



Personal and Work-Life Perceptions of Sri Lankan Prison Correctional and Rehabilitation Officers

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Abstract: Working as a prison officer is known to be stressful and demanding. This paper aims to assess the personal and work-related perceptions of Sri Lankan prison officers working in close contact with inmates, and it is part of a larger study carried out in 2017. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted in 2017 among 1803 'ground level' prison officers across the country, consisting of 1683 prison guards and 120 prison rehabilitation officers. Their perceptions related to personal-life and work-life were assessed using a self-administered questionnaire. Percentages were calculated in the analysis. The majority of the sample were between 25-54 years (85.9%), and male (88%). Out of the participants, 232 (12.9%) felt their family-life was adversely affecting work-life, while 412 (22.9%) thought their work-life was adversely affecting family-life. 102 (5.7%) felt they couldn't take leave even for an urgent need. While 1369 (75.9%) always had a clear idea about their duty, 338 (18.7%) felt there were no career prospects in the job. 398 (22.1%) felt they were overloaded with work. Around one fourth of the participants felt job insecurity most of the time. Regarding work relationships, 292 (16.2%), 65 (3.6%) and 167 (9.3%) thought their relationship was excellent with colleagues, inmates and superiors, respectively. Around sixty percent were overall satisfied with their job. The perceptions of the 'ground level' prison officers reveal that there is space for improvement in the work setting, both at institution and policy level. Future studies should focus on perceptions of other categories of prison officers

Keywords: Prison officers, work-life, Correctional officers, Rehabilitation officers, Perceptions

1. Introduction

Prisons can be defined as institutions which confine individuals who have violated the laws that keep the smooth running of the larger society, against their will (Steiner, 2008). The main purposes of prisons are to punish criminals for the crimes they have committed by depriving them of their freedom, and to protect the community from people who pose a threat to public safety (Coyle, 2008).

In reality, the most important facet with regard to the prison is the human component, and the two most important groups of individuals at a prison are the inmates and the prison staff who take care of them. The type of the relationship between these two groups decides the ultimate good management of a prison (Coyle, 2009). Prison work is considered demanding. It is a known fact that working as a prison officer is a stressful occupation (Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000). This is particularly because their work involves working with people whose freedom and liberty have been taken away. To make matters worse, many of their service recipients are likely to be mentally disturbed, suffering from addictions, and having poor social and educational skills. Some of them could also be dangerous and aggressive (Coyle, 2009). Prison officers are exposed to violence and other safety risks at rates which are higher than for workers in most other occupations (Steiner and Wooldredge, 2017). Officers working in jails which had characteristics that threatened order and security, had more inmates per officer and greater levels of inmate violence, have shown higher levels of stress (Ellison and Caudill, 2020). Prison officers also have a relatively high risk of experiencing victimization at work (Steiner and Wooldredge, 2017).



'Prison guard' is considered as a job category which is involved in 'people-work' (Maslach, 1993). Literature on human services work (Hasenfeld, 1983) emphasizes that working with mal-functioning clients in 'people-changing' service category carries the highest workload, into which category prison staff falls. The inmates are kept in prison against their will, and thus they are distinct from other service recipients who approach the employees themselves to get their service. Providing a quality service to this special category of service recipients is a remarkably difficult task, taking into consideration the difficulty in getting their cooperation to provide services and rehabilitation. According to Coyle (2009), staff working at this sort of a prison setting is compelled to work in an enclosed and isolated environment, which can convert them to be 'narrow and inflexible' long-term. Further, he believes that prison staff is expected to perform a custodial, as well as a reformatory role in their job, but are considered at a lower status than the others who work in the criminal justice field. According to Brower (2013), a well-established threat to the wellness of correctional officers is the stress they encounter as a result of their occupation. Ellison and Caudill (2020) have found that unreasonable workloads, perceptions of insufficient staff, role problems, less control or autonomy, a lack of support at work or home, and exposure to violence were associated with greater stress among officers working in jails. It is identified that the heavy workloads could limit the amount of mutual support provided by colleagues (Kinman *et al.*, 2017). Multiple and unpredictable occupational risk factors such as violence, unsupportive colleagues and management, poor prison conditions, and shift work have resulted in the occupational stress among correctional officers to be insidious and chronic (Jessiman-Perreault *et al.*, 2021).

Prison inmates are required to be provided correctional and rehabilitation services during their stay. The Department of Prisons of Sri Lanka functions under the vision of social reintegration of inmates as good citizens through rehabilitation. Their mission mentions about creating good relationships between prison officers and inmates to achieve the objectives of custody, care and corrections. Further, it emphasizes on improving job satisfaction of the officers and building positive attitudes among them, as well as regulating the welfare of the inmates (<http://www.prisons.gov.lk/indexenglish.html>).

In Sri Lanka, prisons placed throughout the country are managed and supervised by the central organization known as the Prison Headquarters (Department of Prisons, 2020). At the time of data collection, there were three closed prisons for convicted prisoners, where they are held normally under maximum security conditions. Remand prisons are closed Prisons reserved for remand prisoners, and there were nineteen remand prisons situated throughout the country in 2017. In addition to these, there are two open prison camps without perimeter walls, where selected prisoners are held under minimum security conditions. There are nine functioning work camps in Sri Lanka which also have no perimeter walls, and short-term or medium-term offenders are held there under minimum security conditions. There are two correctional centers plus a training school for youthful offenders, who are between the age of 16 and 22 years. A drug rehabilitation centre is also established, where inmates with drug related offences are held and rehabilitated. Further, there are 22 functioning lock-ups around the country where prisoners are held for short periods of time (Department of Prisons Sri Lanka, 2016).

Separate job categories are defined for the correction and rehabilitation of the inmates in Sri Lanka, where the uniformed prison guards, prison sergeants and jailors are mainly involved in the security and correctional activities, while the non-uniformed rehabilitation officers are mainly involved in the rehabilitation activities of the inmates (Department of Prisons, 2016). The combination of these two job categories has been designed for giving a holistic approach to the care of inmates while they are in prison. The correctional officers mainly focus on the security and supervision of the inmates, with a minor role in their training and rehabilitation, while the rehabilitation officers play a major role in training and rehabilitation. Correctional officers, while giving special emphasis on duties related to correction and security of the inmates, are also involved in registration of new entrants, escorting prisoners to courts and supervision during 'party' (various industrial and other activities) work (Personal communication, Superintendent of Prisons - Rehabilitation, 05 August 2016). The duties assigned to them are in accordance with the Prisons ordinance 1877 of Sri Lanka Prison Ordinance. It provides for prison subsidiary legislation, departmental standing orders and circulars. The Ordinance has been amended several times in accordance with the timely requirements (Department of Prisons, 2020). The role of the rehabilitation officers mainly focuses on reintegrating prison inmates to the society as good citizens through providing rehabilitation during prison life. In both job categories, except for the in-charge level officers, the others are directly and significantly in contact with the inmates, usually at a daily basis. The correctional officers who are most frequently in association with the inmates are the prison guards. They come in to contact with the prisoners on a daily basis, during their routine activities at work.



