Capital Punishment: Review Of Studies

This article has been chosen because it is so controversial and divides many countries apart, whilst many countries have banned it, it is still in use in many countries. I am a citizen of Pakistan where the death penalty was re-legalized quite recently, but it has not been used correctly as there are too many errors with investigations and there is an 85% overturn rate. While those who have committed such actions should be penalized, too many innocent individuals have been wrongly executed. The other topics were about paternity confidence and mate retentions which are also important but I just didn't feel quite as passionate about those, I believe that capital punishment is more important to talk about as too many people are in custody awaiting their deaths whereas many of those may be juveniles, individuals living below the poverty line or those that are mentally unstable.

1. Past research about capital punishment has been about exploring cultural and individual factors such as religious customs and mental and emotional health, past research has been conducted to find out why many prefer imprisonment over death. This research takes a more proactive stance and proposes that environmental factors can play a huge role when deciding punishment policies. Availability or scarcity of resources can play a huge role when deciding whether a society would lean towards the execution or imprisonment of an individual. Four studies were carried out globally and within the United States of America to record the preferences of individuals. Four studies were carried out and they tested how scarcity of resources would change people's responses to capital punishment and how existing resource scarcity causes people to think about capital punishment.

2. Four studies are conducted to get an accurate idea of the opinions people have about the capital punishment. The first study was used to analyse the correlation between resource scarcity and death penalty laws, information about death penalty laws were collected from 131 countries. As information of resource availability was not readily available, data on human development was collected, which was then compiled to form a binary code which was used to indicate whether the countries have the capital punishment law in place as a matter of law. The hypothesis formed for this study was that countries with lower human development would have a strong positive correlation to maintaining the capital punishment law whereas countries with high human development would not. In order to test the hypothesis, global data regarding human development was collected as a substitute for information regarding resource scarcity. The information was collected from the IHDI (Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index). Evaluating the information, many factors were considered, firstly an accurate representation of resource harshness was required, and an accurate scale was needed. Secondly, another scale was required to measure a comprehensive report of resource deprivation so it would better help identify the complexity of environmental harshness on a global scale. Lastly, information about death penalty laws from each country were recorded and a binary code was created from all the data available, this allowed the program to indicate whether the capital punishment was just in place as a legal matter.

The second study was only conducted within the 50 states of the USA, it was used to determine each state's level of resource availability, but as that was not available, the per capita income data for each state was acquired. Information regarding the legality of the death penalty law was

also acquired and finally a binary code was created to indicate whether a state used the capital punishment law as a legal issue. The hypothesis obtained was that states with lower per capita income would be more likely to have the capital punishment law in place than states with a higher per capita income.

The third study was conducted on a purely experimental basis, it was designed to test whether a shift in resource availability would cause a change in an individual's views on the capital punishment law. Some important factors to consider here would an individual's political views and their socioeconomic status. A hundred and twenty-eight participants were selected, and they were divided into two groups, but because people have a very stringent view on capital punishment, the hypothesis was that individuals who face higher resource scarcity would be more compliant with the death penalty whereas those with lower resource scarcity would not.

In the previous study, we hypothesized that perceived resource scarcity would cause higher favourability towards the death penalty, in the final study we are going to test whether resource scarcity increases the perceived risk of keeping severe offenders in society, which increases approval towards the death penalty. Many have different reasons for why they endorse the capital punishment law; it is relatively cost effective, scares people from committing the same crimes, murderers do not deserve to live and the most basic of all- revenge. A very important issue this study focuses upon are the cost of error measures. What we mean by that in this scenario is- what are the risks with keeping those offenders alive? This study will aim to check whether resource scarcity would cause individuals to re-assess the risk of keeping murderers alive, which would help shift how intensely they favour the death penalty law. Furthermore, this study also tests whether the conditions spoken about only include the individuals for whom the death penalty is a feasible option under certain circumstances. A massive criterion would be death qualification, this is basically a criterion put in place during capital cases to prohibit those who have a staunch view of the capital punishment law to serve as jurors. The law requires jurors to have no previous perspective on the matter, it requires them to form their opinions whilst hearing the information presented to them by the defendant and plaintiff. Including this criterion in this study proves highly valuable as it increases ecological validity which means that the research can be applied to a real-life situation quite easily.

