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FEAR OF CRIME IN PUBLIC SPACE: PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

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Abstract

Fear of crime in urban public space affects the well-being of residents and has detrimental effect on individuals' behaviour. Thus, this study examines the effect of physical and social environment conditions on fear of crime in Malaysia. Data was collected for nine variables related to fear of crime from sample of 540 adults selected from housing estates every state in Malaysia. Binomial logistic regression analysis technique was used in identifying the odds of fear of crime among the individual attributes for the different dimensions (physical and social environmental conditions). Findings from the study revealed that the odds of fear of crime in deteriorated physical environment condition is three times higher among respondents that are married ($\text{Exp(B)} = 3.766$, $p < 0.05$), two times higher among Malays ($\text{Exp(B)} = 2.185$, $p < 0.05$) compared to other racial groups, and the older adults ($\text{Exp(B)} = 2.201$, $p < 0.05$).

Keywords: Fear of Crime, Physical Environment, Social Environment, Public Space, Malaysia.

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INTRODUCTION

Public spaces play important role in human connections and public activities in urban centres (Roy and Bailey, 2021). No other urban environment echoes the meaning of city life better than the public space. Whatever the nature maybe - a garden, park, open space, a mall, public buildings, lobbies, foot path, train platform or a street corner, a public space is where people move around, interact with each other and at times become crime victim (Ceccato and Nalla, 2020). Costamagna et al. (2019) noted that public space is a place that is usable and accessible by everyone and that such a space could be outdoors or indoors. Due to the important role public spaces play in urban centres, scholars over the years, have continued to discuss about it (Mehta, 2014; Di Masso, 2015; Costamagna et al. 2019). Public space is defined as an arena for social relations that impacts the psychological wellbeing of individuals in terms of comfort, tranquillity, and sense of security (Carmona et al., 2003; Gallacher, 2005).

Public space can act as a crime generator that creates sense of insecurity and opportunities for crime in certain places and at certain times (Putra et.al. 2023). One of the main concerns regarding public spaces is safety. Safety affects accessibility and use of a public space (Ceccato and Nalla, 2020). Clarke and Eck, (2007) noted that public spaces are often risky, because of disproportionately high crime rates in them compared to the surrounding areas. Thus, discussion about safety in public spaces is not only an essential issue for academic scrutiny or research, but also for long-term sustainability of cities and economic development (UN-Habitat, 2019). How urban centres are designed and planned has influence on an individual's safety (Ceccato, 2016).

Crime literature in public space is replete with studies that have identified several factors that influence fear of crime among residents. Some of the studies identified physical environment conditions (e.g Austin et al. 2002; Freedman and Owens 2011; Md Sakip et al. 2013; Vernez Moudon et al. 2018; Roy and Bailey, 2021), while others identified social environment conditions (Hillborn 2009; Groff and McCord 2011; Gholamhosseini et al., 2018). Fear of crime in urban public space is a complex environmental, social-cultural, physiological and psychological phenomenon that is inadequately understood within the urban planning profession (Ratnayake, 2013). The complexity in understanding fear of crime in public space is partly explained by confluence of the various factors highlighted above.

In Malaysia, studies have been conducted to examine crime in urban public spaces (e.g measures that local authority could implement to reduce crime rate in Malaysia (Shamsudin, 2008); Cause and effect of urbanization on crime in Malaysia (Che Soh, 2012), Public perception of crime (Ali, 2014); Factors that influence fear of violent crime in Selangor (Mohd Arshad et.al. 2018); Fear of crime in residential areas (Md Sakip et.al. 2018); Relationship between fear of crime and self-rated health (Abdullah et.al. 2019); Contextual and multifactorial

influence on perception of safety from crime (Abdul Ghani et.al. 2021). Although these studies examined crime in urban public space in one form on the other, there is none that incorporated individual attributes of residents, physical and social environmental conditions in one study to examine fear of crime. A recent study conducted by Abdul Ghani et.al. (2021) examined fear of crime in Malaysian public space looking only at the neighbourhood conditions (physical environment) and social conditions (e.g. experience of victimisation, crime information, law enforcement). Although this study highlighted some of the effects of physical and social environmental conditions in residents' perception of safety in public space in Malaysia, there is need for further study that incorporates the individual attributes (socio-demographic attributes) to further deepen the understanding on antecedents of fear of crime. Therefore, the current study aims at examining the influence of deteriorated physical and social environment conditions on fear of crime in Malaysia.

