Fear of Crime in Small Towns: The Case of Elazig in Turkey

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Abstract

The prevailing trend in fear of crime research revolves around using data predominantly sourced from major cities in developed nations. Unfortunately, this particular method greatly limits the relevance and universality of these investigations when it comes to smaller urban areas and developing nations. The aim of this study is to fill that gap in the literature. It focuses on three key factors: demographic characteristics, prior victimization, and neighborhood structure. The study was conducted in Elazığ, Turkiye, with 430 participants. Survey questions included Likert-type items. Fear of Crime scale provided a score of 2.37, which is very close to the notion of "not worried." Hypotheses are tested using the Independent Samples T-Test, ANOVA, and correlation tests. According to the results, fear of crime was found to be higher for female participants compared to males, for people with no formal education compared to people with higher education, for people with prior victimization compared to people with no prior victimization, and for people who perceive neighborhood unity compared to people who think otherwise.

Keywords: Fear of crime, perception of security, worry about crime

1.   Introduction

Fear of crime is a significant factor that can profoundly impact individuals' quality of life. Thus, it also has a remarkable negative effect on societal life. The concept of fear of crime is closely related to the perception of security. Meeting the need for security entails protecting individuals from victimization and freeing them from the fear of crime (Delice, 2013; Choi, 2019). In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the need for security ranks second, immediately after physiological needs. The importance of reducing fear of crime, specifically in relation to the broader concept of security, is gradually becoming more apparent (Huit, 2007).

Quality of life and fear of crime are two closely related concepts (Moore & Trojanowicz, 1988; Department of Justice, 2009). Therefore, it is safe to argue that any quality of life service delivered to citizens also have an effect on reducing their fear of crime. Ensuring security -one of the state's fundamental duties- is crucial in enhancing the quality of life (Dolu, Uludağ, & Doğutaş, 2010, p.75; Kedida, 2020). The fear of crime has always been a fascinating topic for scholars in so many different countries such as the United States, Canada, England, Germany, France, the Netherlands, and others. The literature suggests that fear of crime started to grab the attention of scholars in early1960s. Subsequently, the number of scholarships kept increasing after that (Kohm, 2009, p.3; Wright, 1978). In Turkiye, however, similar studies have only become possible in less than the past two decades (Karakuş, 2013).

Unfortunately, fear of crime as a research topic has not been given as much importance as the crime itself. The belief that combating crime and criminals directly eliminates the fear of crime has also hindered early research in the field. However, numerous studies indicated that fear of crime often arises independently of actual crime incidents (Dolu, Uludağ, & Doğutaş, 2010, p.58; Forde, 1993; Zhang et al., 2021). Research conducted in the United States and Canada revealed that while serious crimes such as murder have decreased, fear of crime among individuals has not followed the same downward trend and has remained constant (Roberts, 2001; Smith & Hill, 1991). This finding alone suggests that factors triggering fear of crime may extend beyond the actual crime rate. Consequently, many social researchers have begun investigating factors that influence fear of crime by considering it independently of actual crime rates (Wyant, 2008).

Identifying the factors that contribute to fear of crime can facilitate the development of effective public policies. As Taylor stated, since most existing studies have been conducted in developed countries, particularly in major cities, conducting research in relatively smaller regions has become necessary to better understand the concept of fear of crime (2002, p.774). The purpose of this study is threefold: to address this gap in the literature; enrich the limited number of fear of crime studies conducted in Turkiye; and provide guidance

not only for the city of Elazığ but also for nationwide efforts in Turkiye to reduce fear of crime.

2.   Fear of Crime

Social scientists have differing views in explaining the concept of fear of crime. Ferraro's definition is widely used in the literature. Ferraro defines the fear of crime as "an emotional response of dread or anxiety to crime or symbols that a person associates with crime" (1995, p.23). However, Ferraro (1995) believes that fear of becoming a victim of a crime and fear of crime in general are not two synonymous concepts. To him, within fear of crime studies, divorcing them from each other and treating them as two separate concepts would be more appropriate. Garofalo (1981) tends to agree with him and add that scholars should distinguish between *concern* and *fear*. To him, *concern* is more related to material losses, while *fear* is solely an emotional response to potential attacks.

