

FEAR OF CRIME AND PERCEPTION OF SAFETY ON CAMPUS AND THE CITY
-
A RESEARCH STUDY ON PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS IN FLORINA (GREECE)

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* “*Contralto*”: Sculpture depicting a bear playing the double bass. Since 2017 it is placed in the entrance of the city of Florina (Alexander the Great Square). Photo by *Maria Katsimpra*, undergraduate student, Department of Psychology, University of Western Macedonia.

Introduction

Upon our request submitted on 11-12-2022 to the Committee on Ethics and Deontology of Research of the University of Western Macedonia (UoWM) our research team asked for the approval of a research project entitled “*Experimental investigation of the fear of crime to students of the Department of Psychology of the University of Western Macedonia [Florina]*”. The research project aimed at empirically investigating fear of crime (Alexiadis, 1991; Zarafonitou, 1996, 2002, 2006, 2013, 2018, 2023a, 2023b; Courakis, 2023) among students living in the city of Florina and attending the Department of Psychology of the UoWM. The ultimate objective of the research was the improvement of the quality of life of this population group. In response to our request the Committee in its No. 35/19-12-2022 Meeting decided to authorize the conduct of this research.

The research project was implemented by the Department of Psychology of the School of Social Sciences and Humanities of the UoWM in collaboration with the Laboratory of Urban Criminology of the Department of Sociology of the School of Social Sciences of Panteion University. The main features of the research team were its relevance and experience with the subject under investigation, i.e. the phenomenon of fear of crime, but also the interdisciplinary formation of the team, since the subjects matters were Law, Criminology, Psychology and Statistics. In particular, the scientific supervision of the project was carried out by *Christina Zarafonitou*, Professor of Criminology and Director of the Postgraduate Programme “Criminology” of the Department of Sociology and the Laboratory of Urban Criminology of Panteion University. The research project was led by *Charalampos Karagiannidis*, Doctor of Criminology of the Faculty of Law of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and academic scholar during the period of implementation of the research of the Department of Psychology of the UoWM. Responsible for the statistical processing of data was *Vasilios Ismyrlis* academic scholar during the period of implementation of the research of the Department of Psychology of the UoWM and statistician of the Hellenic Statistical Authority. Finally, responsible for the distribution of the questionnaire and the collection of research data was the established research team of students of the 3rd year of studies of the Department of Psychology. In particular, in total four research

groups were created, as the years of study of the Department of Psychology of the UoWM³.

It is noted that the conducted research was *self-funded*. However, the contribution of the Secretariat of the Department of Psychology to the support research team of students was significant and with this contribution certain needs for the successful conduct of the research were satisfactorily addressed. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that the conducted survey is scarcely *the second* in Greece on the fear of crime and *targeted at the student population*, after the recent survey conducted by Professor Christina Zarafonitou, which empirically investigated the attitudes of Greek university students in relation to punitiveness and insecurity (Zarafonitou & Chalkia, 2018).

Bearing in mind that nothing is taken for granted in criminological research, with the sole exception of the inadequacy of official criminological statistics to inform us about the true extent, structure, and evolution of the crime phenomenon (Panousis, 1991; Pitsela, 1992), it is our wish that our research effort and its findings will constitute a minimal contribution to *improving the quality of life* of the student population of Florina.

The research area

Florina

Florina is a city in Macedonia, seat of the Municipality of Florina and capital of the Regional Unit of Florina in Western Macedonia. According to the 2021 census, the city (municipal community) of Florina had a population of 17,188 inhabitants, while in total the Municipality of Florina had a population of 29,500 inhabitants. It is a mountainous city, built at an altitude of 687 meters and is characterized as the coldest city in the

³ The first team for the 1st year consisted of *Maria Katsimpra* (leader), Maria–Ioanna Gidakou, Chryssa Terzi and Jason Gonzos. The second team for the 2nd year consisted of *Stavroula Valekarda* (leader), Ioannis Arestis, Konstantina Florou, Lambrini Vamvakidou and Agathi–Alexandra Vlachou. The third group for the 3rd year consisted of *Vasiliki–Paraskevi Vargiami* (leader), Michaela–Vasiliki Manolaki, Maria Papageorgiou, Konstantina Papagianni and Rafailia Tyrigianni. Finally, the fourth team for the 4th year consisted of *Efstathia Papanikolaou* (leader), Penelope Gaki, Dimitra Argyroplidou, Eleni Papadopoulou, Ourania Boutziloudi and Eleni–Maria Kitsou. Moreover, we would like to express our thanks especially to the undergraduate students *Vasiliki–Paraskevi Vargiami*, *Maria Katsimpra*, *Stavroula Valekarda* and *Michaela–Vasiliki Manolaki* for their assistance in preparing this paper.

country, with the most frequent snowfalls and an average annual temperature of 11.2 degrees Celsius (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2023: 20).

Florina is a place of natural beauty where important wetlands are located for various species of birds (Dalmatian pelicans, cormorants, herons, buzzards, etc.) as well as the “*Bear Protection Center*” and the “*Wolf and Lynx Protection Center*”. Built between mountains, the neoclassical mansions of the city give a charmingly traditional style to the city. A well-known winter destination of the area is *Pisoderi*, a settlement built on the slopes of Mount Varnounta at an altitude of 1,400 meters where there is a ski resort.

Unfortunately, like the rest of Western Macedonia, it is treated by the central authority unfavorably compared to others, at least in terms of infrastructure, a treatment that certainly affects the wider area of the Municipality, which has high rates of deindustrialization and unemployment⁴. Objectives for improving the position of Florina at national and international level could be the utilization of the geographical position of the city, which can also be one of the existing gateways of the Balkans, the strengthening of the ties of local government with the local community, the participation of citizens in the administration of the city and the management of everyday life, the cooperation of the local government with the productive bodies of the city for its economic development, the development and promotion of the cultural offer of the city, so that culture becomes a pillar of development of the city itself, the development of a sustainable urban environment and the promotion of plans to upgrade life in the city of Florina.

The University of Western Macedonia in Florina

An element with a positive sign for the city of Florina is undoubtedly the operation of various Faculties and Departments of the University of Western Macedonia (UoWM). In Florina operates the School of Social Sciences and Humanities (Department of Primary Education, Department of Early Childhood Education, Department of Communication and Digital Media and Department of Psychology), the School of Fine Arts (Department of Visual and Applied Arts) and the School of Agricultural Sciences

⁴ It is estimated that in Florina youth unemployment reaches 70% (Salourou, 2021).

(Department of Agriculture)⁵.

The School of Social Sciences and Humanities of UoWM was founded very recently, in 2019 according to the Law 4610/2019, replacing and expanding the School of Education of Florina, which with its two Departments, namely the Department of Primary Education and the Department of Pre-primary Education, had formed the first academic core of the UoWM. The School of Social Sciences and Humanities consists of the Departments of Primary Education and Early Childhood Education and the Department of Psychology based in Florina, as well as the Department of Communication and Digital Media based in the city of Kastoria. The Department of Psychology was founded in 2019 by the same above-mentioned law, is based in Florina and is part of the School of Social Sciences and Humanities of the UoWM.

The total number of students studying during the academic year 2022-2023, the year in which our research was conducted, in Schools and Departments of the UoWM based in Florina, amounted to a total of 3,107 people. It is estimated that about 1,450 students reside permanently during their studies in the city of Florina⁶. The number of students studying at the Department of Psychology amounted to a total of 540 people, of whom 200 participated in the present survey.

The establishment and operation of these Schools and Departments of the University of Western Macedonia, apart from the consequent development of the scientific knowledge and skills they offer, highlights the city of Florina as an important node on the scientific map of our country.

The city's police force

The police are an institution that has one of the main roles in the implementation of crime prevention policy. The harmonization of the strategy and operational action of the police for crime prevention with the modern demands of citizens for better living and quality of life is a sine qua non for the overall success of the crime prevention policy project.

⁵ University of Western Macedonia, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Department of Psychology (2023). *Study Program Regulation 2023-2024*, July 2023, p. 8.

⁶ We especially thank the Secretary of the Department of Psychology of PDM, Mr. *Lazaros Melissas*, for the kind provision of the above-mentioned data [date of communication, 9-10-2023].

