

FEAR OF VICTIMISATION IN RELATION TO THE KEY COMMUNITY POLICING COMPONENTS

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Abstract. The fear of victimization (FOV) has been explored in relation to quality of police contacts, citizens' perception of crime and disorder and social cohesion as three key community policing constructs in the Croatian local communities. The related data have been collected in a convenience sample of 2,749 Croatian citizens using the Community Policing Evaluation Survey scale (McKee, 2001), and analysed carrying out linear regression. Citizens' perception of crime has been the best, and quality of police contacts the worst predictor of the FOV. There have been different age trends of the respective predictors' relevance in males and females.

Keywords: fear of victimization, quality of police contacts, citizens' perception of crime and disorder, social cohesion, Croatia

INTRODUCTION

Policing is a fundamental component of the police job and a prerequisite for ensuring the rule of law regarding prevention and suppression of crime. Still, policing also involves a purely societal dimension consisting of various aspects which are directly related to major concerns of citizens regarding their personal safety, property, individual legal rights, human and social rights and many others. Therefore, involvement of the community is directly linked to the implementation of policing, both on individual and collective level. Nowadays, the police need to implement policies that are primarily aimed to understand the cultural aspects and values of diversity in order to be able to handle problems that may arise in the performance of their tasks. Sincere understanding, constant and interactive contact between the police and various minority groups (Stergioulis, 2017), as well as the unconditional respect for human dignity and individual rights are major factors contributing to building a climate of mutual trust and

constructive cooperation absolutely necessary for an efficient and effective community policing. The results of relevant surveys on community policing have shown that close cooperation between the community and the police increases the level of citizen's satisfaction with the police work, reduces the fear of crime and generally improves the level of community life (Kappeler & Gaines, 2015).

A variety of empirical researches has been conducted on different aspects of community policing, like its effects on crime, fear of crime, citizen satisfaction with police, police officers' job satisfaction. Most researches showed that citizens who are satisfied with the police are less likely to fear victimization, more likely to cooperate with the police, and even less likely to commit crime (Tyler, 2003). Feeling of safety is important determinant of citizen satisfaction studied by many researchers. Warr (2000, 453-454) differentiates between fear of crime and perception of risk by defining fear of crime as 'an emotion, a feeling of alarm or dread caused by an awareness or expectation of danger.' It involves a variety of emotional states, attitudes or perceptions. The fear is a reaction to the perceived environment or to the immediate threats, not a perception of that environment. Warr considers perceived risk of harm a proximate cause of fear of crime. Most researches suggested that people who have a great sense of safety and who rate their neighborhoods favorably hold a higher opinion of police controlling for individual characteristics such as race and age (Hwang, McGarrell & Benson, 2006). In compatible with these findings, satisfaction with police and fear of crime were found to be negatively related with one another (Scheider, Rowell & Bezdikian, 2003). Fear of crime is a serious individual- and community-level problem in urban and suburban areas, influencing how freely people move about the places where they live (Liska, Sanchirico & Reed, 1988). It is related with people's emotional responses and feelings of vulnerability in the case of dangerous conditions or the possibility of victimization. Fear of crime might only shadow the actual incidence of crime, but it certainly seems to damage psychological wellbeing and decrease collective trust and cohesion (Jackson & Stafford, 2009).

Victimization is also found to be a significant factor that changes the individual's perception of safety feeling and fear of crime, leading a change in their attitudes towards police (Tewksbury & West, 2001). It has also been found that victimization experience is related to dysfunctional worry (an experience that in and of itself erodes quality of life), but not with functional worry (an experience that motivates vigilance and routine precaution), and that social concerns about neighbourhood disorder and levels of social cohesion or collective efficacy are strongly associated with both functional and dysfunctional worry about crime (Jackson & Gray, 2010). Namely, previous research on the fear of crime has focused almost exclusively on the

negative, demaging face of public anxieties and public perceptions of risk on health and well being. In this regard Sacco (1993) and Ditton & Innes (2005) pointed out, hardly any attention has been given to the motivational aspects of emotion and to the valuable capacity of fear and its potential to motivate, problem solve, and alert the individual to potential threat.