Sacco (2005) approaches the concept of fear of crime from a different perspective and explains it through three dimensions. The cognitive dimension examines individuals' fears of becoming victims of crime. The emotional dimension deals with individuals' thoughts related to crime. Finally, the behavioral dimension examines the reactions and behaviors of individuals in response to experiencing fear of crime (Kohm, 2009, p.4; Liska et al., 1988).

Pain (2001, p.901) considers the fear of crime as an individual's emotional and practical response to crime and social disorder. Similarly, we approached the same concept from a broad perspective without distinguishing between the fear of victimization and safety/security concerns.

3.   Causes of Fear of Crime

Within the extensive body of crime literature, scholars commonly classify the instigating elements of crime-induced fear into two primary domains. The initial domain encompasses personal attributes such as gender, age, educational background, academic achievements, and financial status. The subsequent domain delves deeper into the realm of past victimization. In the forthcoming section, we will provide a succinct elucidation of the phenomena that wield direct influence over the fear of crime, representing the bedrock of this research endeavor.

3.1   Gender

Most studies conducted in the field of fear of crime have found that women experience more fear of crime than men (Ferraro & LaGrange, 1992; Stanko, 1995; Cops & Pleysier, 2011). Pain (2001) argues that this conclusion is a result of prior research findings on the topic. When looking at crime statistics in general, except for sexual offenses, it is observed that men are

more often victims of crime compared to women. At first glance, this finding supports Pain's view, but Stanko (1995) claims that women report incidents less than men. Ferraro approaches the issue from the perspective of sexual offenses. According to Ferraro, women show sensitivity to all types of crime because they perceive that any crime could involve sexual harassment (1996). Despite the different views and explanations regarding gender, the common point agreed upon by all researchers is that women feel more fear of crime compared to men (Erkan & Topcu, 2021).

3.3.   Education Level

Education level is one of the personal factors correlating with fear of crime. To Vilalta (2012), there is an inverse relationship between education and fear of crime. The literature revealed that individuals with higher education levels experience lower fear of crime (Reese, 2009). Vilalta (2012) obtained consistent results in his own study conducted in Mexico City, the capital of Mexico, and found that fear of crime decreases as education level increases. Similarly, Kruger et al. (2007) also indicate an inverse relationship between education and fear of crime. Therefore, their research concluded that fear of crime decreases as people's education level increases. Similar results have been found in studies in Turkiye as well. Karakuş et al. (2010) found a statistically significant inverse relationship between education level and fear of crime. According to their findings, as education level increases, the level of fear decreases.

3.4.   Income Level

Many researchers have expressed an inverse relationship between income and fear of crime (Karakuş et al., 2010; Strandbygaard et al., 2020). In other words, the fear of crime decreases as income level increases. Uludağ (2010), in a study conducted on 1173 individuals in the province of Malatya, found a similar inverse relationship between these two variables. Karakuş et al. (2010) also reached the same conclusion using TÜİK data. Similarly, the relationship between income level and fear of crime is consistently demonstrated in international studies. In their study, Moore and Shepherd (2006) stated that fear of crime decreased with increasing income levels in the United Kingdom. One of the main factors here may be that individuals with lower income levels are constrained in their choice of residence. The assumption is that these individuals are forced to choose poorer neighborhoods (Kohm, 2009). Consequently, they become disproportionately more subject to personal and societal problems, such as the abundance of abandoned buildings, inadequate lighting, and higher crime rates (Oh et al., 2019). The association of lower housing prices with higher crime rates in these neighborhoods (Boggess & Hipp, 2010), and the relocation of individuals with

increasing income levels to places they perceive as safer (Gökulu, 2011), support this idea.