Prison sergeants and jailors are mainly involved in in-charge level duties, except on special circumstances. By the end of 2015, there were altogether only 4131 prison guards working in prisons in Sri Lanka (Department of Prisons Sri Lanka, 2016). However, the cadre for male and female prison guards for Sri Lankan prisons was 4447 and 594, respectively, which implied unfilled cadres. Prison Rehabilitation Officers, who were earlier called Welfare Officers, are a category of non-uniformed staff attached to the Department of Prisons of Sri Lanka, who serve both convicted and remand prisoners. As at the beginning of 2016, there was a cadre for 147 Rehabilitation Officers in the Department of Prisons, out of which 112 were filled by the end of 2015. According to statistics as at the end of 2015, out of the recommended cadre, only 81.9% of prison guards and 76.2% of rehabilitation officers were working, reflecting that nearly one fifth of the cadre is not filled (Department of Prisons Sri Lanka, 2016). In Sri Lanka, most of the prison institutions are functioning with a severe shortage of staff (Dharmadasa, n.d.). It has been discussed in many forums in the prison setup at the policy making level, but still the issue is not rectified. The workload becomes the responsibility of the remaining officers, resulting in them becoming overloaded with work, making it unable for them to take leave even for an important event (Personal communication, Superintendent of Prisons – Rehabilitation, 5 August, 2016).

In Sri Lanka, the service provision in the prison setting has been designed in such a way, that the services of two categories of staff have been blended in order to provide the basic services to the inmates (Personal Communication, Superintendent of Prisons – Rehabilitation, 5 August 2016). Being the lowest rank in the stepwise hierarchy of correctional officers, the prison guards shoulder the main component of duties related to providing security to the inmates while they are inside the prison, as well as when they are being escorted to courts for judicial hearings. They are the category of uniformed staff which comes in to contact with the inmates most frequently, at a regular basis during their routine duties. The higher ranks of prison correctional officers, including prison sergeants, jailors, chief jailors and superintendents of prisons, are involved more in supervisory and in-charge duties, while occasionally involved in activities which bring them into close contact with the inmates. Rehabilitation officers are also having very frequent encounters with the inmates during performing their duties, as they are involved in providing welfare facilities for the inmates. They provide services such as organizing welfare activities for the inmates and seeing whether they are being carried out successfully, promoting health among the inmates, coordinating and collaborating with the families of inmates, arranging home leave and looking in to issues arising among the inmates and finding solutions for them. Inmates look to them for their social issues, just as they would look to correctional officers with their legal issues (Personal communication, Superintendent of Prisons – Rehabilitation, 5 August, 2016).

As the rehabilitation of inmates is a crucial aspect with respect to the services provided in prison, even emphasized in the vision statement of the Department of Prisons as 'social integration of inmates as good citizens through rehabilitation', the quality of service rendered by the rehabilitation officers, as well as the correctional officers who are involved in correctional duties which goes hand in hand with it, has to be at a high standard for it to be successful.

This article aims to describe the perceptions of prison correctional and rehabilitation officers working on direct contact with the inmates, with regard to their work and personal life. The information in this article was collected with the intention of identifying the main personal and work-life components among them, as a prerequisite for assessing their burnout and how these factors contribute to that (will be published in a separate article).

2. Materials and Methods

All correctional officers (prison guards) and rehabilitation officers working in Sri Lankan prisons fulfilling the eligibility criteria were taken as the study population. The study was conducted in 32 selected prison institutions in Sri Lanka in 2017, including three closed prisons, nine remand prisons, five work camps, one open prison camp, one correctional centre for youth offenders, training school for youth offenders, rehabilitation centre for drug abuser inmates, and eleven lock-ups, to collect data of correctional officers. Some of the prisons were purposively selected while the others were randomly selected, depending upon the importance placed on information to be collected from prison officers of certain institutions. All the rehabilitation officers working in the Department of Prisons who were eligible for participating were also invited, since the number was comparatively smaller compared to the number of correctional officers. Prison officers who have been working as correctional officers and rehabilitation officers in the Sri Lankan prison setting for more than six months duration were included, while those who did not have direct and



frequent contact with the inmates, or were on maternity leave or other long-term leave at the time of data collection, or had a diagnosis of a mental disorder at the time of the study, or couldn't read and write in Sinhala language (confirmed as a very small number prior to the study, since it's the most commonly used language in Sri Lanka), were excluded.

Table 1 Numbers of correctional officers planned to be selected from each type of prisons.

Stratum	Number of correctional officers in the stratum	Number of correctional officers needed
Closed Prisons	909	645
Remand Prisons	900	638
Work Camps	196	139
Open prison Camps	76	54
Facilities for Youth Offenders and drug abuser inmates	96	68
Lock-ups	231	164
Total	2408	1708

One thousand seven hundred and eight was calculated as the sample size for the correctional officers, according to the [Lwanga and Lemeshow's \(1991\)](#) statistical formula. Multi-stage stratified sampling method was used as the sampling method for the selection of correctional officers for the study. The sample was stratified by the different categories of prisons in Sri Lanka, resulting in six strata. These strata were closed prisons, remand prisons, work camps, open prison camps, facilities for youthful offenders and drug abuser inmates, and lock-ups. The number of correctional officers selected from each stratum was proportionate to the total sample of correctional officers from the selected prisons in each stratum, at the beginning of data collection. Once the number to be selected from the stratum (each prison category) was decided, it was divided among the selected prisons of each prison category, probability proportionate to the sample size of the number of correctional officers in each of those prisons. After the number to be selected from each prison was decided, the individuals to be selected for the study were selected randomly using random number generators from numbered lists of the correctional officers in each of the selected prisons. The details of the numbers of correctional officers selected from each type of prisons are depicted in table 1.

