Case Study

THE ROLE OF THE POLICE IN REDUCING THE FEAR OF CRIME IN THE COMMUNITY

Driton Muharremi and Mensut Ademi

ABSTRACT

The feeling of fear of crime is a condition created in the hearts of many citizens, both in urban and rural areas, in war or peace, and the goal of many international researchers in the field of criminology is to evaluate it. This article is broken into three parts. The first

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part introduces the factors that explain the fear of crime, a including socio-demographic and social-psychological model by A. van der Wurff, L. van Staalduinen, and P. Stringer. The second part provides an overview of paradoxes and inconsistencies in the literature regarding fear of crime and the police's role in reducing the fear of crime. Discussing public, political, and media perceptions of the role of police, and these perceptions' implications for possible ways the police can increase feelings of security. Finally, it covers measures that can reduce fear of crime.

The police presence in dangerous areas with criminal influence is an important factor to reduce the fear of crime. Citizens continue to make more demands of the police to fight crime, and this task is directed mainly at community policing.

Alleviation of the fear of crime comes with the preventive actions of the police. They believe their presence in a neighbourhood calms the situation. For citizens, on the other hand, police presence can be seen as an indicator of an unsafe, tense, or disorderly situation.

Methods: *The combined methodology from the studies of self-accusation and victimization was used in this paper by following the listed methods. The police's role to reduce the fear of crime in the RPRFCC community has two distinctive features identified within a comparative study of crime and victimization: the large number and cultural diversity of participants in our country, Kosovo, and its explicitly comparative design. The study reviews how to overcome these challenges and how to gather the data in time or to give an early warning.*[1]

An integral part of comparative survey research is the inclusion of a long tradition of researchers in the fields of cultural anthropology, sociology, political science and criminology, with few clear solutions (A. Prezworski and H. Teune, M. Armer and A. D. Grimshaw, M. L. Kohn, C. Ragin, E. Allardt, S. Karstedt, N. J. Smelser, F. van de Vijver and N. K. Tanzer, T. Bennett, D. Nelken, S. Rokkan, et al.). During the implementation of RPRFCC, many technical, human, and logistical challenges and problems can arise, but awareness of these problems is the best weapon against oversimplification or misinterpretation of the results.[2] *The research also analyses the strongest and most problematic aspects, such as the challenges faced by residents and identification of a number of recommendations to strengthen law enforcement agencies' work in the future.*

The paper addresses the following questions:

> *1. What conditions and causes lead to the occurrence or development of criminal behaviour in a society at a given time?*

> *2. What are effective ways to remove the conditions and causes of criminal behaviour?*

Case study: Kosova.

Research participants: 2,060 respondents in rural and urban areas.

Researchers: Students of Law Faculty at AAB University, 25, Professors of Law and Criminology, 5.

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1   For a more detailed explanation of the basic ISRD research and methodology, see Ineke Haen Marshall and Dirk Enzmann, 'Methodology and Design of the ISRD-2 study' in *The Many Faces of Youth Crime: Contrasting Theoretical Perspectives on Juvenile Delinquency across Countries and Cultures* (Springer 2012) 21, doi: 10.1007/978-1-4419-9455-4.

2   Ibid 21.

Survey and interview method in hybrid form, online, paper and pencil, and electronic questionnaire.

Results and Conclusions: *The latest criminological research emphasizes two ways to study and discover the hidden number of criminal offenses in the official national crime records. The most popular methods are via self-report studies and victim studies. The consequences of fear of crime, namely its economic and social effects, are serious challenges facing any society. The weight of the consequences due to the fear of crime in any concrete society depends on many factors, including the criminalization in society, corruption, organized crime, nepotism, criminal offenses handled in national legislation, leading to implementation in the social system for all of the afore-mentioned items. In fact, the consequences depend on the prevailing type of criminal in the respective country. Corruption and organized crime produces poverty and general economic decline accompanied by social dissatisfaction of democratic development reforms, reducing the effectiveness of the state power's functioning and minimizing the trust of citizens in law enforcement bodies and state public service.*