FEAR AND CRIME

Due to the fact that physical and emotional reactions to crime are unique to each individual, the concept of fear of crime has been defined differently by researchers. The varied definitions of fear of crime, Pain (2001) argues, act as a limitation in comparative studies. Thus, empirical results from studies on fear of crime are highly contrasting, given that, in some instances these studies do not consider the same underlying construct (Hale, 1996; Lorenc et al., 2012). In this regard, fear of crime according to De Donder, (2009) and Semmens, (2007) suffers from conceptual confusion and researchers need to develop a better, more unified conceptual understanding or framework. The best conceptualization of fear of crime are those definitions that appreciate the way in which fear of crime constantly acts as constraint to activities in daily life of people (Yates and Ceccato, 2020). Gordon and Riger (1989) defined fear of crime as a 'sense that one must always be on guard, vigilant and alert'. Three words that stood out in this definition are 'guard', 'vigilant' and 'alert'. In other words, when an individual has a sense of insecurity in an environment, it makes that individual to be on guard, alert, and vigilant because anything untoward can happen. Irvin-Erickson et.al. (2020a) opined that an individual's perception of the built and social environment in a neighbourhood could affect his/her cognition of risk of victimization and trigger feelings of insecurity and worry, which may all together be expressed as fear of crime.

Social disorder theories of fear of crime posit that disorderly events and signs of chaos in communities create fear of crime. One of such theories is 'Broken Windows Theory' (Wilson & Kelling, 1982), which posits that feelings of social and physical deterioration in an environment could increase an individual's sense of vulnerability, which then leads to higher fear of crime, reduced social control and an increase in crime rate. Extant literature on the

propositions of social disorder theories on perceived social and physical incivilities and fear of crime are well documented (Lorenc et al., 2012; Loukaitou-Sideris, 2014). For example, neglect in the immediate neighbourhood and other physical signs such as vacant plot, abandoned and vandalized buildings, and graffiti have been linked with increased level of fear of crime. Also, social environment problems such as presence of disorganized or disorderly individuals (e.g. drunkards or those under influence of drugs, beggars on the streets, homeless individuals, people with mental disorder) have also been associated with increased fear of crime (Innes, 2017; Farrall, et.al. 2009; Waters, et.al. 2007; Vrij & Winkel, 1991; Cozens, et.al. 2003; Hale, 1996). Valentine, (1990) argues that socially integrated neighbourhoods engender self-help support and networks, which helps in alleviating an individual's fear of crime, as the individual feel more confident in his/her ability to handle potential risks. It is presumed that individuals who show high levels of fear of crime live in neighbourhoods with evidence of physical incivilities and limited social cohesion. The extent of fear of crime and consequences are not evenly distributed (Burgess, 2002; Yates and Ceccato, 2020; Stjernborg and Bamzar, 2020). For example, studies have found that older adults and females experience higher levels of fear of crime (Haislmaier, et.al 2018; De Donder et. al., 2012; Ortega and Myles 1987).

METHOD

Data for study was obtained through survey of adults in Shah Alam city. The selection of the study area stems from its location and position as an industrial hub with high economic activities and the human population. Due to the high level of population growth, the city acts as an attraction for both skilled and unskilled labour from different backgrounds, the majority of whom are young adults. The level of crime in Malaysia has a decreasing rate and is generally moderate. However, there are some areas that record higher crime rates which are known as Blackspot areas by Local Authorities and District Police Headquarters. These areas have a criminal record in the past.

Based on the local cultural setting, the survey questionnaire was designed in bilingual (Malay and English) drawing from the following fear of crime indicators: (1) deterioration in physical environment (2) deterioration in social environment. The respondents were asked to rate their perception about each fear of the crime indicator on a five (5) point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Not worried to 5 = Very worried. Using stratified and random sampling techniques, a total of 540 respondents were sampled.

Dependent variable

In the field of criminology, the operationalization and conceptualization of fear of crime has been a subject of debate among scholars. The debate centres on the broad measurements of fear of crime as both cognition and feeling and the

inability of researchers to discern the two concepts (Irvin-Erickson et.al,2020b). In the current study, we measured fear of crime by asking respondents at the time of the survey, how worried they are about the deterioration of physical environment, deterioration of social environment. The respondents rated their level of worry on a scale ranging from 1 = Not worried to 5 = Very worried. We generated a dichotomous variable by grouping the responses 1,2,3 as Not worried and 4, 5 grouped as Very worried using SPSS software. Thus, the dependent variable (fear of crime) is treated in the logistic regression models as dichotomous whereby, very worried = 1, otherwise (Not worried) = 0.