A self-administered questionnaire containing close-ended questions was developed to assess the information on perceptions of the prison officers, focusing on the literature available on personal and work-related correlates of burnout. A thorough literature search was conducted using web-based search engines and theses on studies carried out on burnout, and information was gathered through unstructured in-depth interviews held with individuals related to the prison. These personnel included high rank prison officials involved in rehabilitation and administrative posts in the prison, public health experts collaborating with prison staff during their work, and a psychiatrist providing health services to the prison inmates. These individuals were able to provide valuable information on the work-life of the correctional and rehabilitation officers. Following the literature search and extraction of information through in-depth interviews, a list of variables to be included in the questionnaire were identified.

The questionnaire included information related to the basic socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics. Questions on personal life included information on children, chronic illnesses, smoking and alcohol habits, income, presence of disabled individuals needing long-term care in the family and their satisfaction on various factors related to support they received from the spouse/ partner / family members, income, living conditions and the appreciation received for the work done at home and at work. Satisfaction was assessed using a five-point Likert scale. Feeling of being overburdened by housework and family-work conflict were also assessed. Information related to work-life was gathered through questions based on the years of service, permanency of the post, main duties, number of work hours per week, number of hours spent with inmates, travelling to work, shift duty, using of an official weapon, taking leave, welfare services at work and work environment. Further, as other elements related to work-life, work overload, variety and autonomy at work, role ambiguity, role conflict, underutilization of skills,



relationships at work with inmates, their families, colleagues, superiors and external authorities, job security, career prospects, social status and views of different people about the job, salary and increments, promotions, work-family conflict and job satisfaction were also assessed. Five-point Likert scales were used for many of the questions.

The developed questionnaire was presented to a panel of five experts including a psychiatrist, a psychologist, a sociologist, a public health expert and a high rank prison official, to assess the face validity, content validity and the consensual validity of the questionnaire. They assessed each question for its relevancy in assessing correlates of burnout among prison officers, appropriateness of the wording used and the acceptability to the local context. Necessary modifications were done following their inputs. The questionnaire was translated to Sinhala language, and was back translated to English by two different bilingual experts, in order to ensure that the meanings of the original English questions were retained. The translated Sinhala version of the questionnaire was pre-tested among ten correctional officers and two rehabilitation officers working in the Prison Headquarters, who were well experienced in the job by working in prisons across the country and were in regular contact with the inmates. A few necessary modifications were made following the interviews.

The principal investigator (NW) and two trained study assistants were involved in the data collection. They visited each prison on a pre-specified date/s to collect data from the correctional officers, and visited an in-service training programme held for all the rehabilitation officers, to collect data from them. Prior administrative clearance and approval for data collection were taken from the Department of Prisons to collect data from the prison officers. At all times, the participants were explained about the study, and that they had the liberty to refrain from participating. An information sheet was provided to each of them, and adequate time was given to read it before consenting to the study. If the individual consented to participating, written consent was obtained. Instructions for completing the questionnaire were clearly mentioned, and they were also explained the instructions prior to administering the questionnaire. The participants were encouraged to ask any questions that arose while filling the questionnaire, to which the principal investigator and the study assistants answered in a uniform manner. All the collected questionnaires were collected on the same day of administration and were ensured of their completeness by the study assistants, as well as by the principal investigator at collection. All the questionnaires were collected by the principal investigator at the end of the day, and they were kept under lock and key, to ensure confidentiality. The Prison headquarters and the selected prison institutions provided their fullest coordination and support for the study, and it was evident that the selected participants were enthusiastic in completing the questionnaire.

Data entry and analysis for the study were done using the computer package 'Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 23.0 version'. Percentages were calculated for each of the options given for the questions. Perceptions of correctional and rehabilitation officers were taken together in calculating the percentages, since the two groups were considered together as the occupational group having first line contact with the inmates. The basic socio-demographic characteristics were sub-grouped according to the occupational groups to give an overview of the study sample.

3. Results and Discussion

Going along with the vision and mission statements of the Department of Prisons of Sri Lanka, both correctional as well as rehabilitation and welfare services need to be provided to the inmates. The rehabilitation and welfare facilities, aiming at proper social reintegration once the inmates are released from prison, are intended to be performed by the Rehabilitation officers, while the duties related to custody, corrections and security of the inmates are bestowed upon the correctional officers, starting from the rank of prison guards.

One thousand six hundred and eighty-three correctional officers and 120 rehabilitation officers provided completed questionnaires in the study, bringing the response rates to 98.53% and 100% for the two categories of officers, respectively. This high response rate was achieved owing to the committed coordination of the higher authorities at the Department of Prisons, and the enthusiastic attitude of the participants towards the study, because this sort of a research was conducted for the first time among them. The calculated sample size for correctional officers covered more than forty percent of the total prison guards in Sri Lankan prisons. All eligible prison rehabilitation officers in the country were also included in the sample. All categories of prisons existent in Sri Lanka were represented in the current study, since the sampling was carried out taking these categories as the strata. Both correctional and rehabilitation officers were included in the sample due to the harmonized nature of their duties and



roles in providing routine services for the inmates. Including all types of prison institutions in the study enabled to get an overall picture of the perceptions of the 'ground level' prison officers in the country.

The basic socio-demographic characteristics of the study participants are described in table 2. The majority of the study participants (85.9%) were between 25 years and 54 years of age. The mean age of the sample of prison officers was 39.1 years (S.E. = 0.23). Previous studies conducted on burnout among prison officers have also shown closely similar mean ages of the participants (Gitau, 2013; Campos et al., 2016). The sample showed a high male representation (88%), going in line with the sex distribution of prison officers in the Department of prisons where most of the officers are male. Many of the participants were currently married (80.6%). Around ten percent of the participants were diploma or degree holders.

