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### Prison Reform

Basically, the term prisons is to refer to the correctional institutions which have been and still are integral constituent of the criminal judicial systems. They play a vital role in maintaining law and order in conjunction with other elements of the judicial systems such as the courts and the police department. The criteria by which prisons operate is almost the same in many countries even though the system may be different in different countries. The primary function of prisons is to make sure that the convicted criminals do not go ahead to inflict more harm to other members of the society. They are the last institution where convicted criminals are housed. The extent to which prisons facilitate the rehabilitation of criminals or deter crime has sparked a persistent debate in the recent past. Scholars have taken it upon themselves to study whether the incarceration of criminals is significant in deterring crimes. Due to various factors such as high costs and the violation of human rights, as in the United States, have motivated the advocacy for development and implementation of police reforms. This study seeks to unravel the extent to which the prison systems are effective means of rehabilitating criminals and how the process reduce recidivism.

### **Analysis**

Many changes have occurred in the prisons systems around the world due to the necessity of reforms. In the era where human activists have stepped up to advocate for human rights in

prisons, some of the rights have been incorporated in the constitution. Thus, studies have been made to evaluate the advantages brought by the prison systems as well as why there should be more policies to curb the drawbacks associated with the same. While some proponents of the prison systems have argued that imprisonment is the best way to rehabilitate criminals, some have argued that there is significant violation of human rights. The conflict will found the basis of this study in the quest to assess which argument is more accurate.

There has been no evidence to support the claim that prison systems alter the behaviors of offenders. Many psychologists and criminologists have put forward the argument that there is a high chance that an incarcerated offender is likely to commit another crime after being set free again. The assertion is backed by the argument that prisoners encounter various forms of injustices and violation of human rights which anger them into wanting to take revenge. The end developing a negative perception concerning the criminal justice system, including the prisons. As affirmed by Harding (168), the prisons systems promote criminality instead of significantly facilitating crime deterrence. They delegitimize the criminal system instead of creating positivity in criminals who are willing to reform and become better members of the society. According to some scholar, the conditions that prisoners find themselves in when confined in correctional facilities should be considered as the violation of human rights. In some cases, prisoners feel comfortable in correctional facilities by forming an attachment with fellow inmates that when they are set free, they go on to break the law so that they can be returned to the facilities again. Such cases are prevalent in the United States that in any other country.

Besides, a case can be made that some criminals see prisons as safe havens where they can be separated from the society where they have committed atrocious crimes. Thus, it has become common for lawmakers and members of the juridical system to put forward the argument that

correctional facilities are not supposed to be as comfortable as many activists advocate for. Many correctional facilities should not be made conformable for convicts. In the eyes of the society, correctional facilities are viewed as the places where criminals are subjected to adverse conditions that compel them to reform. Many prisons do not take into account the seriousness of the offences. As result, criminals who have committed serious crimes such as murder are kept in the same place as those who have been convicted of minor crimes such as petty theft. Thus, it is hard to argue that the correctional facilities are aimed at correcting criminals because the rehabilitative needs depending the extremity of the offence are disregarded. Thus, scholars argue that there should be strategies that psyche up criminals of different crimes because in the end of the day prisons are confinement for all prisoners.

The penal policy is considered as significant weapon that could fight against crimes of higher magnitude. Nonetheless, prisons do not reform high profile criminals but aggravate them instead by angering and disorienting their mental stability. In study performed by Green Street, a staggering 20% of inmates develop mental problems while confined in correctional facilities. Thus, even when prisoners are released back to the society, they are not in the mental state to function properly. The major reason that have been argued to cause mental distress is the amount of time inmates spend time in the cells, sometimes alone. Some are isolated from the other people. They become distressed and their mental stability can never be the same again. Some prisoners undergo intense abuse from the guards, a vice that has been hard to curb especially in the United States where the cases of abuse on inmates have been prevalent. The United States government has not been able to curb the issues through policies or reforms.

In correctional facilities where deterrence programs are present, there has not been any evidence to prove that the programs have been successful. For a specific population, studies have

not established any evidence to show that crimes are low in such populations. Scholar have showed that instead, the rate of imprisonment has increased. The argument is founded by the belief that in areas where the imprisonment rate is high, the members are aggravated and tend resolve into engaging in criminal activities. Thus, a case can be made and proved that high rate of imprisonment does not curb but motivate and result to increase of recidivism. In the prison where low-level offenders are confined in the same facility as high-level offenders, they are likely to be cases if influence as low-level inmates acquire negative characters. Therefore, it cannot be substantiated that longer sentences are effective or significant in deterring crimes. Instead, it plays a significant role in increasing the rate of crime and imprisonment.

Even so, the prison systems play, though not much, a role in rehabilitating criminals and deterring new crimes. It is a way of rendering punishment for offenders and potential criminals can be discouraged from engaging in crimes. In multiple studies carried out by various scholars, a substantial evidence indicated that correctional facilitates play a role in reducing the rate of crimes as well as reforming the convicts before they can be released again to the society. For instance, Harding (167) concluded his studies by noting that upon confinement, prisons play an integral role of reforming law breakers, changes they attitude and perceptions as well. Such is achieved through various strategies that have over time proved to be effective. In many correctional facilities in the United States, there are programs such as drug recovery programs as well as anger management that seek to make the inmates better members of the society that can co-exists. According to theories such as the economic theory of crimes, there are different causative factors as to why different criminals commit different crimes. The motives are not the same for all criminals regardless of the magnitude of the crimes. Thus, the prison systems can establish a connection between psychological and social problems that could have motivated the

criminal to engage in a law-breaking activity. When the members of society see the punishment that is rendered to law-breakers, they are motivated to continue abstaining from crime.

Restorative justice is another reason as to why the prison system play a critical role in rehabilitating offenders and making them better society members again. By definition, restorative justice is the form of treatment that is accorded to criminals to makes sure they become normal people who can be accepted back to the society after undergoing a period of reformation. Many of the United States' justice systems take into account such approaches to make sure inmates are accepted back to the society. Offender are made to be aware of the errors they made and how the can be accountable for such errors in the future. According to the proponents of such systems, sanctions should be made proportional to the crime that an offender has committed. Since such systems are based on restitution, the chances of an incarcerated convict re-engaging in crime are low.

The prison systems in the United States have partnered with various organizations and platforms that facilitate the process of transformation of offenders to members who can exist with other people in the society. They include the department of health, social and family services, and the bureau of motor vehicles among others. The measures are also integral in ensuring that offender's do not remained confined for longer times which could have adverse effects on their mental health. The partnership with the Bureau of Motor Vehicles enable convicts to have ID cards that can show they have transformed into better members of the society. The department of workforce helps unmated to secure job opportunities after they have been released from prisons.

## **Conclusion**

In this discussion, it is evident that the effectiveness of the prison systems in deterring crimes or rehabilitating criminals is a subjective topic that could remain contentious for a long time. While some scholars have managed to prove that prisons are indeed significant in deterring crime and rehabilitating convicts, some have worked hard to prove otherwise, and indeed, they have done just that. Despite being substantial that could prove how the imprisonment has not been able to deter claims or rehabilitate the criminals, the government has remained adamant that there is indeed advantages of using the correctional facilities to deter crime and reform convicts. Nonetheless, despite there being many contrasting opinions about the issue, it is clear that there are changes that need to be addressed to make sure the effectiveness of the prison system is increased. The issue of mental health in correctional facilities has been constantly disregarded and it is high the systems adopt strategies that could protect inmates from suffering mental distress whilst in correctional facilities.

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