Death Penalty in Canada

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Abstract

This study was conducted to determine if the death penalty is more beneficial than the current legislation Canada has implemented. The data was collected through a qualitative method where the primary data was obtained through academic sources. There are many variables discussed that are a deciding factors if the death penalty is beneficial over current legislation. The first variable that discussed is the history of the death penalty in Canada and why it was removed. The second variable is the public's perception on the death penalty, as different age groups may favour or oppose to the death penalty. The third variable discussed is the capacity that correctional facilities have. It was determined that correctional facilities are declining in capacity, which appears to be that crime rates in Canada are also on the decline. Crime rates in Canada have been the lowest since 1970. The last variable discussed is how the death penalty can be cruel and unusual in present day because it is a violation of an individual's rights. After further research of the variables it was determined that currently Canada should maintain their current legislation as the death penalty does not have enough benefits to it in present day.

Background

This study was conducted to define and explore the fundamentals of the death penalty benefiting Canada in numerous aspects such as the history, the cost, the current correctional facility population and determining if it is a human rights violation. The death penalty serves as a punishment to someone who commits a serious crime such as "murder, treason and rape were still considered capital offences" (Gendreau & Renke, 2016). The death penalty results in no rehabilitation for the offender who has committed the crime. In relation to Canada having the death penalty many years ago (1976) (Thompson, 2008a, p. 172), the question has been raised on

why it was abolished and whether or not the current legislation for serious violent crimes is sufficient. An in-depth analysis needs to be completed to determine why the death penalty was removed from Canada's Criminal Justice System, so the same problem will not be brought up again as to many years ago, which led to it being abolished. In addition, also determine if Canada's current legislation on serious crime is sufficient and that correctional facilities are not over capacity. A public perception is crucial in determining if Canada should go forth with implementing the death penalty. Further research one the death penalty is crucial to analyze and determine if it's in Canada's best interest to implement the death penalty into their legislation.

Purpose

The main purpose of this research is to determine if the death penalty in Canada would be more beneficial over current legislation. Many years ago (1976) "Thompson, 2008a, p. 172)

Canada had the death penalty in their legislation. Determining the variables involved with what may help determining if the death penalty will be beneficial is important in this research. The first variable that needs to be discussed is the history of the death penalty in Canada and why it was removed. The second variable that needs to be discussed is publics' perception to see if the public supports or opposes to the death penalty. The third variable that needs to be discussed is the capacity that correctional facilities have. The fourth variable that needs to be discussed is recent crime rates in Canada under their legislation for serious crimes. The last variable being discussed is how the death penalty can be cruel and unusual in present day because it is a violation of an individual's rights. The death penalty can serve as deterrence from an individual committing a serious crime as it may make the person wanting to commit the crime to think twice before doing the act. If the death penalty is beneficial it would make tax payers happier as

they would have to pay less taxes; in addition, if it reduces crime rates from what they actually are then it would make people living in Canada feel much safer. If the death penalty does help assist with all the questions mentioned then it would cause some controversy in Canada to bring it back.

Research Question and Rationale

The main question that is being asked is if it is beneficial for Canada to have the death penalty in their criminal justice system rather than their current legislation on violent crimes. The main question can be broken into numerous sub questions so it can be answered. The first sub question being able to know the history that Canada had with the death penalty. The second sub question is determining the cost of the death penalty versus current legislation. The third question is would the death penalty reduce crime rates over Canada's current legislation. The last question is determining what the current correctional facility population is. The death penalty has been a topic of interest in Canada because "a public opinion poll conducted in 2013 found that 63 per cent of Canadians supported reinstating the death penalty" (Gendreau & Renke, 2016). Furthermore, if it does truly benefit Canada then the information needs to be exposed to the public so they can make their voices heard. Perhaps due to not much talks lately of the death penalty and considering that not many countries use this approach, the public is not educated on the death penalty.

The intended audience for this research is any individual that has an interest to the news, or any personnel involved with the law. This would be beneficial to an individual who pays close attention to the news as this topic can cause debates amongst professionals in this topic. Many people enjoy viewing the perspectives of both sides before making a decision. Furthermore, for

any individuals involved with the law or is a law enforcement personnel this would be a topic of interest so they can judge for themselves to see if having the death penalty in Canada will be beneficial and to see if their jobs which involves the law has a positive or negative impact.