Table 2 Basic socio-demographic characteristics of the study participants

Socio-demographic characteristic	Correctional Officers Number (%)	Rehabilitation Officers Number (%)	Total Study Participants Number (%)
Age in completed years	(n=1683)	(n=120)	(n=1803)
18-24	97 (5.8)	3 (2.5)	100 (7.5)
25-34	583 (34.6)	22 (18.3)	605 (33.6)
35-44	495 (29.4)	56 (46.7)	551 (30.6)
45-54	362 (21.5)	30 (25.0)	392 (21.7)
55 and above	146 (8.7)	9 (7.5)	155 (8.6)
Sex	(n=1683)	(n=120)	(n=1803)
Male	1488 (88.4)	98 (81.7)	1586 (88.0)
Female	195 (11.6)	22 (18.3)	217 (12.0)
Marital Status	(n=1683)	(n=120)	(n=1803)
Unmarried	315 (18.7)	12 (10.0)	327 (18.1)
Currently Married	1346 (80.0)	106 (88.4)	1452 (80.6)
Cohabiting	2 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	2 (0.1)
Separated or Divorced	13(0.8)	1 (0.8)	14 (0.8)
Widow/Widower	7 (0.4)	1 (0.8)	8 (0.4)
Highest Educational Qualification	(n=1683)	(n=120)	(n=1803)
Ordinary Levels or below	46 (2.7)	0 (0.0)	46 (2.6)
Passed Ordinary Levels	182 (10.8)	6 (5.8)	189 (10.4)
Studied for Advanced Levels	474 (28.2)	12 (10.0)	486 (27.0)
Passed Advanced Levels	839 (49.9)	58 (48.4)	897 (49.8)
Diploma Holder	89 (5.3)	27 (22.5)	116 (6.4)
Degree Holder	53 (3.1)	16 (13.3)	69 (3.8)

Excluding those who were unmarried, majority of the study participants (87.3%) had children. Out of them, around two thirds (66.1%) had two or more children. Just above ten percent of the participants (11.5%) were taking care of a long-term disabled person at the time of data collection, where almost seventy percent of those personnel were parents or in-laws of the participants. Most of the participants were having a total monthly family income of 20,000 to 60,000 Sri Lankan Rupees. Around twenty per cent of the participants were current smokers, whereas half of the participants have smoked during their lifetime. Just about five percent of the current smokers were smoking ten or more cigarettes daily. Sixty-two per cent of the participants mentioned that they were consuming alcohol, but most of them were doing so either sometimes or rarely. Presence of a chronic disease was self-reported by 665 (36.9%) of the participants, while 254 (14.1%) were suffering from diabetes, 180 (10.0%) from hypertension, 69 (3.8%) from bronchial asthma, 69 (3.8%) from heart diseases, 168 (9.3%) from arthritis, 113 (6.3%) from varicose veins and 112 (6.2%) from other chronic diseases. Twenty-nine participants (1.6%) were feeling burdened by housework almost daily, while 232 (12.9%) felt that their family life was adversely affecting their work-life. This concept defines the demands and time devoted to, and the stress created by the family interfering with the job



(Netemeyer, Boles & McMurrin, 1996). Family-work conflict originates in the family setting, such as activities related to child-care, spousal duties, gender roles expectations etc., and has an impact on work life including absenteeism, being late to work, leaving the job and fatigue etc. (Shaukat, 2017). Personal life characteristics of the participants are detailed in table 3.

Table 3 Information and perceptions related to personal life of the study participants

Personal life characteristic	Number (%)
Presence of children (n=1476)	
Yes	1289 (87.3%)
No	187 (12.7%)
Number of children (n=1289)	
1	437 (33.9%)
2	641 (49.7%)
3 or more	211 (16.4%)
Presence of a long-term disabled person to take care of (n=1803)	
Yes	208 (11.5%)
No	1595 (88.5%)
Relationship with the disabled person (n=208)	
Parent/ In-law	145 (69.7%)
Child	18 (8.7%)
Other	45 (21.6%)
Total monthly family income in SLR (n=1803)	
<20,000	52 (2.9%)
20,000-60,000	1417 (78.6%)
60,001-100,000	306 (17.0%)
>100,000	28 (1.5%)
Current smoking (n=1803)	
Yes	368 (20.4%)
No	1435 (79.6%)
Current smoking habit (n=368)	
Daily, >10 cigarettes a day	17 (4.6%)
Daily, <=10 cigarettes a day	104 (28.3%)
More than 3 days a week	64 (17.4%)
Sometimes	102 (27.7%)
Rarely	81 (22.0%)
Ever smoking (n=1803)	
Yes	918 (50.9%)
No	885 (49.1%)
Current alcohol consumption (n=1803)	
Yes	1118 (62.0%)
No	685 (38.0%)
Current alcohol habit (n=1118)	
Daily	6 (0.5%)
>3 days a week	47 (4.2%)
1-3 days a week	87 (7.8%)
Seldom/ Rarely	978 (87.5%)
Presence of chronic diseases (n=1803)	
Diabetes	254 (14.1%)
Hypertension	180 (10.0%)
Bronchial asthma	69 (3.8%)
Heart diseases	69 (3.8%)
Arthritis	168 (9.3%)
Varicose veins	113 (6.3%)



Other	112 (6.2%)
Presence of any chronic disease (n=1803)	665 (36.9%)
Feeling burdened by housework (n=1803)	
Never	537 (29.8%)
Rarely	662 (36.7%)
Sometimes	472 (26.2%)
Often	25 (1.4%)
Very often	78 (4.3%)
Almost daily	29 (1.6%)
Perception of family life adversely affecting work-life (n=1803)	
Yes	232 (12.9%)
No	1332 (73.9%)
Don't know	239 (13.2%)

Note. *1 SLR=0.007 USD at the time of data collection

Satisfaction of the participants regarding entities related to their personal life were enquired using a five-point Likert scale on satisfaction (see table 4). Many of the study participants were satisfied with the support received from the spouse/ partner/ family members in housework and taking care of children (67.3% and 85.9%, respectively). A relatively lower proportion was satisfied with the support received from them for taking care of disabled family members (47.1%). Sixty-four per cent of the participants felt that they were satisfied with the support from spouse/ partner/ family members in career development. Around ten per cent were not satisfied with their family income. Almost two thirds (63.5%) of the participants were satisfied with the physical environment and conditions of their living place, and the people they were associating with, while just above two thirds (68.4%) were satisfied with the appreciation and complements from family members for efforts made by them in housework and their profession. A considerable proportion of the participants had neutral views for the above aspects.

