

Impact of the Perceived Crime at the Local and National Levels

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Abstract

The cognition mechanism on crime rather than the actual cause of crime has become an important topic of interest for criminologists and the public who have experienced concern and fear rather than an actual criminal victimization. We compared the effects of population and condition variables at the local and national levels on the perceived crime through the 'Korean Crime Victims Survey' of 28,416 South Koreans. This study presents that there are significant differences in the influence of independent variables such as the environment around the neighborhood, interaction with the neighborhood, policing in the neighborhood, fear of night, victimization of crime and media consumption at the local and national levels. Variables such as dissatisfaction with the environment around the neighborhood, experience of crime victimization, and more media consumption elevated the perceived crime across both the local and national levels. Moreover, we found that the lack of interaction with neighbors had the only significant impact on increasing the perceived crime at the local level, and dissatisfaction with policing in the neighborhood had little influence on increasing the perceived crime at the local level. However, good policing in the neighborhood had a significant effect on decreasing the perceived crime at the local and national levels. According to the results, the consumption of media had a significant effect on increasing the perceived crime at the local and national levels. However, the consumption of media affected the perceived crime at the national level as the second highest effect after victimization of crime, while the perceived crime at the local level was found to have the least significant effect among the independent variables. This study presents the relationship between the perceived crime and other individual indicators while controlling for socio-demographic variables. We also provide differences of the indicators' effects on the perceived crime at the local and national levels.

Keywords

Perceived Crime, Fear of Crime, Environment around the Neighborhood, Interaction with Neighbors, Policing in the Neighborhood, Media Consumption

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Crime itself has a great impact on everyday life in various ways. Individuals often restrict their range and time of activities, such as where to eat out, shop, travel and socialize, when considering perceived neighborhood safety (Jackson & Gary, 2010). This negative response is more likely to spread around the family, the neighbors, and even the whole nation. This avoidance behavior reduces the interactions with neighbors and damages social cohesion (Lee, 2010). The fear of crime has drawn much attention related to this phenomenon, and there have been international studies on the fear of crime and the perceived crime. The main objective of such scientific research is to explain the fear of crime and the perceived crime using a number of individual and contextual variables, which are considered to be the most plausible correlates of the mentioned phenomena (Reese, 2009; Hummelsheim, Hirtenlehner & Oberwittler, 2011; Visser, Scholte & Scheepers, 2013; Vauclair & Bratanova, 2017).

Especially, in South Korea (hereafter, Korea), the concept of the fear of crime has received attention. The fear of crime has been studied over the past decades, resulting in personal health deterioration, various socioeconomic costs and lowering the residential satisfaction in Korea. However, many studies have been conducted to analyze those various definitions, because there has been no unified conceptualization of the fear of crime (Kim, 2018; Cho, 2019). As Yun (2015) suggested, the fear of crime is that ‘people can be harmed by crime that can happen in their own neighborhood’. Roh and Cho (2014) also revealed that the fear of crime is subdivided into the fear of general and specific crimes. The general fear of crime is how much people feel about the fear of staying home alone and walking alone at night, and the specific fear of crime is how much fear people may have about a particular crime (Jang, Jung & Kim, 2010). In addition, Kim (2017) defined the fear of crime as constituting a general and specific fear as well as the frequency of recognition of the crime.

With regard to this hodgepodge-use, Ferraro and Grange (1987) pointed out that there is a necessity to distinguish different types of perception when analyzing the fear of crime and the perceived crime or risk. Regarding the

perceived crime, Mesch (2000) explicitly refers to ‘the judgement of crime and assessment of safety in the immediate surrounding area’. According to Krulichová (2019) who studied the relationship between the fear of crime and risk perception, the perceived crime reveals to be a major predictor of the fear of crime and the mediator between the fear of crime and other individual and contextual indicators. From this point of view, the fear of crime and the perceived crime need to be explained separately. However, there have been some studies on the fear of crime, but few has been conducted on the perceived crime.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of neighborhood conditions on the perceived crime at the local and national levels in Korea, controlling for the socio-demographic variables. We aim to find the details of cognition on the neighborhood and to identify the general perception and attitude of crime. We also study the relationship between the perceived crime and other individual indicators, controlling for socio-demographic variables, which provide the statistic effects of the indicators in the perceived local and national crime. It is meaningful to understand the effect of the perceived crimes and the conditions because it is a core element of community safety for people’s well-being.

Theoretical Background

Those who do not feel safe at places may live with social anxiety. Therefore, people with social anxiety do not participate in community activities that they belong to. The public perception of crime, also known as the perceived risk or perceived crime, prevents people from going outside, which keeps them at home. There may be some discrepancies between the perceptions of crime and the actual levels of recorded crime. In Korea, the actual number of reported criminal offenses have decreased for five years according to the Korea Institute of Justice (2020). However, the Social Survey Report (Statistics Korea, 2018) surveyed the perception of South Koreans about social safety and found that crime itself (20.6%) was the biggest risk factor in Korean society, followed by national security (18.6%), environmental pollution (13.5%), and economic risk (12.8%). To figure out this phenomenon, we propose that the perception of crime is one of the important dependent variables in criminal research.

