



Rehabilitation vs Punishment: How prison design system shapes behaviour

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Abstract

The design of prison facilities plays a critical role in shaping inmate behavior and supporting rehabilitation efforts. This paper examines the effectiveness of current prison designs in facilitating rehabilitation, exploring whether the spatial organization and architectural features promote positive psychological and behavioral outcomes or primarily serve punitive purposes.

It is important to trace the historical evolution of prison architecture and examine its impact on inmate well-being. The purpose of this research is to assess whether these environments meet modern objectives of rehabilitation and recidivism reduction.

This analysis includes architectural typologies, including radial and Panopticon designs, in relation to their effects on containment, control, and inmate mental health. India's approach towards rehabilitation and reintegration of their prisoners has certain design factors owing to its lack of workability. The dormitory-style barracks contribute to one major issue of overcrowding, restricting these modern reform practices.

India's punitive designs often hinder inmate well-being and promote cycles of marginalization rather than supporting reintegration. It is important to note why prisoners are unable to reintegrate themselves back into society despite the on-paper efforts of rehabilitation.

This paper identifies international standards and India's standards and their juxtaposition with the current situation of the Indian prisons. The research contributes to the discourse on

prison reform by emphasizing the role of architecture in transforming correctional facilities into environments that support inmate rehabilitation and societal reintegration.

The study concludes with design interventions in the model prison systems that do not satiate the growing needs of the modern prison. These interventions will enable the prison's community wisdom and enhance their purpose of improving prisoner psychology and well-being. This will help them better integrate themselves back into society.

Keywords: prison design, rehabilitation, inmate well-being, Indian prisons, societal reintegration

1. Introduction

Prison design has a significant impact on the psychological well-being and rehabilitation of inmates. It is essential to evaluate whether current prison systems protect individuals from physical and mental harm inflicted by the environment, public authority, and other prisoners during their sentence. This raises the question: Are prisons designed to facilitate rehabilitation, or do they exacerbate the issues inmates face?

To understand prisons as architectural entities, it is crucial to trace the historical evolution of their spatial organization and examine how economic and political forces have shaped these environments. By analyzing the changes in prison design over time and the influence of punitive practices on spatial structures, we can better assess the role architecture plays in prisoner rehabilitation and justice reform.

“Prisons do not disappear social problems, they disappear human beings. Homelessness, unemployment, drug addiction, mental illness, and illiteracy are only a few of the problems that disappear from public view when the human beings contending with them are relegated to cages.”

— Angela Davis (Bakare, 2020)

2. Background Study

To understand the spatial characteristics and typologies of prison design, it is important to understand the global standards of prison design. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), good prison design should aim to reduce reoffending by facilitating access to education, vocational training, mental health support, and maintaining family ties.

In contrast, prison architecture has historically reflected punitive philosophies, emphasizing containment and control over rehabilitation. Internationally, countries like Norway have adopted humane prison designs that prioritize normalization and dignity. Halden Prison, for example, emphasizes natural light, privacy, and access to nature, promoting rehabilitation and lowering recidivism rates.

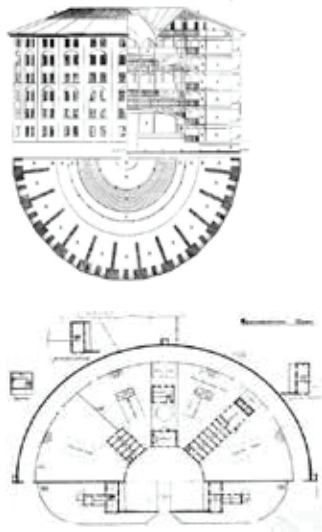
In India, however, prison designs have largely remained outdated and punitive in nature. These environments often lead to overcrowding, poor sanitation, lack of ventilation, and limited access to mental health care. The physical infrastructure fails to support reformatory efforts, contributing to the

deterioration of inmate well-being.

3. India's Prison System

India's prison infrastructure faces serious challenges in terms of overcrowding, inadequate sanitation, and limited access to educational and vocational training. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Indian prisons are overcrowded by more than 15%, with most facilities operating well beyond their capacity.

The dominant architectural typology consists of dormitory-style barracks that limit privacy and exacerbate stress, violence, and mental health issues. These conditions hinder the implementation of effective rehabilitation programs. The punitive model of incarceration fails to promote behavioral change or societal reintegration. Moreover, prison staff often lack training in mental health support and rehabilitation techniques, further impeding reform efforts.



(Panopticon)
(Stevenson A.)

Figure 1 Panopticon Prison

Figure 2 Radial Prison

The inability to fully implement these architectural strategies

further exacerbates issues with control and rehabilitation. The evolution of India's prison architecture is deeply influenced by socio-economic factors. Indian prisons often serve as holding centres for the economically marginalized, reflecting the country's broader socio-economic divide. Overcrowding, inadequate resources, and minimal rehabilitation programs have turned prisons into punitive spaces rather than institutions aimed at reform.

This aligns with Foucault's analysis, where prisons were designed to control idle populations, reinforcing the idea that they function more for containment than for rehabilitation (Discipline and Punish, p. 149).

The architecture of Indian prisons, due to their overcrowded and under-resourced nature, amplifies several issues, including poor hygiene, lack of medical care, and inadequate nutrition. These conditions, combined with an absence of rehabilitative programming, severely affect inmate welfare, echoing the historical function of prisons as tools for controlling marginalized populations.