What is Known

History

Canada has had a relationship with the death penalty in the past; in addition, "in preconfederation Canada, hundreds of criminal offences were punishable by death" (Gendreau & Renke, 2016). Canada has had it in its criminal justice system; furthermore, prior to 1976 the death penalty was in the legislation; however, "the process of making Canada abolitionist began at the level of high politics as an attempt to simultaneously make the criminal justice system more human and bring Canada into the modern era" (Thompson, 2008a, p. 172). It appears that the death penalty was becoming outdated and Canada wanted to try something new for their justice system. Furthermore, the "parliament officially removed the death penalty from Canada's Criminal Code in 1976 and defeated a motion to have it reinstated in 1987" (Thompson, 2008a, p. 172). However, Canada did not completely abolish the death penalty in 1976, as "murder remained a capital crime until 1998, when Canada completely abolished the death penalty" (Gendreau & Renke, 2016). Looking at Canada's history, it can modify the death penalty to fit into their legislation today. The question remains how much of a modification would Canada need to make for the death penalty to benefit Canada.

Public Debate

Over the years there has been public debates on having the death penalty implemented (Gendreau & Renke, 2016). It is entirely up to an individual to decide if they support the idea of the death penalty. There are numerous variables that can change the decision for the death penalty; furthermore, age plays a crucial factor in the decision making as people that are "older tend to be more supportive of capital punishment than younger individuals" (Bohm, Lambert, Baker, Tucker, p. 6-7). Older individuals (ages 40+) prefer the death penalty due to the fact that they may have lived a part of their life when Canada had the death penalty and prefer it.

However, individuals that are under the age of 40 may prefer to keep the law in Canada the same due to the fact that they don't find any flaws in the current legislation. Individuals believe that having the death penalty in the legislation will reduce the amount of violent crimes as it serves as a deterrent. It serves as a deterrent because individuals that are seeking to commit a serious violent crime such as murder will think twice before committing. In addition, if an individual wants to take another person's life then they are also taking their life away due to the punishment they will receive. From a public poll conducted in 2013 the results determined that 63 per cent Canadians support having the death penalty in the criminal justice system (Gendreau & Renke, 2016). Nonetheless, "public are equally disposed to reducing crime by rehabilitating offenders as they are to imprisoning them for longer" (Jones & Weatherburn, 2011, p. 9) this demonstrates that the public have not truly made up their minds on what is best for them and the country. This shows that the public supports for the death penalty but the decision is not unanimous. Numerous citizens of Canada are going to be disappointed and are going to have a

tough time adjusting if it is implemented due to the fact that there is going to be a significant change in the Canadian criminal justice system.

Citizens of Canada may favor bringing back the death penalty due to it being a cost benefit plan as their thinking may be that the criminal that has committed a serious crime will not have to stay in prison for twenty-five years, which the taxpayers are going to have to pay for. However, individuals do not put into perspective that the death penalty does not occur right away, as there is a wait time before the individual goes on death row. The individual spends time in prison as they go through court process and then eventually once the individual is charged with a violent crime such as first-degree murder then they will be placed on the death row. In fact, keeping a prisoner in jail "it costs about \$312 a day, or \$113, 880 a year, to house an inmate in prison" (Paperny, 2012). About \$312 a day to keep an inmate in a correctional facility is a lot for an individual who pays taxes, this may be a factor in which an individual may resort to the death penalty as the offender will not have to serve his or her full sentence in prison. An ethical issue with this may be age groups. Different age groups may prefer the death penalty over other age groups.