According to Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) in the United States, the violent crime rate has fluctuated over the past decade but has declined overall

from 458.6 to 380.6 per 100,000 people. This trend was also evident in property crime, which steadily declined by one decade from 3214.6 in 2008 to 2199.56 in 2018 per 100,000 people. This decreasing trend in officially reported national homicide rates has occurred globally in the United Kingdom, Japan, France, and Korea in the past decade (UNODC, 2019). As explained previously, there are often mismatches between the perceived crime and the actual number of crimes (Weatherburn, Matka & Lind, 1996; Jackson, 2004; McGinn et al., 2008; Larsen & Olsen, 2020).

Across the past 30 years, Gallup (2019) has documented that most Americans think that the number of crimes is increasing when it is actually decreasing. This discordance of the perception of crime and police-reported crime has caught the attention of many criminologists. According to the previous studies, various indicators such as gender, socioeconomic status, education level, personality, cultural measure of crime, media, and other life differences were revealed to influence individuals' perception of crime (Forgas, 1980; Truman, 2005; Alcala, 2017), which encouraged people to create their own belief on current crime trends irrelevant to the actual crime incidents. Jackson (2004) suggested that and police-reported crime have caught the attention of many criminologists.. to their homes. ly to participate in commthe public perception was subjective and based more on an inaccurate belief rather than the real experience, and people sometimes expressed their fear/concern on the general social crisis by raising their fear/concern of crime since crime could easily represent the disorder of society (Jackson, 2004; LaGrange, Ferraro, & Supancic, 1992).

Considering that the public receives information about crime indirectly from the media or their neighbors, we assume that the perception of crime is subjective and may differ from the actual crime rate. In particular, media channels, such as television news and newspapers, have an influence on developing fear because watching crime-related news evokes a stronger emotional and visceral response (Callanan, 2012). The coverage is likely to include a bloody and cluttered crime scene, but the emphasis on the crime scene from the media usually covers egregious and rare crimes (Surette, 2007). This behavior of the media may be assumed as the community right to know, whereas this phenomenon evoking such inconsistency by the media should not be overlooked.

When people are more concerned about perceived crimes, their daily lives are

less warranted, which affect people's perception of the quality of life negatively and causes them to feel anxious and scared. Meanwhile, inappropriate and excessive public interest in crime rates may interfere with government policies by directing unnecessary costs to correctional facilities and the Department of Justice rather than other important areas of public services such as health and education (Weatherburn et al., 1996). Many studies have been conducted to examine which indicators, such as education level and socio-economic status, would possibly have an influence on the perception of crime. Highly educated people tend to have a more realistic perception of crime (Baier, Hanslmaier, & Kemme, 2016). In addition, the victimization of crime affects the perception of crime. A person's past experience of victimization significantly increases his/her anxiety or fear of crime, thus changing the perception of crime from no-risk to high-risk.

There has been the influence of news media on crime perception. Most of the general public relies on media reports for their information, and the media exaggerates negative news which would have more exaggerated perceptions of crime. The widely perceived influence of media representations of crime has stimulated various concerns about mass media representations of crime and disorder that have accompanied their development. For example, news media reports fictional or exaggerated facts about crime, leading people to believe that crime is on the rise (Pfeiffer, Windzio, & Kleimann, 2005).

The perception of crime is affected by a variety of indicators. In our literature review, we found that the perceived crime was closely related to the factors in the community. Therefore, we aim to investigate the variables related to these indicators using the social disorganization model, which explains the weakening of social ties and cohesion. Sampson indicated that these variables could increase the crime rate and the level of perceived crime (Sampson, 1993). The disintegration of communities also weakens informal social control among respondents, causing them to feel unsafe and insecure in the place where they live (Sampson & Raudenbush, 2004; Sampson, 2009). In other words, those respondents living in socially integrated communities are expected to have strict control over their own areas, and this expectation causes them to have a low level of the perceived crime. On the contrary, those who feel that there is no strict control over their community are more likely to have the perceived crime.

Even though the social disorganization model was used to help us understand

and reduce levels of criminal activity, Wilson (1996) argued that even the high ties among the respondents in areas where they were too lenient with crime, would result in higher crime rates. However, the model consistently revealed low level results of the perceived crime when the social integration level was relatively high (Skogan & Maxfield, 1981; Rountree & Land, 1996). In other words, an urban area with a higher level of social disorganization showed a higher level of the perceived crime than that of a rural area and an area with a lower socioeconomic status (Allen, 2006; Kershaw & Tseloni, 2005; Sampson, 2009). Therefore, it is necessary to examine all underlying factors related with the perceived crime using the social disorganization model.

Visser (2013) argued that countries with lower social protection expenditure had higher levels of the perceived risk of crime. The impact of social safety nets is not consistent depending on the nature of the person or community. Wyant (2008) found that the perceptions of crime risk or fear correlate with crime, personal vulnerability, socioeconomic status, neighborhood integration, and neighborhood racial composition. However, these factors are not completely operated fragmentarily. He argued that the perceptions of crime risk should be estimated in a multilevel model because the perceptions provided a stricter investigation of the ecological impacts of the sources than seen previously. We believed that the perceived crime could possibly show a dissimilar pattern when people considered the perceived crime at the local and national levels.