At national level, the total personnel of the Hellenic Police in 2019, according to the statistical office of the European Union Eurostat, amounted to 54,430 people. This number should certainly have increased, considering the notices for the recruitment of staff in the Hellenic Police, which are regularly posted on “DIAVGEIA” and on the website of the Hellenic Police. It should be noted that according to Eurostat data for the year 2016, in our country the ratio of police officers to citizens is one of the highest in Europe and higher than the European Union average. Specifically, this ratio is 492 police officers per 100,000 inhabitants.

Today, in the wider area of the Regional Unit of Florina, following the latest restructuring of services and the rational redistribution of the organic police force, according to the real needs of its services, the implementation of measures to save personnel and to rationalize the management of human resources, the existing force of the Hellenic Police amounts to a total of five hundred and fifty (550) people. Especially, in the city of Florina, a total of one hundred and thirty (130) people serve in the Police Department, the Security Department, the Traffic Department, and the Two-Wheel Policing Team (“DIAS”) of the city.

The number of the police force in the Regional Unit of Florina, according to its own physical leadership, is *fully sufficient* for the policing coverage of the area, both at the prefecture level and especially at the city level. The police force of the area is considered satisfactory both for the effective policing of the area and in general for the reduction of the extent of crime (prevention and repression). This is mainly due to the reinforcement of police personnel in the region during the three-year period 1999-2001, when many Border Guards joined the already existing police force.

Furthermore, an element with a positive sign for the *historically low crime* rate for the city of Florina according to its own physical leadership is its special geographical location. The city is surrounded by high mountains with limited exits and space for policing, aspects that are strong deterrent factors of criminogenesis.

Finally, it should be noted that the institution of the *Neighborhood Police Officer* is not operationally implemented by the Hellenic Police in the area, while no *Local Council for the Prevention of Delinquency* has been established and does not

operate by the municipal authority of Florina⁷.

The municipal police

The municipal police, as the control mechanism of the municipality, deal with the management and handling of problems that concern the daily lives of citizens. In the case of the Municipality of Florina, the Municipal Police Directorate is responsible for the effective exercise of the responsibilities described in the existing legislative framework, namely article 1 of the Law 3731/2008⁸.

Municipal police officers are trained under the responsibility of the municipal authority in traffic police, security, order, criminal law and criminal procedure, computers, and crisis management. The human resources and equipment of the municipal police in the Municipality of Florina include a total of only four municipal police officers and just one patrol car, which is old and needs replacing. The problem of understaffing of the municipal police is claimed to be addressed soon with the announcement of ten additional positions of municipal police officers for the area, which is due to take place soon. Apart from this problem, the service does not face any other problem, while the cooperation of the municipal police with the municipal authority was described as impeccable. In general, the municipal police have a positive work to show, and the city of Florina was characterized as safe for its residents⁹.

In any case, the municipal police area necessity, but for its smooth and effective operation it requires full staffing and logistical equipment (vehicles, wireless communication materials, etc.), elements that do not seem to exist in the case of Florina. Finally, the drafting of an integrated operational plan for the operation of the municipal police and the establishment of an observatory with the task to provide information and instructions to the Municipalities of the country for the establishment and rational operation of the municipal police services within their limits of responsibility and the promotion of intermunicipal cooperation during the establishment of the municipal

⁷ We sincerely thank the Police Deputy Director of the Florina Police Staff, Mr. *Dimitrios Dimopoulos*, for the useful information mentioned above [date of telephone contact: 17-10-2023].

⁸ Law 3731/2008 “Reorganization of the municipal police and regulations of other matters under the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior”, *Government Gazette Issue A' 263/23-12-2008*.

⁹ We sincerely thank the Municipal Police Officer Ms. *Maria Michaltsi* for the useful information mentioned above [date of telephone contact: 6-12-2023].

police service, it seems that it is still a matter of consideration (Karagiannidis, 2011:277-278).

The aim of the research

Our research project, as mentioned above, aims at the empirical investigation of the fear of crime in students residing in the city of Florina and studying at the Department of Psychology of the University of Western Macedonia. The ultimate goal of the research is *to improve the quality of life* of this population group.

The research further sought to highlight problematic situations that concern the student population of the University of Western Macedonia, as well as to formulate proposals aimed at addressing the fear of crime on the basis of the formulation and implementation of a rational anthropocentric crime prevention policy. These problems are either related to the criminal phenomenon, or they are situations that directly affect their quality of life during their studies at the University of Western Macedonia.

In particular, the empirical investigation of the problems faced by this population group in their area of residence in Florina and the recording of their needs in order to improve and upgrade the quality of their daily living in the city of Florina, the proposals for effectively tackling the phenomenon of fear of crime and the recording of directions that could act as indicators of practically effective criminal preventive policy, were objectives of the investigation.

As mentioned above, the main characteristics of the research team were its relevance and experience with the issue of the phenomenon of fear of crime under investigation, as well as the interdisciplinary composition of the team. Particularly beneficial for the conduct of this research was the participation of the person in charge of this research project in recent diagnostic investigations of the Laboratory of Urban Criminology of Panteion University under the scientific responsibility and supervision of Professor of Criminology Christina Zarafonitou¹⁰.

¹⁰ In particular these are: [i] the diagnostic research conducted during the implementation of the research project entitled “*Mapping crime and insecurity in the era of economic crisis: Trends, dimensions and correlations*” (2021-2022) in three municipalities of the Greek capital city, i.e. Municipalities of Athens, Korydallos and Filothei–Psychiko (see Zarafonitou, 2022a; Kontopoulou, 2023) and [ii] the innovative European research project entitled “BeSecure-FeelSecure: A Holistic Risk Management Approach for Monitoring, Assessing and Forecasting the Efficiency, Sustainability and Resilience of Piraeus–BSFS” (2020-2023), which aimed to enhance security in the city of Piraeus with actions that are part of the

The methodology of the research

Preparation and configuration of the questionnaire

The methodology followed was a quantitative survey using a structured questionnaire, which is considered methodologically equivalent to oral interviews, while its conduct usually has a lower cost compared to the latter (Alexiadis, 1989:39-40; Spinellis, 2014:170; Pitsela, 1992:438). During the formulation, distribution and processing of the empirical research, data were taken into account and at the same time an effort was made to address the problems that appear in a survey based on a questionnaire, i.e. problems that may arise from the content of the questionnaire, the formulation of the questions and the reliability of the survey results by applying a structured questionnaire (Alexiadis, 1970; Schneider, 1981; Zauberman, 1985; Bernard, 1992; Bowling, 1993; Fattah, 1993).

With the scientific guidance of the research supervisor Professor *Christina Zarafonitou*, the basic tool of our research, the questionnaire, was developed. The questionnaire was based on questionnaires developed by Professor Ch. Zarafonitou in the framework of her previous empirical studies on fear of crime. It was also decided, due to the absence of any particular difficulties in completing it, not to formulate a user guide for the questionnaire. The formulation and structure of the questionnaire took its final form following the suggestions of the supervisor of the survey. The structured questionnaire consisted of a total of twenty-eight (28) closed and open-ended questions. The questions were divided into five distinct thematic parts: [i] “*Demographic and socio-economic characteristics*” (questions 1-5), [ii] “*Insecurity and Fear of Crime*” (questions 6-12), [iii] “*Experience of direct victimization*” (questions 13-19), [iv] “*Attitudes towards formal social control of crime and the dimensions of crime*” (questions 20-23) and [v] “*Evaluation of University services*” (questions 24-28).

During the preparation of the questionnaire, great care was taken not to create doubts about their content. The content of the questions was extensively developed in a lecture on the fear of crime as part of the course “*Criminal Psychology*”. The course

philosophy and values of participatory crime prevention policy, see (Zarafonitou, 2022b; Kontopoulou, 2023).

was attended by the participants in the individual working groups created for the needs of the research by students of the Department of Psychology of the UoWM. In this way, we believe that the risk of non-understanding or misinterpretation of the questions during the completion of the questionnaire by the survey participants was avoided. Moreover, during the preparation of the questionnaire and the formulation of the questions, instructions and directions from other relevant empirical criminological studies were taken into account (Clinard, 1978:18-19; Warr & Stafford, 1983:1033-1043; Farrall et. al., 1995). For example, in questions related to the fear of victimization that may have been expressed by students for certain areas of the city of Florina, it was preferred to avoid the simple quotation for selection of dichotomous answers of the type “safe” and “unsafe” and to supplement this relevant question with the demonstrably more productive citation of various reasons, who may be causing this fear of victimization. So, the question “How safe do you feel when you walk around your area of residence in Florina after nightfall?”¹¹, supplemented by the question on the assessment of specific factors in terms of their contribution to the feeling of insecurity in the place of residence of participants.

