Comparison of police corruption in china and singapore

Introduction

Police is very important to every country in the world. They are responsible for law enforcement, maintaining public safety and protecting lives and property. Therefore, police is so important that they should be professional, perfectly just and impartial. However, police corruption is a big crime problem for some countries. Police corruption affect the authority of the government which seriously decrease public confidence towards the government. The methods used to fight against police corruption may vary in different countries. Yet, countries with similar background and aim in solving police corruption maybe possible to share similar policies in tackling the problem of police corruption. In the following comparative case study, a number of literature towards China and Singapore will be reviewed and compared. Methods and policy recommendations will also be made to see how China can be benefited or learn from Singapore in the view of tackling police corruption

Review of the Literature

The reason why police corruption happens around the world is that cost of the punishment is low, which means that the offenders think they can escape from the punishment easily (Bowles & Garoupa, 1997). It reflected that the deterrence effect towards corruptive practices is low, therefore people are not afraid of the consequences and unrestrainedly commit corruption. Bowles and Garoupa (1997) also stated that the police in some well-developed countries are receiving fixed salaries. However, in some countries police are only offered relatively low salaries and they are not

satisfied with the salaries. Hence, in order to increase their income, they receive bribe. It shows that poverty leads to police's dissatisfaction towards their quality of life, which leads to crime. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Convention against corruption is agreed by most of the parties in the United Nations. There are five important dimensions in the convention, which are methods of prevention, law enforcement, cooperation between countries, recovery of the assets and information exchange between countries (United Nations Convention against Corruption, 2003). There are different kind of police corruption, which have been identified as authority corruption, extortion, internal payoffs and shakedowns (Newburn, 1999). The police has been emphasized that they may be the easiest group to corrupt. According to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (2003), police not only is an agency for law enforcement, but also have the right to use legitimate force to investigate criminal act and deprive individual liberty. As the police has an important role in one country, they should be monitored strictly. Apart from the cooperation and information exchange between countries, some countries also have their own department to crack down police corruption. For example, there is Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau in Singapore (Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau, 2019) and Hong Kong Independent Commission Against Corruption in Hong Kong (Hong Kong ICAC, 2019). These bureau are not under any government departments and have independent operations.

China has a population of 140 million people which ranked number one in the world. The population is constantly increasing despite the fact that there

are serval policies to control birth (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2018). According to the National Population Census of the People's Republic of China, the majority of the population is identified as Han (Chinese) (92%) with the remaining ethnic groups including the black and Jewish (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2011). From the above, it shows that China is not a multi-racial country since China is dominated by few races. China has a huge police force among the world, with the research done by Sawe (2017), China has 1, 600, 000 police officers. However, even with a huge amount of police force, there is no apporpriate agency to monitor them. Moreover, according to the findings done by Hualing (2005), the yearly salaries of the secretary in China is RMB $200, 000, which is USD $28, 908. It reflected that the police in China are underpaid and hard to meet their living standard. Therefore, police tend to receive bribe to increase their revenue to improve their living conditions, hence raise satisfaction towards life. China is a country that practice socialism. Socialism refers to the country that shares economy combined with collective political thought, implementing collective production that there is no class system in that country. Under this system, land and capital assets are jointly owned by the people (Cunningham, 1987). Under collective political thought, the democratic level in China is low. The government is not selected by the citizen and well-monitored. The transparency of the government and the police is low (Zengke, 2000). Also, the research done by Hualing (2005) stated that China is a country that utilizes police force to maintain her political stability. There is an indivisible and deeply-rooted relationship between the police and the government. The problem of police corruption is hard to be solved unless the relationship can

be broken off or there is a mature monitoring system that operates independently.

According to Department of Statistics Singapore, Singapore in 2018 has a population of 6, 049, 000 people, which has increased 0. 7% from 2017 (Singapore Population, 2018). Also, from the Singapore Demographics Profile in 2018, the majority of the population identifies as Chinese (74. 3%) with the remaining ethnic groups including Malayan (13. 4%) and Indian (9. 1%) (Singapore Demographics Profile 2018, 2018). From the above, it reflected that Singapore is also a society that is mainly formed by Chinese. In Singapore, there is around 38, 587 policemen (Singapore Police Force, 2018). According to Quah (2006), Singapore succeed in alleviating the phenomenon of police corruption by increasing the salaries and improving police working conditions. According to the findings done by Hualing (2005), the yearly salaries of the secretary in Singapore is USD $1, 700, 000. It reveals that the government is uses high salaries to reinforce honesty. Although Singapore has claimed to be a democratic country, she is always being challenged by her democratic level. Singapore is a illiberal democratic country, she is not a democratic country since she is not resolving the differences in the country peacefully (George, 2007). Moreover, there are over 20 political parties in Singapore. However, the Singapore Government Party – People's Action Party keeps suppressing the political parties which disagree with them. Therefore, the opposition are being isolated and marginalised (Mutalib, 2000). It shows Singapore is using force to threaten the opposition. From these, Singapore's democracy level is apparently questionable. The government allows limited opposing opinions. Therefore,

she is actually an authoritarian country. Quah (2001) stated that problem of police corruption is serious in Singapore before 1960, however, the Singapore Government gain experiences from Hong Kong and develop an independent bureau – Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau, the government gives more power to the bureau and fight against police corruption. Therefore, Singapore is now a successful example that other countries with serious police corruption can learn from (Quah, 2006).