It used to be common in the literature to refer that some socio-demographic characteristics were independently associated with citizen satisfaction with police. Current studies focus more on the analysis of neighborhood context, police contact, victimization, and other safety issues which are mediated or moderated by socio-demographic characteristics (Yuksel & Tepe, 2013). In general, there are more consistent findings for race than most other demographic characteristics such as sex, age, or socioeconomic status (Nofziger & Williams, 2005). Sex is the most consistent predictor of personal fear of crime and remained so during decades of research. Namely, women are almost always more afraid of crime, no matter how, when or where the measurement was performed. Studies in the United States, England, as well as in some European countries have found women to be more afraid of crime (Adu-Mireku, 2002; Goodey, 1997; Softas-Nall, Bardos & Fakinis, 1995; see also Warr, 1994, for a review). This applies to all racial and ethnic groups as well as to social classes. Early research on fear has revealed that despite the fact that women are less likely to be victimized by street crime, they and the elderly were the most fearful, and this became known as the paradox of fear (Warr, 1994). After these early findings, researchers focused on finding the reasons why women and the elderly might be more afraid. Much of the criticism of this early work focused on the poor measures of fear used in most studies, including their inability to distinguish the emotional feeling of fear from the cognitive component of perceived risk and the fact that measures did not make distinction among fears of different offenses (Kenneth Ferraro and Randy LaGrange). Although findings on age differences in fear became inconsistent as measures improved, sex differences in fear consistently remains.

One of the most basic and straightforward arguments for greater fear among women is that they are physically more vulnerable to being victimized and consequently wounded in case of victimization, due to their generally smaller and weaker statures compared to their male counterparts (Skogan & Maxfield, 1981). Moreover, vulnerability, especially to violence, was considered as one of the main feminine characteristics while being dangerous as one of the main characteristics of masculinity. Hollander (2001) asserted that women might be more likely to express more fear than they felt and men to express less fear than they felt, specifically as a way of meeting society's expectations of how they should behave (see also Sutton & Farrall, 2005 who, based on work in Scotland, argue that this is more true for men). In support of the

socialization argument, a study conducted in Belgium (Cops & Pleysier, 2011) found that it was not the sex of the respondent but their gender identity that mattered most. Both, males and females who had more masculine attitudes and behaviors were less afraid. Most explanations for the lack of expressed fear of crime among men also points to the importance of societal expectations of how men and women should act. Specifically, as Goodey (1997) who conducted research in England has argued, the existence of “hegemonic masculinity,” in which young, strong, heterosexual, white men are valued more and males who are older, weaker, homosexual, and/or minority are valued less, is a primary factor in the lack of expressed fear among adult men. In other words, expressing fear of crime is a sign of weakness, and being considered “weak” is not desirable for those who want to be considered masculine. Consequently, some consider that many men are really afraid of crime, but studies are unable to adequately measure their personal fear because even fearful men may not admit it to a researcher. May (2001, 167) has named this fear, related to physical weakness and feelings of inadequate personal power among some men, “the shadow of powerlessness.” Others consider that men are not actually very afraid of crime as long as they feel in control of the situation (e.g., if they know well the areas they are in and if they can avoid altercations with others, by hanging in groups and being prepared to react aggressively if negative interactions arise) (see Brownlow, 2005; Rader, 2010).

Although community policing efforts have been evident across the world for decades, its implementation and evaluation in post-socialist countries like Croatia have received insufficient attention. Nevertheless the fact remains that a lot of individual enthusiasm, as compensation for system deficiencies, has been invested and lot of good work has been done during almost fifteen years, which has resulted in many positive changes in the police and in the community (Butorac & Cajner Mraović, 2017).