Cruel and Unusual

Another argument proposed by individuals that can be opposed to the death penalty is that the death penalty can be cruel or unusual. For instance, if a person lowers himself or herself by murdering someone then citizens are lowering themselves to the same level by executing (Baker, Lambert & Tucker, 2006, p. 6). Furthermore, according to Baker, Lambert and Tucker the death penalty violates "the fundamental human right to life" (2006, p. 6). Taking an

individuals life appears to be immorally wrong. In addition, it would be cruel to take an individuals life that was later determined to be innocent. In present day, with so many new laws and regulations, the death penalty in Canada would cause some dilemma as "Article 3 of the UN Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment forbids the extradition of individuals in cases where there is a possibility that they might be subjected to torture, which was beginning to be equated with capital punishment" (Thompson, 2008a, p.182). This justifies that there would be many obstacles that Canada would need to clear before having the death penalty implemented. In fact, this would cause some major controversy with the death penalty. However, without the death penalty a criminal's life cannot taken and if they are found to be innocent at a later time then they can be exonerated. An individual who is exonerated for their crimes due to them being innocent can still live their life freely. However, an individual's life that is taken by the death penalty cannot be undone. It would be more impactful to the family that lost that individual to the death penalty after finding out that he/she was innocent.

Current Legislation

According to the official government website of Canada the current legislation in Canada states that in the Criminal Code of Canada (1985) under Section 745(a) "a person who has been convicted of high treason or first degree murder, that the person be sentenced to imprisonment for life without eligibility for parole until the person has served twenty-five years of the sentence;" (Canada, 2017). When looking at this closely, twenty-five years in prison appears to be more than enough time for an individual that has committed a crime to realize what they have done wrong, especially considering that the person is ineligible to apply for parole during the

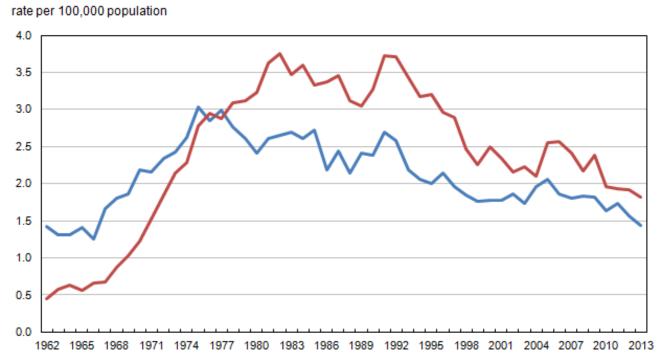
twenty-five years; furthermore, an individual that receives the maximum amount of sentencing in Canada must stay in prison and is not allowed to be granted to leave prison at an earlier time due to their good behavior. Even after the twenty-five years in prison, the offender still has an opportunity to rehabilitate back into the community.

Correctional Facilities

With the current legislation the correctional facilities that hold prisoners appear to be doing fine due to the fact that "rate of adults being supervised by the correctional system continues to decline" (Statistics Canada, 2016). It appears that individuals are committing less crime, which is causing lower rates of supervision in correctional facilities. If correctional facilities have intake space for criminals then death penalty is not an asset to Canada, especially due to the fact that crime rates in Canada have been decreasing. Nonetheless, Figure 1.0 from Statistics Canada portrays attempted homicide rates in Canada, which has been declining.

Figure 1.0 (Statistics Canada, 2017)

Chart 2 Homicides and attempted murders, Canada, 1962 to 2013



Note: Excludes 329 victims killed in the Air India incident in 1985. Data on homicide are available back to 1961 through the Homicide Survey, while data on attempted murder are available back to 1962 through the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Attempted murder

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey and Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Homicide =

Looking at Figure 1.0 the graph shows that in 2013 both attempted murders and homicide rates in Canada are at the lowest since 1970. Figure 1.0 portrays that there is just less than 1.5 attempted murders per 100,000 people in Canada; however, for homicides the Figure 1.0 shows just less than 2.0 homicides per 100,000 people in Canada. It is evident that with the current legislation that Canada has crime rates are still declining especially with the peak year of 1982 with approximately 3.7 attempted murders per 100,000 people in Canada and with just over 3.0 homicides per 100,000 people in Canada.

Methodology and Research Design

The type of data collected that was used to obtain information on this research topic was through a qualitative data collection method. In addition, being able to take quality and related information on the topic to determine if the death penalty will be beneficial for Canada. Furthermore, various search engines were used to obtain information regarding the death penalty in Canada. Specifically information based on Canada was used due to the fact that the research outcome could be directed into the wrong direction if other countries were involved for comparison. The collected data was analyzed which concluded that all data found linked to the death penalty; in addition, data such as if it supported or went against the death penalty in Canada. Due to the fact that there was a limited amount of academic journals found through the Academic Search Complete on the death penalty, all of them were chosen for abstract review because they all had some relation to the death penalty in Canada. The sources shared a trend, which included knowledge about the Canadian Justice System; in addition, the data that was going to help answer the research question was extracted from the source. Various statistics were portrayed in some of the academic journals. It was determined that some people do favor the death penalty however, are not aware on what would actually happen if it were to be implemented.