The problems of combating and detecting criminal offenses, such as corruption and organized crime, are complicated and caused by various political, legal, economic, and social factors in general. Laws always require enforcement, and while the limit of legal behaviour has generally shrunk over time, to a large extent the laws in our country are not largely applicable to a society obliged to enforce the laws in force. The time it takes for quality implementation is less clear. Enforcement requires a form of initial information about the collusive act, such as corruption – reported either by a government investigator or a third party – and then taking a legal action from that information, culminating in an adequate conviction. Public knowledge about organized crime and corruption is made possible primarily by third parties or investigators from some branches of the government, separate from the current criminal and corrupt groups.

Solving and overcoming the obstacles in the detection and combating of organized crime and corruption is achieved with complex state policies, including analysis of the current state of this phenomenon; obligations of political activity and general goals; specific measures against organized crime and corruption, and in particular, the special laws against organized crime and the confiscation of illegally acquired property; the formation of specialized anti-corruption institutions operated by the Judicial Police and foreseen by the Criminal Procedure Code and the Law on the Police; the full cooperation of intelligence bodies, such as KIA (Kosovo Information Agency), Police Intelligence, and many governmental and non-governmental organizations that specialize in the fields, investigations, and trials as upheld to professional principles and ethics; legislative regulation of special authorizations of certain bodies and organizations in detecting and fighting corruption; effective implementation of the law and measures controlled by institutions; good governance, administration, and full legality in the functional performance of justice bodies, police, customs, inspections, and municipal government bodies; the scientific and professional approach to detecting and fighting organized crime, corruption, educating the public, and mobilizing the media to prevent and combat organized crime and corruption.

1   INTRODUCTION

Internationally, research on the fear of crime has existed since 1906 in the United Kingdom (UK), and in 1960 in the U.S.A. For example, every two years, the Crime Survey for England and Wales interviews around 10,000 residents regarding their views of crime and crime-related matters. The survey sheds light on the public's attitude towards policing, victimization,

risk perception, and overall fear of crime. Crime surveys are conducted not only in Western European countries and the U.S.A., but also in Central and Eastern European countries.[3]

The research findings from the UK and U.S. are insightful. A plethora of studies have concluded that fear of crime influences the well-being of a large part of the population. Some studies even go as far as to suggest that fear of crime is now a larger issue than the committed crime itself.[4]

G. Chambers and J. Tombs, while reviewing the 1982 British Crime Survey (Scotland), reported that "more than half of the respondents (58%) said that at some time in the past they had worries about the possibility of being a victim of crime."[5]

Fear of crime results from socioeconomic, demographic, and psychological changes in a democratic society.[6] Today, in all countries of the world, and especially after the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and important wars (including Ukraine, Russia, Syria, etc.), society largely demonstrates its feeling of insecurity in communities, particularly in urban areas where the population includes immigrants and refugees who are targeted by criminal groups. These communities are often victims of criminal offenses against human rights, life and body, sexual integrity, and criminal offenses of organized crime.

The effects seen include the disintegration of traditional societies which previously were characterized by social cohesion, predictable economic environments, and local specificities. These destructive effects have resulted in a society in which feelings of insecurity and the search for vague and secure identities in communities are permanent and defining characteristics.[7]

D. Garland studied the problem of cultural formation in high crime societies. This cultural formation produces a series of psychological and social effects that exert influence on politics and policy and "give the experience of crime a fixed institutional form."[8] People become more aware of crime under these conditions and are experience common, everyday practices that require them to assume the actual identity of a criminal (or a potential victim) and to think, feel, and act accordingly. In response, the public policy focus has shifted from offender-oriented policies (rehabilitation, etc.) to victim-oriented policies, which are primarily based on repressive and punitive measures.