This paper attempts to shed light on citizen fear of victimization (PFV) which has been explored in relation to quality of police contacts (QPC), citizens’ perception of crime and disorder (PCD) and community cohesion (CC) which are representing the main components of the community policing model in the Croatian local communities. Our hypothesis is that those who feel fear of crime and disorder express more personal fear of victimization and less citizen satisfaction with police followed by decline of social cohesion in the community.

1. METHODOLOGY

1. 1. SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

The research was conducted in 21 counties in Croatia in 2017. The related data have been collected in a convenience sample of 2,749 Croatian citizens using Likert-scale items in the *Community Policing Evaluation Survey scale* (McKee, 2001) across sex and age. Data was collected from citizens on a voluntarily basis in public places. The response rate for the citizen survey was 97%. The sample characteristics are generally close to census data demographics in these regions. Linear regression analysis has been performed.

1.2. INSTRUMENT

The Community Policing Evaluation Survey scale contained interrelated four sets of variables. These were (a) quality of contact between the police and local residents, (b) the perception of the level of crime and disorder, (c) fear of victimization, and (d) level of community cohesion. The first part of the questionnaire consists of questions referring to the quality of contacts between the police and citizens. The second part of the questionnaire includes questions on the perception of crime and disorder, and the third part refers to fear of victimization. The fourth set consists of questions on community integration. The last part of the questionnaire refers to demographic data. In this regard, gender and age were examined. Respondents rated their satisfaction with community policing using a Likert scale from 1 to 5. The claims made by the authors were adjusted to suit Croatian cultural environment.

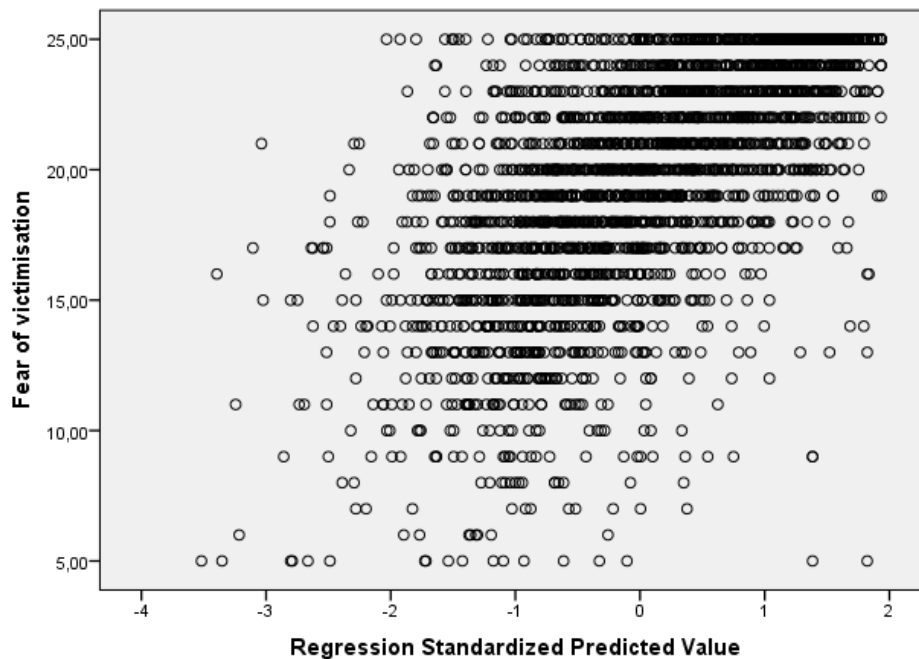
2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.3. FEAR OF VICTIMISATION IN RELATION TO THE KEY COMMUNITY POLICING COMPONENTS

The previous work (e.g. Franklin & Franklin, 2008, Kanan & Pruitt, 2002, Silverman & Della-Giustina, 2001) suggests that the personal fear of victimization (PFV) should be significantly determined with three components of community policing - (1) quality of police contacts (QPC), (2) perception of crime and disorder (PCD), and (3) community cohesion (CC).

