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**Negative Impacts of Prison Overcrowding:**

Prison overcrowding in the United States has continued to increase over the years, causing many issues in health and prison conditions. “The Issue of Safety and Prison Overpopulation,” is a video and article published by Chelsea Dixon on April 25, 2014, of Joe Davidson explaining the causes and effects of prison overcrowding in the United States. After examining prisons, evidence showed that “challenges are arising maintaining prisoner’s health, safety, and sanity” (Davidson). This article and video on prison overpopulation focuses on what overpopulation does not only to the inmates but the people working in the prison as well. Prison officers are not wanting to continue working in the prison service due to the threats that come with overcrowding of the inmates and the difficulties they are facing with maintaining them. If overcrowding continues to increase, guards will continue to be at risk and leave their jobs, inmates health will continue to decline, and maintaining inmate’s sanity will be tougher than ever.

Joe Davidson uses Aristotelian appeals, ethos, pathos, and logos, to explain the negative impacts that prison overcrowding has on many individuals within the prison facility. He uses these appeals to connect to his readers and show the urgency in fixing this issue. Davidson uses Ethos to portray his credibility to his audience. He starts his article by stating, “Having worked in a prison facility, it is obviously more dangerous than a desk job, but the dangers can be amplified if the facilities are overcrowded” (Davidson). Davidson shows his credibility by stating to his readers that he has worked in a prison facility and has seen the effects of prison overcrowding first hand. He goes on his article demonstrating a video on how prison overcrowding affects not only prisoners, but the officers as well using the pathos appeal. In this video, he shows prisoners sick, not getting proper medication, officers being assaulted, and prisoners committing suicide from not getting proper treatment. He uses this appeal to draw emotional responses from his audience so he gets his message through. He also uses Logos to persuade his audience by giving them data that backs up his statements. Davidson states “In fiscal year 2010, there were almost 1,700 assault on bureau staff, according to an April 2011 GAO report” (Davidson).

The number of inmates in a prison has continued to rise over the years making prison officers jobs much harder and more dangerous. According to Davidson’s research, “As the prison population grew 9.5 percent from 2006 through 2011, the agency’s capacity, increasing at 7 percent, didn’t keep up” (Davidson). The outcome for inmates outnumbering staff can be alarming and even fatal. It is hard for prison officers to do their jobs when they are worried for their lives and their safety every day when they show up for work. Instead, we are now lacking in people to fill the jobs of the prison officers that are quitting due to the consequences of prison overcrowding. Prison guards are at higher risk for getting sick easier, catching diseases, and easily being drawn into fights, because they are getting the backlash from the inmates. Davidson reported that “Correctional Officer Jose Rivera was murdered by two inmates in cold blood, and many others have met the same fate” (Davidson). Davidson’s research shows, “In fiscal year 2010, there were almost 1,700 assaults on bureau staff, according to an April 2011 GAO report” (Davidson). His findings show that these numbers will continue to increase if nothing is done about the overcrowding in prison systems that continue to grow. Many lives are at steak and the problem has yet to be solved.

Inmates health is also a cause of overcrowding in the prison systems. With so many people in one space, if one person gets sick, it is very likely that many people around them will get sick as well. Inmates are not receiving their medication the correct way, nor are they making it to their appointments. The shortage of prison officers is also impacting the inmates negatively. An article published by Emerald Insight reports, “The shortage of prison officers has impacted negatively on health care with prisoners unable to attend health care appointments due to lack of available escorts. It was also found that in some cases prisoners were given their night time medication as early as 4:30 p.m.” (MacDonald). Due to prison officers leaving their jobs because of the overcrowding taking place, it is also affecting the inmate’s health. They are not receiving their medicine when sick, nor are they taking their medications at the right time causing them to remain contagious and spread diseases. This issue is creating problems for everyone in the prison system. “Overcrowding is an obvious cause of and contributing factor in many of the heath issues in prisons, most notably infectious diseases and mental health issues. The latest data shows that 22 national prison systems hold more than double their capacity, with a further 27 countries operating at 150-200% (MacDonald). Prisons in almost every state are way above their capacity, just finding new ways to fit more people. Prisons today are fitting 4 people into one cell when it used to be one person to each cell. When someone is sick or carrying diseases, they are easily going to pass it along to anyone they are in contact with, which in overcrowding prisons, it is always.

