



PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS FEAR OF CRIME AND VICTIMIZATION IN THE AGE OF MASS MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

Majority of people believe that crime is a significant problem in Pakistani society. For the last several years, there has been a lot of attention paid to two distinct but interrelated topics: crime, as well as media attention. As a result, the study's primary objective is to look at the connection between media and public fear of crime. Being frightened of crime is something that many people have to deal with. Research shows that a person's fear of crime is influenced by a lot of different things, and that some groups are more afraid over others. Even though they are predominantly young, university graduates admit they are frightened of crime both on and off campus. What hasn't been looked into yet is whether university students in Pakistan are afraid of violent acts or not. Further, the contributing factors why men and women seem to be frightened of crime may also be distinct. This data is obtained from the students of two higher education institutions in Punjab, Pakistan, which are both in the same province. Results show that most students don't think they're safe on campus, even though they have a lot of chances of getting victimized. A survey was utilized to gather data in this study, which employed the questionnaire. This study population consists primarily of higher education adolescents between the ages of 18 and 24. Overall, 447 of the 550 individuals who participated in the study were able to effectively reply to the majority of the questions. The present research emphasizes the need of investigating the relationship between students' fear of crime and their usage of mass media.

Keywords: Fear of crime, mass media; campus; university students, Pakistan

JEL Codes: K10

I. INTRODUCTION

Theories of influence of the mass media have consistently revealed a relationship between media consumption and the fear of crime. Fear of crime has been a topic of study for decades, however the present level of measures and methodologies used to analyse perceptions of crime in an individual's natural surroundings are restricted (Prieto Curiel et al., 2020). In response, the present study investigates the context-dependent nature of victimization worry as it is experienced within the proximate environment of young people. The fast rise of mass media has made it substantially easier for individuals to communicate with one another and share information with one another. At the same time, it has provided new opportunities for internet and aggressive online behavior to flourish. The media has shown that the internet play a big role in how crime images are made and spread, especially when it comes to how they are made and spread (Kujala et al., 2019). Research shows that people who watch a lot of TV or read a lot of newspapers have different views about crime and justice than people who don't watch TV or read a lot of newspapers. Criminal justice system onwards (CJS) issues are seen differently by people who frequently consume media from the mainstream and social media than by those who do not regularly consume information from these sources (Dolliver et al., 2018a). On the other hand, this study has shown that the impacts of media could well be modified by factors such as the audience or the kind of media being investigated (Hollis et al., 2017; Prieto Curiel et al., 2020b). The frequency of study that examined how an individual's knowledge and attitudes on CJS could be impacted by additional individual circumstances is limited. Students' academic performance may be influenced by their interactions with the criminal justice system, their experiences and the structure of their social networks (Intravia et al., 2017). As a result,

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information on CJS is gleaned from a variety of sources, including the news media, personal experience, and social networking sites (Shi, 2021a). Even if it is true, little research has been done into how the information gathered from these sources impacts the public's perception of crime and justice. These three information sources in particular were examined for their impact on views about crime and the CJS in general, among other things. The dilemma framework hypothesis is examined in detail in this article, as is the manner in which the media socially construct the crime issue, as well as the consequences of that imagery on people's attitudes toward crime and punishment (Jackson, 2011). The cultivation paradigm (Shrum, 2017) the interpersonal diffusion thesis (Kort-Butler & Habecker, 2018a) the replacement and resonance hypotheses are just a few of the topics we'll be covering. Media consumption, exposure to violence, personal victimization and the victimization of social network followers were analyzed by researchers in this study. Employment in the judicial system and involvement of social network members in the justice system were also evaluated. The media's influence on public perceptions of crime and punishment has been studied in the past.