3.5.   Victimization

Victimization is the process of being victimized, either from a physical or a psychological or a moral or a sexual point of view (Muratore, 2014) According to Ferraro (1995) - based on general crime theories- individuals who have previously experienced victimization are expected to possess more fear of crime compared to those who were not victimized. Cook and Fox (2011) state that many studies in the literature confirm this issue. On the other hand, Ferraro's study (1990) claims that previous victimization does not increase the fear of crime. However, the same study found that individuals feel significantly more fear of crime when their close ones have been victimized. Some studies also claim that knowing or learning about individuals who have experienced victimization triggers fear of crime (Skogan & Maxfield, 1981). These conflicting findings insinuate that other factors affect fear of crime, such as environmental factors, neighborhood structure, and trust in the neighborhood.

3.6.   Environmental Factors and Neighborhood Structure

Environmental factors are among the foundations that fear of crime is predicated upon. Social disorganization theorists argue that the probability of crime and, consequently, the formation of fear of crime are very high in neighborhoods where internal and external controls are insufficient (Porter, Rader & Cossman, 2012; Moore & Shepherd, 2007). According to Wilson and Kelling (1982), in areas where structural elements such as abandoned buildings, broken streetlights, and social disorder are present, it is natural for people to feel more fear of crime. The social disorder includes antisocial and disruptive behaviors such as vandalism, pollution of the environment with garbage, abandoned or illegally parked cars, derelict buildings, walls with various writings, public alcohol consumption, gang activities, neighbor disputes, noise problems, begging, prostitution, and drug trafficking (Kruger et al., 2007; Oh et al., 2019). According to Kruger et al. (2007), prior to the 1960s, neighborhoods had tighter social connectedness. They consisted of people who knew each other, so people would watch out for and control young individuals prone to crime. Fukuyama (1999) argues that, especially in small businesses, there were people who knew and supported each other. However, with the replacement of small shops with large stores, the number of shopkeepers who knew each other decreased. Consequently, unemployed individuals had to go outside their neighborhoods to work. Thus, this weakens the social tapestry in controlling crime (Iadicola, 1986).

Another view related to the environment suggests that the presence of families bound together by marriage reduces the fear of crime (Porter et al., 2012). They (Porter et al., 2012) claim that neighborhoods with a high concentration of married families have significantly lower crime rates and, therefore, less fear of crime compared to neighborhoods where singles predominantly reside.

4.   Method

The data for the study were collected through a questionnaire survey in 2015. The questionnaire used in the research was developed by Karakuş and Başıbüyük (2013) and was used in their book titled "Suçun Karanlık Yüzü (The Dark Side of Crime)." The questionnaire was revised to better fit the context of the study at hand. The authors reduced it to 76 questions. The questionnaire used in this research includes several demographic characteristics and they were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The 5-point Likert scale included 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree, and 5-Strongly Agree.

4.1.   Population and Sample

This research drew its sample from a population of Elazig city center dwellers who are older than 18 years of age. Assistance needed mainly with data collection was obtained from the staff of the Community-Oriented Policing division in the Elazığ Police Department. They primarily helped the authors deliver and collect the questionnaires. At the beginning of the study, the personnel of the Community-Oriented Policing unit were trained in handling necessary work related to the research. They were also informed about assisting participants with completing the questionnaires. Following that training, the questionnaires were delivered to the dwellers of the city center. A total of 430 people participated and completed the questionnaires in the study.

4.2.   Data Collection and Analysis

The data were analyzed using several statistical methods with SPSS 22.0 (Statistical Package in Social Sciences). Authors mainly performed descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and correlation tests in this research. There was only one dependent variable in this study. i.e., fear of crime. To understand the levels of fear of crime the participants have been experiencing, authors created four questions and embedded them in the questionnaire. These questions are as follows:

1. How concerned are you about being a victim of a crime while walking alone in your neighborhood at night?

2. How concerned are you about being a victim of a crime while alone at home in your neighborhood at night?
3. How concerned are you about being a victim of a crime while walking alone in your neighborhood during the day?
4. How concerned are you about being a victim of a crime while alone at home in your neighborhood during the day?

