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SOCIOLOGICAL AND CRIMINOLOGICAL VIEWPOINTS OF POLICE PERSONNEL TOWARDS CAPITAL PUNISHMENT: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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Abstract:

The present study is an attempt to find out the sociological and criminological viewpoints of police personnel towards capital punishment. The sample consists of 107 police personnel of which 71 male and 36 female respondents, who were randomly selected from 5 districts around Mysuru region. The selected sample was administered both demographic data sheet and structured inventory which consisted of sociological and criminological viewpoints regarding capital punishment. Data collected were analyzed using chi-square tests. Results revealed sociologically and criminologically death punishment was justified by majority of the police personnel. Sociologically, 76.6% of the sample selected considered capital punishment as a scientific in the modern society, 80.4% of them agreed that capital punishment can control crimes in society, 86.0% of them agreed that capital punishment will create awareness and 76.6% of them considered awarding capital punishment is found to have improved the social system. Criminologically, 84.1% respondents supported capital punishment for crimes of serious nature, 83.2% of agreed for execution of capital punishment create fear in the offenders, 59.8% of them for age limit, 72.9% for capital punishment award for criminal acts committed by mental patients/persons with a pervert mind, 81.3% for awarding capital punishment for crimes like acid attack, Supari killing etc. 82.2% agreed as capital punishment impacts the future offences/offenders 75.7% of them indicated 'yes' for quantum of crimes reduce due to capital punishment, 67.3% of them agreed that number of offenders reduce due to execution of capital punishment, and 87.9% of them for more coordination between the Police and Law in the investigation leading to capital punishment

Key words: Capital punishment, Sociological viewpoint, Criminological viewpoint, Police Personnel.

Introduction

The historical of the use of the capital punishment, being part of the human history, involves religion at almost every step of the way. Religion shapes society, society shapes religion: this chiasmus is unavoidable. Our interest, though, will be limited to the place of capital punishment in Western Christendom. The single most influential fact, accounting for the early Christian acceptance of the capital punishment, was undoubtedly the Bible. Thirty-six capital offenses are found in the Mosaic Law, split into thirteen classes of misdeeds and calling for death by stoning, burning, decapitation or strangulation. Although these biblical precepts seem to bring with them unavoidable (Mendelsohn, 1968) blood-sheds, the discussion about the implementation of the capital punishment among Rabbis has been proliferating for almost two millenniums. Some Rabbis are advocating the abolition of the capital punishment, as they believe that biblical law was intended as a solemn warning to the extreme seriousness of crime, but that the courts were justified in circumventing the law so that it becomes a dead letter. Language has (Erez, 1981) many uses and Law codes are not to be applied literally. The Rabbinic as well as contemporary western disputes indicate that capital punishment might be a very critical and slippery issue, if combined with an uncritical reading of the Old Testament law codes.

For example, Retentionists often quote Genesis 9:6 ("Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind"); modern scholars have, however, pointed out that the chapter has a poetic form, yet biblical laws were never written in poetic form. We seem to be dealing, therefore, not with a piece of legislation but with something like a proverb. Turning Romans 13:4 into a proof-text for capital punishment is even less persuasive when its context is more fully taken into account. Since the capital execution of Jesus is central to the message of the Gospel, it is worth asking whether early Christians had anything special to say about this punishment (Christian Reformed Church in North America, 1981).

So far as the capital punishment is concerned, it might seem that once it is granted that human life is sacred or that everyone has an equal right to life, the capital punishment has to be morally indefensible. Such a punishment seems to be inconsistent with ideals of human worth and value.

A punishment can be judged cruel and unusual or excessively severe, if it imposes more pain, suffering, loss of rights or other deprivation than is necessary to serve society purposes. Even if a painful death is what it always was, cruelty in human life is not. Cruelty and hence any cruel and unusual punishment, and the excessiveness it implies, take their moral degradation grade from the socio-cultural context, which is not fixed for all time.

Having number of discussions about the capital punishment sentiment, there are very few studies that analyze the assessments of police personnel. This is deplorable, an attempt is made to find out the sociological and criminological viewpoints of police personnel, which will be very unique as they deal more with the issue than others. Hence, the purpose behind this paper is to report sociological and criminological viewpoints of police personnel towards capital punishment.