Independent variables

The set of independent variables used in the logistic regression analysis to test variations in level of fear of crime are: (1) gender measured as dummy variable whereby male = 1 otherwise 0, (2) race is measured as dummy variable whereby Malay = 1 otherwise 0, (3) marital status is measured as dummy whereby 1 = married otherwise 0, (4) occupation is measured as nominal variable comprising of five categories, (5) age, (6) income and (7) educational qualifications are measured as interval variables (scale).

ANAYSIS & FINDINGS

More than half (57.6%) of the participants in the survey are female, while the rest are male. About 63% are within the age category 20-39 years, while 14.6% are within the category of 40-49 years, 11.5% are within the category of 50-59 years and 10.9% are above 60 years. Based on this breakdown, it could be said that majority of participants are young adults. In terms of racial composition, results in Table 1 indicate that the dominant racial group in the sample is the Malay (72.8%), followed by Chinese (16.9%), Indians (9.6%) and others (0.7%). More than half (55.2%) of the respondents obtained University degrees, 40.4% had only secondary education, 4.1% primary education, while 0.4% had no western education. Majority (73%) practice Islamic religion, while the rest (27%) practice other religions (Christian (15%), Buddhis (4.8%), Hindu (2.8%) Others (2.8%). In terms of marital status, Table 1 indicates that 47.6% are married while 40.9% are unmarried (single), 7.8% are divorced or separated, 3.7% are widow/widower. About 40.6% are employed in the private sector, while 20.2% are self-employed, 15.6% are employed in the public sector, 14.8% are unemployed and 8.9% are retirees. About 37.4% earned RM2000 monthly, 24.4% earned between RM2001-4000, 16.1% earned between RM4001 – 6000, 15% earned between RM6001 –8000, 3.7% earned between RM9001 – 10,000 and 3.3% earned above RM 10,000.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Attributes of Respondents

Gender	Frequenc y	%	Religion	Frequenc y	%
Male	229	42.40	Islam	394	73.00
Female	311	57.60	Christian	81	15.00
Total	540		Buddha	26	4.80
		100.00			
Age			Hindu	24	4.40
20-29	217	40.20	Others	15	2.80
30-39	123	22.80	Total	540	100.00
					0
40-49	79	14.60	Marital Status		
50-59	62	11.50	Single	221	40.90
60 and above	59	10.90	Married	257	47.60
Total	540	100.00	Divorced	42	7.80
Race			Widow/widower	20	3.70
Malay	393	72.80	Total	540	100.00
					0
Chinese	91	16.90	Occupation		
India	52	9.60	Private sector	219	40.60
Others	4	.70	Public sector	84	15.60
Total	540	100.00	Self employed	109	20.20
Education			Retired	48	8.90
University	298	55.20	Unemployed	80	14.80
Secondary School	218	40.40	Total	540	100.00
					0
Primary School	22	4.10	Monthly Income		
Never attended	2	.40	RM2000	202	37.40
Total	540	100.00	RM2001 – RM4000	132	24.40
			RM4001 – RM6000	87	16.10
			RM6001 – RM8000	81	15.00
			RM9001 – RM10,000	20	3.70
			Above RM 10,000	18	3.30
			Total	540	100.00
					0

The binary logistic regression analysis test was conducted to estimate the relationship between the fear of crime categories (deterioration in physical environment, deterioration in social environment and the socio-demographic attributes of respondents. We chose binary logistic regression because our dependent variables have been dimensioned as dichotomous variable whereby Very worried = 1, otherwise 0. Looking at the goodness of the fit results in fear of crime due to deterioration in physical environment (i.e. abandoned housing in the neighbourhood), (Table 2). the chi-square statistic along with pseudo R-square show that the full model is an improvement over the intercept only model (chi-square = 102.613, $p < 0.05$, Negalgarke R-square = 0.38), bushy/green areas (chi-square = 94.858, $p < 0.05$, Negalgarke R-square = 0.30), unkempt

environment littered with garbage (chi-square =112.205, $p<0.05$, Negalgarke R-square = 0.47).