China and Singapore share some similarities, including their society structure which mainly consist Chinese and share similar thoughts like Confucianism (Fukuyama, 1995). Fukuyama (1995) stated that classic Chinese Confucianism is deeply-rooted in Chinese and their society. In view of this, they may share similar cultures and thoughts. Also, as China is a country ran under socialism whereas Singapore is ran under illiberal democratism. Both of them have a low democratic level and require absolute obedience from their citizen. Yet, differences exist between situation in China and Singapore. China's population is around 230 times Singapore's population and the salaries of the officials in Singapore is around 60 times higher than that in China. Therefore, China has a relatively low salaries when compare with Singapore (Hualing, 2005). Police in China then have higher probability to corrupt due to the lacking of money to save their living. Moreover, Singapore has developed an independent bureau in minimizing number of police corruption while China do not have such a institution.

Methodological Critique

This study aims to examine to what extent the methods used to fight against police corruption is useful in China using comparative methodology. It uses statistics from the government official institutions, like National Bureau of Statistics of China, Singapore Demographics Profile and Singapore Population. These are official data came from the government, and allows me to have a better understanding on the situation of a country. Moreover, although China and Singapore share similar thoughts and political means, they still bear different criminal justice systems. Therefore, more details should be considered when doing comparison.

After reading various literature and readings, there are some gaps found in the literature. Firstly, articles lack information about the experiences and the processes of receiving bribes in police of China. A huge portion of the literature just mentioned the reason behind police corruption and the types of corruption. There are no details of how police receive bribe. Secondly, there is in lack of readings that show statistics on number of police in China who have engaged in bribery before. If these gaps can be improved, the study will be more comprehensive and convincing.

Policy Recommendations

Firstly, there is an independent bureau may be established to help promoting just and integrity. For example, in Singapore, the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau is set up to combat police corruption. Since the bureau is not under any department of the government and operated independently, the investigation and the adjudication can ensure independence and will not be affected by other variables (Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau,

2019). However, there is no such an independent bureau in China, the anti-corruption campaigns are useless since the investigation and the arrestees are selective and impartial (Quah, 2016). It reflected that the anti-corruption campaigns exist in name only, they are not effective at all. There is a lack of fair ruling in China towards the problem of police corruption. Therefore, it is suggested by Holmes (2015) that China should learn from Singapore. It is so important for China to establish an independent anti-corruption department to effectively minimize the number of police corruption and bring a positive phenomenon to the society. Also, it is always hard to distinguish between bribe and gift-giving. Developing an anti-corruption institution can allow the country to develop a better definition to the public and to warn their behaviour. Therefore, if China government can develop such an agency and do a fair adjudication, there should be a positive effect on the reduction of police corruption.

Secondly, as stated from above, the officials in China are receiving relative low salaries (Hualing, 2005). The insufficient salaries of police leads to a serious problem that they cannot support their basic expenses (Quah, 2016). Therefore, the police starts to receive bribe to maintain their quality of life and balance their expenses. However, one of the significant approach in Singapore to decrease the number of police corruption is to increase the official's salaries (Holmes, 2015). If the salaries that they received are reasonable and can meet their basic needs, the police will not take risks to receive bribe. Some economic researchers discovered that under the situation of police corruption, the corruption rate decreased when the salaries increased (Scoggins & O'brien, 2016). It reflected that increasing

salaries is a key and important factor in tackling police corruption in China. Therefore, after increasing the salaries of the police in China, it can reduce their discontent and unhappiness. The corruption rate will then be lowered.

Although China and Singapore are of different criminal justice system. They have similar culture and democratic level. Also, as stated from Peng (2012), China is now starting her revolution and police corruption crackdown program, it can be assumed that China have enough human resources and capital to practise the above recommendations. Moreover, with the literature supported, it is believed that the policy used to fighting against police corruption in Singapore is useful for China.

Conclusion

Police corruption is a deeply rooted problem in the world, and more methods should be provided in minimizing the problem. However, as there are limitations by different criminal justice system, not every method is useful in solving each problem. Therefore, future direction in comparative research can be how can researchers minimize the bias in their research on two totally different countries and find an appropriate method in tackling the problem. The method will be more accurate and successfully aid the problem. Police corruption need to be minimized, as it is not just affecting the authority of the police officials, but also infringing the society. Singapore has developed some effective policies that China can learn from. In China and Singapore, they are in different criminal justice system, have differences on people salaries and population. Singapore has an independent anti-corruption bureau while China has not. However, they share similar cultures

and democratic level. From a number of literature reviews, the fighting against police corruption policy in Singapore can effectively bring positive result to China.

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