Furthermore, the structured questionnaire included a variety of questions, depending on the subject to be investigated. In particular, the questionnaire included: (a) *closed questions*, in which the answers were determined in advance and the respondent had to choose among all those proposed. The choice of answers offered was based on existing experience from previous surveys on fear of crime¹², and (b) *semi-closed or semi-open questions*, in which the main possible answers were provided as in a closed question, but at the same time the respondent was given the opportunity to add other answers, outside the predetermined boxes.

Finally, regarding the language of the questionnaire, taking into account the recipients for its completion, it was chosen to use as simple a language as possible, avoiding “difficult” scientific (legal and criminological) terms, whose approach and interpretation varies, even within the criminological community itself, in order to easily understand the questions and avoid any unintentional distortions and misinterpretations

¹¹ This is the question that is used in the research on the fear of crime and the diagnosis of its dimensions, both internationally and nationally in the few similar diagnostic researches, which were carried out in our country by the supervisor of the present research, Professor of Criminology *Christina Zarafonitou*.

¹² Zarafonitou & Student Research Group, 2000: 511-519; Zarafonitou, 2002; Zarafonitou & Chalkia, 2018:45-69; Zarafonitou et. al., 2022:139-155.

by the students of the Department of Psychology.

Distribution and completion of the questionnaire

The investigation followed the method of sampling the available sample. The research team undertook the distribution for the completion of the questionnaires at the University premises from a randomly selected sample of students of all four years of study of the Department of Psychology who attended the lectures¹³. The completion of the questionnaires was voluntary and anonymous and at the forefront of the questionnaire was included detailed privacy notice for the processing of personal data. In particular, it was mentioned that the anonymous research is carried out jointly by the Department of Psychology of the UoWM and the Laboratory of Urban Criminology of Panteion University, with Dr. Charalampos Karagiannidis as scientific responsible. It was also stated that the processing of responses is carried out with the explicit consent of the sample in accordance with article 6§1par.a' of the General Data Protection Regulation, which it could revoke at any time and without penalty, unless this made impossible or seriously hampered the research.

A total of four research groups were created, i.e. as many as the years of study of the Department of Psychology, consisting of a leader and 3-4 members of the teams. The completion of the questionnaire by the students of the Department of Psychology of the University took place in January 2023, while the statistical processing and analysis was completed in August 2023 by Dr. Vasilios Ismyrlis, statistician and academic scholar of the Department of Psychology of the UoWM using the statistical package Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The SPSS statistical package was preferred because it is considered appropriate and is used to organize process data and highlight dominant trends. Furthermore, a media analysis was carried out in order to determine whether certain demographic variables, such as gender, years of residence in the city of Florina, and urbanity affect the answers to certain questions/variables. The degree of urbanity in particular appeared to affect several of the questions in the questionnaire, but in the ANOVA that took place, these differences were not considered statistically significant. The same applies to years of residence.

¹³ We sincerely thank the Assistant Professor of Developmental Psychology *Triantafyllia Georgiadou*, the Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology *Aikaterini Flora* and the Academic Scholar *Panagiota Christodoulou*, during whose classes the survey questionnaires were distributed and completed.

The reference population was the total student population of the Department of Psychology of the UoWM, which, based on the data we received from the Secretariat, amounts to 540 students for 4 years of study. A total of two hundred (200) people were investigated, of which one hundred seventy-eight (178) were women and twenty-two (22) men. Finally, we note that the timetable for the work of the survey, which we had initially set, was adhered to precisely, without any significant deviations.

The findings of the research

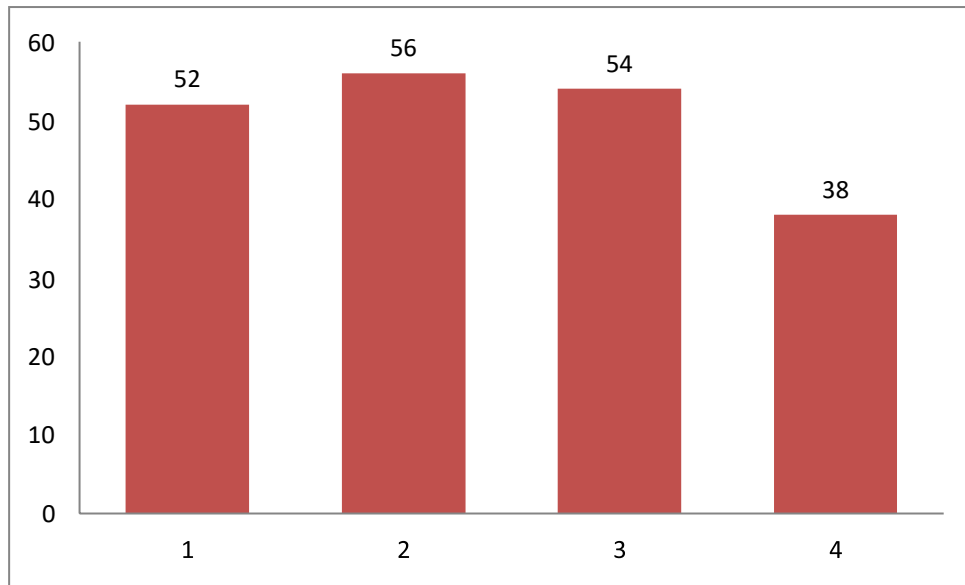
Demographic and socio-economic characteristics

In the first five questions of the survey questionnaire, respondents were asked to provide information about their demographic and socio-economic characteristics. In particular, they were asked to indicate their *gender, age, place of permanent residence, how long they have been living in the city of Florina due to studies* and how they would assess their financial situation.

The sample of the survey consisted of a total of two hundred (200) students of the Department of Psychology of the University of Western Macedonia. The picture of the sample specifically per year of study is as follows:

Table 1: The sample of the students per year of study

Year of study	Surveyed	Total no of students
1 st	52	150
2 nd	56	150
3 rd	54	150
4 th	38	90

Figure 1: Sample of students per year of study

In total 200 people were surveyed, of which 178 women and 22 men, a sample that is satisfactory and representative. The average age of participants was 19,85 years old. The next question revealed that the place of residence of the sample shows *a high degree of urbanity*. In particular, three categories based on their urbanity, were classified based on Hellenic Statistical Authority data for the population of settlements. Below is the table showing the number of survey participants *by degree of urbanity*.

Table 2: Urbanity degree of the students in the sample

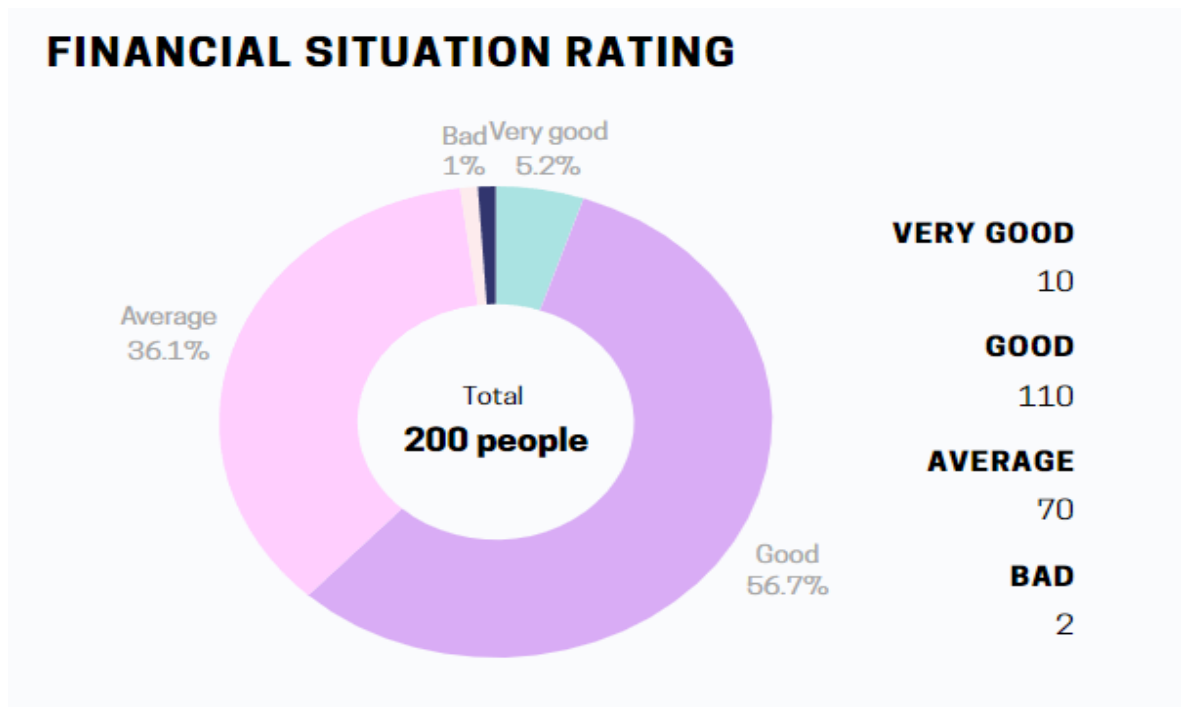
Urbanity degree	Number of students	Percentage %
1 st (1-1.999)	25	12,5
2 nd (2.000-9.999)	21	10,5
3 rd (≥ 10.000)	154	77
Total	200	100