Participants' responses to these questions are structured in a Likert scale answers as follows: 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neither agree nor disagree, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree. The scale of the fear of crime was subjected to a reliability test during its preparation. Klein (2005) states that Cronbach's alpha coefficient is the most commonly used method for assessing reliability in social science studies. Therefore, the reliability analysis of the Fear of Crime scale was conducted accordingly. Table 1 shows the findings of that analysis. The analysis revealed a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .87. Literature suggests that values of .70 and above are conventional levels for acceptance. Therefore, it can be confidently stated that our scale is reliable.

Table 1. Reliability Analysis of the Fear of Crime Scale

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.871	.873	4

4.3   Research Questions and Research Hypotheses

Three research questions were formulated for the study. Corresponding research hypotheses consistent with the literature review were identified as follows:

Research Question 1: Does fear of crime vary among individuals according to demographic variables?

Hypothesis 1: "Females experience higher levels of fear of crime compared to males."

Hypothesis 2: "Individuals with lower levels of education experience higher levels of fear of crime compared to those with higher levels of education."

Hypothesis 3: "Individuals with lower income levels experience higher levels of fear of crime compared to those with higher income levels."

Hypothesis 4: "Unmarried individuals experience higher levels of fear of crime compared to married individuals."

Hypothesis 5: "Elderly individuals experience higher levels of fear of crime compared to young individuals."

Research Question 2: Does the previous victimization influence an individual's fear of crime?

Hypothesis 6: "Individuals who have experienced victimization have higher levels of fear of crime compared to those who have not experienced victimization."

Research Question 3: Does neighborhood structure influence fear of crime?

Hypothesis 7: "Individuals who do not trust their neighbors have higher levels of fear of crime compared to those who trust their neighbors."

Hypothesis 8: "Individuals who perceive a lack of unity and togetherness in their neighborhood have higher levels of fear of crime compared to those who perceive a strong sense of unity and togetherness."

4.4 Limitations

This study has contributed to the literature on fear of crime and revealed important findings. However, certain limitations may have influenced the research and its findings. First, the scarcity of prior scientific research on the fear of crime in Turkiye posed certain problems. Second, the research was conducted only in the city center of Elazığ. In other words, the sample was not drawn from the entire city of Elazig. For mainly security reasons, data collection was limited to safer neighborhoods in the city center.

Third, we decided to employ a non-probability sampling method for this research. Although demographic indicators suggest diversity within the sample, we cannot claim that it was fully representative of the entire city of Elazığ. Therefore, it is essential to keep these limitations in mind while considering the findings. To better tackle these limitations, a future study employing a probability sampling would be a viable solution. Also, a more thorough investigation into the factors influencing the fear of crime phenomenon in Turkey would yield more detailed results.

5. Findings

Table 2 reveals the demographic characteristics of the sample. The participants mostly consist of people aged between 18 and 80 years. The average age was approximately 35. As for the gender distribution, 302 out of 430 participants were males. Males made up about 70% of the sample. On the other hand, the sample included 128 females. Females accounted for nearly 30% of the sample.

As for the education levels, each participant was given nine options to choose from. Hence, those options ran the gamut, offering a wide range of choices from "illiterate" to a "doctorate degree." A simple descriptive analysis revealed that 132 participants (30.7% of the sample), had completed high school. Also, 24.2% had education levels either at the middle school level or below. Roughly, 28% of the participants had a university degree.

Researchers compared these sample statistics with the overall national statistics from the same year (2015) coming from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK). That comparison yielded that the participants in this study had relatively higher educational achievements than the national averages. For instance, 22.4% are high school graduates in Turkey, which is almost 8% lower than the sample. According to the same TUIK (2015) national survey, 17.6% of the people who are living in Turkey hold at least an associate degree. In comparison to that, almost 45% of the sample had at least an associate degree.

Regarding the marital status of the participants, researchers used a five-category index, and it was found that close to 68% of the participants were married. Approximately 29% were single, and the remainder minority belonged to the remainder 3 categories.

Concerning the employment status, the research shows that almost 82% of the participants were employed with pay. The percentage of participants who were unemployed was around 7%. The remaining group included students, retirees, and homemakers who were not actively employed in the paid labor market.

