as a post-conviction correction mechanism with special reference to Sri Lanka

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Parole, as an instrument of conditional release, has emerged as a critical post-conviction correction mechanism in modern criminal justice systems, aimed not only at reducing prisons' overcrowding, but also at facilitating the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners into society to reach decreasing reconviction and recidivism. However, the efficacy of parole in achieving these objectives differs substantially across jurisdictions. This study adopts a doctrinal and comparative research method coupled with a critical analysis of the framework relating to parole systems in Sri Lanka. The study also examines parole in countries like Canada, UK and USA, in reducing reconviction and recidivism through the philosophy of rehabilitation and reintegration. The background to this study is rooted in the global shift from punitive incarceration to rehabilitative correctional models, which increasingly recognize the need for community reintegration. Despite this trend, Sri Lanka does not have a parole system and the prevailing early release systems employed by the Department of Prisons remain at an infant stage, lacking consistency, rehabilitative orientation, and procedural transparency. This study attempts to achieve four objectives: to assess parole concept in the criminal justice system; to examine the legal, procedural, and institutional framework governing parole in Sri Lanka; to compare this framework with the parole systems in Canada, the UK and the USA which represent mature, risk-based, and reintegration-oriented models; and to evaluate the role of parole in reducing reconviction and recidivism through rehabilitation and reintegration in Sri Lanka. The findings reveal that developed countries incorporate risk-based release models and robust supervision mechanisms, with integrated support systems. In contrast, Sri Lanka's early release model lacks coherence and rehabilitation-centric infrastructure to include formalized criteria for release, post-release monitoring, and institutional capacity. The study concludes that for parole to serve as an effective tool of reintegration and crime reduction, Sri Lanka must introduce a structured, transparent, and rehabilitative parole system, harmonized with international standards. Legal reform and institutional strengthening are essential to achieving this transformation.

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