Table 4 Perceptions of the study participants on their satisfaction about aspects related to personal life

Entity	Highly satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat unsatisfied	Highly unsatisfied
Support received from the spouse/ partner/ family members in housework (n=1803)	1031 (57.2%)	183 (10.1%)	540 (30.0%)	26 (1.4%)	23 (1.3%)
support received from the spouse/ partner/ family members in taking care of children (n=1289)	1011 (78.4%)	96 (7.5%)	144 (11.2%)	12 (0.9%)	26 (2.0%)
Support received from the spouse/ partner/ family members in taking care of disabled family members (n=208)	72 (34.6%)	26 (12.5%)	102 (49.1%)	4 (1.9%)	4 (1.9%)
Support from spouse/ partner/ family members in career development (n=1803)	929 (51.5%)	226 (12.5%)	593 (32.9%)	28 (1.6%)	27 (1.5%)
Total family income (n=1803)	216 (12.0%)	468 (26.0%)	932 (51.7%)	145 (8.0%)	42 (2.3%)
Physical environment and conditions of the living place, and people associating with (n=1803)	602 (33.4%)	542 (30.1%)	575 (31.9%)	58 (3.2%)	26 (1.4%)
Appreciation and complements from family members for efforts made in housework and profession (n=1803)	761 (42.2%)	472 (26.2%)	508 (28.2%)	35 (1.9%)	27 (1.5%)

Table 5 depicts some of the work-related information of the sample. A total of 662 correctional and rehabilitation officers from closed prisons participated in the study, accounting to around one third of the sample, while approximately another one third of the sample consisted of officers working in remand prisons (693, 38.4%). Around three fourths of the sample had work experience between five to twenty years. Only 68 had worked for 6 months to one year. The majority (89.4%) of the sample had been made permanent in their job. Just above one fourth of the participants (26.4%) were able to reach their workplace from home within ten minutes, while for around ten percent, it took more than two hours. The main duty declared by around forty percent of the sample was both



providing security and escorting inmates to courts, while another 20.2% mentioned their main duty as providing security to inmates in wards or cells, and 15.4% mentioned escorting inmates to courts as their main duty. Another 149 and 153 mentioned providing security to inmates during 'party' work (vocational training and other routine work in the prison) and providing rehabilitation services to inmates, respectively. One thousand participants (55.5%) mentioned that they need to possess an official weapon during work. Carrying the weapon had to be done usually during escorting inmates to courts, and quite a number of correctional officers were involved in that activity at a regular basis. With regard to the self-declaration of the number of hours of duty per week, the majority (77.5%) were working 40-70 hours. Another 18.4% declared that they worked for more than 70 hours a week. Almost three fourths (1324, 73.4%) of the respondents were engaged in shift work at the time of data collection, and 88.7% of them (n=1174) were expected to work on nights shifts. Out of those who had to work on night shifts, nearly half (45.6%) declared that they worked ten or more night shifts a month. Around four fifths of those who worked in shifts (79.7%) mentioned that they were expected to work double shifts, indicating that they had to work two shifts in a row. Out of them, more than half (55.1%) experienced this once or twice a month or at a lesser frequency.

Table 5 Work-related information of the prison officers

Work-related characteristic	
Category of Prison (n=1803)	
Closed Prisons	662 (36.7%)
Remand Prisons	693 (38.4%)
Work Camps	154 (8.5%)
Open Prison Camps	59 (3.3%)
CCYO and DRC	75 (4.2%)
Lock-ups	160 (8.9%)
Years of Work Experience (n=1803)	
<1 year	68 (3.8%)
1 to 5 years	387 (21.5%)
>5 to 10 years	466 (25.7%)
>10 to 20 years	497 (27.6%)
>20 to 30 years	239 (13.3%)
>30 years	146 (8.1%)
Made Permanent in the Job (n=1803)	
Yes	1617 (89.7%)
No	186 (10.3%)
Time Taken to Reach for Work (n=1803)	
<10 minutes	476 (26.4%)
10-30 minutes	311 (17.2%)
>30 min - 1 hour	455 (25.2%)
>1hour - 2 hours	382 (21.2%)
>2 hours	179 (9.9%)
Main Duty (n=1803)	
Providing security to inmates in wards/cells	364 (20.2%)
Providing security to inmates during escorting them to courts	277 (15.4%)
Providing security to inmates during party work	149 (8.3%)
Registration of inmates	78 (4.3%)
Providing rehabilitation services to inmates	153 (8.5%)
Both providing security and escorting to courts	782 (43.4%)
Need for Possessing an Official Weapon (n=1803)	
Yes	1000 (55.5%)
No	803 (44.5%)
Hours of Duty per Week (n=1803)	
<40 hours	74 (4.1%)



40-50 hours	445 (24.7%)
>50 - 60 hours	525 (29.1%)
>60 - 70 hours	427 (23.7%)
>70 hours	332 (18.4%)
Number of Hours Spent with Inmates Per Day (n=1803)	
<2 hours	208 (11.5%)
2-4 hours	208 (11.5%)
>4 - 6 hours	543 (30.1%)
>6 hours	844 (46.9%)
Currently Doing Shift Work (n=1803)	
Yes	1324 (73.4%)
No	479 (26.6%)
Expected to Do Night Shifts (n=1324)	
Yes	1174 (88.7%)
No	150 (11.3%)
Number of Night Shifts Per Month (n=1174)	
1	57 (4.9%)
2-5	315 (26.8%)
6-9	266 (22.7%)
10 or more	536 (45.6%)
Expected to Do Double Shifts (n=1324)	
Yes	1055 (79.7%)
No	269 (20.3%)
Frequency of Doing Double Shifts (n=1055)	
Less than once a month	267 (25.3%)
1-2 times a month	314 (29.8%)
Nearly once a week	180 (17.1%)
2-3 times a week	190 (18.0%)
More than 3 times a week	104 (9.8%)

Perceptions about work-related entities were enquired next. The perception about working in shifts was enquired from those who worked in shifts. More than half (56.6%) of them were always comfortable with it, whereas a minority of 3.9% most of the time found it difficult to adjust to it. When enquired about taking leave, almost half (49.3%) mentioned that they could take leave when they needed, while for around one third, it was difficult to take leave due to cover-up for duty not being available. Taking leave is an issue for the prison officers in Sri Lanka, due to the inadequacy of staff at almost every prison institution owing to the unfilled cadres. While for some, it could be easier to apply and take leave, for some others in institutions or duties with higher deficiencies in the number of staff, taking leave has become a great mental burden (Personal communication). Many were in the idea that the eligible number of leave was adequate (n=1180, 65.4%). Only a minority (3.9%) mentioned that the welfare facilities were excellent, but more than half (58.4%) agreed that they were good or satisfactory. It is a common complain of the prison officers that even though welfare facilities for inmates is taken as an issue of high priority, such emphasis is not given for the welfare facilities provided for the prison staff. Almost three fourths of the participants (73.7%) were in the perception that there was inadequate staff in the units they worked. With regard to the workload, 61.4% were in the impression that the amount of work to be done was tolerable, but another 22.1% believed that they were overloaded with work. When the reasons were enquired from those who believed that they were overloaded with work, there were mixed perceptions, with the most common perceptions being the need to complete a large amount of work within a short time (31.9%) and the need to perform overtime and extra shifts due to inadequate staff (22.4%). According to statistics as at the end of 2015, out of the recommended cadre, only 81.9% of prison guards and 76.2% of rehabilitation officers were working, reflecting that nearly one fifth of the cadre is not filled (Department of Prisons Sri Lanka, 2016). This could be the main reason for the increased workload for the existing officers. Around seventy-five per cent of the participants always had a clear idea about the duties they were expected to perform, while the rest were unsure of what was expected from them at least sometimes. Only around ten per cent declared that they never had to perform conflicting roles in the job, while the others experienced it at different