The prison environment in India thus not only fails to foster rehabilitation but often damages prisoners' psychological well-being, further diminishing their chances of reintegration into society. The architectural focus on confinement over rehabilitation plays a direct role in perpetuating cycles of marginalization and recidivism.

This background highlights the crucial role that prison design and architecture play in shaping inmate outcomes, with India's system reflecting a larger global debate on the balance between containment and rehabilitation in correctional facilities.

4. Literature Review

Numerous studies have highlighted the relationship between prison architecture and inmate behavior. According to Fairweather and McConville (2000), spatial organization affects the psychological state of prisoners, with poorly designed environments contributing to aggression and mental health decline.

Research by Jewkes and Moran (2015) emphasizes the importance of incorporating therapeutic design elements such as natural light, ventilation, and green spaces to improve inmate outcomes.

In India, limited literature exists on prison design's impact on rehabilitation. Most studies focus on legal frameworks and administrative reforms rather than architectural interventions. However, reports by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative and Amnesty International point to the urgent need for prison reform, including infrastructural improvements.

5. History: The Origin of the Prison System

Even in the world's oldest legal systems, the value of punishment for the defence and well-being of the state and its citizens was acknowledged. Even in ancient India, the king had an obligation to punish the criminal. Punishing the offender has been the prime focus when a crime has been committed. This was to create a sense of fear and shame for the person committing the act and to warn anyone else against the same (Dillenburg K. E., 2020).

5.1. Deterrent Theory – This theory is mainly based on the principle that punishment should be of such a nature as to put a deterrent effect on the offender and also on the members of society. According to this notion, the offender is punished in a way that sends a message to the rest of society, warning them that they will face the same punishment if they commit the same crime as the one being punished. This is the reason why punishment is frequently administered in public settings, where it can have a significant deterrent effect.

As society progressed, corporal punishments of a public nature started to get replaced by confinement of the person, where punishment is to be of the psychological kind, done privately (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 1977, p. 17).

Punishments which were public made the spectators a part of the process of the punishment—making everyone wary of the crime and making the population an accomplice to the punishment. With the shift to confinement-based punishment, the transparency of the “justice” being served is taken away from the public eye and scrutiny.

Foucault iterates in his book the shift in the kind of crimes committed from the 17th to the 18th century. By the end of the 17th century, violent crimes of murder and physical harm started to shift into the destruction of private property and thievery. This was also due to changes in the economic condition of society (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 1977, p. 75).

At this stage, the prison system had undergone no reforms to accommodate the influx in its prisoners and was unsanitary,

understaffed, with no proper access to food, clean water, or proper living conditions. It was reflected in society that crimes had become less violent long before punishment became less severe.

The 18th century saw the first reform of prisons in England, which trickled down to the rest of the world. Thus, the need for a prison and its purpose changed according to the times.

5.2 The Role of Humane Punishment in Defining Verdicts

The principles behind the reform movements are constantly in favour of “humane” punishment, declaring that punishment must have humanity as its measure.

But how exactly do you define what is humane and what is not? The current mindset of society at the time of punishment is what defines what is considered humane and inhumane.

During the timeframe when criminals were hung from the gallows, it was considered a humane punishment. Foucault regarded the idea of humanity as a measure of punishment as insuperable (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 1977, p. 75).

6.Objective of Punishment

The modern objective of the prison system is built on the basis of the 5 R’s. What started as punishment to inflict fear and display power has now been transformed into the objective of the 5 R’s of the prison system—Rehabilitation, Reintegration, Restoration, Resettlement, and Recidivism Reduction—which are interconnected principles aimed at transforming incarceration from mere punishment to personal and social improvement.

Rehabilitation starts the process by addressing the behaviours that led to criminality. This leads to Reintegration, wherein inmates are equipped with skills for returning to society. Restoration promotes accountability by repairing harm done to victims. Resettlement ensures stable housing and employment upon release, directly supporting Recidivism Reduction, which lowers the chances of reoffending through continued support.

Each step builds on the previous one to ensure a holistic approach to criminal justice reform.

(Rocksheng Zhong, 2014).

7. Origin of Prisons in India

T. B. Macaulay's Minute, published in 1835, served as the model for India's contemporary prison system. After being appointed, a commission called the Prison Discipline Commission turned in its report in 1838. The commission rejected all humanitarian demands and improvements for the inmates, although it did urge more stringent treatment. Central Prisons were built starting in 1846 in accordance with the suggestions made by the Macaulay Committee between 1836 and 1838.

Thus, British dominance has left its mark on India's current prison system. It is based on the idea that even the strongest criminal code may not be very helpful to a community if there is inadequate equipment for administering penalties.

Subsequent changes and revisions were made in the 1864, 1877, and 1888 Commissions of Inquiry into Jail Management and Discipline, which tried to make the diet, living conditions, and medical care better. (Department, n.d.)

State governments are solely responsible for the management and administration of prisons, which are regulated by the Prisons Act of 1894 and the respective state governments' prison manuals. Therefore, the major duty, obligation, and ability to amend the existing jail laws, rules, and regulations rest with the states.

8. Evolution of the Prison System

8.1. Timeline

This timeline traces the evolution of punishment from the pre-17th century to the 20th century, highlighting changing ideologies and systems.

Before the 17th century, punishment was public, instilling fear and reinforcing sovereign power. By the late 17th century, during the "Great Confinement," punishment became private, focusing on controlling marginalized groups like the poor and mentally ill.

In the 18th century, punishment shifted from violent retribution to corrective measures for crimes against property. The 19th century introduced Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon emphasizing surveillance and control to instil fear through constant observation.