Finally, the sample rated their financial situation mainly as “good” (57%) and “average” (36%). A much smaller proportion rated their financial situation as “very good” (10 people) and “poor” (just 2 people). The answers are shown in the table and graph below.

Table 3: Financial situation of the students in the sample

Financial situation rating	Number of students	Percentage %
Very good	10	5,18
Good	110	56,99
Average	70	36,27
Poor	2	1,55
Don't know/ Don't answer	2	1,55

Figure 2: Financial situation of the students in the sample



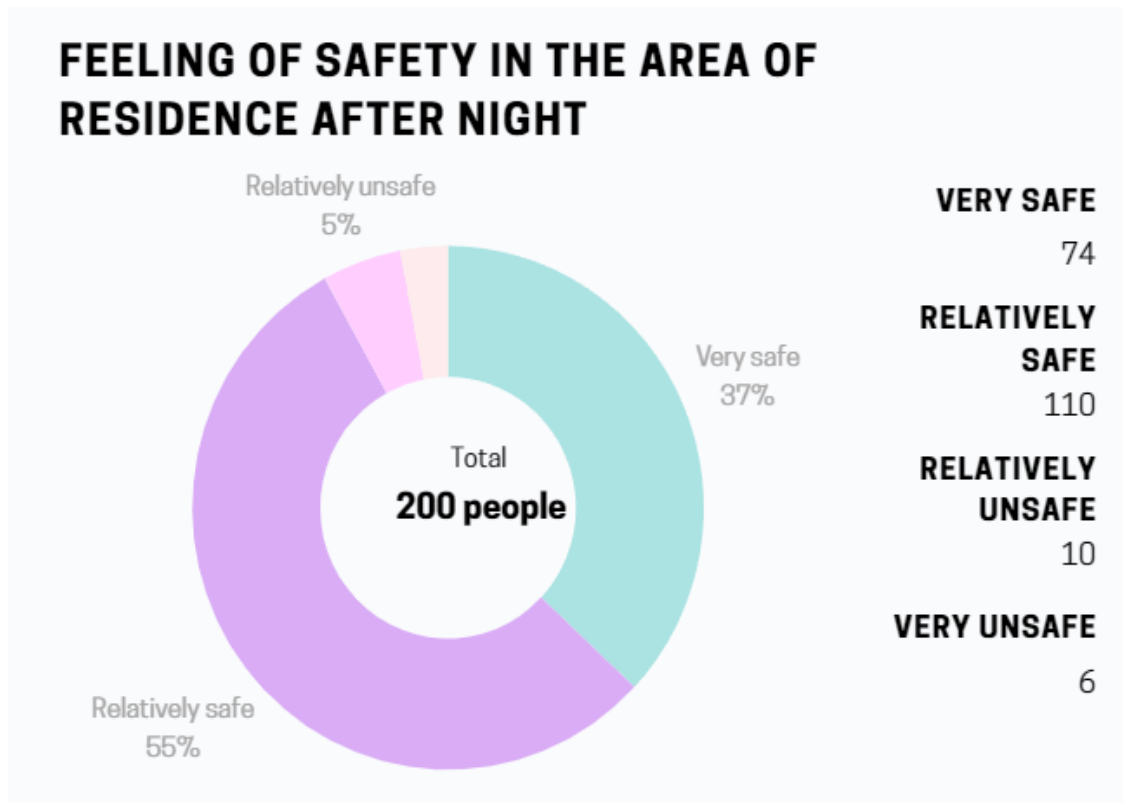
Insecurity and Fear of Crime

The second part of the questionnaire contained a total of seven questions (6-12), which addressed the issue of *insecurity and fear of crime*. The table and graph below present the answers of the sample to the question “*How safe do you feel when you walk in your area of residence in Florina after night?*”.

Table 4: Feeling of safety in the area of residence after dark

Safety rating	Number of students	Percentage %
Very safe	74	37
Relatively safe	110	55
Relatively unsafe	10	5
Very unsafe	6	3
Don't know / Don't answer	0	0

Figure 3: Feeling of safety in the area of residence after dark



The answers of the sample show that *nine out of ten* survey participants feel *safe or relatively safe* when they move around in the area of their residence in Florina at night. In this specific case, no particular differences were observed in relation to demographic variables. It should be noted, however, that *gender* clearly differentiated the answers to this question, since only *women* reported feeling *less safe* in the city of Florina. Thus, a total of sixteen (16) women in the sample stated that they feel *relatively unsafe* or *very unsafe*.

These sixteen people were then asked to answer the question “Which areas of the city of Florina do you consider to be the most “dangerous” or cause you the most fear?”. In its responses, the sample was able to include *more than one area and up to three (3) areas*. The respondents were all women. The areas declared were coded for better processing in “A”, “B” and so on, in order to be subsequently reflected on the map of the city of Florina. On the map of the city of Florina below, the codes of the areas considered “dangerous” by the participants in the survey were depicted, using the letters “A”, “B”, “C”, etc. The areas coded with the letter “A”, i.e. the Department of Agriculture and the Student Residences and the letter “B”, i.e. the road to the University and its facilities, are located just outside the specific map¹³⁵.

Figure 4: The more “dangerous” areas in the city of Florina



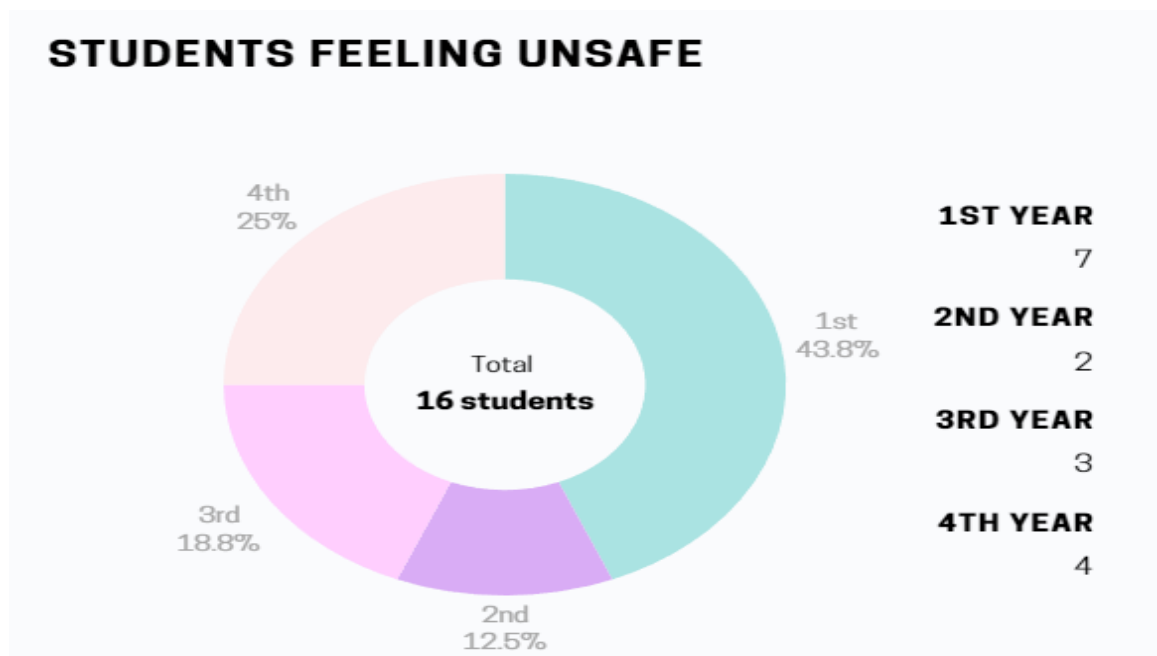
The sixteen participants, who stated that they feel relatively unsafe or very unsafe when walking around after dark in their area of residence in Florina, are *mainly new to the city*, as they are in their first year of studies. The table below (table 5) shows the categorization of the sixteen (16) individuals who reported being unsafe or relatively unsafe, by year of attendance. In the next question of the questionnaire (question 9),