This article consists of three parts. The first part introduces the factors that explain fear of crime, including the socio-demographic and social-psychological model of A. van der

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3   Oksanna Hatalak, Anna Alvazzi del Frate, and Ugljesa Zvekic (eds), *The International Crime Victim Survey in Countries in Transition: National Reports* (UNICRI 1998); Ugljesa Zvekic, *Criminal Victimisation in Countries in Transition* (UNICRI 1998); Helmut Kury (ed), *International Comparison of Crime and Victimization: The ICVS* (de Sitter Publications 2001); Duxita Mistry, 'Falling Crime, Rising Fear: 2003 National Victims of Crime Survey' (2004) 8 South African Crime Quarterly 17, doi: 10.17159/2413-3108/2004/v0i8a1041; Kauko Aromaa and Markku Heiskanen (eds), *Crime and Criminal Justice Systems in Europe and North America 1995-2004* (HEUNI 2008); Gorazd Meško, Andrej Sotlar and John Winterdyk (eds), *Policing in Central and Eastern Europe – Social Control of Unconventional Deviance: Conference Proceedings* (University of Maribor 2011).

4   Mark Warr, 'Fear of Victimisation: Why Are Women and The Elderly More Afraid?' (1984) 65 Social Science Quarterly 681; Trevor Bennett, 'Tackling Fear of Crime' (1990) 28 Home Office Research Bulletin 14; C Hale, *Fear of Crime: A Review of The Literature, Report Prepared for the Metropolitan Police Service Working Party on Fear of Crime* (University of Kent 1992).

5   Gerry Chambers and Jacqueline Tombs (eds), *The British Crime Survey – Scotland* (HMSO 1984); Gorard Meško et al, 'Police Efforts in the Reduction of Fear of Crime in Local Communities: Big Expectations and Questionable Effects' (2007) 2 Sociologija Mintis ir veiksmas 70, doi: 10.15388/SocMintVei.2007.2.6038.

6   Rene Boomkens, 'Towards the Capsular City? Public Safety and Public Fears' in K van der Vijver and J Terpstra (eds), *Urban Safety: Problems, Governance and Strategies* (IPIT 2004).

7   Meško (n 7) 71.

8   David Garland, 'The Culture of High Crime Societies: Some Preconditions of Recent "Law and Order" Policies' (2000) 40 (3) The British Journal of Criminology 367.

Wurff, L. van Staalduinen, and P. Stringer.[9] The second part provides an overview of the paradoxes and inconsistencies in the literature on fear of crime and the police's role in reducing fear of crime. Public, political, and media perceptions of the police's role and the perceptions' implications help identify possible ways the police can assist. Then, ways to increase sense of security is described. Finally, measures that can reduce the fear of crime are discussed.[10]

2   THE SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL MODEL OF FEAR OF CRIMINALITY

Approaches to fear of crime can also be called *indicators of safety* in socio-demographic terms, whereas such models are useful for explaining the fear of crime in certain countries.[11]

These models may combine socio-demographic and social-psychological characteristics when analysing the reduction and fear of criminality. According to some approaches, there are three main models that explain the levels of fear of crime.[12] The first model is the victimization model in which high levels of crime (a socio-demographic factor) lead to a higher number of victims, resulting in higher levels of fear due to the expectation of becoming a victim (a socio-psychological factor). The next model, the model of vulnerability, proposes that personal characteristics, another social-psychological factor, contribute to people's fear of crime. Social and/or physical vulnerability is one of the primary explanations for fear of crime according to this model. Lastly, the social control model proposes that lack of social control, a socio-demographic factor, is the source of fear. Lack of social control involves instability, disorder, and neighbourhood decline that leads to actual or symbolic threats, thus increasing the fear of crime. The models show that there are different types of socio-demographic and social-psychological factors that may contribute to fear of crime. Socio-demographic factors, such as age, gender, health, and poverty may be related to social and physical vulnerability under the vulnerability model. The environment and media are two important psychological factors in the social control model. These three explanatory models take both socio-demographic and social-psychological factors into account. Thus, both demographic concerns and individual levels of fear of crime explain fear of crime in general.[13]