Method:

Participants:

The study comprised of 107 police personnel among which 71 were male and remaining 36 were female respondents, who were randomly selected from five districts of Mysuru region comprising of Mysuru, Mandya, Chamarajanagara, Kodagu, and Hassan.

Tool employed:

Demographic Datasheet:

The demographic data comprised of information pertaining to name (optional), Age, Gender, profession and other details

Structured inventory: A structured inventory was developed by the researcher in consultation with the experts has been employed in the present study. This questionnaire was prepared to elicit sociological and criminological viewpoints of police personnel towards death punishment. The questionnaire consisted of 12 items regarding death punishment- 4 on sociological and 8 items on criminological view points

Procedure:

The first author personally visited all the police personnel in 5 districts of Mysuru region to collect the data. After taking the prior permission and consent from the respondents, structured inventory was given to them along with socio-demographic data sheet. Before administrating the questionnaire, they were assured of confidentiality. They were asked to answer all the questions. In case of difficulty in understanding the item/s, in order to get good response they were made clear in their local language. Once the data were collected, they were scored and fed to the computer.

The data were analyzed using Chi-square tests and Table 1 provides the frequency and percent responses for sociological view points on capital punishment and table 2 provides the frequency and percent responses for criminological view points along with chi-square tests.

Results

Table: 1

Frequency and percent (yes/no) responses of Police on General and sociological viewpoints regarding capital punishment

Statements/questions			Gender		Total	Test statistics
			Male	Female		
1. Is capital punishment scientific in the modern society?	Yes	F	54	28	82	$X^2_{(o)}=30.36;$ $p =.001$
		%	76.1%	77.8%	76.6%	
	No	F	17	8	25	$X^2_{(a)}= .040;$ $p=.842$
		%	23.9%	22.2%	23.4%	
2. Do you feel that capital punishment can control crimes in society?	Yes	F	58	28	86	$X^2_{(o)}=39.48;$ $p =.001$
		%	81.7%	77.8%	80.4%	
	No	F	13	8	21	$X^2_{(a)}= .232;$ $p=.630$
		%	18.3%	22.2%	19.6%	
3. Can capital punishment create awareness about crimes in modern society?	Yes	F	60	32	92	$X^2_{(o)}=55.41;$ $p =.001$
		%	84.5%	88.9%	86.0%	
	No	F	11	4	15	$X^2_{(a)}= .381;$ $p=.537$
		%	15.5%	11.1%	14.0%	
4. Has awarding capital punishment is found to have improved the social system?	Yes	F	54	28	82	$X^2_{(o)}=30.36;$ $p =.001$
		%	76.1%	77.8%	76.6%	
	No	F	17	8	25	$X^2_{(a)}= .040;$ $p=.842$
		%	23.9%	22.2%	23.4%	

Sociological viewpoints: For all the viewpoints mentioned majority of the police personnel had agreement with it. 76.6% of the sample selected considered capital punishment as a scientific in the modern society ($X^2=30.36$; $p =.001$), 80.4% of them agreed that capital punishment can control crimes in society ($X^2=39.48$; $p =.001$), 86.0% of them agreed that capital punishment create awareness about crimes in modern society and 76.6% ($X^2=55.41$; $p =.001$), of them considered awarding capital punishment is found to have improved the social system ($X^2=30.36$; $p =.001$). We find that majority of the police personnel selected for the study justified the capital punishment or capital punishment in India through various sociological viewpoints. All the chi-square values obtained for differences between 'yes' and 'no' responses were found to be significant, having significantly higher number of 'yes' frequencies than 'no'.

When associations were verified between male and female police personnel, chi-square tests revealed non-significant associations for all the four viewpoints, indicating a similarity in their response pattern, whether it is male or female police personnel, all of them justified the death punishment through sociological viewpoints.