which was again addressed to the people of the sample who stated that they feel relatively unsafe or very unsafe when walking around after night in their area of residence in Florina, they were asked to evaluate *specific factors* in terms of their contribution to the *creation of the feeling of insecurity*. The sample, in particular, was asked to rate all factors mentioned in the questionnaire on a scale of “very”, “quite”, “little” and “not at all”. According to the research data the main factors for which respondents stated that they feel insecure are: the existence of *isolated areas*, the *lack of adequate lighting*, the *indifference of passers-by* and the *use and trafficking of narcotic substances*.

Table 5: Students feeling unsafe per year of study

Year of study	Number of students	Percentage %
1 st	7	43,75
2 nd	2	12,5
3 rd	3	18,75
4 th	4	25

Figure 5: Students feeling unsafe per year of study

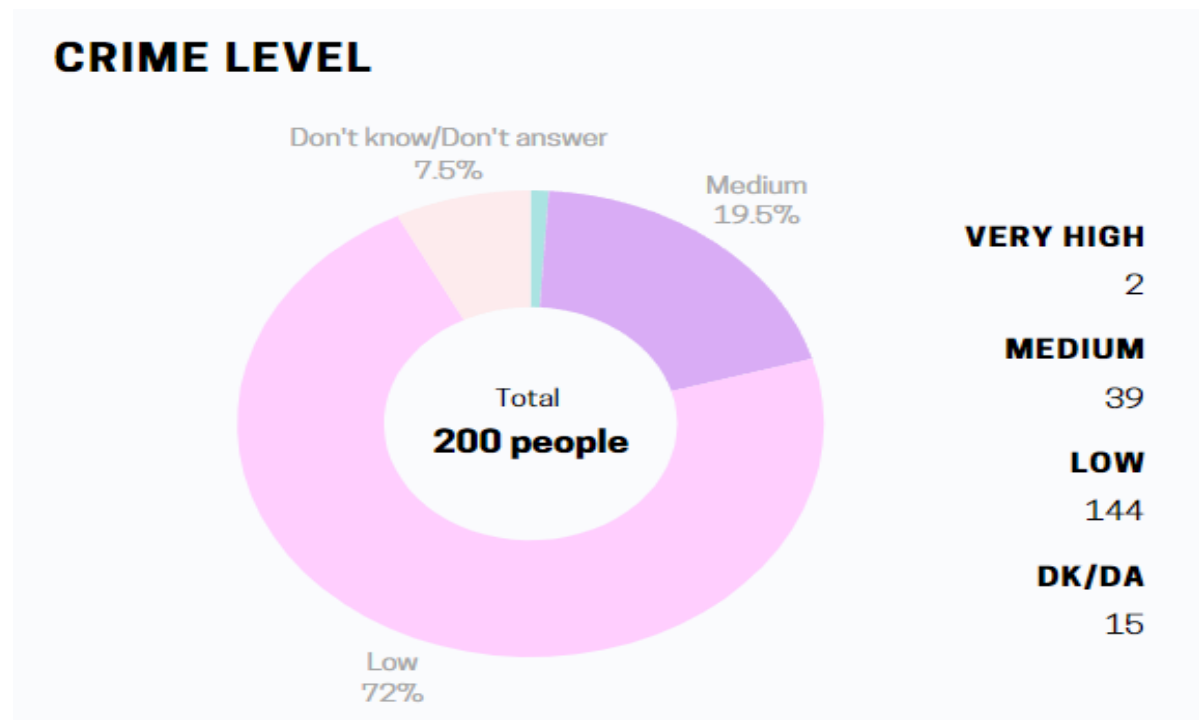


The next question asked for estimates of the extent of crime in the city. The following table and graph show the responses to assess crime levels.

Table 6: Estimation of the extent of crime in the city

Crime level	Number of students	Percentage %
Very high	2	1
Medium	39	19,5
Low	144	72
Don't know / Don't answer	15	7,5

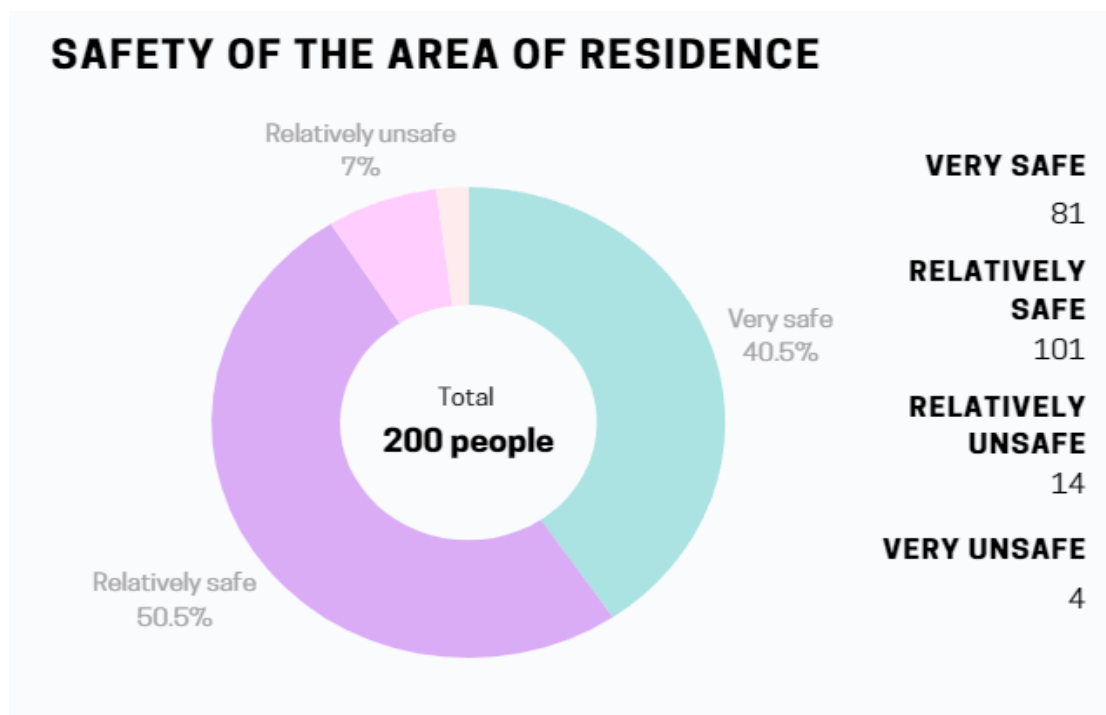
Figure 6: Estimation of the extent of crime in the city



In the next question (question 11) participants were asked to rate their area of residence in the city of Florina on the scale “*very safe*”, “*relatively safe*”, “*relatively unsafe*” and “*very unsafe*”. The table and graph below illustrate the evaluation responses of the sample, which should be underlined that they do not differ substantially from the question about the fear of crime.

Table 7: Safety of the area of residence

Description	Number of students	Percentage %
Very safe	81	40,5
Relatively safe	101	50,5
Relatively unsafe	14	7
Very unsafe	4	2
Don't know/ don't answer	0	0

Figure 7: Safety of the area of residence

Finally, participants were asked to specifically rate the area and facilities of the University, where the Department of Psychology is based, again on the scale “*very safe*”, “*relatively safe*”, “*relatively unsafe*” and “*very unsafe*”. The evaluation responses are *substantially different* from those for the city, with 62 negative vis-a-vis safety issues responses recorded for the University area compared to eighteen 18 for the city area. That is, about *three out of ten* describe the area surrounding the University facilities as “*relatively*” or “*very unsafe*”.

