If Capital Punishment Does Not Discourage Crime, It Can Result in Innocent Lives Lost

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Introduction

The death penalty has been a highly controversial practice in the United States of America. The practice dates back to English law, where virtually any person convicted of delinquency faced a mandatory death sentence. All violent crimes attracted death sentences from the criminal justice system. However, over the decades, the practice has been widely despised and termed inappropriate. Many countries have ruled that imposing the death penalty is unconstitutional and morally wrong both for the accused individual and affected families. Several states in the United States have termed capital punishment a wasteful and risky government program that runs contrary to the core life conservative principles (Lamperti). “For those who remain on death row, understand that everyone is going to die.” These were the words of David Zink before his execution in Missouri (Holloway, 2015). Based on these comments, it is evident that facing the death penalty is not necessarily the worst thing a killer can be subjected to since everyone will eventually die. The death penalty has not been proven always to be adequate or even to help decrease crime. There should be other methods put in place so that responses to crimes committed can provide true justice to victims and families, and therefore, there is a need to rethink the stance on capital punishment.

From the historical perspective, the first established death penalty laws go back as far as the 18th century B.C., and many countries have abolished the death penalty completely or have not utilized the death penalty for years. In the United States, only nineteen states out of fifty states have banned the death penalty. However, statistics from the year 2014 have indicated that only seven states out of the thirty-one states that uphold capital punishment have actually performed executions. The United States utilizes several methods of execution, such as electrocution, lethal injection, and barbaric torment, which includes shooting and hanging (Akers et al. 1996). The European countries have imposed restrictions on the importation of drugs for use in lethal injections in the United States, citing their arguments that they cannot be involved in matters that involve termination of life. According to Burtman (2002), cases of murder were low in states that abolished capital punishment as compared to states that upheld death penalty measures. Statistically, the number of capital offenses in the United States is higher than in countries that do not apply the death penalty.

From the legal perspective, the justice system is not perfect, and there have been many cases where

inmates have been proven innocent, have been beaten into submission and forced to sign, or have had a lawyer who was not adequately capable of helping their client. As argued by Burtman, “many lawyers who have represented failed capital defendants had legal troubles and discrepancies.” It is heartbreaking to examine the statistics that indicate that innocent citizens are sentenced to death for crimes they did not commit. As indicated by Holloway (2015), four percent of inmates subjected to the death penalty in the United States are probably innocent. In the wake of DNA technology, a substantial number of inmates have been exonerated. This indicates that these exonerated inmates may have faced early death in conjunction with the capital punishment handed to them. DNA technology has proven to be instrumental in analyzing cases and has saved many innocent lives. Also, there are other malpractices facing the justice system which, when compiled together, lead to the need for the total abolishment of the death penalty application from the criminal justice system. In regard to this, the justice system needs major reforms in terms of accountability and procedures to ensure that the convicted persons are actually the ones who committed the crime in question, and inmates subjected to death penalty trials should be required to have competent and experienced lawyers to aid in their cases.

From the psychological perspective, some people become mentally ill after being in prison and are not given a reduced sentence, even though their mental capacity has changed. According to Ott (2004), “Criminals who have mental complications do not understand the consequences of their actions or even comprehend the death penalty rule.” Mentally incapacitated individuals have the mental inability to determine what’s wrong or right for themselves, and the death penalty policy does not exclude criminals who become mentally challenged during the years of their trials. Due to this, the death penalty imposed on these individuals does not perform its intended function since the executed criminal does not understand the ruling. This means that the death penalty, as stated by Ott, “is not a practicable solution for mentally challenged offenders since they are unable to understand the reason for their death.” The intended purpose of the death penalty for these types of offenders will be meaningless and a waste of resources. An alternative measure should be developed to make mentally incapacitated convicted criminals accountable rather than subjecting them to the death penalty. They do not have an idea of what’s being done to them, and hence, they cannot learn any lesson from death.

Conclusion

The death penalty was put in place to help decrease crimes, but research shows that 80% of executions are done in southern states, and they indeed have the highest murder rates in the country. Therefore, capital punishment is not the solution to curbing capital offenses. Other countries have opted for other alternative measures to deal with capital offenses, and their murder rates are much lower than the rate in the United States. It is evident that capital punishment results in more harm than good to society, hence the need for its eradication from the criminal justice system. On the contrary, instead of reducing crimes, statistics indicate that the policy is somehow accelerating the rate of crimes in the states where the law is applicable. The justice system in the country does not

offer a perfect platform that will ensure the accused individuals gain access to fair trials and that innocent lives are protected. Additionally, the capital punishment policy is harder on murder victims' families since the cases take too much time to be decided. The death penalty punishes the affected families more than the offenders who committed the crime, thus jeopardizing their lives (Glosser, 2016). Human life is very valuable, and in some cases, there is no precise way to ensure one is given a fair trial or to ensure that the lawyer provided to them is working to the best of their capabilities. The death penalty does not deter crime; therefore, I believe the death penalty should be abolished, and a life sentence would suffice for the crime committed, or other alternatives could be considered as stated in the article.

Final Paragraph

The death penalty has been a highly controversial practice in the United States of America. The practice dates back to English law, where virtually any person convicted of delinquency faced a mandatory death sentence. All violent crimes attracted death sentences from the criminal justice system. However, over the decades, the practice has been widely despised and termed inappropriate. Comparatively, the death penalty has not been proven always to be adequate or even to help decrease crime. There should be other methods put in place so that responses to crimes committed can provide true justice to victims. According to Burtman (2002), cases of murder were low in states which abolished capital punishment as compared to states which upheld death penalty measures. Instead of reducing crimes, statistics indicate that the policy is somehow accelerating the rate of crimes in the states where the law is applicable. Research shows that 80% of executions are done in southern states, and they indeed have the highest murder rates in the country. Subsequently, the justice system is not perfect, and there have been many cases where inmates have been proven innocent, have been beaten into submission and forced to sign, or have had a lawyer who was not adequately capable of helping their client. As argued by Burtman, "many lawyers who have represented failed capital defendants had legal troubles and discrepancies." Furthermore, from the psychological perspective, some people become mentally ill after being in prison and are not given a reduced sentence even though their mental capacity has changed. According to Ott (2004), "Criminals who have mental complications do not understand the consequences of their actions or even comprehend the death penalty rule." I believe the death penalty should be abolished. A life sentence would suffice for the crime committed instead, or other alternatives could be considered, as stated in the article.

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