The participants were evaluated in five different categories based on income level. In this study, the 2015 national statistics were utilized to align with the corresponding year of the questionnaire. Failure to align the national statistics with the questionnaire would result in incongruity between the obtained findings and the overall national data. The categories are determined in tandem with the minimum monthly wage set by the Turkish government (CSGB, 2015). In order to define the upper level of income earners, a threshold has been set at 27,001 Turkish Lira (TL) and above, which approximately translates to $1,158 and above. Among the participants, a little more than 16% were at this level.

On the other hand, the income level of 9,001-18,000 TL was selected by the majority of participants (32%). Additionally, approximately 34% of the participants had lower levels of income, which is less than 9,000 TL. In 2015, the minimum wage in Turkiye was 1,00.54 TL which approximately equals $ 387. US Dollar (2.59 TL) on May 22, 2015 (CSGB, 2015; TSKB, 2015).

Table 2. Demographic Information

Variables		F	%
Age	**(M = 35,37, Ss = 9,98)**		
	Sex		
	Male	302	70,2
	Female	128	29,8
	Marital Status		
	Single	125	29,1
	Married	291	67,7
	Widow(er)	13	3,0
	Cohabiting	1	0,2
	Education Levels		
	Illiterate	4	.9
	Literate but no schooling	8	1,9
	Elementary	42	9,8
	Middle	50	11,6
	High School	132	30,7
	Associate	74	17,2
	Bachelors	99	23,0
	Masters	19	4,4
	Doctoral	2	.5
	Employment		
	Employed	352	81,9
	Unemployed	29	6,7
	Retired	22	5,1
	Homemaker	8	1,9
	Student	19	4,4
	Income		
	0- 4,500 TL	35	8,1
	4,501-9,000 TL	110	25,6
	9,001-18,000 TL	137	31,9
	18,001-27,000 TL	78	18,1
	27,001 and more	70	16,3
	N = 430		

5.1.   Fear of Crime

The analysis of the Fear of Crime scale revealed an arithmetic mean value of 2.38 (Table 3). Considering that a score of 2 corresponds to the statement "I am not worried," it can be inferred that the overall perception of the sample participants in Elazığ province is very close to the "not worried"

level. Thus, it can be stated that the fear of crime is relatively lower in Elazığ, Turkiye.

Table 3. Fear of Crime Scale

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Fear of Crime	430	1.00	5.00	2.3797	1.03953
Valid N (listwise)	430				

5.2.   Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis 1: "Females experience higher levels of fear of crime compared to males."

An independent samples t-test revealed a statistically significant relationship between gender and fear of crime (t = 3.89, df = 277.7, p < .01). According to these results, female participants in the sample (M = 2.65, SD = .91) reported experiencing higher levels of fear of crime compared to male participants (M = 2.24, SD = 1.06). Table 4 presents the result of this test, confirming the acceptance of the research hypothesis.

Table 4. Independent Samples t-test for Gender and Fear of Crime

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Fear of Crime	Equal variances assumed	5.150	.024	-3.643	428	.000	-.39383	.10810	-.60631	-.18135
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.882	277.786	.000	-.39383	.10146	-.59357	-.19410

Hypothesis 2: "Individuals with lower levels of education experience higher levels of fear of crime compared to those with higher levels of education."

Before proceeding with the analysis related to education level, descriptive statistics of the variable were examined. It was determined that the number of participants in each option was insufficient for comparison between

groups. Therefore, the grouping based on education was revised. Within this revised scheme, participants were categorized into 4 separate groups in terms of their education levels: 1) literate (without schooling) or illiterate, 2) primary school graduates, 3) secondary school graduates, and lastly 4) higher education graduates (college, university, master's, and doctoral degrees).

A t-test was not suitable since the revised education variable had more than two categories. Researchers performed a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The test revealed a statistically significant relationship between education level and fear of crime (F = 3.795, p = .010).

Researchers went on to see which grouping in the revised education variable contributed the most to fear of crime by employing a post hoc multiple comparison test (Bonferroni test). According to the results of this test, the average scores for fear of crime who had not received formal education (M = 3.29, SD = .94) were significantly different from the other three groups (primary school graduates: M = 2.38, SD = 1.13; secondary school graduates: M = 2.42, SD = 1.11; higher education graduates: M = 2.28, SD = .91). When examining the group means, it became evident that the fear of crime is highest among those without formal education. Another finding was that the fear of crime levels was lowest among those with higher education. Therefore, relevant hypothesis was corroborated.