Experience of direct victimization

The third part of the questionnaire contained nine questions (13-19) and addressed the topic of direct victimization experience. In particular, to question 13 “*Have you been a victim of one or more crimes during the past year?*”, a total of 18 people answered positively, *all women*. In the next question (14th) “*If the previous question is answered positively, what was/were these criminal acts?*” the type of crime faced by the 18 women in the sample was recorded. The categorization of people who have been victimized, *per year of study* and *per financial situation* give us the following tables:

Table 8: Victims per year of study

Year of study	Number of students	Percentage %
1 st	2	11,11
2 nd	7	38,89
3 rd	7	38,89
4 th	2	11,11

Table 9: Victims per financial situation

Financial situation	Number of students	Percentage %
Very good	2	11,11
Good	7	38,89
Average	9	50

The location of the crime was investigated in question 15. Twelve of the eighteen crimes were committed in Florina, while the remaining six were committed in another area within Greek territory. In the first case, the place refers mainly to a road in the wider area of the city, while in the second case it was reported that it took place somewhere else within the country.

The reaction and actions of the victims were investigated with the 16th question: “*What were your actions after your victimization?*”. According to the answers, three

victims reported the crime against them to the police, six people reported it to their family, and six people to both the police and their family. Further question 20 evaluated the work of the city police department in relation to tackling crime. 70 students did not provide an answer in this question, probably because they considered that they were not able to form an opinion. From the rest 130 students, 23 (11,5%) considered the police work as very efficient, and 75 (37,5%) evaluated police work as quite efficient. On the other side, the work of the police department was rated as not efficient by 32 students (16%) (a little efficient 12% and not at all efficient 4%).

Attitudes towards formal social control of crime and the scale of crime

The fourth part of the questionnaire contained a total of four questions (20-23) and referred to attitudes towards official social control of crime and the dimensions of crime.

In question 21 respondents were asked to rate specific factors related to their contribution in order to enhance the sense of safety in their place of residence in Florina ("*To what extent do you consider that the following measures enhance the feeling of safety in your place of residence in Florina? Please evaluate all listed measures*"). The table below shows the evaluations of the sample.

Table 10: Proposed measures enhancing the feeling of safety

Measures	Average [1:Very- 4:Not at all]	1:Very	2:Quite	3: A little	4:Not at all
On foot police patrol	2,35	33	90	51	26
Installation of cameras	2,45	45	50	76	29
On-board police patrol	1,93	72	82	34	12

Lighting of public areas	1,75	96	68	26	10
Citizens' information	2,43	40	67	61	32
Patrol from private companies	2,65	28	63	60	49

In the next question, participants were asked their statement on the extent (“very”, “quite”, “a little” or “not at all”) of the enhancement of the mentioned measures, as far as the security in the area of their School in Florina, particularly, is concerned (Question 22: “To what extent do you consider that the following measures enhance security in the area of your School in Florina? Please evaluate all listed measures”). The table below lists the evaluations of the sample.

Table 11: The sample’s evaluations

Measures	Average (1:very-4:not at all)	1: Very	2: Quite	3: A little	4:Not at all
Measures of guarding	2,84	18	22	96	60
Installation of cameras	2,76	58	63	50	66
Better lighting	1,86	61	55	39	37
Information about the establishment of prevention measures	2,25	62	59	14	36
Patrol from private companies	2,76	18	22	96	60
Support providing services	2,05	58	63	50	66

In addition, there were responses that mentioned the increase of the University's bus routes, but also the operation of university police. Finally, in open question 23, participants were asked to record maximum two (2) proposals, for improving the quality of life in the city of Florina. The responses have been categorized and are presented in

the table below.

Table 12: Proposals to improve quality of life in the city

Suggestion	Number of students	Percentage %
Street's lighting	70	39,55
Patrols, policing, mobilization of police (drugs' trafficking, drunk people)	33	18,64
More (and free) bus routes	14	7,9
Mobilization of animal-loving groups or/and by Municipality for the stray animals	7	3,95
Cameras' installation in the streets	5	2,82
More events, variety of stores (deserted city)	17	9,6
Cleaning of sidewalks and streets	5	2,82
Information of citizens for security issues etc., education, provision of help and support	25	14,12
Prohibition of burning wood	1	0,56

Evaluation of the University's services

The fifth and final part of the questionnaire contained five questions (24-28) and referred to the evaluation of the University's services. Participants were asked in relation to the general handling of everyday issues (Question 24: "*How would you evaluate the University's services in relation to the general handling of issues of students' daily lives?*"). The table below illustrates these assessments.

Table 13: University services' rating

Services' evaluation	Number of students	Percentage %
Very efficient	4	2
Quite efficient	55	27,5
A little efficient	95	47,5
Not at all efficient	17	8,5
Don't know/ don't answer	28	14

Subsequently, if question 25 was answered affirmatively, respondents were asked to indicate the areas where the establishment of a university service, providing assistance

and support to victims of crime would be useful. Participants could choose as many listed sectors as they considered important for the above purpose (Question 26: “*If question 25 is answered affirmatively, in what areas they think it would be useful to setup university victim assistance and support service? Please select as many areas as you consider important*”). Other proposals that were also submitted in the same question were: legal support and counseling to victims of crime (1 person), psychological resilience strengthening services (1 person), support groups (1 person) and psychological support (4 people). In the next question, respondents indicated their source of information on the criminal phenomenon. Participants were able to choose as many sources as were applicable to them. The table below shows their responses.

Table 14: Source of information on the criminal phenomenon

Source of information	Number of students
Social environment	156
Online press	160
Radio	15
Social networking media	170
TV	111
Press	21
No source of information	1
Local residents	1

Finally, in the last question of the questionnaire, survey participants were asked for the opinion on whether the mass media in general, present the country's crime in an objective way or not (Question 28). The following table records the responses.

Table 15: Presentation of criminality by mass media

Style of presentation of criminality by mass media	Number of students	Percentage %
More serious than it is	88	44
Just like it is	18	9
Less serious than it is	61	30,5
Don't know/ don't answer	33	16,5

As mentioned above, some variables (questions) were bisected, i.e. two categories were created and then crosses between variables were made. More specifically, the following questions of the questionnaire were divided:

Table 16: Variables that were bisected

No of question	Question	Dichotomous question values
5	“How would you rate your financial situation?”	Good- Bad
6	“How safe do you feel when you walk around your area of residence in Florina after night?”	Security-Insecurity
12	“Please specifically rate the area and facilities of the University - Select one response”	Security-Insecurity
20	“How do you evaluate the work of the city police department in relation to tackling crime? Please select one answer”	Efficient- Inefficient
24	“How would you evaluate the University's services in relation to the general handling of issues of students' daily lives?- Please select one response”	Efficient- Inefficient

These variables cross-checked with each other, but also with other variables, such as gender, years of residence in Florina and age. The crossings carried out in SPSS calculated the index Pearson X^2 . Some of them were statistically significant and only these will be mentioned below. It should be noted that cross-checks were also made with the other demographic variables, i.e. gender, years of residence and age. The following conclusions are drawn from the cross-checks:

§ Those who are in a *better financial situation*, also feel *safer in their residential area*.

§ Those who feel *safer in their residential area* also feel safer in *University premises*.

§ Those who feel safer in *University premises* are of the opinion that *the police are more effective*.

§ Those that are in a *better financial situation* are of the opinion that *the police are more effective*.

§ Those who have been *victims of crime* are of the opinion that *the police are not effective*.

§ Those who feel *safer in the University facilities* have a *good opinion of the University's services*.

§ Those who feel *safer in their residential area* have a *good opinion of the University's services too*.

Conclusions

If there was a need to put a subtitle in our research study, it would be without a doubt: *“Florina – A safe city”*. This is because *only about one in ten* participants in the survey reported feeling *“relatively unsafe”* or *“unsafe”* when walking around during nighttime in the area of their residence in Florina. The few individuals who reported feeling some degree of insecurity were *mainly new residents in the city* as during the survey they were first year students.