3   LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Law enforcement agencies protect society from criminality and help to decrease the amount of "dark" and "grey" criminal offenses. Having analysed some practical cases, we can verify the validity of certain theoretical methods, tactics, and technical tools, providing the appropriate empirical material for preventive measures against deviant activities. Law enforcement agencies must take certain steps in the fight against criminality, develop scientific methods and tools for the detection, investigation, judgment, and prevention of

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9   Adri van der Wurff, Leendert van Staalduinen and Peter Stringer, 'Fear of Crime in Residential Environments: Testing a Social Psychological Model' (1989) 129 (2) Journa of Social Psychology 141, doi: 10.1080/00224545.1989.9711716.

10   *G.Meško 'Police Efforts in Reducing the Fear of Crime', Policing in Central and Eastern Europe: Dilemmas of Contemporary Criminal Justice* (Faculty of Criminal Justice University of Maribor 2004) 734.

11   Wurff (n 11); Stephen Farrall and others, 'Social Psychology and the Fear of Crime' (2000) 40 (3) British Journal of Criminology 399-413, doi: 10.1093/bjc/40.3.399.

12   European Communities, *A Review of Scientifically Evaluated Good Practices for Reducing Feelings of Insecurity or Fear of Crime in the EU Member States* (European Crime Prevention Work 2004).

13   Meško (n 7) 72.

criminal offenses, research the entire repressive and preventive activity aimed to fight crime. As well, new preventive methods and tools should be consistently sought.[14]

It should be emphasized that, regarding the methods taken from other fields, they become criminalistic due to the specifics of the object treated; therefore, mandated law enforcement agencies should have a special role for involvement.

State institutions and scientific university research centres must take on the study and processing based on the criminal code and methodical criminal procedure, technical and tactical tools, and methodical recommendations for searching, finding, fixing, examining, and evaluating evidence for the purpose of discovery, investigation, trial, and prevention of criminal offences. The methods studied and tools processed by science to extract the right information about their mechanisms and ways of committing criminal offences are grouped into three homogeneous parts,[15] interrelated and inseparable as tactical methods (criminological tactics), and methodological recommendations (criminological methodology or investigation methodology).

Thus, in the fight against criminality, along with other legal sciences, the science of criminology as a legal science continues to play an active role. [16]

4   RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Self Report Victimisation (SRV) has two distinctive features as a comparative study on crime and victimization: the large number and cultural diversity of participants in Kosovo and its explicitly comparative design.[17]

With this research, we evaluated how the insecurity affects the citizens of Kosovo, as well as acquire an indicator of how possibly increase quality of life in the municipalities.

The research aims at identifying the perception about individual and collective security, safety, and the environment in which citizens live, the trust in the Kosovo Police (KP) and other law enforcement agencies, community relations, and inter-ethnic relations.

The research also analyses the strongest and most problematic points, such as the challenges faced by residents, as well as identifying a number of recommendations to strengthen the work of law enforcement agencies in the future. An integral part of comparative survey research is an inclusion of a long tradition of researchers in the fields of cultural anthropology, sociology, and political science.

The paper addresses the following questions:

1. What are the conditions and causes that lead to the occurrence or development of criminal behaviour in a society at a given time?

2. What are effective ways to remove the conditions and causes of criminal behaviour?

Case study: Kosovo.

Research participants: 2,060 respondents in rural and urban areas.

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14   Mirsad Abazoviq et al, *Crime Fighting Policy* (University AAB; University of Sarajevo FKN 2006) 4, 23.
15   Nedzad Korajlic and Driton Muharremi, *Criminalistics* (Riinvest 2009).
16   M Ademi and M Budimlic, *Fear of Crime, 2009-2016* (AAB College).
17   For a more detailed explanation of the basic ISRD research and methodology, see Marshall and Enzmann (n 3).

Researchers: 25 students of law faculty at AAB University, 5 professors of law and criminology.