Results in Table 2 indicate that racial background, marital status, and income are significant individual factors that help explain variation in fear of crime as a result of deterioration in physical environment (i.e. abandoned buildings in the neighbourhood). Again, results show that gender and age are significant individual factors that explain variation in fear of crime due to bushy areas in the neighbourhood. Lastly, three individual factors namely gender, age and income explain variation in fear of crime due to unkempt environment littered with dirt in the neighbourhood.

Table 2 Binomial Logistic Regression Results on Deteriorated Physical Environment

I am worried when walking in an abandoned housing area					I am worried when walking along bushy areas in the neighbourhood					I am worried when I come across an unkempt area (ie dirt)				
Individual attributes	SE	Wald	p-value	Exp(B) (odd ratio)	SE	Wald	p-value	Exp(B) (odd ratio)	SE	Wald	p-value	Exp(B) (odd ratio)		
Race	.350	3.830	.040*	2.185	.554	.080	.777	1.170	.589	1.140	.286	1.875		
Gender	.237	.037	.847	1.047	.488	3.210	.013*	2.796	.413	3.173	.015*	2.089		
Age	.128	1.206	.272	1.151	.295	1.385	.025*	2.201	.241	1.984	.031*	1.705		
Marital	.241	5.566	.018*	3.766	.573	2.331	.127	2.400	.407	.098	.754	1.136		
Education	.221	.281	.596	.890	.496	.989	.320	1.638	.426	.830	.362	1.474		
Occupation	.076	1.278	.258	.918	.156	.072	.788	1.043	.132	.369	.543	.923		
Income	.100	4.646	.031*	2.807	.248	1.097	.295	1.296	.180	1.132	.036*	2.936		
Chi-Square = 102.613 p<0.05					Chi-Square =94.858 p<0.05					Chi-Square =112.205 p<0.05				
Nagelkerke R-square = 0.38					Nagelkerke R-square = 0.30					Nagelkerke R-square = 0.47				

Table 3 Binomial Logistic Regression Results on Deteriorated Social Environment (Perceived incivility)

I am worried when I come across people who have no place to live (homeless) in the neighbourhood				I am worried when I come across drunk people (drunkards) in the neighbourhood				I am worried when I see a stranger loitering or hanging around in the neighbourhood				
Individual attributes	SE	Wald	p-value	Exp(B) (odd ratio)	SE	Wald	p-value	Exp(B) (odd ratio)	SE	Wald	p-value	Exp(B) (odd ratio)
Race	.330	4.685	.030*	2.042	.420	.069	.793	1.116	.646	.309	.045*	1.533
Gender	.222	2.972	.085	1.467	.261	5.216	.022*	2.813	.512	.836	.361	1.796
Age	.114	.437	.508	1.078	.135	.210	.647	1.064	.271	.068	.794	.932
Marital	.197	.549	.459	1.157	.226	.056	.024*	2.148	.597	3.182	.021*	2.902
Education	.201	6.766	.019*	2.493	.241	.001	.975	.993	.467	.516	.038*	1.915
Occupation	.075	.009	.925	1.007	.086	.444	.505	.944	.164	.075	.784	.956
Income	.099	.153	.012*	2.962	.127	1.591	.207	1.174	.243	.078	.780	1.070
Chi-Square = 97.892 p<0.05				Chi-Square = 104.277 P<0.05				Chi-Square = 118.724 P<0.05				
Nagelkerke R Square = 0.32				Nagelkerke R Square = 0.47				Nagelkerke R Square = 0.49				

For fear of crime due to deterioration in social environment, three (3) variables were used in assessing the residents' perception. The goodness of fit results of the binary logistic regression in Table 3, indicate that the chi-square statistics along with pseudo R-square of the model is significant at .05 (homeless people in neighbourhood) (Chi-Square = 97.892, $p < 0.05$, Nagelkerke R Square = 0.32, drunkards in the neighbourhood (Chi-Square = 104.277, $P < 0.05$, Nagelkerke R Square = 0.47), presence of strangers loitering/hanging around in the neighbourhood (Chi-Square = 118.724, $P < 0.05$, Nagelkerke R Square = 0.49).