Inmates sanity is another thing being investigated as a result of overcrowding according to many reports. This is a major problem with inmates in prison and when they are released. When there are so many people in one place, barely being able to move around without running into everybody around them, it creates frustration and friction. Joe Davidson explains that “double or triple bunking can be a breeding ground for sexual or physical abuse among inmates because the staff simply cannot supervise every single thing that happens in the facility due to understaffing. As the prison overpopulation continues to grow, the violence on the limited staff will continue to increase due to the unbalanced ratios of inmates versus staff. If nothing is done to correct this problem, the violence will only continue and worsen, and discourage any new individuals from joining prison staff” (Davidson). Sooner than later, at the rate officers are leaving their jobs, the ratio of prisoners to staff is going to be overrun. My artifact and articles show that inmates are never having time to themselves, always being surrounded by people in a small space, it could drive a person mad. Many inmates are turning to suicide as a result of their insanity. Reported by Savage and Townsend, “The rate of self-injury has more than doubled among male prisoners since 2010 with self-harm at record levels with 42,837 incidents-an average of 117 a day-documented during the year to September 2017, an increase of 12%.” Self-injuries are continuing to arise as overcrowding continues in the prison system. Inmates sanity is a big question in these systems. The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (2017) stated, “Concerns about mental health problems where nearly one in five of those diagnosed with a mental health problem received no care from a mental health professional in prison.” If inmates have a mental health problem in prison and it is not being fixed, they are likely to get in trouble again and be back in the same place they left off when they get out.

These articles show that prison overcrowding in the United States has had many negative impacts on inmates lives as well as the prison staff. As the numbers increase, something needs to be done. Modifying sentences would help with overcrowding. New York has implemented a program that has seen success so far where “inmates can participate in a drug program to reduce their sentences. This program has seen a 20% reduction in prisoner’s sentences over the past decade” (Davidson). In an article by the Huffington Post, Knafo suggests “sending fewer people to prison for drug crimes” (Knafo), to reduce the amount of overcrowding. According to his research, there are “219,000 inmates in the federal prison, and half are there for drug offenses. If the government cuts the penalties for non-violent drug offenses, fewer people will remain in prison. If 20% fewer drug offenders find themselves in prison, it will save taxpayers $1.29 billion. This cannot only help in reducing prison populations, but it can save taxpayer’s and the government money” (Knafo). More studies demonstrate that Knafo’s research shows that “54,200 federal prisoners are not U.S. citizens. If the government implements an “international transfer program,” it could potentially save $6.9 million dollars and help relieve the overcrowded prison populations” (Knafo). There are multiple options that can be put in place to reduce prison overcrowding and all of the consequences. It is said that people in prison deserve to be there, but a lot of people are in there for mistakes they made and deserve a second chance. More focused on drug addicts, instead of being locked up for years, they can be put in a mandatory rehabilitation center to get clean and reduce the number of people in prison to create more room.

“The Issue of Safety and Prison Overpopulation,” is a video and article published by Chelsea Dixon on April 25, 2014, of Joe Davidson explaining the causes and effects of prison overcrowding in the United States. This video highlights how guards will continue to be at risk and leave their jobs, how inmates health will continue to decline, and how maintaining inmate’s sanity will be tougher than ever. These three arguments are outcomes of prison overcrowding in the United States. Putting a stop to overcrowding will save lives, make prisons a safer place, reduce the amount of prison officers leaving their jobs, and reduce the number of people spreading diseases. All of these issues are rooted by prison overcrowding, until change is made all of these problems will continue to grow and soon enough prisoners will heavily outweigh the officers. Different solutions can be put in place in different states to see what the best outcome is to fixing overcrowding in prisons and all the problems that come with it. Joe Davidson used Aristotle’s appeals to persuade his audience of this public issue with facts, research, and emotion to draw out how real this issue is.

Citations:

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