frequencies at work. Around three fourths (76.6%) of the participants felt insecure about their job at least sometimes, while 4.9% had no idea about it. Around one third (34.4%) believed that career development was available only to those who had special skills. Around forty-seven per cent agreed that there was good support from the institutions for extra learning, while an almost similar proportion believed that the support was inadequate. A minority of 6.5% believed that there was no opportunity for extra learning at all. Almost one fourth (23.2%) of those who had to carry an official weapon at work, did not like it. Around one fourth of the participants found their salary to be adequate and believed that it was adequate in relation to the work done by them, while the rest believed that the salary they received was inadequate, and that they deserved a higher salary for the work they carried out. Only about one fourth (24.2%) of those who found the question relevant agreed that the increments were adequate as well as given in a timely manner, while 17.5% of those who found the question relevant believed that they did not receive the promotion they deserved. When the perceptions on the social status received for the job were enquired, around thirty per cent agreed that there was little or no respect for their job from the society. The majority of the participants (83.1%) were honoured to be in their job, and an almost similar percentage believed that their families thought the same. Around eighty per cent thought that the inmates respected them and their job, but a minority (7.4%) had thoughts such as the inmates despising the prison officers and their job, and that the inmates could be thinking that they did not have any say in their occupation and thus didn't have any respect for the officers. Close to one fourth of the participants (22.9%) believed that their work-life was adversely affecting their family life, while another 16.1% didn't have an idea about it. This work-family conflict is known to arise from the variables that are associated with the work such as job demands, job pressures, working hours, organizational culture, work-related stresses and overburden and causes conflicts in family life with difficulty to perform the roles and requirements associated with family (Shaukat, 2017). When enquired about the overall job satisfaction, it was evident that 59.2% were satisfied while 4.5% were unsatisfied, while the rest were having neutral views. See table 6 for the distribution of work-related perceptions mentioned above.

Table 6 Work-related perceptions of the prison officers

Perception	Number (%)
Doing Shift Work (n=1324)	
Always comfortable with it	749 (56.6%)
Rarely find it difficult to adjust to it	378 (28.5%)
Sometimes find it difficult to adjust to it	146 (11.0%)
Most of the time find it difficult to adjust to it	51 (3.9%)
Ability to Take Leave When Necessary (n=1803)	
Can take leave when needed	889 (49.3%)
Difficult to take leave due to no cover-up	617 (34.2%)
Cannot take leave even for an urgent need	102 (5.7%)
Problem with taking leave due attitude of the leave approving officer	195 (10.8%)
Eligible Number of Leave (n=1803)	
Adequate	1180 (65.4%)
Inadequate	623 (34.6%)
Welfare Facilities at Work (n=1803)	
Excellent	70 (3.9%)
Good	441 (24.4%)
Satisfactory	613 (34.0%)
Poor	492 (27.3%)
Very poor	187 (10.4%)
Adequacy of Staff in the Unit They Work (n=1803)	
More than adequate	16 (0.9%)
Sufficient	458 (25.4%)
Inadequate	1329 (73.7%)



Amount of Work Needed to be Done (n=1803)	
Under-worked	298 (16.5%)
Tolerable amount of work	1107 (61.4%)
Overloaded with work	398 (22.1%)
Reason for Feeling Overloaded with Work (n=398)	
Need to complete a large amount of work within a short time	127 (31.9%)
Need to complete multiple tasks at the same time	75 (18.8%)
Inadequate time to recover between duties	76 (19.1%)
Need to perform overtime and extra shifts due to lack of staff	89 (22.4%)
Need to travel long distances frequently	10 (2.5%)
No specific reason	21 (5.3%)
Having a Clear Idea about the Duties (n=1803)	
Always have a clear idea	1369 (75.9%)
Sometimes unsure of what is expected	389 (21.6%)
Most of the time unsure of what is expected	45 (2.5%)
Frequency of Having to Perform Conflicting Roles in the Job (n=1803)	
Never	183 (10.1%)
Rarely	634 (35.2%)
Sometimes	720 (39.9%)
Often	207 (11.5%)
Almost daily	59 (3.3%)
Job Security (n=1803)	
Feel very secure always	334 (18.5%)
Feel unsecure sometimes	944 (52.4%)
Feel unsecure most of the time	436 (24.2%)
No idea	89 (4.9%)
Career Development (n=1803)	
No career prospects	338 (18.7%)
Career development is only for people with special skills	620 (34.4%)
Career development is available for all	422 (23.4%)
Career development is blocked by institution	423 (23.5%)
Perception on Extra Learning (n=1803)	
Receive good support from the institution	852 (47.3%)
Inadequate opportunity from the institution	834 (46.2%)
No opportunity from the institution at all	117 (6.5%)
Perception about Possessing an Official Weapon (n=1000)	
Feel secure	713 (71.3%)
Feel prestigious	55 (5.5%)
Don't like to carry it	232 (23.2%)
Perceptions on Salary/Allowances (n=1803)	
Adequate	450 (25.0%)
Not adequate	1353 (75.0%)
Perceptions on Adequacy of Salary in Relation to the Work Done (n=1803)	
Fair for the work done	452 (25.1%)
Deserve more for the work done	1351 (74.9%)
Perception on Increments (n=1765)*	
Adequate and timely	428 (24.2%)
Adequate but delayed	292 (16.6%)
Inadequate but timely	697 (39.5%)