The low crime rate for the city of Florina, is eloquently reflected in the evaluations of the sample, according to which, an overwhelming percentage (seven out of ten) of the sample, rates crime levels in the area as *“low”* and *only two* participants rate them as *“very high”*. In fact, taking into account the *gender* of the survey *sample* and the over representation of women in it, the above-mentioned finding on safety in the city is highlighted. As it is well known, according to the lessons of common experience and related research findings (Zarafonitou, 2002), women, i.e. people with reduced physical strength compared to men, who are forced to walk alone at night very often in isolated areas and/or dark streets of a city, experience the fear of crime more intensely than men. This particular clue often emerges in other surveys but *was not highlighted in our own research*.

However, the same picture does not seem to apply in the area and facilities of the *University*, including the location of the Department of Psychology, considering that out of a particularly large percentage of the sample, which exceeds 30%, the area that generally surrounds the facilities of their School was characterized as *“relatively unsafe”* or *“very unsafe”*. Areas which were particularly considered more *“dangerous”* or areas which cause more fear in the sample of our research, and which are located in areas of the UOWM, are the *Department of Agriculture*, the *student dormitories*, the *road to the University* and *its facilities*. From this point of view, it could be validly argued that the fear of crime for research participants is *differentiated locally* in the city-university binary, a specific research finding that should certainly concern all competent authorities and most of all the University Institution itself.

In general, it could be argued that the majority of the findings of this research are to be *expected*, in the sense of its correspondence with findings from relevant research studies on the fear of crime.

In particular, the main factors for which respondents stated that they feel insecure are: the existence of *isolated areas*, the *lack of adequate lighting*, the *indifference of passers-by* and the *use and trafficking of narcotic substances*, which have been repeatedly reported in relevant criminological researches on fear of crime. The responses of the participating students in our survey converge with the answers of the sample of corresponding urban and environmental criminology surveys, which investigate the connection of urban areas dominated by *signs of environmental and social degradation or disorder*, with the fear and insecurity of their inhabitants (Zarafonitou, 2016; Zarafonitou, 2023). The findings of these criminological researches highlight the strong correlation between fear of crime and characteristic elements of degraded areas, such as the existence of isolated areas, insufficient lighting of public spaces and the use and trafficking of narcotic substances, data that were also mentioned in our sample of our own research.

Furthermore, in relation to the direct victimization of the sample¹⁴ in the last year before the survey, most (of the few in each case declared) experiences of the respondents, concern *crimes against property* (petty theft), but also *against individuals* (physical attacks). However, the answers of the sample fall into the category of the so-called *everyday crime* or *street crime*.

The cross-checks recorded the well-known finding from other victimization surveys of the *crisis of confidence in the criminal justice system* and in particular in the *ineffectiveness of the police* in dealing with crime, given that those who were victims of a crime additionally argued that the police are not effective in their preventive and repressive work.

Examining the place of direct victimization experience of the sample, it was found that in the few cases (18 in total) where such experience was reported, in a fairly *large percentage*, these criminal acts did *not take place in the area of Florina* (either in the city in general or at the university), but in some other area within the Greek territory. In particular, twelve of the eighteen reported criminal acts were committed in Florina, and mainly on a city street, but *the remaining six took place outside Florina*, in another area, but within Greek territory.

The high proportion of respondents reporting crimes committed against them to the

¹⁴According to Zarafonitou “*There is a great scientific debate about the relationship of the previous experience of victimization with the feeling of fear and insecurity. The research findings do not show uniformity in this case, while they distinguish according to the type of crime*”, see Zarafonitou, C. (2023). *Empirical Criminology*, *ibid*, pp. 277-278, where the findings of victimization research at the international, European and national level are cited (pp. 278 et seq.).

police should also be highlighted, given that the majority of victims of our survey reported the crime against *them either only to the police, or to both the police and their families.*

In the same context, the survey sample evaluated positively, the *city's police department* as “*very effective*” or “*quite effective*”. Nevertheless, it should be noted that a high percentage of *ignorance/non-response* of the sample is recorded for the effectiveness or not of the police department. In any case, however, the recorded positive assessment, contradicts the stated great dissatisfaction of victims who complained about the response of the police in recent Greek research experiences. In this case the sample included residents of the capital and Piraeus (Zarafonitou, 2023: 281).

However, the findings that emerge *from the evaluation of the sample of services provided by the University in relation to the general handling of issues of its daily life are also important.* In particular, only four participants rated university services as “*very effective*”, while *more than half* of the survey participants rated them as “*little*” or “*not at all effective*”.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, those who feel *safer near the University premises* have a *good opinion of the University's services*, just as those who feel *safer near their home* have a *good opinion of the University's services, as well.*

In addition, the participants consider it useful *to set up a university service to help and support victims of crime*, which they consider important for a variety of objectives and purposes. In particular, such a university service will primarily be important for reporting crimes against them, but also for reducing the victim's feeling of insecurity, informing them of their rights and protecting them from further victimization.

The preference of the participants for forms of crime prevention, which are part of the so-called *situational crime prevention*¹⁵, is also highlighted through the positive evaluation of

¹⁵ The opportunity reduction model, very often in the international literature is also referred to as the situational crime prevention model. These are community prevention measures, mainly of a technical nature, which are directly related to urban planning and spatial planning. This standard is based on target hardening and opportunity reduction (Spinellis, 1982:105 et seq.; Alexiadis, 1994:18). The studies of the *Oscar Newman* and *C. Ray Jeffery* are considered to be catalysts for the formulation of the positions of this crime prevention direction and mainly of the crime prevention policy through environmental design (crime prevention through environmental design), while as a precursor of the positions of the situational crime prevention is considered *Enrico Ferri*, whose relevant study at the beginning of the last century significantly influenced the science of Criminology, while the crime prevention function of adequate street lighting was particularly emphasized in his work. However, the work of Oscar Newman and his theoretical conceptual construction of defensible space is considered the fundamental theoretical background for the model of situational crime prevention, as it appears mainly with the practice of

specific factors that, in their opinion, enhance their feeling of safety in their place of residence in the *city* of Florina. In particular, *adequate lighting of public spaces* is mentioned as such a factor (Spinellis, 1992:516; Courakis, 2023: 32-33), in the largest percentage of the sample. In the same context, the best lighting of the area, especially of their School, is considered by the sample to be the measure that enhances their sense of safety. The contribution of lighting an area to the emergence of fear of victimization by its inhabitants has been repeatedly highlighted: in areas with poor or non-existent lighting, there is a strong element of lack of control and surveillance, resulting in citizens feeling more vulnerable to any criminal act against them and therefore avoid moving in such areas¹⁶. Relevant criminological research has proven the positive influence - sometimes large and sometimes small-of illuminating an area on preventing and reducing crime (Skandamis, 2006: 99-100).

In addition to adequate lighting, high percentages were also recorded for the on-board police patrol, for the establishment and operation of a *support service* and for *informing* the student population *about taking crime prevention measures*.

The sample's proposals *for improving their quality of life in the city* primarily include *adequate street lighting, targeted policing with patrols to tackle drug trafficking*, as well as persons under *the influence of alcohol and informing citizens about safety issues* and finally *providing assistance and support to victims of crime*.

A particularly negative element is the evaluation of the university's services in relation to *the general handling of issues of the daily life* of the student population. The majority of survey participants rate these services negatively, claiming that they are “*little*” or “*not at all effective*” (112 participants in total).

The creation of a *university service providing assistance and support to victims of crime, according to the survey participants*, would be particularly important in reporting general issues/reporting crimes, reducing the victim's feeling of insecurity, informing victims' rights and protecting victims from further victimization.

Regarding the information of the participants in the survey in relation to the criminal

(re)designing the urban environment (Newman, 1972; Jeffery, 1971; Crowe, 1991; Zarafonitou, 1996: 807; Alexiadis, 1989: 414 et seq.).

¹⁶ As Skandamis states: “*the light undoubtedly enhances the possibility of surveillance... it creates a sense of security for road users and deters offenders*”, see Skandamis, M. (2006). “Street lighting as a means of crime prevention”, *ibid*, pp. 97-98.

phenomenon, their main sources are mainly social media, but also the online press, the social environment and television¹⁷. It should be noted, however, that for the participants, the way crime is presented by the media *largely lacks credibility and objectivity*, because for most, the crime is presented either more serious than it is, or less serious than it actually is.

Moreover, the examination of the family income of the sample in relation to their expressed safety and their assessment of the effectiveness of the police showed that the participants who are in a *better financial situation*, feel *safer* near their home, on the one hand and also, have the opinion that the *police is more effective*, on the other hand.