Cultivation theorists contend that the public's fear of crime is fostered by the media (Shrum, 2017) The vast majority of individuals have had no first-hand experience or direct engagement with the CJS, making it difficult for them to remain up to speed on crime and CJS issues in their own neighborhoods (Kort-Butler & Habecker, 2018a). Crime headlines in the media, in contrast to authentic crime scenes, are framed in such a manner that they seem to be more violent and horrible than the actual crime scene, which is not the case (Dolliver et al., 2018a). Because of this, individuals who consume large amounts of media may develop erroneous preconceptions of crime and justice in the CJS that are comparable to those presented in media coverage of crime. The attention devoted to crime news, as well as exposure to television news, seem to be associated with a fear of crime, consistent with previous research (Hollis et al., 2017a). It's conceivable that respondents' cognitive beliefs of their chances of being a victim play a role in the cultivating effects of media exposure on emotional apprehension (Prieto Curiel & Bishop, 2018; Wu et al., 2019). The respondents' choice of media has a strong influence on the cultivation effect (Morgan et al., 2015; Shrum, 2017). As the landscape of media consumption changes, it is predicted that cultivation theorists would broaden the scope of their measurement of media use as a result. Currently, a rising number of individuals are turning away from local television and instead turning to media to keep up with the latest news. According to Gilmour (2022) media watching is more casual, customized and discretionary compared to conventional sorts of media (Dolliver et al., 2018b). Because of the disparities in media viewing, it is hypothesized that based on the subscriber's geography, media exposure might increase their fear of crime. Furthermore, people may have concerns about the reliability of information found on the internet (Pickett et al., 2015). Nonetheless, this theoretical potential requires more empirical investigation and testing.

There has been extensive documentation of how media plays a role in the development and dissemination of crime images across a variety of media kinds, notably news media. Public opinions regarding crime and justice have been regularly established by research, including misperceptions about the scope of crime (Intravia & Pickett, 2019). These studies have also shown that factors such as the characteristics of the target audience or the genre of media under investigation may have an impact on the effects of media. In the same investigation, insufficient attention was paid to other personal aspects that may impact an individual's knowledge and attitudes regarding crime and justice problems, which is a severe flaw. Previous interactions with the CJS, as well as the experiences and structure of one's social networks, may impact one's chances of recovery (Kort-Butler & Habecker, 2018b). The media, personal experiences, and other people's experiences, all of which are shared via social media, people's education or awareness of CJS may be enhanced by serving as sources of information (Bakhshizadeh 2021). Despite this, little investigation has been performed on how information from these sources affects people's perceptions of crime and justice in a broad sense.

II. MEDIA, CRIME AND FEAR

There are a variety of factors that influence people's fear of crime, such as victimization, crime, and the media. According to the findings of this research, fear of crime is a multifaceted concept that is comprised of three components: emotional reactions, cognitive processes, and behavioural responses. The behavioural component relates to limitations in activity or defensive behavior; the emotive component is concerned with fears and anxieties; and when it comes to the psychological construct, it is all about the potential threat of victimhood (Rosenberger et al., 2021). However, in empirical investigations, indices of fear of crime do not necessarily take into consideration these varied views of the threat of criminal activity. It's common for people to express their fear of crime by the use of only one object, the so-called "standard indication"(Shi, 2021b; Singer et al., 2019). Violence perpetration experience, homicide rates, and the mainstream press are some of the aspects that have been investigated in the literature that have an influence on fear of crime, and they are significant for the present contribution since they are all factors that have been studied in the literature (Kuhlman et al., 2022). Attributed to the reason that victimhood experience increases the psychological victimization risk, it is hypothesized that those who have been victims of crime would report higher

levels of apprehension than the general population. Additionally, victimization arises as a consequence of model-learning or trustworthy data collection methods. Because of the information they have learned about victimization, people's apprehension of criminality intensifies (Näsi et al., 2021a; Singer et al., 2019). It has been demonstrated empirically that the relationship between crime-specific victimization and specific fear is stronger than the relationship between general indicators of victimization and fear (Akyuz et al., 2021; Näsi et al., 2021b). A further finding is that victims perceive a greater subjective risk of victimization (Lytle et al., 2022). There seems to be a relationship between differences across studies about the intensity of the victimization–fear link and differences in markers of victimization and fear of crime (Gauthier & Graziano, 2018).