Inadequate and delayed	348 (19.7%)
Perception on Promotions in the Job (n=1429)*	
Timely and fair	604 (42.3%)
Delayed	575 (40.2%)
Didn't receive the promotion deserved	250 (17.5%)
Perceptions on the Social Status Received for the Job (n=1803)	
Society highly respects this job	1113 (61.7%)
Not much respect from the society	645 (35.8%)
No respect from the society	45 (2.5%)
Own View on the Job (n=1803)	
Much honoured	941 (52.2%)
Somewhat honoured	558 (30.9%)
Neither honoured nor ashamed	295 (16.4%)
Somewhat ashamed	8 (0.4%)
Much ashamed	1 (0.1%)
Perceptions on Views of the Family on the Job (n=1803)	
Much honoured	937 (52.0%)
Somewhat honoured	543 (30.1%)
Neither honoured nor ashamed	252 (14.0%)
Somewhat ashamed	17 (0.9%)
Much ashamed	3 (0.2%)
Don't know	51 (2.8%)
Perception on the View of Inmates on the Job (n=1803)	
They respect us and our occupation	1427 (79.1%)
They are just scared of us, but they don't have much respect	243 (13.5%)
They think we have no say in our occupation, so they don't have any respect for us	88 (4.9%)
They despise us and our occupation	45 (2.5%)
Perception on Work-life Adversely Affecting Family Life (n=1803)	
Yes	412 (22.9%)
No	1100 (61.0%)
Don't know	291 (16.1%)
Overall Job Satisfaction (n=1803)	
Very much satisfied	418 (23.2%)
Somewhat satisfied	649 (36.0%)
Not satisfied nor unsatisfied	655 (36.3%)
Somewhat unsatisfied	62 (3.4%)
Very much unsatisfied	19 (1.1%)

Note. *Others found the question 'not relevant'

When the prison officers were enquired about their satisfaction about the work environment, 160 (8.9%) were highly satisfied with the work environment with regard to it being free of threat of violence and danger, while 305 (16.9%) were somewhat satisfied. Two hundred and forty (13.3%) and 151 (8.4%) participants were somewhat unsatisfied and highly unsatisfied in that aspect, respectively, whereas, more than half (947, 52.5%) had neutral views. With regard to their satisfaction on the work environment being Free of contracting communicable diseases, only 5.2% (n=94) were highly satisfied, and 11.4% (n=205) found the conditions somewhat satisfying. Neutral views were held by 41.4% of the participants (n=747), whereas 374 (20.8%) and 383 (21.2%) were somewhat unsatisfied and highly unsatisfied, respectively. Cleanliness of the work environment was perceived by 13.5% (n=244) as highly satisfying, by 25.8% (n=425) as somewhat satisfying, by 14.5% (n=262) as somewhat unsatisfying and by 7.5% (n=134) as highly unsatisfying, while 36.7% (n=698) held neutral views. Satisfaction of the participants on the odour of their working environment was also enquired, and respectively 114 (6.4%), 285 (15.8%), 417 (23.1%) and 285 (15.8%) were highly satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat unsatisfied and highly unsatisfied with the condition,



while the rest had neutral views. The ventilation of the working environment was up to their high satisfaction in 12% (n=217) of the participants. Another 20.8% (n=375) found it somewhat satisfying, and 16.7% and 9.7% (n=299 and 174) were somewhat unsatisfied and highly unsatisfied about it. Neutral views were held by 40.9% (n=738). Orderliness of the working environment was found to be highly satisfying to 238 (13.2%) participants, while 88 (4.9%) found it highly unsatisfying. Four hundred and ninety-seven (27.6%) and 194 (10.7%) found the condition to be somewhat satisfying and somewhat unsatisfying respectively, while the rest indicated a neutral attitude. When their satisfaction on the resting facilities at work were enquired, only 6.8% (n=122) found them highly satisfying. Another 19.1% (n=344) were somewhat satisfied, and 35.2% (n=636) were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied. Three hundred and seventy-one participants (20.6%) were somewhat unsatisfied with the resting facilities, while 18.3% (n=330) mentioned the facilities as highly unsatisfying.

The prison officers were enquired about the variety of the work they carried out, using five-point Likert scale type questions. One hundred and fifty-three (8.5%) participants replied 'excellent' to getting a variety of tasks to perform, while 809 (44.9%), 627 (34.7%), 157 (8.7%) and 57 (3.2%) replied 'good', 'satisfactory', 'poor' and 'very poor' to the question, respectively. Low level of repetitiveness of work was perceived as 'excellent' by 2.3% (n=42), as 'good' by 33.9% (n=612) and as satisfactory by 46.5% (n=836), while 13.8% (n=249) and 3.5% (n=64) answered 'poor' and 'very poor' respectively, to the question. Ninety-seven (5.4%) participants found that the occasions for creativity during work was excellent, while 424 (23.5%) and 614 (34.1%) found it 'good' and 'satisfactory', respectively. However, 668 participants (37%) thought that the occasions for creativity during work was poor or very poor. Six hundred and seventy-five participants (37.4%) were not happy with the opportunities at work to learn new things and answered 'poor' or 'very poor' to the question. The others had more favourable attitudes towards the question, mentioning 'excellent' (192, 10.6%), 'good' (446, 24.7%) and 'satisfactory' (490 (27.3%). The final question under variety at work was on the opportunity for developing special abilities during work. For this question, 140 (7.8%) mentioned 'excellent', 404 (22.4%) mentioned 'good' and 521 (28.9%) mentioned 'satisfactory', while 453 (25.1%) thought it was 'poor' and 285 (15.8%) thought it was 'very poor'.

The participants were asked whether they found their job dull and boring, to which around one third (621, 34.4%) answered as 'never'. Another 629 (34.9%) rarely felt like that, while 484 (26.8%) mentioned 'sometimes', and 52 (2.9%) mentioned 'often'. Seventeen participants (0.9%) felt their job to be dull and boring almost daily. With regard to autonomy at work, the perceptions of the participants on their ability to take decisions at work were assessed using three questions. When their ability to make decisions in their own job was enquired, only 6.7% (n=120) graded it as 'excellent', but a larger proportion of 30.3% (n=546) and 34.1% (n=616) graded it as 'good' and 'satisfactory', respectively. However, 23.2% (n=419) found it 'poor', and 5.7% (n=102) found it 'very poor'. Next, the ability to influence the work team during work was assessed, and only 3% (n=54) thought it was 'excellent'. Others thought it was good (452, 25.1%), satisfactory (764, 42.3%), poor (405, 22.5%) or very poor (128, 7.1%). Only a minority of 0.7% (n=13) thought that their ability to influence higher department policies was excellent, and only another 9.8% (n=177) and 28.7% (n=518) thought it was at least good or satisfactory, respectively. More than half of the participants thought it was poor, where 33.8% (n=609) mentioned it as 'poor' and 27% (n=486) mentioned it as 'very poor'.

