Social Psychological Theory of Gun Control

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# **Abstract**

The main aim and scope of this paper is to study the psychological theory that is involved in the debate on gun control within the United States. This paper will cover the wide range of social psychological theories that are usually discussed when people take part on either side of this debate of “Gun Control”. Such theories include behavioral effects of gun possession, building up attitudes towards Gun control and all the psychological behaviors which will come into play when devising a policy for the control of Guns. There are usually two types of people who either are in favor of gun control or against it. People who support the stance of gun control base their stance on its behavioral effects on society, they claim that it gives rise to aggression and violent conduct. While the people who oppose guns control consider them as part of their social and cultural characteristics. They see it as their essential part and are unwilling to surrender it.

Gun control has recently surfaced as one of the greatest debates in the United States after the recent Massacres in schools and concerts. There are many people who wish to implement strict policies on Guns as they believe that easier access is the major problem behind mass school killing and domestic terrorism that is taking place. While many people believe that the current policies that are implemented are suitable enough for maintaining sustainable control over guns and they see no further need for limitation on the possession and purchase of guns. However, the scope of this paper covers the social and psychological theories and concepts that are associated with human behavior towards gun control and psychological thinking that affects the additional legislature that can be implemented in the future.

The best way to start this is by looking at the attitude of people towards guns. Only a mere positive or negative exposure can largely affect the behavior of people towards guns. If someone is exposed more than once to a certain thing, the tendency to positivity or negativity related to such things also increases. The continuous exposure to guns historically and the ongoing wars going throughout the world naturally increases the positive image of love for guns. In today's society guns are often considered as sacred objects or represents an extension of an immediate power of a person who is carrying it. If someone is holding a gun it is natural that people will fear him or respect him out of fear (Stroebe, 2016). The cultural acceptance of guns is visible from its use and appearances in video games and kids’ cartoons as well. Favorable attitude towards guns is generally more common in men as compared to women because guns are often considered as a symbol of power in part of masculine culture. However, females in the United States are more likely to favor a gun as compared to females in other parts of the world. There are many reasons which can help in the formation of attitude towards guns. The people who propose strict policies on guns base their reasons on the behavioral theories on lower suicide and mass shooting rates.

People nowadays face many pressure situations in their life and it can easily result in frustrations that can lead to anger and aggressiveness. Such aggressiveness can lead to serious incidents in the presence of environmental signs such as guns. Weapons are not only considered as a way to harm yourself but just its presence can help in increasing aggressiveness. If the presence of guns can increase aggressive behavior in people it is only natural to argue that the removal of guns will reduce such behavior. Further arguments can be made that its reduction in aggressive behavior will help in the reduction of criminal and violent acts. According to Diner and Crandell's research in 1979 it was founded that the rates of homicide, rape, robbery, shooting incidents significantly dropped by 14%, 32%, 25%, and 37% respectively after one year on the ban of Guns (Kleck, 2015). The people who are pro strictness policy on guns argue that a change in attitude towards policy strictness on gun regulations can result in a greater decrease in crimes in a society. The violence rates that are related to guns are very large in number as compared to other advanced countries as in 2011 the homicides and suicide incidents that involved firearms were 11,101 and 19,766 respectively (Hoyert & Xu, 2012).

The other side of the coin is the shield that people use in the form of the second amendment, that the state has given them a right of freedom and any ban or change in policy is against that right. One major factor that affects the support or opposition of guns is the cultural background of the person. Cultural upbringing certainly helps in shaping the attitude of views about gun culture. However, many specific individual factors also affect the decision of people regarding policies on gun control. Many people see guns as a part of their personality and feel that they are incomplete without firearms. They feel that having guns will make them feel good about themselves and allow them having greater control over their environment. In short, many people sees the presence of a gun as a symbol of their masculinity and identity. This debate of support or opposition certainly gives rise to psychological problems that are needed to be considered while making policy.

The number of people that are either on the side or opposition will determine the potential psychological and social issues that would arise to hinder the process. Many lawmakers in America belong to a class which thinks that guns are generally a normal part of everyday life (Carter & Binder, 2018) This behavior has hindered any significant change that can be made in the laws to control the spreading of firearms. In many group thinking situations, it is common for people to overestimate their powers and often listen to suggestions outside their group which can lead to poor policy making and decision making. Similar decisions have occurred in the past where decisions were mistakenly taken due to over group thinking. The escalation of the war in Vietnam is one of the major examples of poor decisions taken by the U.S government due to overthinking it and relying it on different involved groups.

# **Conclusion**

The interpretation of psychological theories that play an important role in the formation of attitudes towards gun control shows that there are many factors that can affect the way people think about concerned policies. The social-psychological phenomena are also one of the important factors that determine the effects of guns and gun ownership on human behavior. Apart from that psychological reasons such as cultural behaviors individual upbringing is also one of the main factors that can determine the placement of individuals on either side of the debate of gun control. The social-psychological phenomenon is also one of the important factors that can affect the making of policies to control guns. Different individual attitudes at a higher level can affect the results of a policy on a whole society. In general, we can conclude that there are many numerous social psychological theories that can affect the debate of gun control issues within the society of the United States.

# **References**

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