Finally, in the 20th century, the focus moved to rehabilitation, blending control with reformatory approaches. This progression reflects society's evolving understanding of discipline and justice.
(Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 1977)

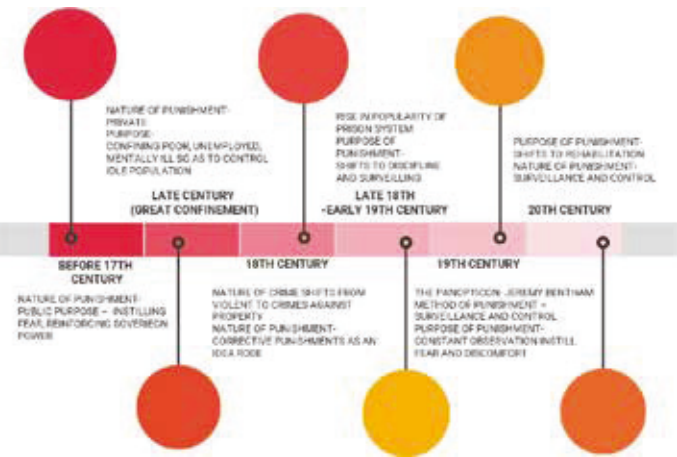


Figure3 Evolution of Prison system (Author)

9. Typology

It is crucial to comprehend prison typologies since they represent the changing goals of incarceration, whether it be for rehabilitative or punitive purposes. Typologies are more than just architectural designs; they represent the historical concepts of criminal justice systems. Their significance stems from their effects on security, inmate administration, and the possibility of rehabilitation.

We can learn more about how prison environments either support or obstruct prisoner reform by examining the various shapes that these institutions take. Every typology has a specific function and reflects how society has approached rehabilitation and punishment throughout history.

The prison's design began as T- or cross-shaped structures, since it was modelled after religious structures. They changed to radial shapes, resembling 1600s mental asylums with hallways branching off a central point. More complex shapes like the H-shaped, rectangular, hollow square, and courtyard layouts became the norm in design. Centralized monitoring was made possible by circular, polygonal, and radial designs, like Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, which allowed guards to view prisoners from a single location. Although these forms increased security, they also limited the movement of the prisoners and brought monotony to the atmosphere.

The 19th century saw the emergence of campus-style patterns, which signalled a shift toward rehabilitation. A sense of freedom is fostered by this architecture, which divides prison parts into discrete sections because prisoners must move between buildings.

"Overcrowding has long been an issue in prison systems, and the shape of a prison plays a crucial role in managing privacy and space." Compact shapes like circles and squares tend to increase feelings of confinement, leading to psychological distress among inmates. These designs result in lower mean point-to-point distances, meaning there is less space for movement and separation between individuals.

In contrast, elongated or branched shapes, such as long rectangles or towers, enhance privacy by maximizing the distance between points within the building. This design reduces the effects of overcrowding and allows for greater psychological comfort, as inmates are not constantly exposed to

others in close quarters.

Thus, the shape and layout of a prison significantly impact the well-being of its inhabitants by either exacerbating or alleviating the stresses of confinement. (Dillenburg K. E., 2020)