In certain cases, crime rates derived from victim evaluations or official crime statistics may be utilized to make an objective determination regarding the probability of being a victim of an assault. The possibility of being a victim of a robbery increases proportionally to the occurrence of robbery in a particular location. People are fully aware of high (regional) crime rates will be seeing their chances of being a victim as lower, and per the statistics (Intravia et al., 2018). The apprehension of criminality is a rational response to the rising objective threat of becoming a victim of crime, particularly considered from this standpoint (Britto & Noga-Styron, 2014; Haider & Ali, 2015; Intravia et al., 2018; Sajid & Ali, 2018; Kassem et al., 2019; Ali & Bibi, 2020; Roussel et al., 2021; Senturk & Ali, 2021). Rosenberger et al., (2021) indicates a positive correlation between the majority of respondents who are concerned about crime and the incidence of harassment and homicide in a specific city at the community scale. According to Näsi et al., (2021b) the official delinquency statistics, there is an inverse link between the fear of being a victim and official crime rates at the societal level. The association between the robberies rate and the fear of being snatched has been determined to be the most substantial of everyone. Individual-level study undertaken in two European cities reveals that there is a statistically significant association between neighborhood crime statistics for robbery and assault and the claimed level of fear among the population. The fact that total crime, burglaries, and vehicle theft are at relatively low rates is not statistically significant.

III. THE MEDIA'S PORTRAYAL OF CRIME

There is considerable debate as to whether or not the media impact public attitude about crime and justice, but recent studies show that the way crime is reported, as well as the tone used in that reporting, has evolved through time, affecting public perceptions of public punishment (Nickerson, 2019). The media's role in influencing public debates on CJS and practice is a result of its role in the spread and reinforcement of cultural views of crime (Prieto Curiel et al., 2020c). The media has a vital role to play in modifying the political paradigm since it is a major player in socially developing and influencing ideas about crime and its prevention. When it comes to crime, victimization, and the judicial system's response to these concerns, most people have little or no first-hand experience (Pollock et al., 2021). One of the most often recognized sources of public knowledge about crime and crime prevention measures is the media. Reporters in the public eye, pointing out particular types of criminal activity and offering their take on the events that transpired (Slakoff, 2022). Rare and heinous crimes influence media portrayals of crime, offenders, and victims. This leads to depictions of crime, criminals, and victims that are often at odds with official crime figures and that correspond to cultural norms in their depiction and portrayal (Hollis et al., 2017b). Concerns about crime and justice are often framed by conceptions in favour of punitive crime control measures that emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century across a number of different television genres and other media platforms, particularly in the context of CJS (Ash & Poyker, 2019; Hsieh & Boateng, 2015).

IV. FEAR AND MEDIA EXPOSURE

According to researchers, fear of crime and perceptions of risk are heavily influenced by the media (Baranauskas, 2022; Kort-Butler & Habecker, 2018b). The association between media intake and anxiety has been studied extensively, but there are two notable methods. Media consumption that highlights violence and other extreme occurrences, according to the cultivation hypothesis, leads to viewers acquiring a worldview that is more in line with television than reality (Baranauskas & Drakulich, 2018). This misunderstanding may be the result of an exaggerated dread of criminal activity. When it comes to the influence of exposure to local vs national news and crime shows against entertainment news, academics have studied this link extensively over the last several decades (Gilmour, 2022; Graziano, 2019).

The cultivation theory has been heavily criticized for failing to specify the model properly. The incorporation of real crime rates in spectators' locations demonstrated that actual victimization risk and crime experiences influenced the effect of media exposure on fear of crime following exposure to violent media. Citizens of high-crime neighborhoods were more afraid than non-residents. areas. Gerbner and his colleagues altered their cultivation theory to incorporate

