

Contemporary COVID-Specific Punishment Perspectives

Introduction

- Covid-19 is an unprecedented event has significantly impacted many aspects of society, including the criminal justice system and societal consensus of 'crime' and 'punishment'.
- The construction of acts as a crime such as travel restrictions and limiting the number of people in gatherings have provoked intense debate and reactions from the public.

Project Overview

- The project investigates public opinion on the issue of COVID-19 related crime and rule breaking.
- this includes the development of an understanding about how such opinions affect what people think the punishments should be for individuals who go against the COVID -19 government guidelines and how their decisions are justified.
- Given intensive media focus on the actions of young people during the pandemic, this project also examines the theme of youth within negative media coverage of COVID-19 rule breaking.

Methods & Methodology

- This project implemented a mixed method approach to data collecting. A Jisc survey was created with 25 questions, beginning with close ended questions to gain information about the various demographics of each participant, such as age, race, gender. A five-point Likert scale was used within the questionnaire, with statements about COVID-19 and various behaviours included to assess participant's degree of agreement or disagreement. The questionnaire was distributed via the researchers' social media platforms to allow for a range of responses. The data was then analysed through descriptive statistical measures on SPSS such as crosstabulations
- For the qualitative data aspect of this project, content analysis was implemented to analyse a range of media publications that cover instances of COVID-19 rule breaking. In using this method, large amounts of texts was broken down into key points of in which context the media covers this issue.
- Lastly, both sets of results was compared through the application of relevant criminological theory. This included theories of deviance, social control, and youth in a criminological framework.



References

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Results & Findings

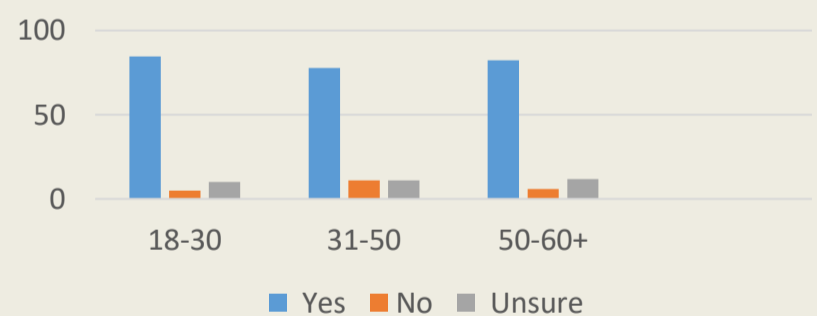
Quantitative Analysis

- There was no significant relationship between age and following the rules (significance of .539 on a Pearson Chi Squared test) where 85% 18-30 followed the rules 5% did not follow 10% were unsure if they did in comparison to 82% of over 50 followed 5% did not 12% were unsure
- There was no significant relationship between age and understanding of the rules (significance of .277 on a Pearson Chi Squared test). Hence there was no significant difference between age and how well Covid rules are understood
- There was a highly significant relationship found between age and how scared participants were of leaving the house in case of catching Covid (significance of .001 on a Pearson Chi Squared test and the level of significance was .816 on a Phi and Cramer's V test) where younger age groups were more fearful of leaving the house than older groups.
- When looking at participants main source of information on Covid, 18–25-year-olds were more likely to use social media and print media than other groups. However, all groups were similarly likely to use TV.
- Levels of fear was significantly related to what participants main source of information was (significance of .014 on a Pearson Chi Squared test) where those that consumed print media were most likely to be scared
- The results of looking at age in relation to the implementation of harsher punishments for Covid-19 rulebreakers indicated there was a significant relationship of .011 on a Pearson Chi Squared test and the level of significance was .739 on a Phi and Cramer's V test where younger groups were more in favour of harsher punishments than older groups

Qualitative Analysis:

- There was a theme between some articles of portraying young people as having the belief that as they were less at risk to Covid 19 they therefore showed less concern for following the rules (*Daily Mail*, 2021; *The Sun*, 2020; *Daily Mail* 2021)
- However other articles challenged this in portraying young people to be as respectful of the rules and to take similar precautions as other age groups (*The Guardian*, 2021)
- There was a difference in portrayal of rulebreakers depending on age where younger people were labelled as "hooligans", selfish, lacking respect and in some instances, there were aspects of racialisation in comparison to older people being labelled as "silver-haired rebels" where a more empathetic tone was presented towards them breaking the rules (*Daily Mail*, 2021; *The Sun*)

Percentage of Participants who Followed Covid-19 Rules in Relation to Age



Discussion & Conclusion

- Overall, contrary to popular media portrayal, this study shows young people to be as responsible as older people in following rules relating to Covid-19
- It also showed that Young people were more fearful of catching Covid-19 than older people despite the opposite depiction commonly being presented by the media
- Finally, this study also contradicts the belief that young people are careless regarding rule breaking where they feel stronger than other age categories about the implementation of punishment for those that do not adhere to restrictions

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