

# Review of: "The Impact of Urban Design in minimizing Women's Fear of Crime"

Frouke Hermens<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Open University of the Netherlands

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

## Review of "The Impact of Urban Design in minimizing Women's Fear of Crime", section by section.

This is a review of version 1, some of the comments may no longer apply.

I think version 1 can benefit from a revision. Please find below possible changes that could be made.

### Abstract

The start of the abstract and the introduction very much focus on actual crime, while your study is on the fear of crime. Instead of indicating whether actual crime is on the rise (which may not be the case everywhere in the world), better focus on the impacts of fear of crime (independent of whether there is actual crime). Fear of crime has many consequences, such as people being afraid to leave their homes, not socializing as much, not going out at night, avoiding certain neighborhoods, avoiding outdoor exercise. These often affect women more than men.

The abstract indicates "One crucial outcome of rising crime rates is a psychological phobia, which breeds fear of crime.". I am not sure whether a fear of crime induces more fear of crime (if this is what you mean here). The word phobia suggests that it is an irrational fear of crime, while there is often an actual risk and the consequences of being a victim can be profound. All in all, I would avoid this sentence, as you probably want to indicate that fear of crime is a problem, independent of whether it is justified or not.

You also write "Areas like low-density public spaces, curving trails with poor lighting, urban forest with unclear vision lines, and destitute and abandoned structures with minimal human traffic are more prevalent in crime activities." This might not always be true. They are known to induce more fear of crime though.

You indicate: "Thefts, robbery, sexual assault, homicide, are among the more prevalent crimes in India." I wondered whether you want to make the text specific about crime and fear of crime in India, or whether you would like to be able to generalize to other countries as well.

Most of the abstract provides the background of the research. Try to balance it more between background, methods, results and conclusion.

### Introduction

The first paragraph describes actual crime frequency, and the second paragraph indicates where actual crime occurs more often. Here, I would on the actual topic: Fear of crime, independent of actual crime. Fear of crime has many consequences, including less socializing and less outdoor exercising and is something you want to combat (in addition to actual crime).

The crime triangle also focuses on actual crime, as does the three D concept and CPTED. Try instead to focus on fear of crime, if that is the topic of your study.

## **Literature review**

In the literature review it was unclear why you focus on these particular studies. There is quite a large literature on fear of crime. Why did you decide to focus on the fear of crime in Indian women? Is there a reason to believe that fear of crime is different in Indian women? Are there things that can be learned about fear of crime in other countries that could be beneficial to understanding fear of crime in India?

## **Methods**

You may want to elaborate on the concept of “positivist technique”, because it was not a term that I was familiar with. What exactly was done? Were women given a questionnaire? How were women recruited? Did they complete the questionnaire online or on pen-and-paper? Did you follow up on people who did not respond to avoid biases in those willing to take part?

You indicate “Women were requested to answer questions about their perspectives concerning several public spaces they frequently encountered on a daily basis”. How were these spaces described? Were images given? How were these spaces selected? Were they actual spaces or did women have to think of a space like the one in the description?

This suggests that the surveys were not conducted online, but in person: “Surveys were intended to be conducted in public areas where women tend to congregate in greater numbers.” Were people in a quiet location when filling in the questionnaires? Were they able to talk to each other?

## **Results and discussion**

The first part of the results and discussion section appears to be a continuation of the methods section. Best move this part to the methods section.

In the methods section you talk about 10 minutes for a survey and in the results section about 20 minutes. Can you make clear what the difference was? Likewise the methods talks about 9 am and the results section about 9.30 am. See whether you can mention information only once.

In the results you indicate that there was also an online section: “A concurrent online survey was conducted using Google Forms.” How many women were tested in person and how many online? How were the online participants recruited? Was the population who was tested online similar in terms of age, employment, education?

You indicate: "The quantitative information from both surveys was examined, and a correlation between the theory and the sample survey's results was found. " Can you explain exactly how you computed this correlation? What was the input? How was the theory cast into numbers that could be compared to survey responses and turned into a correlation? What was the size of the correlation?

In general, could you indicate what exactly the questions in the survey were and how many women gave which answer? (in a table or figure, or as supplementary materials).

You indicate: "In addition to the questionnaire survey, an observation survey was conducted to track women's comfort level in using public places at night and their level of dread of doing so." Can you indicate how this observation survey differed from the questionnaire survey? Did all women complete both?

You then write: "The quantitative survey was responded by 243 women, of which 208 were through an online survey and 35 were through an offline survey." Was this quantitative survey identical to the questionnaire survey or the observation survey?

The sentence "The questionnaire had 24 questions regarding the most used public space, ambiance of their neighborhood, fear of crime in public spaces, types of crime which provokes fear, their previous experience of crime etc (sample of the questionnaire has been attached)." indicates that the questions were mostly about crime and some about actual crime. It might therefore be good to more strongly focus the introduction on fear of crime.

The results section makes use of pie diagrams from Google Forms. Often results are easier to compare when you make use of ordered bar diagrams.

You indicate that many women indicated that they prefer well maintained spaces. This is in line with quite a bit of the literature on fear of crime. Since you combine results and discussion, please refer to this literature here to say that your results confirm earlier findings.

Your table indicates that women feel less safe at night. This also agrees with quite some literature on the topic. Please refer to this literature to indicate that your results confirm these earlier findings.

For figure 4.3, please indicate whether women could choose multiple options or only one option.

Overall, the results and discussion section could do with more discussion. Are your results in line with past findings? If they differ, how do you explain the difference? What findings were unexpected? What should future studies do add to your research? If there were possible problems with your setup, how could future studies do better?

From the results and discussion section it is not clear whether these are all the data that were collected or a subset of the findings. How were the presented results selected? Were there differences between different groups of women?

## Conclusion

In the conclusion you refer to the Broken Window Theory. Best already refer to this earlier (for example when discussing

the results). Also make sure to cite relevant papers.

Try to keep the conclusion to a minimum (the first paragraph is a bit long – see whether you can condense this to a single line). In the discussion section you can elaborate, but the conclusion should be short and to the point.

The conclusion talks about the factors that lead to fear of crime, which are not always the same as the factors that lead to actual crime. It would be good if you could have more about fear of crime in the introduction, as you do in the conclusion.

### **Sample of Questionnaire**

The form can no longer be viewed. Best print the form to a PDF and share it using Google Drive (or OSF: [osf.io](https://osf.io)). If the anonymity of participants can be kept, best also share the responses (possibly take out demographic information, but share for each participant which combination of responses they gave). This way your data can be used in a meta-analysis, or for data science purposes. It can also help researchers to show your data in their own papers without copyright problems (by plotting their own graph of the data).