

Drugs related masculinity gang criminal behavior: A Case study based on Welikada and Mahara prison

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Abstract

Gang-related crimes represent a critical concern in Sri Lanka, driven by well-organized groups engaged in a variety of criminal activities that profoundly affect society. Historically, both global and local gang activities have been documented, with significant instances observed from the colonial era to the present, particularly within Sinhala and Muslim communities. According to prison statistics, individuals involved in drug-related offenses are frequently incarcerated for drug trafficking, abuse, and other serious crimes. This study aimed to analyze drug-related gang criminality through the lens of masculinity. Employing a qualitative methodology, the study was based on ten case studies from Welikada and Mahara Prisons during 2023/2024. Data was collected from official prison records, offender profiles, and interviews with prison officers. Content analysis was used to analyse the data. The study highlights that gender stereotype norms are deeply ingrained among prisoners involved in drug-related gang activities, there is a significant correlation between low self-control and criminal behavior among incarcerated gang members, and these individuals are frequently involved in violent crimes such as murder, robbery, and financial fraud. The findings also indicates that most gang members originate from urban rather than rural areas and that these gangs operate within extensive networks, often engaging in transnational crimes. The study concludes that drug-related gang crimes are on the rise in Sri Lanka, with prisoners maintaining substantial connections both locally and globally. The primary recommendation is the disruption of the drug supply chain that sustains these criminal activities. Additionally, the study emphasizes the role of masculine power dynamics in perpetuating these offenses within society.

Keywords: *crime typology, gang criminals, masculinity, prisons, transnational crime*