Gun Control Legislation: The Motivations and Factors Influencing a Multi-Faceted Issue

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INTRODUCTION

- The United States had the largest quantity of firearms and gun-related deaths per capita among Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries in 2013 (Gopal & Greenwood, 2017).
- Gun law legislation across the United States has been debated for years with little progress toward a consensus.
- Congress has been reluctant to regulate gun control under both Republican and Democrat administrations (Campion et al., 2017).
- Second Amendment rights and administrations (Campion Republican and Democrat, 2017) have been reluctant to enact legislation across the United States (Gopal & Greenwood, 2017).
- Reluctance to establish any legislative action could be because of economic, social, and psychological factors.

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

- Anxiety and fear surrounding potentially losing the right-to-own increases gun ownership interests.
- The current form of gun control debate leads these individuals to believe that any change will bring a worsened outcome (Gunn et al., 2018).
- Fear of losing Second Amendment rights and necessary means for self-protection (Gunn et al., 2018).
- Media reports on mass shootings tend to produce feelings of hysteria, panic, and fear amongst the US population. (Kwon & Cabrera, 2019)

THE MEDIA

- Several studies have shown that the media plays a large role in instilling fear across the nation (Wallace, 2015).
- Individuals perceive and react differently to mass shootings shown by the media.
- Some individuals fearlessly react by purchasing more firearms as a form of self-protection (Wallace, 2015).
- Individuals are afraid their guns will be taken away by the government and therefore purchase more guns.
- Strobe and colleagues (2017) studied the effect of government calling for stricter gun laws on pro-gun owners. Individuals became fearful that their protection (guns) would be taken away.
- Other individuals react in the other direction, wanting to ban all guns.
- Therefore, a standstill occurs, and a consensus cannot be reached.

SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS

- Immediate increases in purchases of firearms occur after a mass shooting (Gopal & Greenwood, 2017).
- After a mass shooting takes place, the price of guns — as well as stock prices for gun manufacturers — drop significantly (Gopal & Greenwood, 2017).
- It could be hypothesized that because of the amount of money going into the economy from the purchasing of guns, the government is influenced to not take the legislative action needed.
- Income inequality can produce hostile, unstable social environments with individuals who are frustrated, anxious, resentful, and stressed. (Kwon & Cabrera, 2019)

SUICIDE & HOMICIDE GUN DEATHS

- Gun ownership significantly increases the rate for homicide and suicide (Lippmann, 2010; Siegel et al., 2019).
- Gun-shot suicides happen much more often than all other shooting deaths combined (Lippmann, 2010).
- Firearms being readily available increases the lethality of impulsive behaviors (Lippmann, 2010).
- Rural areas – increased suicide rates; Urban areas – increased homicide rates (Crifasi, 2018)
- Gun violence claims nearly 100 lives in the US everyday, a fact that is often obscured by the focus on more rare events such as mass shootings (Crifasi, 2018)

THE CONCLUSION & SOLUTIONS

- Stricter gun laws need to be implemented across the United States. Gun legislation is a multifaceted issue that requires a consensus on all sides.
- The reasoning behind individuals’ perceptions on gun control legislation is important to study when attempting to come to a consensus.
- Many factors come into play such as socioeconomic influences, family upbringing, and psychological factors such as fear and anxiety.
- After a 20-year ban, the US government has allocated $25 million of federal funds for research on gun control for 2020.
- Funds will be split between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH)
- Conducting research on solutions surrounding anxieties about gun reform would provide helpful background for gun legislation.

REFERENCES