Korean criminologists have researched to understand the causes of perceptions of crime and fear. Studies on gender (Yun, 2017), routine activity (Kim, Song, & Kwak, 2017), age (Park, 2017), and victimization (Kim, 2018) are related to these efforts. As stated earlier, many authors have researched people's fear of crime which is highly correlated to the perception of their safety with demographic and criminological variables. Based on these previous studies, the aim of this study is to examine the impact of various demographic and criminological variables on the perceived crime and these effects at the local and national levels.

METHOD

Data Collection

We conducted this study using the data of the ‘2014 Korean Crime Victims Survey’, which was reported by the Korean Institute of Criminology. The data collection for this study was conducted by interviewing and self-entry questionnaire. The trained interviewers collected the data through the interview and self-survey method. The samples collected in this study were 6,960 households with family members aged 14 and older. Of those persons who completed the study, 28,416 respondents with evaluable data were eligible.

Data Analysis

The perceived crime

The dependent variable was comprised of two estimates of the perceived crime: perceived crime at the local level and perceived crime at the national level where the respondents resided. Two research questions were asked about the perceived crime: “How do you expect the crime rate will change in the neighborhood?”, “How do you expect the crime rate will change in the country?”

The perceived crime was measured using a five-point Likert-type scales from ‘significantly decreasing’ to the ‘significantly increasing’. The five-point scale was readjusted into three respondent groups: ‘decrease’, ‘does not change’ and ‘increase’ to facilitate the investigation of the effect of causes. At the local level, 59.7 percent of the public believed that the crime rate would not change (Table 1), while at the national level, 56.7 percent believed that the crime rate would increase. To explain this dissimilar phenomenon, we employed various socio-demographic and independent variables that affected the perceived crime as discussed in the literature review.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics by the Perceived Crimes

Perceived crime		At the Local Level			Total
At the National Level	Decrease (15.1%)	Does not change (59.7%)	Increase (25.1%)		
Decrease (10.4%)	2,352(8.3%)	558(2.0%)	43(0.2%)	2,953	
Does not change (32.9%)	968(3.4%)	8,021(28.2%)	368(1.3%)	9,357	
Increase (56.7%)	981(3.5%)	8,395(29.5%)	6,730(23.7%)	16,106	
Total	4,301	16,974	7,141	28,416	
χ^2	15280.152***				

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Control variables

Socio-demographic information was collected through the survey, which included indicators such as sex, age, income level, education level, and city size. According to previous studies, various indicators such as sex, age, socio-economic status, education level, personality, a cultural measure of crime, and other differences of life influenced the individual's perceived crime (Forgas, 1980; Truman, 2005; Alcalá, 2017). Some studies reported that those who were female, younger, and had a lower economic level, were more likely to have the perceived crime (Rountree & Land, 1996; Wyant, 2008; Roh & Cho, 2014; Hong & Jang, 2015; Krulichová, 2019; Cho, 2019). Among these studies, there was no consensus in the way that they deal with the perceived crime.

Independent variables

Table 2 presents all the variables related with the perceived crime. For the neighborhood setting, the respondents were asked about a series of conditions separately and to categorize their satisfaction with the neighborhood conditions as 'very satisfied', 'somewhat satisfied', 'neutral', 'somewhat dissatisfied', or 'very dissatisfied.' The factor, Environment around the neighborhood, was measured with six items prefaced by asking "What's your opinion about the environment around your neighborhood?" (Cronbach's $\alpha=.836$). The factor of Interaction with neighbors was measured by asking "How do you like your neighborhood?"

(Cronbach's $\alpha=.846$). The factor, Policing in the neighborhood, was measured by asking "What do you think about your local sheriff?" (Cronbach's $\alpha=.804$). The factor, fear of night, was measured by asking "How much do you fear when walking alone at night on the street and staying at home alone?" The scale of fear of night had a Cronbach's α of 0.874. As for the factor, victimization of crime, we classified the respondents into two categories: experienced group and inexperienced group. The respondents who had any experiences of criminal victimization such as deceit, larceny, property invasion or damage, and sex crime that was committed in 2014 were classified into the experienced group. Garland (2001) considered crime reporting by the mass media and in particular on television as a factor that had significantly altered social perceptions of crime in his analysis of crime policy and sentencing in the UK and the US. To verify the influence of media consumption on the perceived crime, the question was measured in the present study on how often people watched news or programs about crime.