Table 5. ANOVA Test for Fear of Crime and Education Level

Fear of Crime	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	12.068	3	4.023	3.795	.010
Within Groups	451.517	426	1.060		
Total	463.584	429			

Bonferroni		**Multiple Comparisons**				
(I) Educ_new	(J) Educ_new	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1.00	2.00	.90308*	.31598	.027	.0655	1.7406
	3.00	.86174*	.31041	.034	.0390	1.6845
	4.00	1.00687*	.30625	.007	.1951	1.8186
2.00	1.00	-.90308*	.31598	.027	-1.7406	-.0655
	3.00	-.04134	.13982	1.000	-.4120	.3293

Fear of Crime		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups		12.068	3	4.023	3.795	.010
Within Groups		451.517	426	1.060		
	4.00	.10379	.13032	1.000	-.2416	.4492
3.00	1.00	-.86174*	.31041	.034	-1.6845	-.0390
	2.00	.04134	.13982	1.000	-.3293	.4120
	4.00	.14513	.11616	1.000	-.1628	.4530
4.00	1.00	-1.00687*	.30625	.007	-1.8186	-.1951
	2.00	-.10379	.13032	1.000	-.4492	.2416
	3.00	-.14513	.11616	1.000	-.4530	.1628

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Hypothesis 3: "Individuals with lower income levels experience higher levels of fear of crime compared to those with higher income levels."

Researchers performed an ANOVA test to see if there was a significant statistical relationship between fear of crime and income levels. Income levels were categorized into 5 groups. Therefore, the one-way ANOVA test found no statistically significant relationship between income levels and fear of crime (F=.853, p=.492). To state this differently, regardless of their income levels, participants reported similar levels of fear of crime. Table 6 demonstrates the findings of this analysis.

Table 6. ANOVA Test Results for Fear of Crime and Income Level

Fear of Crime

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.693	4	.923	.853	.492
Within Groups	459.892	425	1.082		
Total	463.584	429			

Hypothesis 4: "Unmarried individuals experience higher levels of fear of crime compared to married individuals."

The marital status variable was presented in five different categories in the survey. However, due to the low sample size in some categories, this

variable was transformed into a binary variable: unmarried and married. Researchers performed an independent samples t-test to see if there was a statistically significant relationship between fear of crime and marital status of the participants. Analysis revealed that there was no significant relation between these two variables (t=.706, df=258, p>.05). In other words, marital status did not affect fear of crime among participants. Table 7 demonstrates the results of this test. The hypothesis was not accepted.

Table 7. Independent Samples t-test for Marital Status and Fear of Crime

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Fear of Crime	Equal variances assumed	.407	.524	-.721	428	.471	-.07730	.10724	-.28808	.13348
	Equal variances not assumed			-.706	258.035	.481	-.07730	.10948	-.29289	.13829

Hypothesis 5: "Elderly individuals experience higher levels of fear of crime compared to young individuals."

We performed a correlation test to see whether there was a statistically significant relationship between fear of crime and age. The correlation test results yielded a low Pearson correlation coefficient of .019. This result indicates no statistically significant relationship between age and fear of crime. Therefore, our hypothesis was not confirmed.

Table 8. Correlation Test for Age and Fear of Crime

		Age	Fear of Crime
Age	Pearson Correlation	1	.019
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.687
	N	430	430
Fear of Crime	Pearson Correlation	.019	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.687	
	N	430	430

Hypothesis 6: "Individuals who have experienced victimization in the past have higher levels of fear of crime compared to those who have not."

A statistically significant relationship between prior victimization and fear of crime was discovered by an independent sample t-test (t=3.11, df=336.8, p<.01). According to the results, participants who reported previous victimization (M=2.58, SD=.99) expressed higher levels of fear of crime compared to those who did not have that experience (M=2.26, SD=1.04). Therefore, this hypothesis was accepted.

