Caribbean Police Leaders Perspectives on the Death Penalty

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Abstract

Globally, Police officers are society’s frontline and first line in the fight against crime and have the responsibility for its control. In many countries, Police leaders are often called upon to account for their stewardship and are often questioned on ‘what works’ in the fight against crime. Instructively, Police leaders have a close view of the deleterious effects of crime on a daily basis as well as a personal stake in its reduction. Therefore, it is quite natural then to ask them: “What, in their opinion works in the battle against crime?” However, as it relates to much crime control and intervention strategies, particularly the Death Penalty, Police officers in the Caribbean are hardly ever consulted and their views are generally unheard. Further, there are many studies on crime reduction and prevention in the Caribbean; however, a great deal of these studies has been conducted by academics, lawyers and researcher to the detriment of Police practitioners. This is especially prevalent as it relates to the Death Penalty. The aforementioned phenomenon facilitates a commonly held assumption of silence associated with Caribbean Police leaders who lead the fight against crime and deviance. Importantly, these Caribbean Police leaders are viewed as policy makers and are often summoned before Parliamentary Committees of their National Parliaments to give evidence as to the state of their Police Department. With this in mind, the views of Police Commissioners (Police Chief) or the officer in charge of Homicide Departments in eight Caribbean islands were sought on the efficacy of the Death Penalty as a crime reduction tool. In doing so, the current study aims to apply social science research to the investigation of a pressing societal issue in the Caribbean – that of crime, its control and prevention and specifically focuses on the intersection between research and the practice of policing as well as the possibilities which abound for Police practitioners in the Caribbean. The study also aims to highlight the views of Caribbean Police leaders and give voice to the voiceless element in the fight against crime and deviance in the Caribbean – Police leaders. The study utilized structured interviews and survey questionnaires to the Police leaders to achieve its goal. The results will be discussed in relation to the Death Penalty as a crime reduction tool. Strategies used by these Caribbean Police departments to reduce crime and deviance will also be discussed.

Keywords: Caribbean; Police leaders; perspectives; Death Penalty