Survey and interview methods took a hybrid form (a combination of online and face-to-face forms), and an electronic questionnaire.
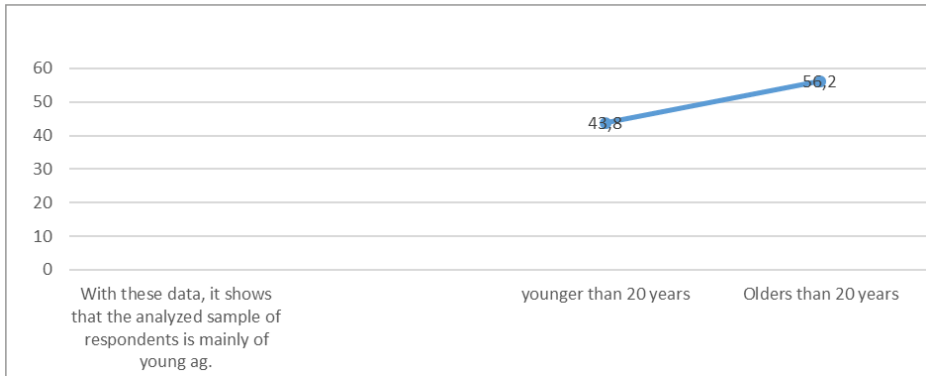

Fig.2 Economic situation

We can see a few factors from the analysed sample of respondents: they are primarily of a young age, i.e., 43.8% are younger than 20 years, and 56.2% are older than 20 years; the gender ratio is 44% men and 56% women. According to the data, 80.5% of the respondents have a secondary education. Regarding housing status, 78.8% live in a private house or have lived for a long period at their existing address while 22.2% have resided at the same address for a period of up to 11 years. This may mean that they have migrated to cities from other regions, and in this case, we see the counterculture (observed in criminology as conflict of cultures). The highlighted characteristics are that they live with their families (96.3%), and their own financial capacities are low (34.3%), average (24.2%), and (41.5%) higher.

The data shows that only 7.5% of the respondents have been victimized by some form of delinquent behaviour (damage, private matters, theft, etc.) in the past. This data relates to the time after the 2000-2013 war. The percentage of victimization varies enormously before and during the war and would skew the data. Their psychophysical ability shows that they can assess risk at average (42.3%) and excellent (41%) levels. In most cases, their health is assessed as excellent (75.5%), with only slightly more than half of respondents communicate with their neighbours (59.7%), and a number of interviewees (58.5%) visit friends in the neighbourhood.

