Pleasure vs Pain: An application of Beccaria’s pleasure pain principle on the convicted prison population of Trinidad and Tobago

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The rate of reoffending and an increase in crime and gruesome violence now permeates a once peaceful society which suggests that the pleasure/pain principle is not germane. Some early theorists have posited that punishment is intended to act as a deterrent from criminal offending and should be more than the pleasure derived from crime. This study examines Cesare Beccaria’s pleasure/pain principle and its applicability to criminal offending in Trinidad and Tobago. The researcher conducted a pilot study with convicted prisoners in Trinidad followed by semi-structured interviews with eighty (80) convicted prisoners at five (5) prison facilities. Newspaper reports, past studies and other academic sources were examined. The results revealed that pleasure and pain spans a plethora of emotional experiences which are discordant to the objectives of punishment. These findings provide the basis to strategically examine criminal offending in Trinidad and Tobago and propose policy recommendations to improve the criminal justice system in the island.

Keywords: Beccaria; pleasure; pain; prison; violence; Trinidad and Tobago