

Crime and violence as an economic crisis criminology essay



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Crime and Violence in Jamaica is relatively high and its getting worst. Over the past 40 years, homicides have increased by 1, 240 and rapes and drug offenses by 300. The financial crisis and high unemployment rate are no doubt the main contributors to the high crime rate and growth of gangs. And due to the state of the Central Justice system people feel they can commit any crime and get away with it. The Jamaican Governments and the police have been largely ineffective, research has shown that from the mid-1970s, criminal gangs began entrenching themselves in our communities, broadening and diversifying their illegal activities locally and internationally, and vigorously arming themselves to take out the resist law enforcement. In response to this, the Government and the Opposition have engaged in morally confusing behavior. While they are talking about crime on the different Medias, they too have been involved in high profile relationships with known and suspected criminals.

The police have now stated that gangs are responsible for 60% of the crime in Jamaica. I believe Jamaica needs a game changer in their approach to crime, they need to do more investigation using modernize technologies.

The private Sector Organization of Jamaica (PSOJ) believes that the Government needs to move with urgency to enact the full complement of crime fighting legislation in their most effective form that will empower law enforcement agencies to go after and break up criminal gangs. But most notably, they are proposing that Government Amend the Bail Act to deny Bail to repeat violent offenders and documented gang members and leaders. People who are charged with violent crimes such as: Murder, Shooting wit Intent, Kidnapping, Rape, Robbery etc. and I support the (PSOJ) 100%.

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Crime and Violence as an Economic Crisis

The level of crime has increased over the years and consequently the pattern of criminal activities reflects a greater degree of organization and coordination. The situation has worsened because of an increased tolerance of crime and criminal within the wider society.

Research as shown that financial crisis can lead to an increased in crime and violence. Criminal Motivation theories, including Strain theory, propose that “ Illicit behaviors are caused, at least in part, by structurally induced frustrations at the gap between aspirations and expectations, and their achievement in practice”. Where financial crisis is manifested through decreased or negative economic growth and widespread unemployment, many individual can suffer severe and perhaps sudden reduction in their income. And when this happen it in turn cause an increase in individual’s motivation to identify solutions to their immediate problems. Thus leads to stress which in turn leads to crime and violence and property crime. In Jamaica, security is in need of improvement, the major /key economic sectors such as tourism, transportation agriculture and mining can be adversely affected by crime and violence. If these key sectors are affected then this means a reduction in revenue inflows as well as a reduction in the flow of investment capital and foreign exchange. The tourism sector is one of the main concerns, in the past; violence and disorder in Jamaica have had a negative impact on tourism flows and development. The high cost of countering the effects of negative perceptions and damaging travel advisories in major foreign markets, result in a less than optimal use of scarce resources.

Crime and Violence is considered an economic crisis in Jamaica because since Jamaica is located in the Caribbean it boosts tourist attraction. And Tourism is one of the major contributors to Jamaica's economic growth. Tourism contributes to over 60% of Jamaica's GDP along with the export of Bauxite and Alumina. And because of this Crime and violence is considered an economic problem because it affects Jamaica's tourism industry. However the country faces several long-term problems, such as very high debt to GDP ratio, large scale unemployment etc. one of the major concerns of Jamaica's economy is the, high debt to GDP ratio of 130% is a result of government bailouts to ailing sectors, including the financial sector in the 1990s. Nearly 50% of government spending is allocated for debt servicing and only limited resources are available for infrastructure and social development. The depressed economic conditions have led to civil unrest and worsening of the crime scenario with gang violence being a common problem as I mentioned earlier. A violent environment alone with a Criminal justice system (CJS) which works slowly causes two things:

The perception that justice cannot be guaranteed by the state and

That the only solution for even relatively minor matters is death.

Therefore the relatively high level of violent encourages more violent, and the slow working of the Criminal justice system may leads to lack of confidence in it. And the perception that some persons are above the law will weakens the respect for the law than it already is. The major increased in mob killings is another way that shows that there is no respect for the law, and lack of confidence in the Jamaica justice system.

What does experts and theorist saying concerning the issue (Crime and violence is an economic crisis)?

Tourism analysts have argued that the high crime rate in Jamaica have negatively impact the tourism industry in Jamaica. And in the popular perception of tourism industry by Dunn and Dunn (2002) it was found that crime and violence were perceived to be the number one problem affecting the tourism industry. The high rate on crime and violence will have a drastically impact on the tourism industry because this will decrease the rate of tourist arrivals in the country because they will be afraid of their life and their safety.

There are several criminology theories that emphasis the relation between social and economic factors and the perpetration of crime. Noted American criminologist, Larry Siegel, through his work ‘ criminology’ explored extensively social structure theories. Siegel noted “ as a group, social structure theories suggest that social and economic forces operating in deteriorated lower class areas push many of their residents into criminal behavior patterns”. These negative social and economic factors are as mentioned earlier above; high unemployment, underemployment, high school drop out rate, single parent household and teenage young adult gang etc.