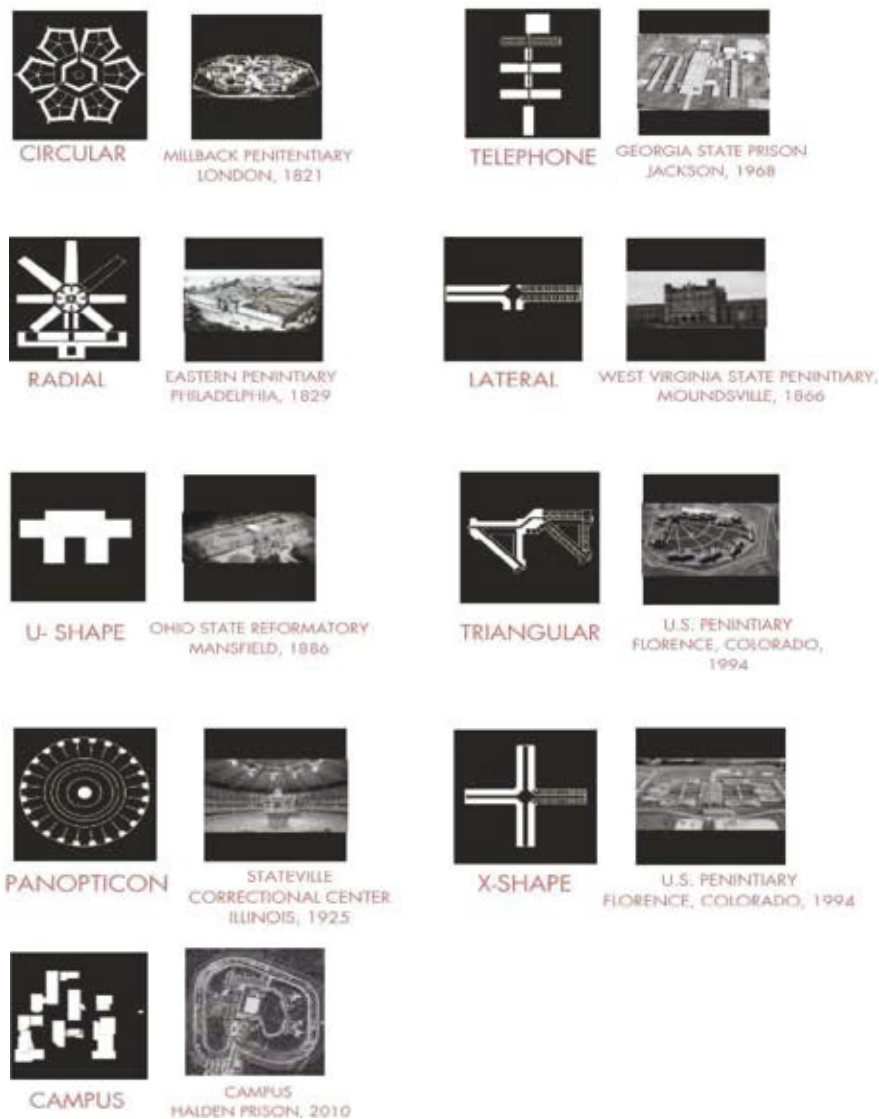


Figure 4 Typology of prisons

(Dillen burger K.E., 2020)(Elisa beth Fransson)

10. Standards

The treatment of prisoners is guided by a set of international and national standards that aim to ensure human dignity and basic rights within incarceration systems. Among the most influential are The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (2015)—commonly known as the Nelson Mandela Rules—and India's prison regulations, primarily shaped by the Prisons Act of 1894 and related state prison manuals (LAW, 1957).

This comparison highlights that both the Nelson Mandela Rules and the Indian Prison Standards prioritize key aspects such as living conditions, space, safety, and health. However, the focus of each differs significantly:

- ☒ The UN standards emphasize privacy, hygiene, adequate lighting, and the rights of prisoners as central to the humane treatment of inmates.
- ☒ In contrast, Indian prison standards tend to stress administrative control, segregation, and security management more heavily than personal rights or rehabilitative focus.

While the specific rules on rehabilitation and inmate care differ, both frameworks guarantee the provision of basic necessities and seek to prevent overpopulation—at least on paper.

However, ground realities often diverge from these ideals. For instance, India currently houses approximately 478,600 inmates, resulting in an occupancy rate of 112.6%. A major contributor to this overcrowding is the large proportion of undertrial prisoners, who make up nearly 69% of the total prison population, often languishing in jails for extended periods without conviction.

These figures underscore the urgent need for not just better policies, but effective implementation and reform, in line with both national objectives and global human rights standards.

Table1 Comparison of
standards

Parameter	UN Standards (Nelson Mandela Rules)	Indian Standards(Prisons Act,1994& Identification of
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		Prisoners Act,1920)
Prison Layout	Rule 13: Accommodation should facilitate health, privacy, and supervision	Section 4: Layout must allow separation of prisoners by type (criminal, civil, gender, age)
Nature of Cells	Rule 29: Solitary confinement limited to 15 days with daily medical checkups	Section 29: Solitary cells must allow prisoner-officer communication; daily medical visits required
Size and Crowding	Rule 13: Adequate cubic air content, no overcrowding	Section 7: Temporary accommodation provided in case of overcrowding
Views and Privacy	Rule 13: Access to natural light and privacy	Section 27: Separation of prisoners by class/type; no specific mention of privacy
Air Quality	Rule 13: Must provide adequate ventilation	Section 4: Proper ventilation must be provided
Temperature	Rule 13: Facilities must consider local climatic conditions	Section 4: Accommodation must consider local climatic conditions
Aesthetics	Not explicitly mentioned	Not explicitly mentioned
Living Conditions	Rule 13: Adequate air, lighting, heating, ventilation	Section 4: Accommodation must comply with health requirements, including ventilation and space
Barrack Design	Rule 12: Sleeping accommodation should be individual if possible	Section 4: Accommodation must comply with health requirements, including ventilation and space
Lighting	Rule 14: Windows must allow natural light; artificial light must prevent eyestrain	Section 28: Accommodation must provide light and ventilation
Material Used	Not explicitly mentioned	Section 27: No specific materials, but security and safety are emphasized in building regulations
Accessibility	Rule 24: Free access to necessary services (medical, education, etc.)	Section 40: Legal rights ensured including communication with lawyers and visits

Facilities	Rule 23: Access to open-air exercise and hygiene facilities	Section 16: Bathing facilities must be provided
Noise	Not explicitly mentioned	Not explicitly mentioned

(The United Nations
Standard Minimum
Rules for the Treatment
of Prisoners, 2015)
(LAW, 1957)

One of the main challenges facing the Indian prison system is overpopulation. Although the total jail capacity stands at 425,609, the actual inmate population far exceeds this figure. A significant contributor to this overcrowding is the high number of undertrial prisoners, many of whom are held for extended periods due to judicial delays.

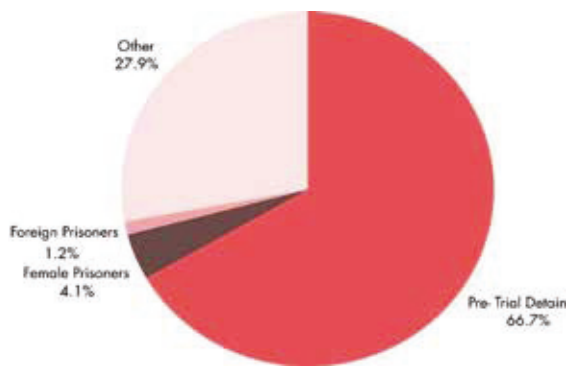
This overcrowding is further aggravated by subpar living conditions, including inadequate access to clean drinking water, poor sanitation, and limited medical care. In many prisons, infrastructure remains outdated, and facilities are severely understaffed, making it difficult to ensure effective supervision and inmate welfare.

