

8TH INTERNATIONAL STUDENT CONFERENCE ON LOCAL SAFETY AND SECURITY



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FEAR OF CRIME

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Introduction

The importance of a sense of security in local communities

- Sense of security in local communities is the key to quality of life, sense of belonging and social stability
- Not always related to actual crime, but mostly to subjective factors

Factors influencing fear of crime

- Demographic features
- Environmental appearance (e.g. vandalism, homelessness)
- Presence of social disorder
- Media portrayals and people's experiences with crime

Purpose of the seminar paper

- Analyse the factors influencing the fear of crime
- Research the role of local communities in strengthening the sense of security
- Focus on preventive measures by residents and security services.



Fear of crime factors: Demographic features

Gender

- Women express more fear but are less likely to be victims of crime.
- Men are more likely to be victims of violence but express less fear.
- Men's fear is often underestimated.

Age

- Older people don't necessarily express more fear.
- They feel more vulnerable due to physical limits, smaller social circles and fewer resources.

Socio-economic status

- Lower income and education = higher fear (less secure environment - more exposure to crime).
- Better social relations = lower sense of threat.
- More resources: security measures are not always associated with a greater sense of security (it's more psychological).

Fear of crime factors: Social and psychological features

Van der Wurff model (4 key elements of fear perception):

- Attractiveness - how threatened an individual feels as a potential target
- Evil intentions - perception of others as potentially dangerous
- Power - self-confidence and sense of control in dangerous situations
- Criminalising space - evaluation of a living space as dangerous

Psychological factors of fear:

- Personal experience of crime
- Personality traits (anxiety, depression)
- Feelings of threat - often psychological, not real
- Media influence - frequent highlights of crime increase fear



Fear of crime factors: Media



Media reports:

- Highlight violent crime (murder, sexual offences)
- Reinforce stereotypes about perpetrators and reality
- Aim: to attract attention, not to show the reality

Consequences:

- Fear of crime can become a bigger problem than crime itself
- Do not include the wider context, causes and solutions
- Increased sense of threat for individuals

Fear of crime factors: Social climate and exclusion

Victim exclusion:

- Socially excluded individuals are more likely to feel threatened and exposed to crime
- Disability and homelessness increase feelings of vulnerability
 - Disabled people - more likely to be victims, especially women with disabilities
 - Homeless people - significantly more vulnerable to violence, greater fear of being attacked

Perpetrator exclusion:

- Fear of "otherness" - people often fear those who are culturally or ethnically different
- Cultural diversity - increases fear due to difficulty in understanding "foreign" ways of life

Fear of crime factors: Environment

The fear of crime is not only a function of the relationships between people, but also of the very environment in which people live!

Untidy environment:

- Dirty streets, neglected buildings, rubbish, graffiti and vandalism
- Behaviours such as:
 - Drinking alcohol in public places
 - Begging, loitering, gathering groups of young people
 - Open drug use

Tidy environment:

- Increases sense of safety and deters potential offenders
- Community support reduces fear, boosts residents' self-confidence

Police visibility:

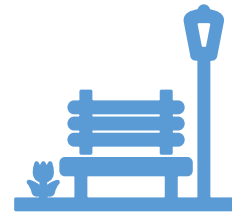
- Foot patrols and dealing with troublemakers - positive effect
- Car patrols - can have opposite effect on sense of safety

Strategies to Reduce Fear of Crime



Improving Home Security

Enhancements like security doors, anti-burglary windows, better locks and surveillance systems



Well-Maintained Public Spaces

Renovated parks, clean streets and open areas help people feel safer, particularly when combined with regular maintenance like cleaning and graffiti removal.

Effective Lighting

- Good lighting in parks, streets, and building entrances reduces fear and potential for crime, but it must be well-placed to allow natural surveillance without feeling overly intrusive.



Increased Police and Security Presence

- Visible foot patrols in high-risk areas deter crime and reassure residents, offering both a preventive and responsive benefit.



Limited Effectiveness of CCTV

- Although surveillance cameras can deter criminals and aid investigations, their impact on reducing fear is limited. In fact, they can sometimes reinforce the perception that an area is unsafe.



Social Support and Community Engagement

- Social isolation often heightens fear of crime. Encouraging community events, intergenerational interactions, and public participation in safety policy-making strengthens trust and is making residents feel safer.



- Social bonds and mutual trust among neighbors play a crucial role in reducing fear of crime. When people are connected and look out for one another, they feel safer and are more willing to intervene in problematic situations.
- Community policing—focused on visibility, engagement, and collaboration—can be an effective tool in reducing fear.
- Local initiatives like Neighbourhood Watch may not always lower crime rates directly but significantly boost residents' sense of safety and trust, helping create stronger communities.



Conclusion

- Fear of crime is often more closely linked to perception than to actual crime rates. Reducing this fear requires coordinated efforts by authorities, the media, and the community.
- Addressing the fear of crime goes beyond lowering crime statistics—it demands building trust, strengthening social ties, and creating environments where people feel secure in their everyday lives. By working together and prioritizing community well-being, we can create safer, more resilient neighborhoods.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!