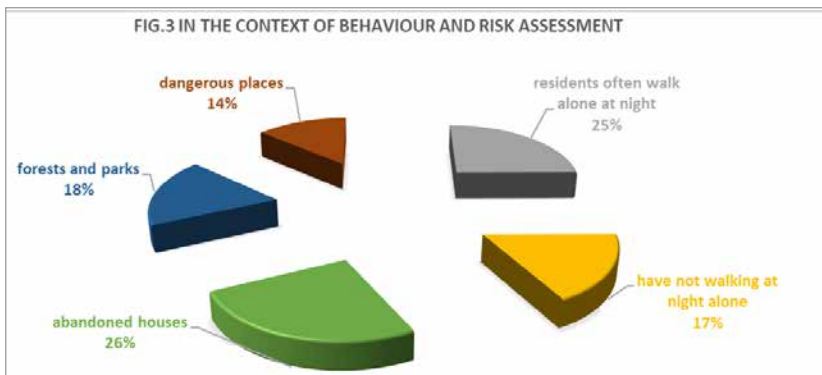**Behaviour and risk assessment**

Fig.3 Context of behaviour and risk assessment

The results show that a relatively large number of residents often walk alone at night (43.6%), although (considering the age of the interviewees), the remainder of the residents (30.5%) do not regularly walk alone at night. Regarding certain locations in the risk assessment, respondents perceived the following as dangerous: abandoned houses (45.2%), forests and parks (32.1%), market (23.8%).
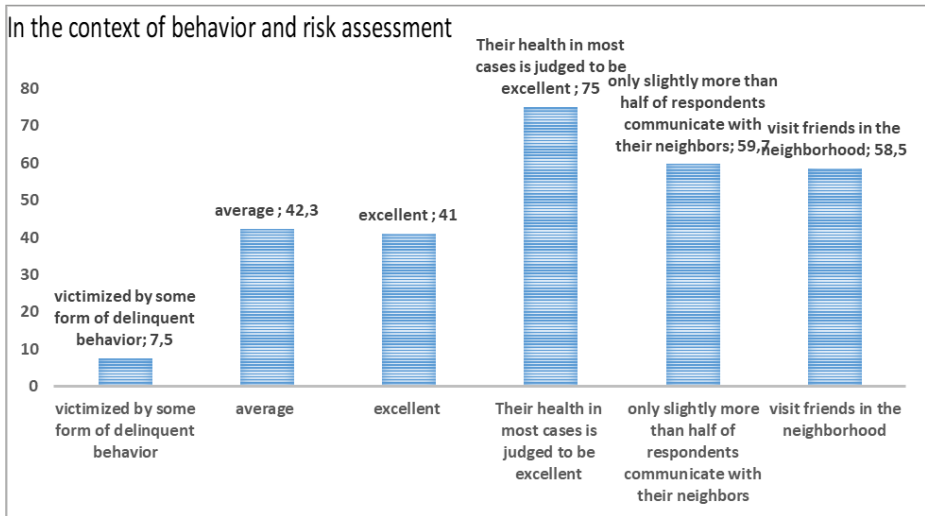
Through characterisation of the social-psychological model of fear of crime from the referred samples, it is seen that the analysed respondents' samples do not perceive themselves as targets of significant victimization; 29% of respondents thought that bad people threaten them and their property, and 16.8% of respondents believe that people are jealous of them.

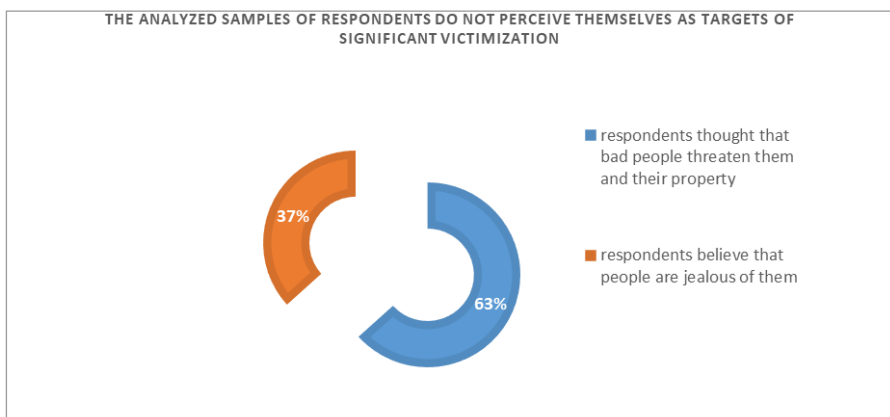*Fig.4. Context of behaviour and risk assessment*

Fig. 5 Characteristics of the social-psychological model of fear of crime

Considering self-perception

Considering self-perception, respondents indicated that, regardless of gender, age, and experience, they can overcome and stop a potential attacker, while more than a third of the respondents are not sure. More than half of the respondents perceive that, with their behaviour, they can avoid a case of conflict (50.4%).

The study revealed that only 13.7% of the respondents trusted the people they know, and 51.5% of the respondents do not trust some people in their environment. The perception of the criminogenic space is relatively high. More than one-third of the respondents sometimes imagine that someone may attack or steal on the street and 27.5% of the respondents believe that they could safely move inside.