Table 9. Independent Samples t-test for Previous Victimizations and Fear of Crime

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Fear of Crime	Equal variances assumed	.787	.375	3.071	428	.002	.31713	.10325	.11419	.52008
	Equal variances not assumed			3.117	336.813	.002	.31713	.10175	.11698	.51728

Hypothesis 7: "Individuals with poor neighborly relationships experience higher levels of fear of crime compared to those with good relationships."

Due to our focus on security perception, participants were asked whether their neighbors would keep an eye on their homes while they were away. The responses were coded as 1 for *Yes,* and 2 for *No*. Later, an independent samples t-test was conducted between this and the fear of crime variables. A statistically significant relationship was found between trust in neighbors and fear of crime (t=-3.97, df=428, p<.01). According to these results, participants who did not trust their neighbors (M=2.74, SD=.99) reported higher levels of fear of crime compared to those who trusted their neighbors (M=2.274, SD=1.03). Therefore, this hypothesis has been accepted.

Table 10. Independent Samples t-test for Neighborly Relationships and Fear of Crime

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Fear of Crime	Equal variances assumed	.448	.504	-3.971	428	.000	-.46824	.11793	-.70003	-.23646
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.052	161.055	.000	-.46824	.11557	-.69646	-.24002

Hypothesis 8: "Individuals who perceive a lack of unity and togetherness in their neighborhood experience higher levels of fear of crime compared to those who perceive unity and togetherness."

In the survey, participants were presented with a set of statements regarding the quality of the social relationships in their neighborhood:

- Our neighborhood is a connected community.
- People in our neighborhood are willing to help their neighbors.
- People in our neighborhood generally cannot get along with each other.
- People in my neighborhood do not share the same values.
- People in my neighborhood can be trusted.

However, the above statements were produced to understand the level of connectedness and quality of relationships among people in the neighborhood. A Neighborhood Trust scale was created to examine the relationship between trust in the neighborhood and the fear of crime. In constructing the scale, some items were first reversed to ensure consistent coding for all scale items. Subsequently, a reliability analysis was performed. The reliability analysis resulted in a Cronbach's alpha value of .65. As this value is very close to the conventionally accepted value of .70, it was considered valid.

Table 11. Neighborhood Unity Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.646	.643	5

The relationship between the level of fear of crime and trust in the neighborhood was examined through a correlation analysis. That analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship between the fear level and trust in the neighborhood ($r = -.312$, $p < .5$). These results indicate the presence of an inverse relationship between trust in the neighborhood and fear of crime. To be more precise, for every 1 unit increase in trust in the neighborhood, there is a decrease of .312 units in fear of crime level.

Table 12. Neighborhood Unity and Fear of Crime Correlation Test

		Fear of Crime	Neighborhood Trust
Fear of Crime	Pearson Correlation	1	-.312[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	430	430
Neighborhood Trust	Pearson Correlation	-.312[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	430	430

[**]. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

6.   Results

Fear of crime is a prominent element that can have enduring consequences for individuals, impacting their overall quality of life and detrimentally affecting the well-being of society. Therefore, identifying the levels of fear of crime, understanding the factors influencing them, and conducting vigorous investigations are crucial for guiding efforts to minimize that fear. The existing literature indicates that fear of crime studies are primarily conducted in developed countries, particularly large cities. As a result, there is a need for research in relatively smaller regions to gain a deeper

understanding of the concept. This study was conducted in Elazığ, Turkiye, with the aim of addressing that literature gap. Moreover, this research will make a valuable contribution to the existing body of knowledge.

Initially, this research addressed whether residents of Elazığ experienced fear of crime. The Fear of Crime scale, consisting of four questions, was used to measure that. Based on the results of the scale's reliability analysis, the fear levels of residents in Elazığ were determined to be 2.37. It is inferred that the overall perception of the sample in Elazığ is close to the "I do not worry" level. Therefore, it is safe to argue that the perception of fear of crime in the sample is fairly low.