This study hypothesizes a relation between perception of crime and disorder (PCD), quality of police contacts with citizens (QPC), community cohesion (CC), and personal fear of crime (PFV) across sex and age. In the sample of 2,671 participants who had the results in all 4 observed variables, it was established that PCD, CC and QPC significantly determine PFV ($F=$

524,8; $df_1=3$; $df_2=2667$; $p<0,001$) explaining nearly 40% of the variation of all SOV results (adjusted $R^2 = 0,370$).



Graph 1. Scatterplot: FOV vs regression standardized predicted value of PFV

Certain differences in the values of the descriptive statistics and the significant interrelationship of the predictors requires relevant β -ponders to be considered in order to evaluate the importance of each predictor.

Table 1 Mutual correlations and descriptive statistics of dependent variable and predictors with related standardized regression coefficients (β) calculated on the whole sample of 2,749 participants

Variables	Descriptive statistics			Pearson r			Linear regression		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>min-max</i>	<i>PCD</i>	<i>CC</i>	<i>QPC</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
PFV	19,5	4,40	5 -25	0,571	0,396	0,322			
PCD	18,0	4,33	5 -25		0,361	0,382	0,473	27,499	<0,001
CC	18,3	4,78	5 -25			0,366	0,2	11,725	<0,001
QPC	17,3	4,06	5 -25				0,068	3,961	<0,001

Considering that the PFV and PCD scales are counter-orientated to CC and QPC scales, Table 1 shows that in Croatia:

- PFV and PCD are below, and CC and QPC above the theoretical average (which is 15),

- Results of all observed variables are optimally dispersed variability coefficient ranged from 22.6% to 26.2%),
- Distribution of all 4 observed variables is negative asymmetric,
- Correlations among all variables are of the expected direction;
- Correlations between the predictors are generally low
- Correlation of criteria with predictors ranges from low to medium high

PCD, CC and QPC are of different importance for prediction of PFV because PCD is 2.4 times more important than CC, and CC is 2.9 times more important predictor than QPC.

Earlier analysis of QPC correlation with PCD and PFV on different age-and-sexr sub-samples showed that the relationship between these components of police functioning in the community depends on age and sexr. Therefore, it was justified to consider whether and how the regression forecast of PCD, CC and QPC depends on the age and sexgroup of citizens of the Republic of Croatia. Considering that the entire sample of participants was balanced by sex (49.4% of female sex) and involved the age range of 8 to 91 years, it was distributed into 6 age-and-sexgroups.

Table 2 Participants' distribution into 6 sex-age groups of the examined sample

		age (years)		
		younger than 31	31 to 50	older than 50
sex	female	501	530	271
	male	558	517	264

Table 3 Linear regression outcomes of personal fear of victimization (PFV) prediction by citizens' perception of crime and disorder (PCD), community cohesion (CC) and quality of police contacts (QPC) in 6 sex-age groups of the examined sample.