5   CONFRONTING THE FEAR OF CRIME

Van der Vijver used Lerner's theory of the "Belief in the Just World' to understand how people deal with potentially threatening situations. The just world theory asserts that human beings want to and must believe that they live in a world where people get what they deserve, and deserve what they get, so that they can go about their daily lives with a sense of trust, hope, and confidence in their future. In a just world, there is no place for innocent victims, but at the same time, we are all aware that there are innocent victims. The judiciary is used to uphold our image of the just world because it is a symbol for both the protection of the "good" and elimination of the threat of crime by ignoring the "evil."[18]

Though if someone becomes the victim of a crime that incites outrage, the perception of the just world is violated and that perception must be reinstated. This has more to do with the battle against experienced injustice than arresting the perpetrator. This is why victims and the public want to know that the police and the justice department are working to solve the case effectively.[19] Lerner's theory of "Belief in the Just World" is, however, problematic in many ways. The press and television present a world where every single person, good or bad, can be a victim. It does not explain why many people feel unsafe, although, according to this theory, most people believe that they are good citizens, and therefore, implicitly protected from bad events, including crime.[20]

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18   Melvin J Lerner, *The Belief in a Just World: A Fundamental Delusion* (Springer 1980) 9-30; CD van der Vijver, *De burger en de zin van strafrecht* (Koninklijke Vermande 1993).

19   Karin Lasthuizen, BAP van Eeuwijk and Leonardus WJC Huberts, 'How Policing Can Reduce Feelings of Insecurity: Results from Survey Research in the Netherlands' (2005) 6 (4) Police Practice and Research 375, doi: 10.1080/15614260500294125.
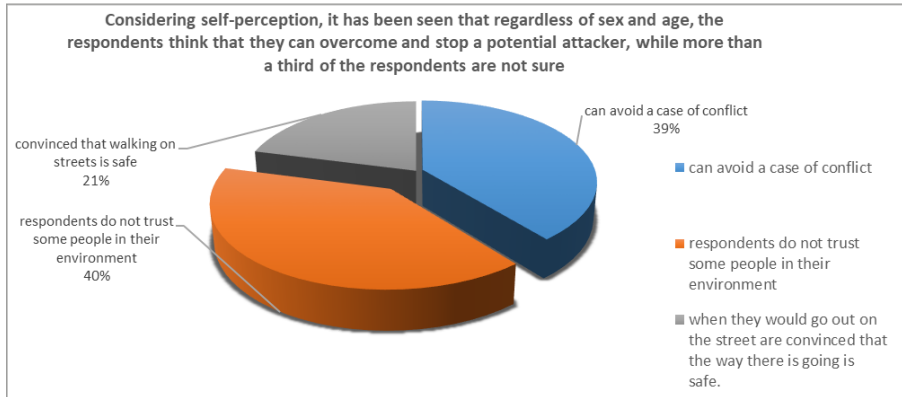
20   Lerner (n 21).

Fig.6. Self-assessment of the ability to overcome and stop a potential attacker

6   ROLE OF POLITICS AND MEDIA IN THE FEAR OF CRIME

The role of politics and media in people's fear of crime is a very important concept as it has a strong influence on political decisions. We find punitiveness increasing in western countries in recent years,[21] often based on a victim-oriented approach. Fear of crime is such an important element of penal populism that politicians recognize and use expressed fear of crime, generated by the media, well-publicized cases, and changes in some legal norms (often without sufficient expert consultation and under the pressure of so-called moral entrepreneurs), to their own ends.[22] According to G. Mesko, political elites have overlooked the fact that society is not only a victim, but also a cause of crime. To fight crime and guarantee security, politicians are placed in a dilemma of "freedom and security."[23] Political elites seem to sacrifice freedom for security. Their declared goal is citizens' protection from victimisation, but the hidden goal is quite frequently some political gain (i.e., getting re-elected). Nowadays, crime is an accepted piece of our society, and like most other problems (e.g., unemployment), is a solvable problem. It seems that contemporary society wants to eliminate all evil so that the "good citizen" can live in freedom without feeling afraid (justifying a belief in a just world). This perspective on reducing crime and fear of crime raises high expectations of citizens to be good, accepted, and avoid becoming a victim. Fear of crime issues are a political matter due to politicians who abuse fear of immigrants, the poor, southerners, easterners, and other marginalized and stigmatized social groups, attributing criminality to them to increase fear of crime and the groups' credibility with a trusting public. The media's influence on one's understanding crime's attribution to specific individuals, circumstances, and possible victimization deserves additional research. The media is often seen as one of the leading causes for fear of crime; fear of crime is fuelled, in part, by heavy exposure to violent, dramatic programming on prime-time television. For example, research study conducted by D. Romer, K. H. Jamieson, and S. Aday indicates that