Despite ongoing efforts toward prison reform, resource constraints and slow policy implementation continue to obstruct meaningful change. The system, in its current state, reflects an urgent need for both infrastructural investment and procedural efficiency to meet even the most basic standards of human rights.

Table2 General Prison Information

Parameter	Data
Ministry responsible	Ministry of Home Affairs
Prison administration	Government of States(28) and Union Territory (7)
Total prison population	376,396

Prison population per 100,000 population)	32
Official Capacity of Prison System	277,304
Occupancy level(based on official capacity)	135.7%
Number of Establishment\Institutions	1,276



(Department, n.d.)

Figure5 Breakdown of Prison Population (Author)

11. Material and Method

The methodology adopted in this study is designed to facilitate an unbiased and comprehensive analysis of the prison system, aiming to develop informed design suggestions that support rehabilitation.

The process begins with extensive background research, examining themes such as prison layouts, operational procedures, and socioeconomic factors. This foundational study helps to clearly identify the research goal, problem statement, objectives, and limitations of the project.

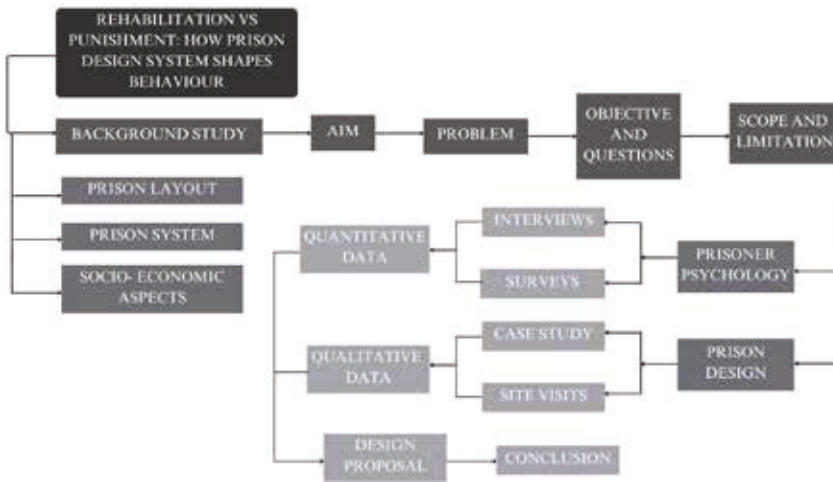
A mixed-methods approach is employed to gain deeper insight into prisoner psychology and institutional dynamics. This includes:

Qualitative techniques: case studies, field visits, and

observational analysis.

Quantitative techniques: surveys and structured interviews with stakeholders.

The combination of these methods ensures a holistic understanding, allowing for data triangulation. The results derived will guide the final design recommendations, prioritizing rehabilitative over punitive structures.



12. Data Collection and Analysis

This research incorporates both primary and secondary data collection methods to assess the present condition of the Indian prison system and recommend a more humane, rehabilitative model.

Primary Data was gathered through a field visit to the District Jail of Dehradun, where firsthand observations were made. These observations have been categorized under three key parameters:

- Architecture
- Infrastructure
- Management

Specific issues within each of these categories were documented, offering insight into the system's shortcomings. These findings serve as a basis for proposals aimed at reforming the prison environment in a way that prioritizes dignity and rehabilitation.

To supplement this, secondary data analysis was conducted using existing literature on prison reform, architecture, and correctional psychology. This dual approach enables the formulation of evidence-based recommendations.

A survey of 30 ex-convicts was also conducted to capture qualitative data on:

Their first-hand experiences inside prison

The alignment of prison objectives (rehabilitation, reintegration) with actual practice

Their perceptions of architectural influence on behavior and emotional well-being

Findings indicate that initiatives such as re-education programs, workplace destigmatization, and reintegration efforts have had relatively positive outcomes. However, the execution of reform ideologies often falls short due to poor infrastructure, lack of emotional support, and disconnected architecture.

It is crucial to note that individuals undergoing incarceration, separated from family and familiar surroundings, cannot always cognitively or emotionally process the architectural environment. Nevertheless, this does not diminish the role of prison design—rather, it emphasizes the need for carefully considered spatial planning that fosters a sense of psychological safety. In many cases, the architecture of a prison becomes the first stable and structured environment a prisoner encounters, making its impact on mental health and behavior deeply significant.