The journal "Beyond expression: amnesty international's decision to oppose capital punishment, 1973" (Thompson, 2008) was excluded from the research study due to the fact that there were other journal articles that had the same information as this one. The information in this journal article did not go into specific details like the others in regards to the human rights

situation the death penalty cause, which is why this journal article was excluded from the research study.

The journal "Two Americas: capital punishment views among Canadian and U.S. college students" (Lambert, Baker, Tucker, 2006) was included to this research to show more in-depth statistics on age to see if individuals support the death penalty and think it would be beneficial and if people do favour the death penalty then determine which age groups prefer the death penalty.

The article "Corrections Canada to make budget cuts as prison population grows" (Paperny, 2012) was included as it portrays statistics from a financial perspective. It gives the reader an idea on how much it costs to hold an offender in prison. This article gives specific statistics so the reader can comprehend and form an opinion on the information that is being provided to them. This article provided this research a more vivid answer to the research question, as there is statistics to better help the read understand.

Discussion and Findings

The connection between all research sources found had information on the death penalty. In fact, research sources had something different to say in each one, which was an advantage for this research study as there was a wide variety of information that was used in portraying this research. After discussing about what was known about the death penalty it is evident that there is extensive amount of information on the death penalty if looking at it in both perspectives; furthermore, the two perspectives being benefitting Canada and not benefitting Canada. Some

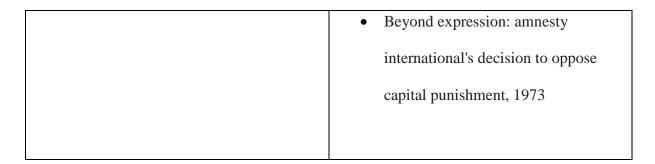
information that can be further analyzed is determining the cost of the death penalty. Knowing a rough estimate on what the cost may be on executing one individual including the money spent during trial will provide a more insightful look on the death penalty. The cost of the death penalty may be taken into consideration when Canada had it numerous years ago, but it would be hard to convert that amount into present day due to inflation of everything over the years.

Literature Review

The sources that were obtained and the data that was collected from them was found from different search engines such as Google Scholar, newspaper articles and journal articles; in addition, the primary source of information obtained was received from the Justice Institute of British Columbia Library Data Base. Specifically it was from the Academic Search Premiere, which included a variety of academic journals on the death penalty in Canada. The first initial search used keywords 'capital punishment' with the following limitations, full text, scholarly (peer reviewed), and academic journals and from the years 1955 to 2017. A total of 1,696 hits were found. However, the searched needed to be narrowed down further more to match research criteria. The search was revised with 'capital punishment [AND] Canada' with the following limitations, full text, scholarly (peer reviewed), and academic journals and from the years 1955 to 2017. After this search there was a total of 26 hits on this specific search, where multiple articles were selected for review. In addition, a Google search was conducted for related information to this topic. Information from, newspaper articles, government websites and other miscellaneous websites were obtained from. The chart below will illustrate what exactly was searched and found:

Table 1: Search Results

Keywords	Capital punishment
Database	Academic Search Complete (EBSCO)
Refined Results	Limitations – Full Text; Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals; Academic Journals; Years 1955-2017
Total # Hits	1,696
Revised Search	Capital punishment [AND] Canada
Total # Hits	26
Articles Selected for Review	 Death penalty decisions: instructions comprehension, attitudes, and decision mediators Capital punishment and deterrence: understanding disparate results Uneasy abolitionists: Canada, the death penalty, and the importance of international norms



Furthermore, other newspaper articles and journals were obtained. A total of sixteen articles were selected for an abstract review that had some relation to capital punishment or the death penalty. These articles were selected because they had credible and generic information on capital punishment or the death penalty, which would assist with the research question being answered; however, not all sixteen articles selected for abstract review had a relationship to Canada causing them to be not selected for the full review. After the search was revised with the addition to 'Canada' in the search, more related articles appeared which could assist with the research question.

