

The cost of Justice

Name

Unit

Course

Lecturer

Date

## **Introduction**

The costs accrued to criminal justice in America are overwhelming and the concerned policymakers, stakeholders and philanthropists are concerned. The costs in the justice departments are of different nature so are the benefits too. Some costs are measured in terms of the direct financial impact they carry with them while other costs are measured according to the impact to the community and other concerned parties (Matthies, 2014). Nevertheless, it is paramount that we first have a basic and agreeable definition of what justice is. This will help in the determination of the costs and also benefits of justice with another question in mind, who is benefiting and who pays which costs.

For the determination of the investment benefits and costs in the long run, the costs benefits analysis (CBA) is carried out (Henrichson & Galgano, 2013). In the justice system, there are resources that are allocated that could have been put into other use. A wide variety of resources are used in the implementation of justice. There are direct costs such as employee salaries, office supplies, employee benefits, and costs of equipment. Such costs apply across the system. However, there are other indirect costs and start-up costs used up in the acquisition of equipment and furniture.

There are other instances that apply which make the estimation of the costs and benefits of the justice system in America a hard task. Such cases require the detailed assessment of the agencies and personnel involved. There are employee and other variable firm costs that can be determined using the transactional and institutional costs analysis (TICA) (Karoly, 2008). It therefore is important to consider these as one seeks to determine the costs of the justice system. The taxpayer's costs are calculated using the marginal costs.

In the justice system, it is paramount that in CBA calculations, marginal costs should be used. The reason for this is the considerable difference between the marginal costs and the estimated costs. Marginal costs are more accurate. The average annual costs of incarceration in America are another cost to consider in the CBA calculations. In the year 2011, it was determined that the average cost of incarceration for one individual in the US was \$46,000 (Paul, 2011). These costs were inclusive of the costs of administration, and other expenses. Other costs include the costs of crime and the victim's costs.

The different benefits of the justice department are dependent on different factors but their financial impact can be determined. One major benefit of the justice system is realized when the number of inmates in a correctional facility decreases (Henrichson & Delaney, 2012). According to Henrichson and Delaney (2012), when this happens, housing units are closed down and the taxpayer benefits are converted into budget savings. When the number of people under probation and parole decreases substantially, the officers previously assigned these duties are able to offer better and more specialized services to the few that they serve. This is another benefit of the justice system.

When the court workload is reduced, there are cost benefits that are achieved. However, these are more significant when there is a reduction in the number of staff working at the courts. Resources available to the court due to reallocation or reduction in services are also referred to as opportunity resources (Matthies, 2014). These are also benefits accrued to the justice system that can be used for other court and judicial purposes. In general to carry out a CBA of the American legal system effectively, there are different factors that need to be considered. The justice system is broad requires analyses that target specific parts of the system.

## References

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