**Mental illness and gun control**

Student’s Name

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Due Date

**Mental illness and gun control**

The United States has recently reported a substantial series of high-profile gun-related mass shootings. These mass shootings have drawn much public attention to the apparent links between serious mental illness and gun violence. However, mental illness has often been a less risky factor for violence despite the misconceptions in the wake of mass shootings and gun violence cases. Policies for restricting access to and possession of guns among individuals with serious mental illness have become more popular among Americans and politicians. The majority of Americans, however, support the policies to restrict gun possession by persons with serious mental illness (Ahonen et al., 2017). Several cases of recent mass shootings which occurred in Arizona, Colorado, and Connecticut appeared to be serious mental illnesses.

Gun control policies are therefore necessary to reduce gun violence and mass shootings. However, mental illness does not play a critical role in the majority of cases of mass shootings; because most individuals with serious mental illness are known to be less violent. In response to the recent mass shootings and violence in the United States, policymakers at the federal and state levels have developed multiple gun policies to prevent individuals with serious mental illness from accessing or possessing firearms (Hirschtritt & Binder, 2018). However, gun control policies have negative implications on individuals with mental illness, for instance, increased negative public attitudes and the effectiveness of gun control policies on persons with mental illness.

**Increased negative public attitudes**

There have been more significant concerns about the relationship between gun violence and severe mental illness. Policymakers and experts have expressed more substantial concern about mental illness and gun-related restrictions. The gun control policies are likely to strengthen negative public attitudes toward individuals with serious mental illness; by implicitly suggesting that persons with mental illness pose a significant threat to public safety. For instance, in the United States, negative public attitudes towards persons living with serious mental illness have recently become more pervasive and persistent due to the widespread assumption that these individuals are dangerous, thus creating negative stereotypes (Barry et al., 2019). Moreover, individuals with serious mental illness, family members of individuals with serious mental illness, and healthcare practitioners also hold negative attitudes similar to the general public about persons living with mental illness.

There is not much information regarding whether gun control restrictions that focus on severe mental illness effectively minimize cases of gun violence among persons with mental illness. Most Americans, policymakers, and experts assert that gun control restrictions significantly reduce gun violence in cases of severe mental illness (Lu et al., 2019). However, there is concern that gun control laws could lead to unintended consequences for persons with severe mental illness. Hence, gun control restrictions could significantly aggravate the public perception that persons with mental illness are primarily violent. Therefore, the outcome increasingly creates negative public attitudes toward individuals living with mental illness.

**Effectiveness of gun control and mental illness**

Many risk assessment tools accurately predict which individuals with severe mental illness are not likely to be violent. However, these assessment tools are poor at predicting the persons most likely to commit violence. The inability to accurately predict future violence makes it hard to target policy interventions for persons with mental illness at higher risk of violence. Hence, the difficulty in predicting violence by persons with serious mental illness does not mean that gun control policies cannot prevent violence from this group of people (Skeem & Mulvey, 2019). Most mental health experts have expressed concern regarding the effectiveness of gun control policies with a focus on severe mental illness.

The current federal gun restrictions for severe mental illness may reduce the risks of violence among persons with mental illness. Implementation of gun restriction police might reduce violent offending individuals restricted from owning firearms because of severe mental illness. However, the impact of gun policy on violent crimes among people with serious mental illness is minimal. Thus, it shows that gun restrictions effectively reduce the risk of violence among mental severe mental illness (Philpott‐Jones, 2018). The effectiveness of gun restriction policies in regard to individuals with serious mental illness may differ due to variations in public mental health systems and the presence or absence of other gun restrictions. Thus, gun control policies effectively reduce gun-related violence among persons living with serious mental illness.

**Conclusion**

Several gun control policies about severe mental illness have been developed in the United States by policymakers and other mental health experts in response to the recent cases of gun violence, which have been on the rise. However, these policies pose significant challenges to individuals living with severe mental illness. These policies have led to an increase in negative public attitudes toward individuals with serious mental illness. Additionally, the guidelines have effectively reduced gun violence among individuals with mental illness and their family members. There is a need to implement policies that will ensure issues of negative public attitudes are dealt with to ensure the effectiveness of gun control policies for the safety of people with serious mental illness.

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