The officers receive a basic training when they first join the service, and are offered continuous or in-service training from time to time during work. The total training period for the prison correctional and rehabilitation officers is only four months of duration, and it mainly focuses on sections like rules and regulations, prison setup and prison ordinance. It was assessed how they thought these trainings were utilized during work. With regard to the utilization of their basic training, 229 (12.7%) participants thought that it was excellent, 762 (42.3%) thought it was good and 586 (32.5%) thought it was satisfactory. Only 186 (10.3%) thought it was poor, and 40 (2.2%) thought the utilization was very poor. As for the continuous training, almost similar results were obtained: excellent (305, 17.8%), good (601, 35.1%), satisfactory (593, 34.6%), poor (156, 9.1%), and very poor (59, 3.4%). Following his analysis of the prison system in Sri Lanka since independence, Dharmadasa (n.d.) has stressed on the fact that there is a practical difficulty in conducting sufficient training programmes for the staff due to the shortage of staff for daily duties and the lack of financial resources. He emphasizes that the basic training they receive at the time they are recruited to the service cannot be deemed adequate at all, in terms of duration, as well as the content covered in it.

Another aspect assessed with regard to the perceptions of the participants was their relationship with superiors, colleagues and inmates. First, the general perception on the relationship with colleagues, inmates and



superiors, as well as with families of inmates and external authorities working in collaboration with the prison, were assessed. The officers were coming into contact with the families of inmates when the families visited the inmates, and they were in contact with external authorities when special programmes, trainings and medical services were organized for the inmates as well as for the officers. Thereafter, a few questions were asked to assess the relationship with colleagues, inmates and superiors further. With regard to the general perception on relationship with colleagues, 292 (16.2%) thought it was excellent, 995 (55.2%) thought it was good, 485 (26.8%) thought it was satisfactory and 30 (1.7%) thought it was poor, while only one participant (0.1%) thought it was very poor. Only 65 (3.6%) believed that the relationship with inmates was excellent, while 706 (39.2%) and 874 (48.4%) believed that the relationship was good and satisfactory, respectively. One hundred and eleven (6.2%) participants thought it was poor, and 47 (2.6%) thought it was very poor. Nearly ten per cent (167, 9.3%) had the perception that their relationship with the superiors was excellent. Another 844 (46.8%) thought it was good and 657 (36.4%) thought it was satisfactory. However, 107 (5.9%) thought the relationship with superiors was poor, and 28 (1.6%) thought it was very poor. When the perceptions about the relationship with families of inmates was enquired, 56 (3.1%) thought it was excellent, 619 (34.3%) thought it was good and 823 (45.7%) thought it was satisfactory, while the others had negative perceptions, with 191 (10.6%) mentioning the relationship as 'poor' and 114 (6.3%) mentioning it as 'very poor'. The relationship with external authorities working in partnership with the prison was found to be excellent to 149 (8.3%), good to 792 (43.9%) and satisfactory to 668 (37%). However, 153 (8.5%) thought it was poor while the remaining 41 (2.3%) thought it was very poor.

When the relationship with colleagues was further assessed, it was identified that 7.7% of the participants (n=139) thought that getting support from their colleagues showed incompetence. Seven hundred and two participants (38.9%) believed that their job expected them to have individual responsibility rather than team responsibility. Interestingly, 22.7% (n=410) of the officers were in the perception that their job didn't expect them to interact with their colleagues regularly. The relationship with superiors was further assessed using six aspects. Seven hundred and ninety participants (43.8%) thought that there was lack of communication, while 611 (33.9%) thought that there was inadequate support. Inadequate feedback was identified by 645 (35.8%) participants. Seven percent (n=126) of the participants thought that there was unfair harassment to them and 6.3% believed that they were unfairly discriminated. Five hundred and seventeen participants (28.7%) thought that their views were not being considered by the superiors. Perceptions about inmates was assessed using two questions. The first question assessed how they mostly thought about the inmates and were asked to select out of five pre-specified options given. Out of the participants, 126 (7%) thought they were not dangerous, 130 (7.2%) thought that though they were dangerous, they would not be harming the officers and 105 (5.8%) thought that would harm the officers at any given moment. The most frequent options chosen were 'They also have good qualities. If you treat them well, they will behave well', chosen by 736 (40.8%) participants, and 'You can never predict them', chosen by 706 (39.2%) participants. The second question enquired whether they thought they received assistance from inmates in performing duties in the job, to which 1212 (67.2%) agreed.

The results included in this article were gathered as a pre-requisite for a larger study which was carried out to assess the burnout of Sri Lankan prison officers, in which these perceptions were tested as possible correlates. However, the perceptions of the prison officers presented in this paper itself yields a wealth of information about them, which could be well-utilized in taking important decisions for their betterment, particularly in view of improving their work conditions, both at the institution as well as at the policy level.

4. Study limitations and guidance for future research

This study considered the perceptions of the 'ground-level' prison officers in Sri Lanka only, and therefore, the perceptions cannot be generalized to all the prison officers in Sri Lanka. However, conducting the study in prison institutions across the country and including all types of prison institutions in the study gives strength to the study in generalizing the study results to the 'ground level' prison guards and rehabilitation officers in Sri Lanka. The study assessed the perceptions using a questionnaire with close-ended questions, developed following an extensive literature search and consultation with experts related to the field. However, following a qualitative approach in the form of focus group discussions or in-depth interviews as the main study design, or prior to the quantitative approach could have yielded further deep-seated perceptions unique to prison officers in Sri Lanka. Future research should



aim at assessing the perceptions of other categories of prison officers not included in the current study, and also consider the use of a qualitative study design at least as part of the study in assessing perceptions.

5. Conclusions

Prison officers who participated in this study had mixed perceptions with regard to their personal life as well as their work-life. When their work-life was considered, some were feeling overloaded with work, some had issues with regard to their relationship with their colleagues and superiors as well as with the inmates, and they were sometimes unsatisfied with the work environment and the welfare facilities. In their personal life, they were sometimes overburdened with housework and had varying levels of satisfaction with household conditions. The information gathered in the study, with special regard to their work-life, could be very useful in understanding their perceptions on the issues and difficulties they face during work. Thus, this information could be valuably utilized in making possible institutional and policy level changes in the work setting, to create a more favourable work environment for the prison officers. This would be beneficial not only for the prison officers but getting better work conditions and more satisfaction at work would in turn contribute to provision of a better service to the inmates under their care, especially with regard to rehabilitation.

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