A total of nine articles or academic articles were selected for full review due to the fact that they had some sort of relationship to the specific research question. It is crucial for the research to be related to Canada. The nine articles were selected for an in depth analysis on the content. The nine articles selected are:

- 1. Criminal Code (Canada, 2017);
- Capital punishment and deterrence: understanding disparate results (Durlauf, Fu & Navarro, 2013);
- 3. Death penalty insanity (Fotheringham, 2001);
- 4. Capital punishment (Gendreau & Renke, 2016);

- 5. Willingness to pay for rehabilitation versus punishment to reduce adult and juvenile crime (Jones & Weatherburn, 2011);
- 6. Death penalty decisions: instruction comprehension, attitudes, and decision mediators (Patry & Penrod, 2013);
- 7. Adult correctional statistics in Canada, 2014/2015 (Reitano, 2016);
- 8. Uneasy abolitionists: Canada, the death penalty, and the importance of international norms (Thompson, 2008);
- 9. Beyond expression: amnesty international's decision to oppose capital punishment, 1973 (Thompson, 2008).

The first research source *Criminal Code* (Canada, 2017) provided the legal aspect of research. This source was used to show the current legislation Canada has for violent crimes such as treason or first-degree murder. It outlined the maximum sentencing in Canada. It demonstrated the current laws on violent crimes and what the punishment can be. This source does not directly relate to the death penalty, but does stand on its own and challenges the death penalty compared to the current laws. The audience will be able to compare the two to get a better understanding. This assisted in determining if the death penalty is ideal compared to current laws.

The second source is a journal called *Capital punishment and deterrence: understanding disparate results* (Durlauf, Fu & Navarro, 2013). This journal showed different models, in which people will relate to see whether or not capital punishment is deterrence for them. It depicted that if Canada does have capital punishment in their legislation will an individual think twice committing a violent crime such as murder. In addition, if an individual gets caught with murder

then they will have to suffer severe consequences. This article demonstrated whether or not individuals will fear the death penalty and stop themselves from committing a violent crime.

This article can assisted as a beneficial fact for the death penalty as it may serve as a deterrent.

The third research source *Death penalty insanity* (Fotheringham, 2001) showed how frequently the death penalty is used around the world. This source explained, "United States found support for the death penalty was down to 66 per cent, its lowest level in 19 years" (Fotheringham, 2001). Furthermore, it specifically stated that "Canadians now know... how many innocent people have been sent to prison. Ninety-five people on death row in the United States have been freed with proof of innocence since 1973" (Fotheringham, 2001). This information assisted in determining if it is beneficial for Canada to implement the death penalty into their Criminal Justice System. In addition, this research source assisted in providing statistics in regards to the death penalty. This source will give the audience a more vivid perspective.

The fourth research source is *Capital punishment* (Gendreau & Renke, 2016). This source was able to obtain the overall information on the death penalty in Canada. It explaieds Canada having the death penalty many years ago and how it was abolished from the Canadian Criminal Justice System. Furthermore, "in 1998, Canada eliminated the death penalty for military members, thus becoming a fully abolitionist country when it comes to states executions" (Genreau & Renke, 2016). Another important fact it stated was the public's perception on the fact of having the death penalty reinstated. It explained, "the majority of studies in Western societies conclude that murder rates have remained stable or declined, along with decreasing use

of capital punishment (Genreau & Renke, 2016). This research article provided an overall general look at the death penalty. Furthermore, it will provide the audience general knowledge of the death penalty, so their attentions are drawn.

The fifth research source *Willingness to pay for rehabilitation versus punishment to reduce adult and juvenile crime* (Jones & Weatherburn, 2011) illustrated how the public feels about violent offenders. It states that "public are equally disposed to reducing crime by rehabilitating offenders as they are to imprisoning them for longer (Jones & Weatherburn, 2011). If rehabilitation is cost effective and shows that it works then it is beneficial to not have the death penalty. This research article tied in with the public perception on the death penalty. It will portray the citizens' perspective.