the concept that repeated exposure to current events may have diverse effects on the body (Morgan et al., 2015; Shrum, 2017). Frequency and resonance of news exposure have been shown to have an impact on people's fear of crime in studies that are still being conducted (Choi et al., 2020; Hollis et al., 2017b). Some have argued that media exposure only has an effect on those who pay attention to what is being said in the news. Hollis et al. (2017a) research was conducted to see whether paying greater attention to news coverage would increase the effect of media exposure and found that paying attention to the news did in fact elevate crime fear levels. More recently, Slakoff, (2022) media coverage of political, economic, and social topics (regardless of whether national or international) leads to higher support for precautionary crime measures than exposure and attention to basic infotainment-style news, which is more strongly associated with criminality apprehension and support for stricter regulations. Finally some research has been done (Baranauskas & Drakulich, 2018; Rosenberger et al., 2021) there is some evidence to support the idea that people's fear of crime is influenced by how realistic or credible the information they are exposed to is thought to be. Prieto Curiel et al., (2020). The criminal activity has been influenced by the mainstream press's worldview. The hypothesis advanced by Intravia et al., (2017) that a person's susceptibility to the veracity of the narrative presented in the news media would mitigate the negative effects of media exposure was refuted by the researchers' findings. Lack of research has made it hard to agree on the link between societal fear of violence and the credibility of reporting. As a consequence, it is plausible to conclude that the mainstream press has a stronger influence on violence concerns than other variables.

V. THE CURRENT STUDY

It's possible to learn what "the world is like" via the media but point out that people's perceptions of reality are also influenced by their own personal histories and social interactions (Kort-Butler & Habecker, 2018a; Pollock et al., 2021). For individuals who have no other way of learning about the crime except via the media, the incident becomes a socially constructed reality (Slakoff, 2022). In contrast, media consumption may have less of an impact on people's attitudes on crime and justice the more important crime is to them, via their own knowledge or interactions with each other in their society today (Singer et al., 2019). These perspectives have received less attention in the scientific literature, however. As a result, in order to improve on previous research, the present study looked at the impact of three different sources of information on attitudes about CJS (Baranauskas & Drakulich, 2018).

The research looked at fears and prejudices about crime in university students, their emotional anger at crime, and their concerns for support in the country's legal system. Fear of crime and support for various aspects of the legal system, for example, are often explored in studies examining media and real-world consequences, as previously indicated. When it comes to the function of media in relation to the CJS, the fear of crime and violence is likely to be the key issue, if not the most significant concern, that university students have. (Dolliver et al., 2018a). Many studies have been conducted on people's fear of crime and their use of media, but one of the drawbacks with topical research is that it deals with crime in a general sense and does not focus on specific types of criminal activity. The perceptions of university students toward media and other information on violence are investigated in order to determine whether they are associated with respondents' perceived fear of crime, avoidance behavior due to the possibility of violence, and respondents' perception of violence as a threat to themselves. Because of this, researchers will investigate the relationship between public perception of violent crime and students' experiences with violent crime and fear of crime among university students in an environment that has undergone major transformation. As a result, the following are the hypothesis, that this this study aims to answer:

1. Fear of crime will be more common among adolescents at university.
2. When compared to their female counterparts, male pupils will exhibit lower levels of apprehension than their female counterparts.
3. Students who have a positive opinion of the police will experience fewer levels of apprehension on campus than students who have a negative opinion of the police.

With this hypothesis, we anticipate that students' positive judgments of justice, enforcement effectiveness and better confidence will lead to a reduction in their fear of crime.

VI. METHODOLOGY

This investigation was carried out using a quantitative research technique. The inquiry was conducted out in the Punjab province of Pakistan. Accordingly, it was determined that the unit of analysis would be consisting of all university students currently enrolled at the University of Punjab and the University of Sargodha in Punjab. The list of students was gathered from the administrative unit of these institutions. To acquire the productive findings, data was gathered from 550 respondents by utilizing the convenience sampling method. Although significant attempts were made to acquire a sample that was representative of the demographic makeup of the university's student body, this was not

possible. Classes were chosen at random from the institution's curriculum using the database management system, which serves as a repository for all courses taught in the university during a current semester, and the survey administration was carried out in classes where the instructors gave their permission to conduct the survey. As a result, students who took part in the study were enrolled in departments such as law, economics, journalism, marketing, and political science, among other fields of study.