Table 2. Definition of Variables

Variables	Description	Cronbach's α
Dependent variable		
perceived crime at the local level	1=Decrease; 2=Does not change; 3=Increase	
perceived crime at the national level	1=Decrease; 2=Does not change; 3=Increase	
Control variable		
sex	0=Male; 1=Female	
age	1 to 7(per 10-year increase)	
level of income	0=Low; 1=Middle; 2=High	
level of education		
level of city size		
Independent variable		
environment around the neighborhood	1=Very satisfied; 2=Somewhat satisfied; 3=Neutral; 4=Somewhat dissatisfied; 5=Very dissatisfied	.836
interaction with neighbors		.846
policing in the neighborhood		.804
fear of night	1=Not fearful at all; 2=not very fearful; 3=Neutral; 4=Somewhat fearful; 5=Very fearful	.874
victimization of crime	0=None; 1=Over one time	
media consumption	1=None; 2=rare; 3=often, 4=frequently; 5=always	

Analytic Methods

We used statistical software program, Stata 13.0 to analyze the data. To find out statistical characteristics of the perceived crime, descriptive statistics and a chi-square test were utilized to analyze the socio-demographic variables, and the correlation analysis was also used to consider the correlation between variables. The three respondent groups, 'decrease', 'does not change' and 'increase' about the perceived crime, are might be analyzed by ordinal logistic regression. However, Long (1997) claimed that the ordinal dependent variable could be used as models for nominal outcomes despite a loss of efficiency as ordinal information was being ignored, which was "out-weighed by avoiding potential bias." Having considered the important debates regarding the socio-demographic and independent variables of the perceived crime, we could proceed more formally to assess the strength of their relationship with 'unchanging' and 'increasing' the perceived crime. A multinomial logistic regression model was applied to provide an assessment of whether different values in the explanatory variables are associated with different odds of falling into each of the three respondent groups. For this reason, multinomial logistic regression was estimated to verify the distinction between the options of the perceived crime while controlling for socio-demographic differences. Moreover, this approach provided it possible to differentiate the impact of one variable from another on the perceived crime. Especially, we could compare those two values of a variable 'unchanging' with 'increasing' that accounts for almost all of the responses to the perceived crime at the local and national levels. In order to determine the difference in the impact of the perceived crime between local and national levels, designating the 'unchanging' group as a reference group seemed to be effective in comparing both local and national levels.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations

The results from the bivariate correlations among the variables used in this study are presented in Table 3. Descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis for all individual variables, were presented. First, we tried to confirm the normality of the variables before testing the multinomial logistic regression analysis. Kline (2011) suggested that the absolute values of each skewness and kurtosis should not exceed 3 and 10, respectively. The skewness of the variables ranged from -0.88 to 1.24 and the kurtosis ranged from 1.01 to 2.98, except for the victimization of crime. The victimization of crime was measured over the suggested reference standard because it was composed of a binary variable. The results of pairwise correlations showed that they did not have multicollinearity as correlation coefficients ranged from -0.319 to 0.561 and were lower than $r=.7$. In addition, we calculated variance inflation factor (VIF) values of variables for having a value greater than 10 (Belsley, 1991) as an indicator of multicollinearity. The VIF of all variables ranged from 1.043 to 1.649, confirming no multicollinearity.

Table 3. Pairwise Correlations

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
(1) PNC	1												
(2) PLC	.561***	1											
(3) SEX	.012	.002	1										
(4) AGE	-.001	-.078***	.047***	1									
(5) LI	.000	.037***	-.056***	-.332***	1								
(6) LE	.018**	.064***	-.137***	-.528***	.409***	1							
(7) LC	.027***	-.060***	.007	.208***	-.209***	-.254***	1						
(8) EN	.091***	.192***	.006	-.151***	-.011	.060***	-.085***	1					
(9) IN	.007	.108***	-.039***	-.343***	.155***	.281***	-.319***	.099***	1				
(10) PN	.011	.106***	-.013**	-.189***	.034***	.119***	-.061***	.223***	.324***	1			
(11) FN	.079***	.145***	.356***	-.150***	.032***	.049***	-.085***	.300***	.082***	.124***	1		
(12) VIC	.032***	.038***	.021***	-.028***	.001	.037***	-.009	.061***	.006	.056***	.062***	1	
(13) MC	.099***	.040***	-.036***	.056***	.029***	.062***	-.010	.051***	-.110***	-.086***	.043***	.043***	1
Mean	2.463	2.100	1.525	4.219	1.849	2.102	1.236	2.267	3.176	2.690	2.270	.041	2.190
S.D	.676	.627	.499	1.786	.667	.798	.425	.770	.859	.798	1.051	.198	.787
Skewness	-.88	-.08	-.10	-.074	.18	-.19	1.24	.29	-.21	.27	.49	4.63	-.35
Kurtosis	2.58	2.51	1.01	2.035	2.22	1.60	2.55	2.98	2.80	3.12	2.41	22.4	1.69

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Note. PNC=Perceived National Crime; PLC=Perceived Local Crime; LI=Level of Income; LE=Level of Education; LC=Level of City Size; EN=Environment around the Neighborhood; IN=Interaction with Neighbors; PN=Policing in the Neighborhood; FN=Fear of Night; VIC=Crime Victimization; MC=Media Consumption.