A survey was conducted by Johnson’s survey research limited in November 2009 it indicated that 81% of people perceived crime and violence as becoming more and more of a problem in Jamaica. Since the 1980s murder rates in Jamaica as become the highest across the world, second to South Africa and Columbia closely behind.

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Table 1. 1 – Shooting Incidents Involving Members of the Jamaica Constabulary Force per the Bureau of Special Investigations (BSI)**YEAR****FATALITIES**

1999*

65*

2000

149

2001

157

2002

154

2003

128

2004

131

2005

202

2006

229

2007

272

2008

222

2009

253

TOTAL 1999 - 2009

1962

Recommended Economic concept

Situational Prevention:

This comprises of opportunity- reducing measures that:

Are directed at highly specific forms of crime

Involve the management

Make crime more difficult and risky, or less rewarding and excusable as judged by a wide range of offenders.

Situational Crime Prevention reduces opportunity for crime to occur; it pays more attention to the setting of the crime rather than upon those committing criminal acts. Situational Crime Prevention seeks to forestall the occurrence of crime, rather than to detect and sanction offenders. It seeks not to eliminate criminal or delinquent tendencies through improvement of society or its institutions, but merely to make criminal action less attractive to offenders.

Aggregate or market forces.

Economics is largely the study of supply and demand for goods. There are two sets of actors, producers and consumers, trying to maximize their objective function (profits for producers, utility or wellbeing for consumers).

The key claim of microeconomics is that producers and consumers can interact to an equilibrium price and quantity without any explicit intervention. Coase (1978) suggested that this tendency by economists to think about the economic system as a unified interdependent system means that they are “ more likely to uncover the basic interrelationships within a social system than is someone less accustomed to looking at the working of a system as a whole (Coase 1978-2009)”. This system approach was explicit in Becker’s original approach to the topic. Becker stated that “(the amount of crime is determined not only by the rationality and preferences of would be criminal but also by the economic and social environment created by the public policies, including expenditures on police, punishments for different crimes and opportunities for employment, schooling and training programs”.

In other words Becker was saying the social system which generates crime is not limited, on one hand it is the justice system and on the other hand you <https://assignbuster.com/crime-and-violence-as-an-economic-crisis-criminology-essay/>

have the offenders. However on any part of the social and economic environment that changes the incentives to commit crime.

Opportunity Cost

The benefit you can receive by taking an alternative action; Such as coming up with different crime prevention acts to reduce crime rates.

An example of opportunity cost is; the opportunity cost of going to college is the money you would have earned if you worked instead. On the one hand, you lose four years of salary while getting your degree; on the other hand, you hope to earn more during your career, thanks to your education, to offset the lost wages.

Investment in human capital

This is a measure of the economic value of an employee skill set; it builds on the basic production input of labor measure where all labor is thought to be equal. This concept recognizes that no all labor is equal and that the quality of employees can be improve by investing in them.

Investment in human capital is critical to improving productivity and increasing revenue. Lack of resources is no excuse to ignore the advancement of Jamaica's human resources, if the investment is there then the resource will be there also.

Benefits of the economic concepts

Recommendations

In every parish in Jamaica crime rate is relatively high; these recommendations are among the primary ones recommended by analyst.

They are:

Deterrence: This states that through raising penalties, sentences, persons will be less likely to engage in violence and crime. Proponents of this recommendation have attributes logic to introduce death penalties for capital crimes.

Educational initiatives: this recommendation suggests that there can be a learning institute within the correctional facilities.

Rehabilitation efforts: This suggests that the government will take a proactive stance in preparing ex-convict in re-entering the society, which includes use of half houses. Meaning probation services, job placement and educational opportunities help among other things. Hence former criminal can find credible alternatives to do with their time, and a job will provide a steady income and responsibility.

Increase the effectiveness of the state, its various forces and institution in dealing with crime. Thus this will require the strengthening of its key institution such as the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) and increase collaboration throughout relevant bodies, including the public and private sector and the civil societies.

By designing and implementing social crime prevention methods.

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Amend Bail Act to deny Bail to repeat violent offenders and documented gang members and leaders.

Change their approach to crime by doing more investigation and using modernizes technologies.

The Government need to strengthen and properly resource the island justice system, if resources cannot be found for all areas of the justice system simultaneously, then perhaps pilot projects in critical areas could be implemented so persons can begin to see successes and begin to believe that justice is possible in the formal systems.

Finally, though perhaps not least, a vision for the Security sector needs to be developed.

Conclusion

As citizens of Jamaica, we need to focus more on the growth and development of our country, we need to demand the protection of rights and insists that the government and its security forces understand the fundamental importance of individual rights in the prevention, detection and prosecution of crime. Crime and violence poses a serious problem for us Jamaicans and the economy, crime is becoming greatly rooted in our culture, its becoming a way of life for many. The crime that beset our society has been driven by unemployment, underemployment, poverty and political manipulation weakness by those sworn to uphold the law. To reduce the crime in Jamaica requires a total social commitment over the long term to uphold and support the law enforcement, to provide opportunity for the

young and a resolve to never again give law breakers a toehold lest they institutionalize themselves.