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21   Julian V Roberts et al, *Penal Populism and Public Opinion: Lessons from Five Countries* (OUP 2003).

22   Helmut Kury et al, 'Fear of Crime as Background of Penal Policy?' in G Mesko, M Pagon and B Dobovsek (eds), *Policing in Central and Eastern Europe: Dilemmas of Contemporary Criminal Justice* (Faculty of Criminal Justice University of Maribor 2004) 126.

23   Gorazd Meško, 'Local Safety Councils in Slovenia: A Story on Attempts to Make Local Communities Responsible for Solving Crime and Safety Problems' in G Mesko, M Pagon and B Dobovsek (eds), *Policing in Central and Eastern Europe: Dilemmas of Contemporary Criminal Justice* (Faculty of Criminal Justice University of Maribor 2004) 734.

watching local television news relates directly to increased fear and concern about crime.[24] K. Lasthuizen, B.A.P. van Eeuwijk and L. W.J.C. Huberts showed that one single incident of violence receiving extensive media coverage can be enough to influence the public's feelings of insecurity.[25] The media's impact is increasingly significant.

Methods to reduce the fear of crime became an internationally discussed and researched topic in the 1990s. Until recently, the European Union was especially focused on the prevention and investigation of different kinds of crimes (including organized crime), but, over time, became aware of the importance of fear of crime as a quality-of-life issue. Reduction of fear of crime is now one of the European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN)'s priorities. Several measures and good practices to reduce the fear of crime are discussed in a review written by the EUCPN (2004) regarding their effectiveness. Although the research on fear of crime is based on three indicators from the International Crime Victim Surveys (ICVS), the EUCPN discusses the implications of certain methods to reduce fear of crime. These methods, discussed below, are often related to crime prevention and not specifically to fear of crime. [26]

7   CONCLUSIONS

With this research, we were able to assess how perceived insecurity affected the citizens of Kosovo.[27]

We have tried to reflect the sense of security of the residents of Kosovo accurately, including their perception of individual and collective security, safety, and their environment; trust in the Kosovo Police (KP) and other law enforcement agencies, community relations, and inter-ethnic relations. The research also analyses the strongest and most problematic issues, such as the challenges faced by the residents of Kosovo, as well as identifying several recommendations to strengthen the work of law enforcement agencies in the future.

This research had a significant impact on safety issues and increasing the quality of life for Kosovo residents, especially in the municipalities where the research was implemented, and from locations where the challenges presented to the Kosovar society can be seen.[28]

This paper emphasizes the need for full commitment from municipal authorities and other stakeholders to achieve a sustainable improvement in the security levels for Kosovo residents.

By including members of different communities in their compositions and working with non-Albanian communities during the implementation of the project, we have managed to build reliable and cooperative partnerships between residents and communities, improving the levels of trust in the municipalities of Prishtina, Prizren, Gjakov, and Ferizaj.

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24   Daniel Romer, Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Sean Aday, 'Television News and the Cultivation of Fear of Crime' (2003) 53 (1) Journal of Communication 88, doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2003.tb03007.x.

25   Lasthuizen, Eeuwijk and Huberts (n 22).

26   European Communities (n 14).

27   <https://www.askk-ks.com/wbc-revista/> date accessed 16 Feb 2023.

28   <https://www.askk-ks.com/wbc-revista/> date accessed 16 Feb 2023.

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