Socio-demographic Variables for the Perceived Crime and Chi-square Test

Before examining the hypothesis of this study, we analyzed the differences between socio-demographic variables of the perceived crime. According to Table 4, there seemed to be different tendencies between the perceived crime at the local and national levels. 59.7 percent of the public assumed that the crime rate at the local level would not change the following year. However, 56.7 percent answered that the perceived crime would increase the following year at the national level. The respondents seemed to assume that the crime rate in the country would increase two times more than in the neighborhood. The socio-demographic variables showed a more significant difference for the perceived crime at the local level than at the national level. The respondents with more income and a higher level of education were more likely to respond that the crime rate would increase. However, at the national level, the socio-demographic variables were not associated with the perceived crime. Especially, the differences of the perceived crime at the national level for gender and income level were not statistically significant. A study by Roh and Cho (2014) on the fear of crime at the local level revealed that there were differences in both general fear and specific fear regarding sex, and level of income and education. Therefore, it is suggested that individual characteristics should be dealt with more seriously at the local level than at the national level.

Table 4. Proportion of Perceived Crime Rate by Socio-demographic Variables

		Sex		Income			Education		
		Male	Female	Low	Middle	High	Low	Middle	High
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Perceived crime at the local level	Decrease (N=4,301, 15.1%)	49.2	50.8	31.0	52.4	16.6	27.5	36.4	36.1
	Does not change (N=16,974, 59.7%)	46.8	53.2	33.0	52.1	14.9	30.0	34.3	35.7
	Increase (N=7,141, 25.1%)	48.3	51.7	26.0	56.5	17.5	20.6	36.8	42.5
	χ^2	10.22**		122.15***			236.05***		
Perceived crime at the national level	Decrease (N=2,953, 10.4%)	49.2	50.8	30.0	52.9	17.1	25.8	38.1	36.1
	Does not change (N=9,357, 32.9%)	47.6	52.4	31.7	53.2	15.1	28.7	35.2	36.0
	Increase (N=16,106, 56.7%)	47.1	52.9	30.7	53.3	16.0	26.6	34.8	38.6
	χ^2	4.34		9.29			31.97***		

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Multinomial Logistic Regression Analysis

A series of multinomial logistic regression analysis was conducted at the local and national levels to assess the impact of independent variables on the perceived crime. The analysis strategy was identical for both dependent variables. In the previous finding, 59.7% of the respondents believed that the perceived crime at the local level would remain 'unchanged', while 25.1% responded that the perceived crime would 'increase'. However, when it comes to the perceived crime at the national level, 56.7% of respondents said that the perceived crime would increase, while 32.9% believed that the perceived crime would 'not change'. To figure out this discordance, the reference category of the dependent variable, 'does not change', was used to compare with the 'decrease' and 'increase' category of the perceived crime.

Table 5 and Table 6 showed the estimated parameters for a multinomial logistic regression of the perceived crime at the local and national levels for the demographic characteristics of the respondents and independent variables. As the validity of the multinomial logistic regression model was applied with the odds ratio test, we found a significant value of $\chi^2=2031.37$ (df=22, p<.001) (Table 5) as well as the value of $\chi^2=827.12$ (df=22, p<.001) (Table 6). The pseudo-R2

provided a measure of the extent of correlation as shown in Table 5 and Table 6, accounting for the proportion of variance, which is explained in the dependent variable by the covariate.

Table 5. Multinomial Logistic Regression of the Perceived Crime at the Local Level

Perceived crime at the local level		Decrease		Increase	
		Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE
Control variables					
Sex	Male(Ref.)				
	Female	-.020	.037	-.182***	.032
Age		-.039**	.012	-.027**	.010
Level of income		.048	.029	.114***	.024
Level of education		.034	.027	.077***	.023
Level of city size	Urban(Ref.)				
	Rural	-.228***	.044	-.268***	.039
Independent variables					
Environment around the neighborhood		-.140***	.025	.439***	.020
Interaction with neighbors		-.165***	.023	.128***	.020
Policing in the neighborhood		-.179***	.024	.015	.020
Fear of Night		-.115***	.019	.186***	.016
Victimization of crime	No(Ref.)				
	Yes	-.007	.095	.253***	.068
Media Consumption		-.045**	.017	.083***	.015
Constant		.449	.142	-3.002***	.126
N		28,416		28,416	

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

$\chi^2=2031.38(df=22)$, Pseudo- $R^2 = 0.038$, Log likelihood = -25713.669

Based on the previous studies for indicators relating to the perceived crime, it was reported that ‘physical disorganization’, ‘interaction with neighbors’, ‘policing in the neighborhood’, ‘fear of night’, ‘victimization of crime’, and ‘media consumption’ were related to the perceived crime. Assuming that the indicators affected differently between the perceived crime at the local and national levels, Table 5 and Table 6 reported β coefficients of various independent variables on both the perceived crime at the local and national levels.