Table:2

Frequency and percent (yes/no) responses of Police on criminological viewpoints regarding capital

punishment

Questions (Criminological)		Gender		Total	Test statistics	
		Male	Female			
1. Do you support capital punishment for crimes of serious nature?	Yes	F	62	28	90	$X^2_{(o)}=49.80$; $p =.001$ $X^2_{(a)}= 1.629$; $p=.202$
		%	87.3%	77.8%	84.1%	
	No	F	9	8	17	
		%	12.7%	22.2%	15.9%	
2. Will execution of capital punishment create fear in the offenders?	Yes	F	62	27	89	$X^2_{(o)}=47.11$; $p =.001$ $X^2_{(a)}= 2.593$.; $p=.107$
		%	87.3%	75.0%	83.2%	
	No	F	9	9	18	
		%	12.7%	25.0%	16.8%	
3. Should there be an age limit for imposing capital punishment?	Yes	F	43	21	64	$X^2_{(o)}=4.12$; $p =.042$ $X^2_{(a)}= .049$; $p=.824$
		%	60.6%	58.3%	59.8%	
	No	F	28	15	43	
		%	39.4%	41.7%	40.2%	
4. Should capital punishment be awarded for criminal acts committed by mental patients/ persons with a pervert mind?	Yes	F	53	25	78	$X^2_{(o)}=22.43$; $p =.001$ $X^2_{(a)}= .327$; $p=.567$
		%	74.6%	69.4%	72.9%	
	No	F	18	11	29	
		%	25.4%	30.6%	27.1%	
5. Can capital punishment be awarded for crimes like acid attack , Supari killing etc.	Yes	F	60	27	87	$X^2_{(o)}=41.95$; $p =.001$ $X^2_{(a)}= 1.421$; $p=.233$
		%	84.5%	75.0%	81.3%	
	No	F	11	9	20	
		%	15.5%	25.0%	18.7%	
6. Will capital punishment impact the future offences/offenders?	Yes	F	60	28	88	$X^2_{(o)}=44.49$; $p =.001$ $X^2_{(a)}= .741$; $p=.389$
		%	84.5%	77.8%	82.2%	
	No	F	11	8	19	
		%	15.5%	22.2%	17.8%	
7. Can the quantum of crimes reduce due to capital punishment?	Yes	F	54	27	81	$X^2_{(o)}=28.27$; $p =.001$ $X^2_{(a)}= .014$; $p=.904$
		%	76.1%	75.0%	75.7%	
	No	F	17	9	26	
		%	23.9%	25.0%	24.3%	
8. Has the number of offenders reduce due to execution of capital punishment?	Yes	F	49	23	72	$X^2_{(o)}=12.79$; $p =.001$ $X^2_{(a)}= .285$; $p=.593$
		%	69.0%	63.9%	67.3%	
	No	F	22	13	35	
		%	31.0%	36.1%	32.7%	
9. Is more coordination between the Police and Law in the investigation leading to capital punishment?	Yes	F	62	32	94	$X^2_{(o)}=61.31$; $p =.001$ $X^2_{(a)}= .055$; $p=.815$
		%	87.3%	88.9%	87.9%	
	No	F	9	4	13	
		%	12.7%	11.1%	12.1%	

Criminological viewpoints:

From the table 2 it is evident criminologically death punishment was justified in a major way by police personnel for the all the viewpoints mentioned. 84.1% respondents agreed that they support capital punishment for crimes of serious nature ($X^2=49.80$; $p =.001$), 83.2% of them were in agreement that execution of capital punishment create fear in the offenders($X^2=47.11$; $p =.001$), 59.8% of them opined that there should be an age limit for imposing capital punishment($X^2=4.12$; $p =.042$), 72.9% of them are of the opinion that capital punishment be awarded for criminal acts committed by mental patients/persons with a pervert mind ($X^2=22.43$; $p =.001$), 81.3% of them agreed that capital punishment be awarded for crimes like acid attack, Supari killing etc. ($X^2=41.95$; $p =.001$), 82.2% of them indicated that capital punishment impact the future offences/offenders ($X^2=44.49$; $p =.001$), 75.7% of them indicated 'yes' for