The sixth research source *Death penalty decisions: instruction comprehension, attitudes, and decision mediators* (Patry & Penrod, 2013) depicts how the death penalty has changed significantly over the years through a specific case *Furnam v. Georgia (1972)* (Patry & Penrod, 2013, p. 205). It depicts the flaws that the death penalty may have such as "given the potential cost to the defendant of errors in death penalty cases (life), it is critical importance that jurors fully comprehend instructions on how to find and use aggravating and mitigating factors during sentencing" (Patry & Penrod, 2013, p. 205). Someone's life is in hands of a citizen of the country who is a juror. There also may be the case of the individual being innocent; however, the individual still has to face capital punishment.

The seventh source *Adult correctional statistics in Canada*, 2014/2015 (Reitano, 2016) illustrated Canadian correctional statistics. Specifically, it showed statistics of population in prisons. Then after it is broken down into gender, age, and province. This source was used to find out if the current correctional facilities are able to cope with the population/intake of prisoners that are being held there. This assisted the audience getting a more vivid look on statistics in the recent years of correctional facilities and their population.

The eighth source *Uneasy abolitionists: Canada, the death penalty, and the importance of international norms* (Thompson, 2008) went in depth of the Canadian history with the death penalty. Information such as when Canada had it, how effective it was, and why it was abolished. This source will be important, as it will draw the baselines for the research to show the previous history on capital punishment in Canada. It gives the reader of what happened with the death penalty many years ago.

The ninth and final source being *Beyond expression: amnesty international's decision to oppose capital punishment, 1973* (Thompson, 2008) showed the point of view of not supporting the death penalty, in addition, "Amnesty International was by no means the first civil society organization to adopt unconditional opposition of the death penalty as a policy" (Thompson, 2008b, p. 333). This research article tied in with the law aspect as the death penalty may cause some human rights violations.

Secondary sources were the primary source of information for this research. Being able to obtain information and statistics on the death penalty to determine if it is beneficial for Canada to

implement the death penalty. A common theme that was found within the sources listed above; furthermore, they all had to do something with the death penalty whether there are facts to support or oppose to it; furthermore, there were statistics within some of the sources to provide a more vivid perception on the death penalty. Data was extracted from sources to portray the best answer to the research question.

Recommendations

Canada has had the death penalty in their legislation in the past and would not be any stranger to it. It appears that at this current time Canada appears to be doing fine within their criminal justice system. There was a reason why Canada let go of the death penalty to begin with and people wanting it back into the legislation does not make sense in terms of benefiting Canada. Furthermore, Canada abolished the death penalty for it being outdated. It is known that the death penalty would free up correctional facilities; however, statistics state that the crime rates and correctional facility capacities are dropping. For the time being Canada's current legislation appears to be sufficient for the current crime rate it has; in addition, there is no reason for Canada to go through the whole process of changing their legislation when the current sentencing of a serious crime is working. Another aspect is that having the death penalty would cause many human right situations where possibly an innocent person's life may be taken if they are tried with the death penalty. The discussion of the death penalty should be brought up again if crime rates start to rise in terms of murders or treason; in addition, if correctional facilities start to go over capacity and are unable to take in prisoners, then the idea of death penalty should be brought up again.

Conclusion

Overall, there is abundance amount information on the death penalty. The talk of the death penalty in Canada has raised some questions whether or not Canada should bring the death penalty back into their legislation. After researching the question extensively it appears that at this time Canada does not require the death penalty in their legislation; nonetheless, Canada does not require it due to the fact that at this current time there is significant benefit to implementing it. Changing the whole legislation versus how Canada would benefit do not trade off well. Especially with crime rates having been on the decline over the years there is no significant reason for Canada to have the death penalty in their justice system. There are points that would make the death penalty beneficial in Canada, such as cost, crime rates and freeing up correctional space, but the current legislation appears to be doing fine. Executing an individual under the death penalty legislation will cause major controversy in Canada, as it would be a violation of human rights. Looking through the publics' eye, it has been noted that older individuals may prefer the death penalty over the younger age individuals. The death penalty benefiting Canada may be a topic of interest in the future however present time the current legislation is sufficient for Canada.

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