Capital Punishment

Name

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It is unlikely that anyone who has become exposed to the on-goings of the world around them for some time does not know or has not heard what capital punishment is. Capital punishment refers to a provision of the law whereby an individual guilty of committing a grievous crime is sentenced to death and executed as per the procedure outlined in the constitution. In the past, a lot of methods were used to execute offenders including stoning, beheading, crucifixion and burning at a stake. These days things have changed a bit, and we now employ methods like electrocution, lethal injections, shooting, and hanging.

The death penalty has raised lots of controversy in the modern world. Other forms of punishment that were used in the past like corporal punishment have been abandoned as they are considered uncivilized. When it comes to the issue of the death penalty, however, nations differ in their stands where some support and some are against it. Most nations have adopted the alternative of life imprisonment without parole, but the United States is an exception to this. In the US capital punishment is provided for by the federal government and some states while others have abandoned the act. This practice was reinstated in 1977 having been initially abandoned in 1972. From 1977 onwards there have been quite some executions. Other countries with a significant number of executed people include China which in 2008 had 1,718 executions.

Capital punishment in the United States has been currently authorized in 31 states. It has been undertaken by the federal government in coordination with the military. In the recent past, some of the states have come out to abolish the death penalty legislatively. Some of these states include; New Mexico that did it in 2009, Illinois in 2011 and Maryland in 2013 (Zimring, 2004). The death punishment has been replaced with the sentence of life imprisonment with no possibility of parole at any given point of the imprisonment period. However, despite the fact that states like Nebraska are abolishing capital punishment in 2015, capital punishment was reinstated in 2016 through a statewide voting process. It is evident currently that, the states across the country will still continue to have great debates concerning the fairness, reliability, and cost of implementation as other courts like the one in Delaware having termed the capital punishment unconstitutional . Similarly, to the death penalty laws present in various states, the federal government has gone an extra mile to employ capital punishment for various national offenses. Such offenses include the following, the murder of any federal official, any kind or type of kidnapping that result in death, running a huge drug enterprise, as well as treason

Capital punishment is a contentious issue with varied opinions from the public and the advocates for human rights. According to Claire and Manuel, about 2000 Americans of different ages are awaiting execution. The ratification of capital punishment by the federal government leads to the loss of many lives through mechanisms such as hanging and lethal injection. The morality behind capital punishment is questionable. Most supporters of capital punishment argue that this form of retribution is a moral obligation to cater to the safety of the citizens by protecting them from capital crimes such as murders and robbery with violence. Killing capital offenders prevent recurrence of capital crimes in society. The proponents of this form of punishment argue that it is an immoral method of punishing the offender as it denies them the Right to life.

Capital punishment is often seen as one way of deterring crimes (Muhlhausen), and therefore it is beneficial to the States where practiced. Due to the depth and intensity of this form of the offense, the potential crimes are discouraged to perform any capital crime. The potential criminals are aware of the consequences of their actions, and they may opt to change their ways. The executed people serve as examples to others who may have intentions to commit capital crimes. However, the evidence that capital punishment deters crimes is scanty, and some studies have been done to show that capital punishment is an ineffective way to minimize criminal activities (Radelet et al.). However, the possibility of capital punishment to prevent some people to commit capital crimes should not be ignored as the studies stating otherwise may be biased in a great deal. Indeed, according to Muhlhausen comprehensive research done between 1975 and 2008 showed that capital punishment has a deterrent effect on criminal activities. Therefore, it makes it good or punishing the perpetrator's heinous crimes. About 61% of Americans have supported capital punishment as a morally acceptable form of punishing the relevant criminals.

Another argument made by the proponents of capital punishment is that the method may expose an innocent person the severe form of punishment. The number of individuals who are convicted of wrongly is increasing. It is estimated that about four percent of the capital punishments done in the US is as a result of wrongful convictions. (David). The killing of wrongly convicted citizen denies the victim any chance to seek and fight for justice. If for instance a person is wrongfully convicted and life imprisonment instituted instead of execution, there is a chance that the truth may be found later. In this way, the person may be set free, and this is impossible if the individual had already been killed. Also, some studies have shown that capital punishment had promoted racial, ethical, and social bias in our society (Unnever et al. 559). For instance, in the US, most cases of capital punishment occur among racial minority groups such as African-Americans. Almost half of the people who are exposed to capital punishment are African-Americans. Thus, even if it may be seen as an important way of propagating justice within the society, this aspect is usually lost when there is racial, ethical, and social segregation in executing the victims.

To conclude, capital punishment seems to have more beneficial roles in society as compared to the disadvantages. Indeed, most people feel that this method of punishment is morally upright. Some criminal activities are very heinous such that justice can only be restored if the individuals are executed. According to Kant's ethical philosophy exploring the theory of justice, if the action is done for the right reasons, it propagates justice irrespective of the consequences of such an act. The principle applies in capital punishment because the effects of execution may be unwelcomed by a majority of the people. However, it may be considered and concluded that this form of punishment is done for the right reasons of maintaining justice and deterring criminal activities. However, some of the perceived negative consequences include denial of the right to life to the victims.

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