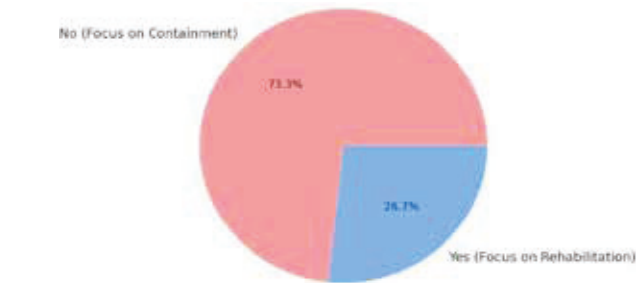


Figure 6 Focus: Containment vs Rehabilitation

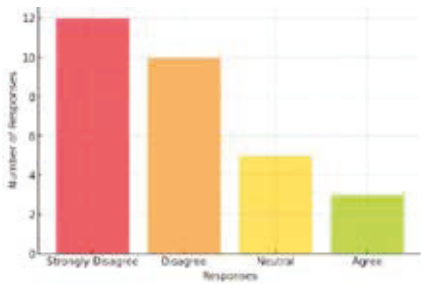


Figure7 Does dormitory lay out help safety and Positivity in Prisons

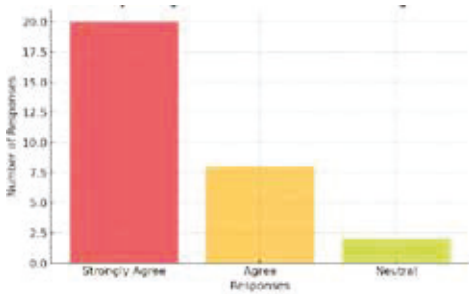


Figure 8 Psychological stress due toPrison Design

13. Inference: District Jail, Dehradun

Based on the primary data collected during the site visit to the District Jail in Dehradun, several key observations were made regarding the existing infrastructure and living conditions of the inmates.

The following aspects were documented:

- **Sleeping Arrangements:** The layout includes both shared and solitary sleeping spaces, with some cells accommodating single or two-person occupancy. While the separation indicates an attempt to manage prisoner classification and behavior, the overall quality and comfort of sleeping arrangements appeared minimal, lacking ergonomic or rehabilitative consideration.
- **Solitary Confinement:** Observations of solitary confinement cells revealed limited space, with restricted access to natural light and ventilation. Although designed to isolate for security or disciplinary purposes, these spaces often failed to meet minimum psychological or spatial standards, raising concerns about the mental health impact on inmates.
- **Sanitation Facilities:** Washrooms and hygiene-related amenities showed signs of under-maintenance, with shared usage models and limited access to water and privacy. These conditions pose serious questions about the dignity, hygiene, and overall well-being of the inmates.
- **Public Amenities:** The availability of common areas such as kitchens, medical rooms, or libraries was either absent or minimally functional. This reflects a lack of focus on rehabilitation infrastructure, reinforcing a custodial rather than reformative approach.
- **Open Spaces:** Although the facility includes open areas for exercise or interaction, their size, maintenance, and utility were inadequate. These spaces, which could otherwise serve as vital zones for mental decompression and physical activity, were poorly equipped and underutilized.



Figure 9 Public bar rack (source author)



Figure10 Public Washroom (source author)





Figure 11 No storage provided (author)

Figure 12 Under trial and convicted prisoners kept together (author) Figure 13 Sleeping arrangement on the floor over crowding (author) Figure 14 Gable roof without ridge ventilator (author)



Figure 15 Solitary Confinement for 2 (source author)



Figure 16 Solitary Confinement (source author)

The above images have been taken from the district jail in Dehradun and show a clear violation of certain rules in the Model Prison system handbook. Certain rules pertaining to the

number of people allowed in a barrack, height and width of births, the availability of temporary living quarters, provision to basic needs such as shelves and storage spaces can be seen to not have been followed.

The district prison has many programmes to support rehabilitation efforts for the prisoner and classes such as pottery, carpentry, sewing, rug making, etc. The internal character and cleanliness were kept to a decent standard. Despite such efforts the possibilities for a convict to reestablish themselves back into society are low. The fault must be noted, one of the main and most compelling factors in this is the overcrowding issue. Firstly the jail has been made with gable roofs which make it very difficult for the future construction of another floor. The on paper population for which the prison has been made is for 540 people. Currently the capacity stands at 1140 with convicts being sent in every other day. With the lack of the ability to construct vertically as well as not being provided temporary living quarters for the new prisoners, everyone is forced to live in double the capacity of their living quarters. This puts a huge strain on their mental well being and deteriorates their chances at rehabilitation being exposed to violent and hardened criminals on a daily basis.

14. Model Prison Standards Rulebook (Research, 2003)

The Model Prison Manual (2003) states:

Such a course implies the setting up of separate institutional facilities for different categories of prisoners, such as:

- Prisons/annexes/yards for under-trial prisoners
- Maximum security prisons/annexes/yards for security risk prisoners and habitual or hardened offenders
- Open prisons, semi-open prisons, and open colonies/camps

- Prisons/annexes/enclosures for women prisoners
- Prisons/annexes/yards for young offenders
- Prisons/annexes/yards for those suffering from infectious diseases
- Prisons/annexes/yards for drug addicts
- Prisons for those arrested during non-violent socio-political and economic agitation for a declared public cause

The model prison standards specify that separate barracks must be provided for pre-trial detainees and convicted prisoners. Due to social stigma and discrimination, the LGBTQ+ inmates should also be housed separately to ensure safety and dignity.

It can be argued that the lack of segregation among different categories of prisoners contributes to the ineffectiveness of rehabilitation programmes, often leading to continued cycles of violence. Although such provisions are specified in the rulebook, they are yet to be implemented effectively in present-day jails.

Prison Architecture and Space Standards

There must be enough open space inside the perimeter wall to allow proper ventilation and sunlight. The area enclosed within the four walls of a prison should not be less than 83.61 sq. meters per inmate of total capacity. Where land is scarce, a minimum of 62.70 sq. meters per prisoner must be provided.

This minimum standard of 83.61 sq. meters per prisoner represents a humane living standard. However, this standard is not being followed in practice. As seen in Figure 3, the sleeping conditions are substandard. Due to overcrowding, which often exceeds twice the designed capacity, prisoners are forced to sleep between beds or on the floor.