	younger than 31	31 to 50	older than 50
male	$R^2=0,334$; $F= 94,2$; $p<0,001$	$R^2=0,370$; $F= 102,1$; $p<0,001$	$R^2=0,31$; $F= 39,6$; $p<0,001$
	$\beta_{CPOC}=0,475$; $t=12,8$; $p<0,001$	$\beta_{CPOC}=0,487$; $t=12,7$; $p<0,001$	$\beta_{CPOC}=0,488$; $t=8,4$; $p<0,001$
	$B_{CC}=0,147$; $t=3,9$; $p<0,001$	$\beta_{CC}=0,231$; $t=6,0$; $p<0,001$	$\beta_{CC}=0,135$; $t=2,3$; $p<0,05$
	$B_{QOPC}=0,107$, $t=2,9$; $p<0,01$	$\beta_{QOPC}=0,01$, $t=0,3$; $p>0,05$	$\beta_{QOPC}=0,02$, $t=0,4$; $p>0,05$
female	$R^2=0,411$; $F= 117,4$; $p<0,001$	$R^2=0,393$; $F= 115,3$; $p<0,001$	$R^2=0,423$; $F= 67,1$; $p<0,001$
	$\beta_{CPOC}=0,498$; $t=12,6$; $p<0,001$	$\beta_{CPOC}=0,460$; $t=11,9$; $p<0,001$	$\beta_{CPOC}=0,355$; $t=6,5$; $p<0,001$
	$B_{CC}=0,195$; $t=5,0$; $p<0,001$	$\beta_{CC}=0,203$; $t=5,5$; $p<0,001$	$\beta_{CC}=0,337$; $t=6,2$; $p<0,001$
	$\beta_{QOPC}=0,073$, $t=1,9$; $p>0,05$	$\beta_{QOPC}=0,122$; $t=3,1$; $p<0,01$	$\beta_{QOPC}=0,117$, $t=2,1$; $p<0,05$

Table 3 clearly shows that on the observed sample of citizens of the Republic of Croatia:

a) PFV with PCD, CC and QPC are systematically better predicted on female participants (7% more variants than on male participants are explained) and the best similarities in prediction success are in the middle age;

b) Success of prediction of PFV with PCD, CC and QPC shows no systematic change in age, but it is indicative that this success is lowest on older men, and the highest on older women;

c) Besides QPC, which in the 50% sex-age groups is not statistically significant, the remaining predictors are statistically significant in all sex-age groups;

d) In all sex-age groups - except for older women, where it's slightly better - PCD is more than twice the better predictor than CC;

e) In all sex-age groups - except for young men and middle-aged women, where it's slightly better - the CC is more than twice the better predictor than QPC;

f) For male participants, the difference in importance of three predictors is on average higher than for female participants;

g) For female participants, the predictive importance of PCD with the age decreases, while the predictive importance of CC and QPC increases; For male participants, the predictive importance of PCD with the age increases and the importance of QPC decreases, while the predictive importance of the CC does not show systematic changes.

To sum up, the correlation of personal fear of crime (PFV) and three predictors: perception of crime and disorder (PCD), quality of police contacts with citizens (QPC) and community cohesion (CC) across sex and age is statistically significant. Citizens' PCD has been the best, and QPC the worst predictor of the PFV. Consequently, PFV is most affected by PCD, followed by CC and significantly and multiply less by QPC. There were a different age trends of the respective predictors' relevance in males and females. This is particularly distinctive for older men and women of younger age. Police contacts with certain categories of citizens, especially with younger men and older women, are unworthy regarding fear of citizen victimization.

It is obvious in our study that safety feeling in Croatia is a strong indicator of citizens' (dis)satisfaction with police encounters. The analysis confirmed the previously mentioned findings that those who feel unsafe express more personal fear of victimization and less citizen satisfaction with police due to the great lack of contact with the police, respectively general decrease of citizen confidence in the police. Evidently there is a communication scarcity in this regard and apparently community policing barely exists. On the other hand, feeling of safety in the local communities might not be related directly with the real crime rates or safety problems.

It might be result of erosion on the quality of life, culture of violence, media attention on crime misinformation, and so forth.

According to characteristics typically associated with older man and younger women facilitators of fear may include factors such as increased vulnerability and/or disorderly local surroundings that would lead a rational individual to be more or less fearful. In addition, fear of crime is understood through characteristics that inhibit or reduce the grounds for fear. Physical vulnerability operationalized as decreased strength and mobility relates to the perception of increased risk to physical assault. In particular, older individuals are typically less mobile and, as a result, may be less able to run away from threat and/or resist physical attack. Similarly, women are typically physically weaker (in part because of socialized passivity) in terms of biological differences in strength and muscular capacity compared with males (e.g., Bale, 1992).