Students were given questionnaires to complete inside their respective classes. A consent letter detailing the aim of the research and the tasks that students would be asked to complete was issued to instructors teaching relevant subjects via email. When instructors received permission, the researchers were able to conduct the surveys at the beginning of their courses. Students were informed that participation was entirely optional and that declining to do so would have no negative impact on their academic achievement in the class. Those who agreed to take part were given questionnaires to complete on the spot, and the procedure was done again and again until everyone agreed. In addition, it was made clear to participants that they were free to resign from the study at any time, skip any questions they chose, and were not needed to sign their names anywhere on the questionnaires if they so desired. However, the real sample size was 447 against the sample frame, as indicated by (Sekaran, 2003) the data was gathered from quadrupled sample size to protect against the minimization of errors, low and improved response rate. While, 235 male and 235 females' students were contacted, and 447 acceptable data were acquired from the chosen individuals by applying the systematic random sample procedure. The sample size was sufficient to generalize the findings and ensure accuracy (Hanson et al., 2005; Ishtiaq, 2019).

VII. DATA ANALYSIS

In this study, a total of 550 questionnaires were sent, and 447 were legitimate and could be used, resulting in an 81.2 percent response rate, according to the results. In this study, the data was separated into two groups, and descriptive statistics were generated using SPSS version 26.0, which was the software utilized for the investigation. Males constituted the significant majority (51.8 percent) of respondents, with 48.2 percent of respondents between the ages of 18 and 24, and 95.7 percent of respondents identifying as members of the Islamic religion, according to the statistics. Urban regions, on the other hand, were home to 65.0 percent of people who responded to the survey's questions. The assumptions in this research were evaluated using the structural equation modelling approach (SEM), and the outcomes of this investigation were provided. However, in this research, we utilized Harman's single factor test to determine whether or not there was an issue of common method bias existing in the questionnaire. There are a variety of methods that may be used to verify that the common method bias concerns in the questionnaire are not present.

The descriptive statistics of the sample are shown in the findings. For the purpose of determining out whether or not demographic characteristics influenced how many people would be get fear about crime, chi-square tests were performed. All four factors revealed statistically significant direct effects on media consumption were seen, with male students ($B = 0.12$, $p.05$) and female students ($B = 0.13$, $p.01$) consuming significantly higher percentages of crime-based media than the overall population, respectively. Research indicates that individuals with higher incomes tended to watch less media about crime ($B = 0.11$, $p.05$). People's fear of crime was also influenced by characteristics such as their race, gender, and income, all of which were statistically significant. According to the findings of the research, participants' fear of crime rose with age ($B = 0.18$, $p.05$). It was also shown that women who were students at the university had a larger fear of crime ($B = 0.06$, $p.05$). As shown by the research, media exposure was a major predictor of support for certain CJS. Indirect media consumption affects on fear of crime were both mediated by fear of crime ($B = 0.13$, $p.01$), as was direct media consumption influences. It has been shown that people's desire to support CJS is favorably impacted by their levels of violence ($B = 0.77$, $p.001$) and that their inclination to support CJS is negatively influenced by their concern of fatality.

VIII. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It is apparent that the media contributes to a culture of fear among students and the wider public, based on data extending from Gerbner's theoretical foundations to contemporary investigations. As a result, perceptions about crime and CJS responses are shaped. According to the Cultivation Theory, media exposure, particularly exposure to criminal offense violent tv shows and movies, has been linked to an increased risk of heart disease and increases one's fear of being a victim of crime, which may lead to increased crime rates (Morgan et al., 2015; Shrum, 2017). Individuals may grow dependent on an authoritative and punitive CJS to keep them safe from crime. To test this hypothesis, we looked at media consumption and support for punitive and defensive CJS policies including three-strikes legislation, the death penalty, stand your ground laws and open carry laws. Our results show a strong correlation between media consumption and crime fear, as well as an impact on support for certain defensive and punitive measures. Those who