This lack of space negatively affects prisoners' mental health and psychological well-being. Furthermore, it reinforces a hierarchical system, where senior convicts occupy more comfortable spaces, while newer or petty offenders are relegated to sleeping on the floor, increasing their sense of helplessness and frustration.

Women Prisoners' Facilities

Institutions or enclosures for women prisoners must have all requisite facilities to address their special needs — including segregation, protection, pregnancy, childbirth and family care, healthcare, training, and rehabilitation.

In the case study conducted, it was observed that three children below the age of six were living in the women's enclosure. All the female prisoners were housed in a single barrack, which had an official capacity of 40 inmates, but was housing 71 prisoners. The children, living in the same overcrowded space, were the worst affected, as they were exposed to early trauma, violence, and mental and physical abuse.

Segregation of Under-Trials and Detenues

Under-trials and detenues must be lodged in separate institutions, away from convicted prisoners.

Housing Standards

Barracks must accommodate no more than 20 prisoners.

If a barrack is gable-roofed, it must include a ridge ventilator.

Ventilation and air quality are critical to the psychological well-being of inmates. However, in the observed facility, the absence of ridge ventilators in gable-roofed structures contributes to poor ventilation and discomfort. This problem is amplified by overcrowding, reducing the per capita vertical ventilation space.

Where accommodation is overcrowded and does not meet prescribed standards, secure corridors, verandas, or work sheds may be used temporarily to house short-term prisoners or under-trials with minor offences. If overcrowding is expected to continue, prisoners must be transferred to other institutions or camps, with the approval of the Inspector General of Prisons.

In the case studied, no temporary living quarters were provided despite the fact that overcrowding had reached 100% beyond designed capacity.

Each berth on the ground floor should measure 2 meters x 0.75 meters, with a height of 0.45 meters. A fixed or in-built shelf must be provided to every inmate for storing personal belongings.

However, in practice, inmates were observed hanging their

belongings directly from the walls, as no shelves were provided, further dehumanising their experience.

Sanitation and Hygiene Facilities

Latrines:

Each sleeping barrack must include a sufficient number of attached WCs, urinals, and wash places.

- ☒ The daytime ratio should be 1 unit per 6 prisoners
- ☒ The nighttime ratio should be 1 unit per 10 prisoners

Bathing

Facilities:

Every prison must provide covered bathing cubicles, with one unit per 10 prisoners, ensuring adequate privacy.

The overcrowding and lack of infrastructure expansion have rendered existing facilities inadequate to meet the growing needs of the prison population. This shortage triggers conflicts, creates hostile living conditions, and undermines rehabilitation efforts. Providing adequate, private, and humane facilities is essential to reducing violence, mental distress, and ensuring effective correctional reform.

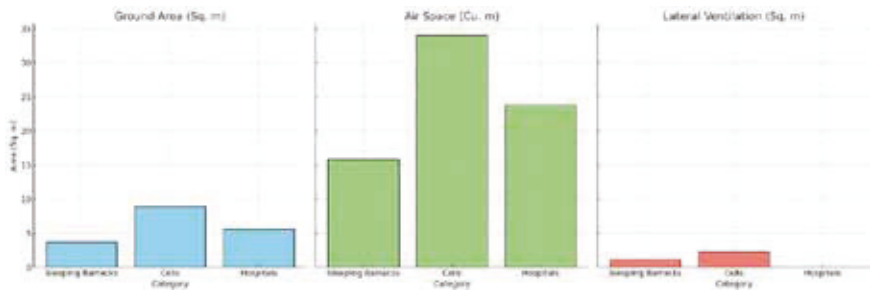


Figure17Area Requirement

Table 3 Parameter based comparison of current scenario of Indian prisons

Category	Parameter	CurrentsituationinIndianPrisons
Architecture	Prison Layout	Most Indian prisons are outdated, lacking separation by type of prisoner (criminal, civil, gender, age), which affects security and privacy.

	Nature of Cells	Overcrowding is a significant issue; solitary confinement is available but can be used for extended periods, often without regular medical supervision.
	Size and Crowding	Severe overcrowding, often with 150-200% occupancy rates; lack of adequate space and ventilation creates inhumane living conditions.
	Views and Privacy	Minimal privacy is provided, with limited access to natural light cells often do not cater to privacy needs, especially in overcrowded conditions.
Infrastructure	Air Quality	Poor ventilation in most facilities, leading to inadequate air quality; ventilation systems are outdated or insufficient to handle high inmate populations.
	Temperature	Little consideration for local climatic conditions; prisoners often face extreme temperatures due to lack of adequate heating/cooling systems.
	Lighting	Natural lighting is limited, with dependence on inadequate artificial lighting; inmates often experience eye strain due to poor lighting conditions.
	Material Used	Basic materials are used for cell construction with a focus on security; lack of emphasis on sustainable or humane materials contribute to poor living conditions.
Management	Living Conditions	Overcrowding, poor sanitation, and insufficient bedding or sleeping arrangements create substandard living conditions.
	Accessibility	Limited access to medical and educational services; legal rights are provided in theory but often limited in practice due to understaffing and administrative delays.

	Facilities	Basic facilities like bathing areas are often inadequate, leading to poor hygiene and health concerns, recreational or open-air exercise areas are rare or insufficient for all inmates.
	Barrack Design	Barracks are overcrowded with limited ventilation, often compromising inmates health the modern designs for individual accommodations are lacking.
	Noise	No explicit consideration for noise levels; inmates are frequently subjected to high noise levels due to overcrowding and lack of soundproofing.