Results show that three (3) individual attributes: race, educational qualification, and income explain variation in fear of crime due to deterioration in social environment (homeless people in neighbourhood), while two individual attributes (gender and marital status) significantly explain variation in fear of crime (presence of drunkards in neighbourhood) and three individual attributes (race, marital status and educational qualification) significantly explain variation in fear of crime due to people loitering/hanging around in neighbourhood.

DISCUSSION

Results from the binomial logistic regression show that racial background, marital status, and income are the individual attributes that help explain variation in fear of crime due to physical deterioration of physical environment (i.e. abandoned buildings) in the study area. Among those who fear most, results indicate that racial background, marital status and income level increases their odds of fear of crime. The dominant racial group in Malaysia are the Malays, thus race was coded as dummy whereby Malay = 1 otherwise 0 in the data analysis. Based on the results in Table 2, the odds of fear of crime due to abandoned buildings in the neighbourhood is higher among Malays than the other racial groups ($\text{Exp}(B) = 2.185$, $p < 0.05$). In other words, the odds of fear of crime among Malays is two times higher than other racial groups in the study area. Yates and Ceccato (2020) observed that perceived social distance between different racial groups in a neighbourhood could explain variation in fear of crime.

Again, results from the study indicate that being married tends to increase the odds of fear of crime due to physical deterioration (i.e. abandoned buildings in the neighbourhood). ($\text{Exp}(B) = 3.766$, $p < 0.05$). This aligns with Warr (1985) notion of 'altruistic fear' which asserts that married people with children report higher level of fear of crime compared to the unmarried (single) who have no children. The married people with children fear not only for their own safety, but also for their children's safety (Warr, 1985). Marriage comes with a sense of responsibility to one's spouse and children, thus it is not surprising that the level of fear of crime is higher among the married in the study area. In this study, the odds of fear of crime among married respondents due to abandoned buildings in the neighbourhood is three times higher than unmarried.

Again, results in Table 1 indicate that the odds of fear of crime due to bushy areas in the neighbourhood is higher among women ($\text{Exp(B)} = 2.796$, $p < 0.05$) and the older adult ($\text{Exp(B)} = 2.201$, $p < 0.05$). As shown by the results, the odds of fear of crime from bushy environment among women is about three times higher than their male counterpart and two times higher for older adults. Vegetation is very important in safety perspectives (Bogacka, 2020). Areas with thick vegetation limits or hinders visibility, which can act as hiding places for criminals, and in turn brews fear of crime among residents (Michael & Hull, 1994). This finding resonates earlier studies that have reported that women express higher level of fear of crime than men (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006; Macassa et al., 2018). This in part is attributed to their fear of sexual harassment or violence (Yates and Ceccato, 2020). Peake, (2020) observed that the gender dimension of public space is rarely the focus of urban planning, and it is yet to be integrated into urban planning. Therefore, there is a disconnect between what women experience in their use and access to public spaces and what urban planners envision (Roy and Bailey, 2021). Again, gender and age were significant in explaining variation in fear of crime due to unkempt environment (i.e. neighbourhood littered with garbage). Results indicate that the odds of fear of crime among female respondents ($\text{Exp(B)} = 2.089$, $p < 0.05$) is two (2) times higher than their male counterpart and also two times higher among older respondents (i.e. those above 50 years) compared to other age categories ($\text{Exp(B)} = 2.201$, $p < 0.05$). Meaning that fear of crime due to unkempt environment is higher among women and the older adults. With regard to specifics of place, Scharf et.al. (2003) opined that older adults have a strong relation to their neighbourhood environment. They are particularly vulnerable, and more likely than others to express fear in deprived or deteriorated neighbourhoods (Smith, 2009; Stjernborg and Bamzar, 2020). In terms of fear of crime due to deterioration in social environment (ie presence of homeless people in the neighbourhood), results show that race, educational qualification and income are the individual attributes that significantly explain variation in fear of crime. The dominant racial group in the study area is the Malay. City center has witnessed rapid growth in human population over the years due to high level of industrial activities. Most of the unskilled labourers from neighbouring countries who have come in search of 'greener pasture', sometimes find it difficult to rent an apartment due to the high cost. The resultant effect is that some sleep-in open places at night. Hunter, et.al. (2002) observed that rapid changes in environment due to high population inflow in the form migration of people, have an impact on residents' sense of safety. In their study in India, Roy and Bailey (2021), found that one of the major factors that made participants feel unsafe is cultural differences. This is attributed to lack of awareness about other people's culture and values which results in decrease acceptability of strangers in the neighbourhood and the sense of insecurity.