have had greater media exposure are more afraid of being victims of crime in the future, translating into stronger support for punitive and protective CJS measures. Based on our results, media consumption itself has a considerable direct impact on support for such laws, and this influence is greatly increased when media consumption is the source of the anxiety in the first place. As a result of this fear, persons in positions of authority are more inclined to support policies that are meant to limit the chance of future victimization while simultaneously punishing those who break the rules harshly and consistently. Considering this, it seems that the emotional arousal of media consumption is a crucial component in deciding support for CJS policies, particularly in scenarios when media consumption boosts fear of crime. These results may also show that the news media plays an essential role in fostering both fear and support for punitive measures, which would be consistent with previous research. Following the cultivation theory, media consumption has a significant and direct influence on strengthening participants' fear of crime, and exposure to violence has a significant and direct influence on individuals' support for the policies under consideration, with the latter having the most influence. Considering all of this together, it seems that individuals have a predisposition to read media exposure of crime as arousing fear, which results in support for policies such as carrying guns, stand up for your rights, multiple legislation, and the death penalty in certain circumstances. Fear among media audiences motivates them to defend the justice for victims and to establish legal relationships in order to enact these severe and defensive laws in an attempt to protect them and to equip them with the ability to legally defend themselves against anticipated further criminal activity. It is reasonable to be concerned, even though most of this concern is based on misinformation spread by the media, which fails to accurately portray the declining levels of violent and property crime in Pakistan. The news media may be generating an imaginary danger while simultaneously giving an unneeded remedy by debating and supporting particular legislation that enhance the penalty of those who do damage while also enabling this fearful gathering to legally defend themselves. This legislation may help reduce the amount of concern even if it does not provide real protection. Another problem is that the media does not appropriately convey the dangers posed by some criminals, which is cause for concern.

Crimes are often portrayed in the media as being committed by anonymous offenders. People who have been the victims of violent, interpersonal crime frequently have a good idea who is responsible for what has happened. Studying whether a crime was committed by a known or unknown criminal will be useful in the future. Crime and CJS policy are seldom discussed in the same breath in other crime-related media outlets, but this is not the case with the news. Viewers and other consumers may look to the news to tell them what is "really going on" now that the news is functioning as the primary information source for crime and CJS policies for so many individuals. When it comes to "newsworthiness," however, the focus is on the uncommon. Unusual events may be seen as more prevalent and "genuine" than they really are if viewers' expectations conflict with the news media's goal. Crime-related news and political discussions CJS may heighten public fear and lead to higher support for harmful CJS policies in the future if they are mixed together in the same broadcasting stream. Media content and how it interacts with each other should be examined in the future as part of a larger research. Contemporary news sources vary greatly in their adherence to journalistic standards. Media intake from different types of media sources (for example, conservative or liberal) may result in different levels of anxiety because of the blurring of the borders between news reporting and politics. In order to better understand the causal relationship between consumption, fear, and support for different CJS policies in society, future research should use longitudinal methods. In this study, the use of a cross-sectional design might be a limitation. Because of this design, it is difficult to deduce causation from the data by determining the temporal ordering of the subjects' consumption, anxiety, and support for policy. We may at least assume that those who are more afraid of crime now will also be more prone to watch more violent movies and TV shows later on in life. The use of SEM enables us to analyse both the direct and indirect consequences of a hypothesized relationship at the same time, but we are unable to identify the causal nature of these correlations without further investigation. Such an investigation should not just look at changes through time, but it should also include experimental designs to examine how they interact with one another. Consider, for example, the effect of historical and social events on consumption, as well as the relationship between consumption and fear, as well as support for government policy. Future research should also aim to further separate the critical elements that make up each of the fundamental traits highlighted in this study. Consider the following example: although the current study questioned about a broad range of policies in general, taking into consideration the effect on the judicial system, future research should investigate into the consequences of media consumption of certain policies particularly. Finally, research should look at public support for various CJS policies, such as efforts to rehabilitate individuals who have committed nonviolent misdemeanors, truth in punishment laws, and the development of drug and mental health court programs, among other aspects.

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