Table 3 has been created as a comparison to Table 1, where the parameters that architecturally affect the prison system and the psyche of prisoners have been highlighted.

From a broader planning perspective, it is observed that the prison rulebook does not specify area requirements for the soldiers' living quarters. This loophole can be exploited on the ground, as large acres of land may be allocated to officials living on campus—land that could otherwise have been used for future expansion of the prison campus itself.

15. Integration Into Society

“Work readiness is not just about core work skills but also about the knowledge of personal attributes that enable someone to interact effectively.”

A person convicted of sexual harassment at the workplace might fall into the same behavioral patterns upon release if not given proper behavioral training. Similarly, a person who enters prison before beginning their professional career may not know how to appropriately conduct themselves around female colleagues at the workplace.

Situations like these pose a different set of challenges, making social assimilation difficult.

Bringing about a change in the inherent behavior of a person is far more difficult than simply teaching a skill. Hence,

behavioral training should be a part of the curriculum for inmates as soon as they are admitted into the institution. (Saxena, 2022)

16. Real-Life Experiences After Reintegration

The real-life accounts of those who have served prison sentences and attempted reintegration into society have been studied. Their experiences and challenges post-incarceration reveal shared patterns, despite differences in their crimes or backgrounds. Some statements include:

1. "Had we come from good families, we wouldn't have fallen into wrongdoing."
2. "Even educated women face rejection."
3. "Despite going to jail for the family, we are shunned by our relatives, subjected to insults and physical abuse, which is more demoralizing than the prison sentence."
4. "To cope with isolation, we seek out others who've shared similar experiences, which can lead us back to crime."

(Suresh, 2024)

17. Challenges for Female Prisoners

The experiences of female prisoners post-incarceration are particularly harsh. Women in India who become convicts are not only treated as social outcasts, but are often rejected by their own families and communities.

In many cases, these women may have been the sole breadwinners of their families, and post-release, they are left with no support system or means to provide for themselves or their children. The stigma is deeply entrenched and disproportionately affects them.

Although the current prison system incorporates rehabilitation efforts, it continues to fall short of ensuring full reintegration of ex-convicts into society. The data collected through surveys reinforces this gap and provides valuable insights into the areas that require focused intervention.

Figure 18 Challenges faced by ex-convicts post-release Figure 19 Employment status Post Release

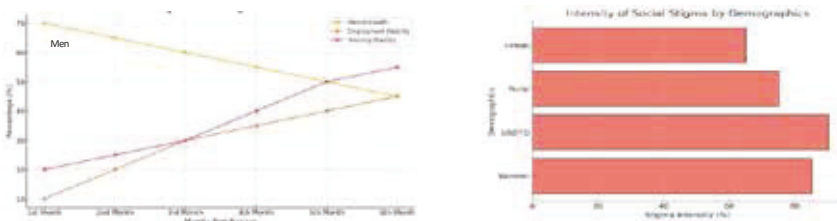


Figure 20 Reintegration Challenges over Time

Figure 21 Intensity of Social Stigma by Demographics

The topic of prisons is a difficult one for architects, having to respect rigid constraints of organization, space, and function dictated by the laws of the moment, which discourage an attempt at design experimentation.

However, without sound architecture a major humanitarian aspect would be taken away from an already emotionless aspect of one facet of society.

18. Discussion

The jail layout plan of the Dehradun District Jail spans an area of 40 acres, out of which only 9 acres have been utilized for constructing the entire prison campus. A panopticon layout has been implemented, with a central viewing tower surrounded by the wings of the barracks. This includes 24 barracks, divided into 8 barracks in each of the three wings. The central area is designated for food distribution and functions as a common space.

This design can be improved to better support rehabilitation practices by segregating convicts according to the classifications specified in the Model Prison Standards. These include:

- Undertrial convicts
- Convicted criminals
- Addicts
- LGBTQ+ individuals
- High-security risk prisoners

Each group should be kept in separate zones, ensuring they do not mingle—even during food distribution.

Furthermore, the Model Prison Standards should specify the area allotment for prison guard living quarters to ensure optimal and appropriate use of on-site space, preventing the misuse of land that could otherwise contribute to the prison's

core functions.

Segregation, when implemented appropriately, offers prisoners a real chance at rehabilitation, while also minimizing the stigma in the eyes of the public. When individuals are not exposed to more dangerous or negatively influential inmates, their potential for positive reform increases. They are more likely to integrate back into society successfully—without fear, judgment, or relapse into criminal behavior.

19. Conclusion

The relationship between architecture and prisoner psychology is deeply intertwined. It becomes the architect's responsibility to uncover the hidden layer of humanity within the otherwise oppressive and punitive prison environment.

The layout primarily studied was the dormitory-style prison, a model increasingly adopted across the globe. Through this research, it has been observed that the current condition of prisons lacks sufficient rehabilitative character and foresight.

Human behavior is greatly influenced by those we live in close proximity with. Hence, true rehabilitation and correction can only occur if the environment encourages growth, reform, and dignity. As architects, we are accountable for crafting such intentional and humane design solutions.

The removal of prisoners from public sight has rendered society oblivious to the growing crisis behind prison walls. In an ideal world, prisons would be obsolete. But as long as they exist, they must serve society—not just through containment, but through restoration of the individual.

Although current prison systems claim to strive for reform, they often fall short in implementation and long-term vision. To address this flaw, we must challenge traditional paradigms, and embrace innovative architectural approaches that prioritize the human spirit alongside institutional goals—ushering in a new era of prison design that truly aligns with justice, humanity, and social reintegration.

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