Again, results indicate that fear of crime due to social problems (i.e. presence of drunkards and strangers loitering in neighbourhood) is higher among female ($\text{Exp(B)} = 2.813$, $p < 0.05$), those that are married ($\text{Exp(B)} = 2.148$, $p < 0.05$), respondents with high-income ($\text{Exp(B)} = 2.962$, $p < 0.05$), and higher educational qualifications ($\text{Exp(B)} = 2.493$, $p < 0.05$). Based on these results, it could be said that the odds of fear of crime as a result of the aforementioned social problems in city center is two (2) times higher among women, respondents with higher educational qualifications and high income and the married. Previous studies have linked social environmental problems such as the presence of disorderly individuals (homeless individuals, drunkards/drug addicts, beggars) and unkempt neighbourhood environment (presence of litter) to higher level of fear of crime (Innes & Jones, 2006; Waters, et.al. 2007; Farral et.al. 2009; Irvin-Erickson, et.al. 2020a). Findings from the study lend support to these earlier studies. Perception of safety is influenced by space and people living therein (Roy and Bailey, 2021). Studies have reported that women feel unsafe in the presence of strangers, labourers, drug addicts, beggars and gamblers (Dhillon & Bakaya, 2014; Machielse, 2015; Chhetri, 2015). It is not suprsing in this study that fear of crime is gendered. Vera-Gray and Kelly (2020) observed that gender difference is by far the most consistent findings in fear of crime literature.

The discussion above demonstrates how deterioration in physical and social environment in a public space, shapes the perception of different segment of the society on fear of crime. Fear of crime and its consequences are not evenly distributed, thus the findings from the study may align or contradict previous studies. Several environmental and social factors affect the safety of public space, yet, it is the people's safety perception that plays an important role in making places seem safe or unsafe (Costamagna, et.al. 2019). What this suggests is that, aside the environmental and social factors, safety perception could be influenced by individual attributes or traits. In this study, we examined how the individual attributes (socio-demographic characteristics) of the participants influenced their level of fear of crime with respect to the deterioration in their immediate physical and social environment. Findings from the study, demonstrates that fear of crime is varied among the different segment of the society (socio-demographic groups), which is influenced by the interplay of socio-environmental factors,

CONCLUSION

This article has shown that fear of crime in a public space is influenced by both physical and social environmental condition, the mass media and individual attributes of the population. A neighbourhood may show some attributes that breed or attract crime in terms of deterioration in physical and social environment, however, the importance of socio-demographic attributes in the discourse of fear of crime cannot be overlooked. This is based on the fact that an individual's safety perception (fear of crime) may not necessarily be as a result

of presence of crime but a function of personality or behavioural traits. Findings from the study revealed that gender, marital status, race, income and educational qualifications are the major individual attributes that influenced fear of crime viz-a-viz the three dimensions adopted in the conceptualization (i.e. deteriorated physical environment, social environment and mass media dimensions). From the results of the study, we found that women, the older adults and those that earned high income are more worried than other groups when walking along bushy areas and unkempt environment littered with garbage and dirt (deterioration in physical environment). In other words, the odds of fear of crime due to bushy and unkempt environment is higher among these groups in the study area. In terms of deterioration in social environment, results further showed that Malays, those with higher income and educational qualifications are more worried when they see homeless people in the neighbourhood, while women and the married are more worried when they come across drunkards or drug addicts in the neighbourhood. Meaning that the odds of fear of crime due to deterioration in social environment is higher among these group (women, the married, those with higher educational qualifications and income). On how mass media affect the perception of different segment of the society on fear of crime, findings from the study revealed that older adults, the married, and those with higher educational qualifications are more worried than other groups when they hear news about crime from mass media or hear stories about crime from friends who have been victim. The findings from this study have shown that fear of crime is not to be understood as a permanent or fixed trait that is inherent in a particular demographic group, but rather something that any individual can express to a varying degree depending on the mass media, physical and social environmental condition which the individual is exposed to at a given point in time. Therefore, a holistic approach that encompasses an understanding of the physical and social environmental conditions in urban public spaces and individual characteristics of the population, are necessary in understanding the problem of fear of crime in Malaysia.

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