Table 6. Multinomial Logistic Regression of the Perceived Crime at the National Level

Perceived crime at the national level		Decrease		Increase	
		Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE
Control variables					
Sex	Male(Ref.)				
	Female	-.018	.046	-.027	.029
Age		.000	.015	.017	.009
Level of Income		.051	.035	.026	.022
Level of Education		.037	.033	.067**	.021
Level of City size	Urban(Ref.)				
	Rural	-.267***	.057	.130***	.034
Independent variables					
Environment around the neighborhood		-.130***	.030	.152***	.019
Interaction with neighbors		-.083***	.028	.020	.018
Policing in the neighborhood		-.131***	.029	-.091***	.018
Fear of night		-.057*	.024	.098***	.014
Victimization of crime	No(Ref.)				
	Yes	-.023	.120	.243***	.069
Media consumption		.029	.021	.228***	.013
Constant		-.243	.174	-.762***	.110
N		28,416		28,416	

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

 $\chi^2=827.12(df=22)$, Pseudo- $R^2 = 0.016$, Log likelihood = -25810.783

There were coefficient differences between control variables affecting the perceived crime at the local and national levels. The socio-demographic characteristics on the perceived crime at the local level reflect that the respondents who were male, younger, more educated, the urban dwellers and had a higher income level were associated with the 'increase' category when compared to the 'does not change', while younger respondents and urban dwellers were more likely to be associated with the 'decrease' category when compared to the 'does not change'. However, the characteristics on the perceived crime at the national level reflected that the respondents who were more educated and the rural dwellers were associated with the 'increase' category, while the urban dwellers were associated with the 'decrease' category. When compared to those who lived in the urban area, the rural dwellers were more likely to believe that the perceived crime at the local level would not change, while the perceived crime at the national level would increase.

According to the results, there was a gender difference in the perceived crime at the local level, showing that women had a positive correlation ($r=.002$, $p>.05$) (Table 3). In other words, when the perceived crime was analyzed as an ordinal variable, the results of the correlation analysis showed higher perceived crime rates in the female group than in the male group. If we analyze the perceived crime as a categorical variable, the odds ratio from the 'does not change' to 'increase' can be interpreted to be greater in the male group than the female group. This result is similar to the Hong and Jang study (2015) that compared Korea with the United States. The fear of crime had a high correlation with each other in the perceived crime. Females were more likely to have a higher fear of crime than males, which was statistically significant in the U.S., but not statistically significant in Korea (Hong & Jang, 2015).

In terms of age, Krulichová (2019) who studied cross-national comparisons of fear of crime across 23 European countries, reported that the elderly was more likely to have a fear of crime, which is consistent with the crime vulnerability model. However, Rho and Cho (2014) revealed that the younger age group might have higher rates of the fear of crime in Korea. They conducted a multi-level analysis of the impact of crimes, foreigners, and disorders on the fear of crime in a neighborhood. Also, LaGrange and Ferraro (1989) explained that the results were curvilinear and largely negative. In summary, the variables of sex and age have shown contradictory results in international and Korean studies. These results are due to the fact that the perceived crime was not analyzed as an ordinal variable, but as a categorical variable.

We found that similar independent variables, such as the environment around the neighborhood, interaction with neighbors, policing in the neighborhood, and the fear of night, had a significant effect on decreasing the perceived crime at the local and national levels. The odds ratio for those who had a high level of the perceived crime ranged from the absolute value of 0.115 to 0.179 at the local level and 0.057 to 0.131 at the national level. If we compare the 'does not change' with the 'increase' category, the perceived crime between the local and national levels shows a different aspect. First, we found that the respondents who were not satisfied with the neighborhood environment and reported night fear in the neighborhood conditions, have a significant odds ratio of the 'increase' on the perceived crime at the local and national levels when compared with the 'does

not change'. The odds ratio of the perceived crime at the local level when comparing the 'increase' group to the 'does not change' group was significant with the value of 0.128 when the respondents were not satisfied while interacting actively with neighbors. On the other hand, this was not meaningful for the perceived crime at the national level. Interacting actively with neighbors served a more powerful mechanism to repress the increase and to facilitate the decrease of the perception of the crime (Wyant, 2008).

On the other hand, a lack of satisfaction with *policing in the neighborhood* had an insignificant impact at the local level. Surprisingly, when there is dissatisfaction with *policing in the neighborhood*, the effect is greater for the 'does not change' when compared to the 'increase' in raising the odds ratio for the perceived crime at the national level. For this reason, Scheider et al. (2003) reported that improving the perception of community policing activities has a positive effect on resident's satisfaction with the police but does not directly reduce the perception of crime. Therefore, a better policing strategy was one of the important factors that led the public to believe that perceived crimes would decrease. Even though poor policing had nothing to do with raising the perceived crime, the isolated living environment and the devastation between neighbors could raise the perceived crime.

In addition, recent victimization experience was associated with a greater odds ratio of perceiving the *increase* when compared to perceiving the *does not change* (a coefficient of 0.253 and 0.243 in the perceived crime at the local level and national level, respectively). However, given the fact that the residents did not experience crime damage, the effect of changing people's perceived crime from 'does not change' to 'decrease' at both levels did not occur. This suggests that the victimization of crime is one of the major factors that increase the perceived crime at both the local and national levels, which has already been researched by Balkin (1979), Yin (1980), Skogan (1987), Liska et al. (1988), and Krulichová (2019).