This study did not stop at merely quantifying fear of crime in Elazig, but it also revealed the factors playing key roles on the fear of crime levels. The study included three research questions and seven related hypotheses to test to better understand these factors. The first research question investigated whether there was a significant relationship between fear of crime and demographic factors. Previous studies suggest that demographic factors, such as age, gender, education level, income level, and marital status, each affect fear of crime levels.

According to existing literature, older individuals experience more fear of crime compared to younger individuals. Women experience more fear of crime compared to men. Individuals with lower education levels experience more fear of crime compared to those with higher education levels. Individuals with lower income levels experience more fear of crime compared to those with higher income levels. And lastly, unmarried individuals experience more fear of crime compared to married individuals.

Our study corroborated some of them while refuting others. According to the findings of this research, no statistically significant relationship was found between fear of crime and income levels, age groups, or marital status. To recap, two of the five hypotheses related to demographic factors were accepted, and three were rejected.

Secondly, the researchers examined the correlation between previous victimization and the fear of crime. The participants were requested to disclose whether they had been victimized by any personal or property-related crimes (such as theft, robbery, assault, harassment, threats, pickpocketing, armed or unarmed attacks, etc.) within the last five years. Those who had experienced victimization were further asked to specify the type of crime and its frequency. The participants were then categorized into two groups: those with prior victimization experience and those without. Consistent with existing literature, the study findings demonstrated that individuals who had previously fallen victim to crime exhibited heightened levels of fear of crime in comparison to those who had not encountered such experiences.

In the third and final section of the study, the relationship between neighborhood structure and fear of crime was tested. A scale of five questions was used to operationalize the concept of neighborhood structure. According to the literature, this scale is believed to measure unity and togetherness in neighborhoods where close relationships exist, and unity prevails, leading to less fear of crime. According to the correlation test results between the neighborhood unity scale and fear of crime, it was found that unity in the neighborhood negatively affected fear of crime. In other words, increasing neighborhood unity reduced the fear of crime. In order not to leave any stones unturned, researchers also analyzed the relationship between fear of crime and the quality of neighborly relationships. Thus, it was observed that participants who answered positively to the question of whether their neighbors would keep an eye on their homes while they were away had less fear of crime.

Conclusion

According to the research findings, it is understood that demographic factors partially contribute to explaining the concept of fear of crime. Previous victimization experiences and the unity and togetherness factor in the neighborhood structure are good predictors of the fear of crime. Therefore, it is safe to argue that promoting a higher quality of life in the community and mitigating the factors that contribute to crime and criminality are crucial for reducing fear of crime.

To mitigate the fear experienced by individuals who have previously been victimized, targeted outreach programs specifically tailored to these individuals are highly recommended. The philosophy behind Community-Oriented Policing constitutes one aspect of such efforts. Odabaşı and Delice (2014) stated that one of the major aims of Community-Oriented Policing has always been to reduce fear of crime in society.

Investigating the specific types of crimes to which victims have been exposed is recommended for future research. Additionally, the extent to which these exposures contribute to increased fear of crime can be investigated.

The knowledge created can be shared with security institutions responsible for internal security. This would enable them to take necessary measures to prevent potential future crimes. This may increase the number of outreach police officers and diversify patrol duties (foot patrols, patrol cars, motorcycle units, rapid response teams, etc.).

Neighborhood structure and unity emerged as another significant factor in reducing fear of crime. During the past two decades, due to nationwide urban transformation, Turkiye has undergone substantial changes in its neighborhood structure. Neighborhood unity can be achieved through various social activities, such as community festivals, block parties, shared gardening projects, neighborhood watch programs, and collaborative

initiatives for local improvement. Additionally, parks, gardens, and recreational areas made available for public use will naturally bring residents closer to each other and act as a barrier against potential crimes.

Human Studies: For the individuals included in this research, the authors confirm that all necessary approvals were obtained from both the participants and the relevant institutional review boards in Turkey. These approvals were obtained in accordance with established ethical standards, protecting the rights and well-being of participants throughout the duration of the study.

Conflict of Interest: The authors reported no conflict of interest.

Data Availability: All of the data are included in the content of the paper.

Funding Statement: The authors did not obtain any funding for this research.

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