quantum of crimes reduce due to capital punishment ($X^2=28.27$; $p =.001$), 67.3% of them agreed that number of offenders reduce due to execution of capital punishment ($X^2=12.79$; $p =.001$), and lastly 87.9% of them were of the opinion that more coordination between the Police and Law in the investigation leading to capital punishment ($X^2=61.31$; $p =.001$). All the chi-square values obtained for differences between 'yes' and 'no' responses were found to be significant, having significantly higher number of 'yes' frequencies than 'no'. It is clear majority of the police personnel selected for the study justified the capital punishment or capital punishment in India through various criminological viewpoints. As seen in sociological viewpoints, even in criminological viewpoints also, when associations were verified between male and female police personnel, chi-square tests revealed non-significant associations for all the nine viewpoints, indicating a similarity in their response pattern, whether it is male or female police personnel, all of them justified the death punishment through criminological viewpoints.

DISCUSSION

Major findings of the study

- Sociologically and criminologically death punishment was justified by majority of the police personnel.
- Sociologically, 76.6% of the sample selected considered capital punishment as a scientific in the modern society, 80.4% of them agreed that capital punishment can control crimes in society, 86.0% of them agreed that capital punishment will create awareness and 76.6% of them considered awarding capital punishment is found to have improved the social system
- Criminologically, 84.1% respondents supported capital punishment for crimes of serious nature, 3.2% of agreed for execution of capital punishment create fear in the offenders, 59.8% of them for age limit, 72.9% for capital punishment award for criminal acts committed by mental patients/persons with a pervert mind, 81.3% for awarding capital punishment for crimes like acid attack, Supari killing etc.
- 82.2% agreed as capital punishment impacts the future offences/offenders 75.7% of them indicated 'yes' for quantum of crimes reduce due to capital punishment, 67.3% of them agreed that number of offenders reduce due to execution of capital punishment, and 87.9% of them for more coordination between the Police and Law in the investigation leading to capital punishment

In the present study it was very clear that sociologically and criminologically death punishment was justified by majority of the police personnel. The findings of the present study are in agreement with the study done by Hughes and Robinson (2013), where law enforcement officers surveyed are overwhelming in favor of the continued use of capital punishment, they concurrently agree that innocent people have both been previously executed and are currently on death row today.

Fagan (1986) conducted a research on 78 police officers in the state of Washington and he found that 94% of the officials supported the capital punishment, while 51% of the officials could not agree with the punishment of the criminals with capital punishment, "There is no evidence that the capital punishment reduces crime." In an investigation of 386 police chiefs, Dieter (1995) found that only 26% of chiefs felt

capital punishment altogether decreases the cases of homicides; when approached about positioning procedures for reducing vicious wrongdoing, the chiefs referred to “expanded use of the capital punishment” as dead last

A legitimate clarification for high support of capital punishment among police officers in our example is that officials showed they accepted the capital punishment accomplishes significant objectives of discipline or advantages to society, including retribution and incapacitation, which they demonstrated would reduce the cases of homicides later on. Policemen additionally said they didn't think capital punishment in North Carolina was excessively applied to poor people or African Americans; without predisposition, it is legitimate to likewise anticipate an elevated level of help.

Dieter (1995) in his study on the perspectives of law enforcement on capital punishment found that as policemen, the essential concern is the insurance of people in general from wrongdoing. Punishment of guilty parties is an urgent component of this security, and one which they accept is crucially significant in reducing the rate of crime.

As of late, consideration has zeroed in on one type of punishment: capital punishment. As individuals, the police personnel contrast generally in their faith in the capital punishment. Huge numbers hold that capital punishment, assuming reasonably and fairly directed, may have a part in the culture. Others have genuine reservations about the utilization of this extreme sanction.

Capital punishment retains an extreme part of the monetary assets and valuable time of the criminal justice system. Since a great many resources and innumerable long periods of court time go toward the execution of a single individual, the police personnel accept that different elements of crime prevention are being short-changed (Dieter, 1995).

Consequently, future examination around this field should assess the opinion of criminal equity specialists in courts, amendments, and other criminal equity organizations, just as in different states. Further, endeavors should be made to build sample sizes so that more advanced investigations can be directed. We hope that our discoveries produce further investigation into this important zone of exploration and further research.

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