3. The first study required a high amount of data to be compiled such global data on human development, next data for resource deprivation was required and both were acquired from the IHDI which is compiled by the UN. The compiled information contained personal income data, socioeconomic factors, and years of formal learning. Lastly, information regarding death penalty laws were collected and compiled to form a binary code which would give a result. The second study required information about average per capita income for each state, data on life expectancy for each state was also collected. Lastly, information about population sizes, murder rates, political allegiances and death penalty laws were collected, which were then inserted into a computer program. The third study required a lot more as it required a hundred twenty-eight willing participants who were asked to examine two different sets of photos and texts. The first set of photos and texts contained information that showed a steady decline in the economy, high rates of home foreclosure and unemployment. The second set showed the exact opposite of the above. Right after, participants were asked to fill in a survey regarding their new attitudes towards the death penalty. The last study required two hundred twenty-four participants and they were all told they would be a part of a study that assessed perceptions towards different environments. Again, pictures and texts were given to the participants and they were told to put themselves in those scenarios, they were randomly picked to view the same texts and photos in

the previous study which showed either a decline or incline in the economic growth. Participants were then asked a series of questions pertaining to their attitudes towards the justice system. Researchers asked questions about risk calculation, endorsement of the death penalty, and a death qualification question which basically decides if they would be fit to serve on a capital case jury.

4. The hypothesis developed for the first study was that countries with lower human development would be more likely to employ the death penalty law. The hypothesis proved to be true as countries with lower average income and development were more likely to have employed the death penalty law. A control test was carried out as countries with higher populations tend to have higher crime rates, so population size was controlled by running a logistical regression with population and human development. This changed a lot as it proved that population size determined whether the law was implemented or not. In the second study we hypothesized that states with lower per capita would be more likely to employ the death penalty law, so a series of logistical regressions were conducted, these proved that states with lower per capita income were more likely to employ the death penalty law. Another test was conducted for the same study whether the law would remain the same if state population size, murder and political ideology was added to the logistical regression, it also proved that per capita income was still the most important factor. The hypothesis proved to be true in the third study as individuals in the resource scarcity section were more likely to support the death penalty than those in the resource abundance section. The last study used the death qualified sample and further proved the previous study's results, individuals supported the death penalty law more rigidly during periods of perceived scarcity.

5. The main strength of this study would be that all factors were accounted for and proper measures were used to form a hypothesis. For instance, GDP could have been used as an adequate measure but because there is a huge discrepancy between resource availability and the population it is available to, it may not have been sufficient. There was a constant use of logistic regression instead of linear regression which is better in these cases as a logistic regression is only used when a binary variable is involved. The paper was very well though out and explained its purpose in a way that was easy to understand if one did not have much knowledge of the topic beforehand. The hypotheses made by the authors were clear and concise, and they were all accurate or very close. The findings of this paper were quite remarkable as I would not guessed that such a high amount of people would be in favour of the capital punishment but they seemed plausible when all the factors were laid out, I would not have thought resource scarcity would be a vital factor as it seems impertinent but all the factors combined make the difference.

6. In some areas, the statistical data and terminology used may be too complex for somebody not well versed in statistics, terms used such as logistical regression should have been explained so it would be easier for the reader to follow. At many occasions, terms were used that may not have been known to somebody who does not know much about criminology or the justice system, my advice would be to include the definitions of such terms so it is easier for somebody who does not know much about the topic. The statistical methods used were not explained and as it is an evolutionary psychology paper, it should be explained more as the methods used were not known to everyone. Such methods include the logistical regressions conducted and more examples of terms used would be variability, per capita income and the letters used such as the beta coefficient (?), when they are first used, a small description about them should be given.

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