As expected, consuming more crime-related news remains significant and positively associated with the perceived crime at the local and national levels when comparing the *increase* to *does not change* (a coefficient of 0.083 and 0.228 at the local and national levels, respectively). According to Callanan (2012),

consumption of crime-related news elevated the perceived crime significantly for all demographic groups. In terms of crime-related media consumption and the perceived crime at the local level, the respondents who were not dependent on the media consumption, belonged to the 'decrease' group rather than the 'does not change' group with statistical significance. However, this was not applicable for the perceived crime at the national level.

As already mentioned, the multinomial logistic regression analysis enabled us to examine whether the indicators, which we discussed in the literature review, predicted the perceived crime of the three respondent groups. According to the results of Table 1, 59.7% of the respondents thought that their perceived crime at the local level would not change. However, 56.7% of the respondents thought that the perceived crime at the national level would increase. Based on those results, it was hypothesized that there would be significant differences between independent variables of the perceived crime at the local and national levels. To summarize the findings of our study, although it is not possible to directly compare β coefficients of the two models (Table 5 and Table 6), we ordered the β coefficients calculated from each model in order of the magnitude to compare if there are differences between the two results.

For the perceived crime at the local level (Table 5), the β coefficient of *environment around the neighborhood* is the highest (0.439), followed by the *level of city size* (0.268), *victimization of crime* (0.253), *fear of night* (0.186), and *interaction with neighbors* (0.128). For the perceived crime at the national level (Table 6), the β coefficient of *victimization of crime* is the highest (0.243), followed by *media consumption* (0.228), *level of city size* (0.186), *environment around the neighborhood* (0.152), and the *fear of night* (0.098). In other words, the victimization of crime was found to have huge significant effects on the local and national levels. In particular, *the environment around the neighborhood* was most influential at the local level, while the media consumption had a strong influence at the national level. Therefore, considering the results of this study, the perceived crime-reduction strategies should be separately devised to reduce the perceived crime at the local and national levels.

CONCLUSIONS

The perceived crime and the fear of crime are known as distinctive variables (Krulichová, 2019). The perceived crime that people may have includes several indexes of the fear of crime (Hummelsheim et al., 2011; Vauclair & Bratanova, 2017). In the Introduction, we clarify the concept of the perceived crime in comparison to the fear of crime, and we highlight future studies for the perceived crime itself as distinct from the fear of crime. A survey by the Korean Institute of Criminology in 2014 on Korean perceptions of crime investigated as part of the study of Korean crime victimization showed that the perceived crime at the local level would not change, while the perceived crime at the national level would increase. Unlike the previous research results of the perceived crime in other countries, Korean studies reported that people with a higher level of education and a higher level of income might be more sensitive to the perception of crime (Roh & Cho, 2014). We confirmed their theories in our study. They were statistically significant in the perceived crime at the local level. However, we found that these factors, except for the education level, were not statistically significant in the perceived crime at the national level. The results of the analysis according to the socio-demographic variables are as follows. Those respondents who were male, younger, more educated, and had a higher income level would have the higher perceived crime especially at the local level.

A central contribution of the present study is that the findings clarify a structural difference on the perceived crime between the local and the national levels. The results indicate that the significant factors differ by the local and national levels when respondents perceived the crime.

First, our review notes the main distinction of two factors on the perceived crime between the local and national levels. The *dissatisfactory interactions with the neighborhood* was a significant factor at the local level when the respondents assessed the perceived crime, whereas this was not the case at the national level. In addition, the *policing in the neighborhood* did not have a statistically significant effect on the perceived crime at the local level. However, *policing in the neighborhood* was statistically meaningful at the national level.

Second, the results indicate that there is a difference in the main factors in determining the perceived crime depending on the local and national levels. The findings show that the main causes were the *environment around the neighborhood*, the *victimization of crime*, and the *size of the city* at the local level, and the *victimization of crime*, *media consumption*, and the *environment around the neighborhood* at the national level.

Third, all of the findings suggest that the major differences affecting the perceived crime vary across the local and national levels. While the neighborhood-related factors have a main impact on the perceived crime at the local level, the media is a leading factor at the national level. This distinction can be interpreted as follows.

According to the social disorganization model, the community disintegration and the weakening of the cohesion of members in the area are related with the perceived crime. That is to say, as the perceived crime could affect the integration of the community and the cohesion of the dwellers, those who are socially interactive and integrated with their neighbors have a lower level of the perceived crime than those who are not (Taylor & Hale, 1986; Lee & Earnest, 2003). In addition, when the community's environment has more social and physical disorders, the community has higher crime rates by strengthening the perception that its community control is weakened and poorly managed (Sampson & Groves, 1989; Choi, 2009).