Furthermore, a quite low level of citizens' bonding, both among themselves and with the police, and related incivilities in the Croatian local communities might be the manifestations of physical and social disorder that threaten individual residents more than the actual experience of crime (Worrall, 2006). The physical decay and deterioration of a neighborhood signify a lack of local concern and the absence of informal social controls, leading to citizen perceptions of neighborhood disorder. Perception of disorder is likely translated into environmental uncertainty and perceived threats to personal safety. The findings also indicate that citizens feel weak connection with their neighborhood. Social integration may differentially influence female fear when compared with male fear as a result of the relational and interdependent nature of feminine gender role socialization. Disorderly neighborhood surroundings thus may engender increased feelings of fear for women, compared with their male counterparts, as a result of definitions of danger and perceptions of threatening situations. Perceptions of disorder and incivility may also differentially affect feelings of fear among women as a result of differences in gender role socialization.

CONCLUSION

This survey is limited to just three community policing components in relation to citizens' fear of victimization, but we believe these components are crucial for community policing assessment from the citizens' point of view. The current analysis fills this gap in the literature by testing "mainstream" fear of crime theory on separate female and male samples with the intent of gaining insight into the potential differential effect of traditional models across female and male populations. Our analysis in this particular study still relies on basically to self-report

in survey responses. This reliance raises questions about common method bias and the accuracy of respondents' perceptions and their willingness to respond honestly. It is accepted that self-report studies are weak in proving causal relationships. In fact, this original research needs to be supplemented with data from alternate sources such as systematic observation, personal interviews, telephone interviews, administrative records etc.

Additionally, research could benefit from testing the intersecting relationships between age and fear of victimization as mediated by other independent variables (e.g., income, education, profession) across both female and male samples, because it is possible that certain women and men of varying age groups may be more fearful than others and taking into consideration community-level factors such as crime rate, economic threat, cultural diversity, degree of urbanization, geographic location and so forth. Clearly support for the association between socio-demographic characteristics and citizen satisfaction with police is limited at best. Today, much more research takes into account neighborhood characteristics, which are claimed to be associated with citizen satisfaction with police.

Community policing provides valuable insights to improve feeling of safety and provide first hand information on local problems. Overall, whether perceived or real, as consistently supported by the current literature and this study, fear of victimization makes a difference in terms of citizen satisfaction with the police. In this respect, the police may focus their attention to find ways how to decrease fear of crime in terms of community policing activities. In addition, victimization was another important predictor of citizen satisfaction which has to be considered by the police organization. Police may contribute overall satisfaction of citizens by the way they handle the problem of victims although victimization *per se* is not a significant correlate of perceptions of crime, fear of victimization, or evaluations of police performance (Thomas & Hyman, 1977, 316).

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VIKTIMIZACIJOS BAIMĖS SAŠAJOS SU PAGRINDINIAIS BENDRUOMENĖS SAUGUMO KOMPONENTAIS

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Santrauka

Viktimizacijos baimė (FOV) buvo ištirta atsižvelgiant į tris pagrindinius bendruomenės konstruktus Kroatijos vietos bendruomenėse: policijos bendravimo kokybę, piliečių suvokimą apie nusikalstamumą ir sutrikimų bei socialinę sanglaudą. Duomenys buvo surinkti iš 2749 Kroatijos gyventojų naudojant Bendruomenės saugumo vertinimo apklausos skalę (McKee, 2001) ir išanalizuoti atliekant linijinę regresiją. Gyventojų suvokimas apie nusikalstamumą buvo geriausias, o policijos ryšių kokybė – blogiausias FOV rodiklis. Buvo nustatytas atitinkamų rodiklių ryšys skirtingose amžiaus grupėse tarp vyrų ir moterų.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: viktimizacijos baimė, policijos bendravimo kokybė, gyventojų suvokimas apie nusikalstamumą, socialinė sanglauda, Kroatija.

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