In terms of the circumstances in Korea, interactions with the neighborhood is also important to the perceived crime. Even if emotional bonds are considered to be disappearing more than before, the emotional bonds with neighbors in the region or the concept of community have still traditionally induced bonds between neighbors. According to the Better Life Index proposed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Korea ranked the lowest country in the 'Community' sphere. This indicator estimates the quality of the social support network, which is the percentage of people who believe they can rely on their social network in case of need. In Korea, 78% of the people know someone they could contact frequently and receive emotional support in a time of need. Korea has the lowest rate in the OECD, where the average is 89% (OECD, 2020). Meanwhile, Korea ranked 25th in terms of 'Safety', indicating that Koreans

feel safe when walking alone at night. About 67% of Koreans assess that they feel safe walking alone at night, which is slightly less than the OECD average of 68%. However, according to the latest OECD data, Korea's homicide rate is 1.0, which is lower than the OECD average of 3.7 (OECD, 2020). In summary, Koreans perceived crime more severely than the actual crime rate, and dissatisfaction with their neighborhood can be implicated in the perceived crime. This tendency is consistent with the current study and previous studies in that the satisfaction with their neighbors is a proximate factor of the perceived crime (Morenoff, Sampson, & Raudenbush, 2001).

The victimization of crime consists of direct criminal harm and indirect criminal damages caused by the exposure to the news media (Maxfield, 1984). The vicarious victimization model describes that if people are frequently exposed to crime through the media, the perceived crime can increase even if they do not directly experience crime damage (Fox, Nobles, & Piquero, 2009). Recently, the seriousness of the problem related with media consumption has been emphasized as experiencing indirect crime damage through media increases of other kinds of the perceived crime (Lim, 2018). The perceived crime of the public, in particular, is less dependent on direct victimization experience, and is very much affected by media contact (Heo & Im, 2015). According to Choi and Han (2014), when people are frequently exposed to crime-related media, they have the higher perceived crime because they identify their real world with the virtual world in the media and internalize the image by recognizing it as a universal fact.

Furthermore, as the public has little direct contact with the police, the media takes an important role in building their perceptions of law enforcement (Surette, 2015). According to a prior study, the greater awareness of negative media coverage is associated with the perceptions of police legitimacy (Graziano & Gauthier, 2018). In the case of the circumstances in Korea, a high level of crime-related media consumption reduces the confidence in the police (Choi, Yim, & Hicks, 2020). This might be an indirect effect in that the public experiences the increased level of the perceived crime through the media. They may think that the policing is not effectively controlling the crime (Choi et al., 2020).

Given the above results, the measures to reduce the perceived crime will require a different intervention at the local and national levels. First, the idea at the local level is to lower the perceived crime through fostering an organized and

secure community to interact with their neighbors actively. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is highlighted as a crime prevention activity focused on the environment, which refers to a strategy that reduces citizens' rate of the perceived crime and reduces the chances of crime through urban planning (NPA, 2005). Removing risky environmental factors that can lead to crime, can encourage people's outdoor activities and build a bond between neighbors. In fact, CPTED in Korea has shown the effect of lowering the rate of perceived crime as a monitoring factor, as well as inducing respondents to participate in activities in public places such as parks and squares (Lee & Lee, 2014). Thus, the CPTED model can be used to reduce the perceived crime at the local level. Moreover, previous studies suggest that the institutions may play an important role for crime prevention at the local level (Triplett, Gainey, & Sun, 2003). The institutions provide conventional values to community members and this process induces informal social control (Warner, 2003). According to Warner and Konkel (2019), an institution such as a church can be a crime prevention strategy that provides bonding and bridging the social network in neighborhood processes. Therefore, to encourage people to participate in a social program from the institutions can decrease the perceived crime at the local level.

Attention should also be paid to the influence of the media in order to reduce the perceived crime at the national level. The public will recognize the perceived crime indirectly through the media experiencing crime damage. In addition, as the contact of the media related to crime increases, the perceived crime of individuals increases, which causes social turmoil and anxiety from a macroscopic perspective. Therefore, the media should avoid an excessive sensational report when reporting on crimes and should be able to lower the perceived crime of the public by reporting not only crime facts but also crime prevention measures together. Moreover, the media should be the key to understanding the crime policies and initiatives. According to Pickett et al. (2015), the reliance on the media for criminal information is related to lower levels of knowledge about criminal justice. Thus, the media can be used as a strategy to provide public education about the criminal justice system as well as correct crime-related information. Especially, scholars have the responsibility to inform the factual information against an irrational or emotional response and to give the public information based on statistics about crime rates and the demographic

characteristics of criminals. (Pickett et al., 2015).

The limitations of the study and suggestions for subsequent research are as follows. First, the model explanatory power (pseudo-R²) in this study was shown to be low, which can be inferred from the interaction effect between variables. As there have been few studies on the perceived crime in Korea, we have other limitations when we research this field. Second, in this study, the association of demographic indicators with the perceived crime was examined by setting the perceived crime as a category variable, which showed more different results than when we viewed the perceived crime as an 'ordinal' variable. In other studies, there is no consistent results of gender and age on the perceived crime and the fear of crime. This suggests that the following studies should be conducted to classify and examine the perceived crime and fear of crime in depth. Third, it is reported that the perceived crime and the fear of crime are distinct in international studies, and that the perceived crime serves as a predictor and mediator on the fear of crime. Therefore, future work needs to reveal the relationship between the two concepts of the perceived crime and the fear of crime and then apply this relationship to the circumstances in Korea.

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