Epilogue

The consequences of committing a crime, especially one with elements of violence (e.g. assault), are particularly unpleasant. In cases of sudden shocking events associated with the commission of a crime, particular psychological effects on humans are recorded, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (Norris, et. al., 1997; Scott & Palmer, S., 2003). As has been aptly pointed out, in addition to increasing the fear of crime “*it causes distress and psychological distress, as well as the tendency to avoid people or areas where the victim may suffer new attacks (avoidance behaviour) ... and the feeling of insecurity is strengthened within him and gradually he begins to be possessed by distrust towards social groups that he believes may target him (again)*” (Zarafonitou & Courakis, 2023: 28).

The role of fear of crime continues to this day to occupy an important place in the management of the urban environment and the problems that arise in it (Zarafonitou, 1989:145; Zarafonitou, 1993:33; Zarafonitou, 2006:1035). The fear of crime as a serious social problem with direct consequences on individual and social level (Zarafonitou, 2023:18) occupies a central place in the issue of crime prevention in urban environments and is an issue to be solved as much as the crime itself (Ito, 1995:151 et seq.; Vidali, 2000:54; Panousis, 2003:102;

¹⁷ According to a survey carried out in 2006 under the scientific supervision of Professor *Christina Zarafonitou* and Professor *Nestor Courakis*, with a sample of residents of the Greek capital, the people who mentioned television as their main source of information about the criminal phenomenon, show a greater tendency towards punitiveness and a preference for the imposition of repressive measures for dealing with crime (8,018 times) in relation to the people who mentioned the social environment as their main source of information. 50% of the people who took part in the survey mentioned television as their main source of information about crime (Zarafonitou, 2008: 131). See, also Alexiadis, 1994a; Zarafonitou, 1995; Lambropoulou, 1996; Alexiadis, 1999; Panousis, 2004.

Zarafonitou, 2006:1038; Lee, 2004:34). In this context, the “*quality of life policy*” followed since the 1990s in Europe and in which the proposed and implemented measures of the State focus on the immediate local environment and the local community, even at neighborhood level (Zarafonitou et. al., 2022d), acquires particular importance and importance in the field of crime prevention policy and even more so in the context of tackling the fear of crime (Van der Vijver, 2004:37 et. seq.; Zarafonitou, 2013:39-40).

In the case of our country, the paradox has been demonstrated, that while according to official statistics Greece ranks at the bottom of the European Union countries in terms of crime and its indicators, at the same time Greeks feel more insecure than other Europeans and hold the first place on the issue of insecurity¹⁸. This paradox is known in the science of criminology as a phenomenon called the “*paradox of irrationality*”, according to which “*people are vulnerable to the fear of crime much more than they are actually at risk from crime or, at any rate, much more than such a fear is justified if their personal experiences as victims are taken into account*” (Zarafonitou & Courakis, 2023: 29)¹⁹. Besides, according to the findings of the European Social Survey of 2010, the rates of fear of crime, which negatively affect the quality of life, are particularly high for our country, given that Greece along with Lithuania and Slovakia is among the three countries with the highest rates²⁰.

It has already been mentioned that the municipal authority of Florina has not established a Local Council for the Prevention of Delinquency in its territorial competence,

¹⁸ According to the European Victimization Survey (2005), the average level of satisfaction of residents of European capitals with the work of their police in preventing and suppressing crime is particularly high (72%). The most satisfied are the residents of Helsinki and Edinburgh (9 out of 10), at the same time that the Athenians are the most dissatisfied, given that half express their dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of the Hellenic Police. See Zarafonitou, 2022c; Zarafonitou, 2023c.

¹⁹ See also, Clemente & Kleiman, 1977: 519 et seq.; Braungart et. al., 1980: 55 et seq.; Garofalo, 1981: 839 et seq.; Skogan, 1990:49, 67-69; Pitsela, 1991:744; Pitsela, 1991a: 260; Coumarelos & Allen, 1999:13; Zarafonitou, 2006:1031; Conklin, 1976: 99; Yin, 1980: 492; Yin, 1982: 240-245; Goodey, 1997: 401 et. seq.; Ditton, 2000: 699; Zarafonitou, 2023: 266. On the other hand, empirical research results have been proved that the expressed fear of crime should not be treated as a criminological paradox or as an unjustified reaction without a logical explanation. As empirically proven, there is a strong positive relationship between victimization indicators and fear of crime, with the result that a real reduction in victimization indicators ultimately implies a reduction in fear of crime (Balkin, 1979; Hartnagel, 1979; Lewis & Maxfield, 1980; Gottfredson, 1981; Janssen et. al., 1981; Lahaye et. al., 1981; Lindquist & Duke, 1982; Stafford & Galle, 1984; Young, 1995).

²⁰ Zarafonitou, C. (2023). *Empirical Criminology*, ibid, p. 285. Moreover, in the European Victimization Survey (EUICS) of 2004-2005, in which Greece also participated, the victimization of the Greek sample (in the specific types of criminal acts examined) amounted to 12.3%, while the European average was 14.9%, see Zarafonitou, C., ibid, p. 39.

while the institution of the Neighborhood Police Officer, as is the case throughout the country, has been unjustifiably weakened and is not implemented by the local police authorities.

However, as has been repeatedly highlighted in the criminological literature, empirical research and international experience, the role of local government plays an important role in upgrading the quality of life of citizens and especially in preventing minor crime but also in tackling the phenomenon of fear of crime (Kontopoulou & Karagiannidis, 2022; Karagiannidis, 2023). In particular, community forms of prevention of crime and fear of crime (Zarafonitou, 2019), as implemented in the form of the institution of both the Local Councils for Crime Prevention (LCCPs)²¹ and the institution of the Neighborhood Police Officer (NPO)²², i.e. with the participation of the local community in crime preventive actions within the framework of a participatory crime prevention policy (Zarafonitou, 2003; Courakis, 2007; Karagiannidis, 2011) and social prevention and social solidarity measures, offer promising prospects for tackling both small and medium-sized crime and fear of victimization (Karagiannidis, 2014). It has been highlighted and confirmed by criminological research that “*citizens who feel the most fear is also the most dissatisfied with police work and are the ones who seek greater policing*” (Zarafonitou, 2023: 280). Especially, it has emerged that police should be “*present, willing, effective and accepted by the community*” (Zarafonitou, 2023: 280), elements that make up the so-called *proximity policing*.

The formulation and implementation of a rational and effective crime prevention policy should combat the exploitation of the fear of crime and the inexpensive and ultimately ineffective punitive practices of dealing with crime (Garland, 2000; Vidali, 2001;

²¹ Based in European experience we know that the institution of Local Crime Prevention Councils has been successfully implemented in many countries and has really paid off in the area of crime prevention. The institution of Local Crime Prevention Councils operates successfully based on a prevention policy aiming to the partnership and cooperation of all institutions and agencies active in the field of crime prevention (Papatheodorou, 2002; Symeonidou – Kastanidou, 2003; Zarafonitou, 2003a; Karagiannidis, 2011:235 et seq.; Karagiannidis, 2020: 387-406; Pitsela & Karagiannidis, 2020; Pitsela & Karagiannidis, 2020a; Pitsela & Karagiannidis, 2022; Karagiannidis, 2022; Courakis, 2023:31).

²² It should be emphasized that both in the case of the Local Councils for Crime Prevention and in the case of the Neighborhood Police Officer, among all their declared legislative goals is the reduction of insecurity. Zarafonitou, C. (2019). “Community forms of crime and fear of crime prevention: Local Prevention Councils - Neighborhood Police Officer”, *ibid*, p. 46. See also the suggestion of Professor *Christina Zarafonitou*, Coordinator of the Special Committee for the study, processing and submission of proposals regarding the improvement of the role and work of the Neighborhood Police Officer of the Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction (2015) at the event for the Neighborhood Police Officer in the Municipality of Kallithea (Athens) in Davaki Square with the title “*Come and meet your Neighborhood Policeman*” (15-6-2015), available for viewing at the link: youtu.be/PZ5NzGF9uMc (date of last access: 16-12-2023).

Karagiannidis, 2010; Zarafonitou, 2023). It is now an acquisition of our criminological knowledge to recognize that actions to prevent crime and the complex phenomenon of fear of crime are not the exclusive domain of the police and the criminal justice system in general²³, but that the contribution of the local community itself and its members is also crucial (Spinellis, 1982:252 et. seq.; Tsitsoura, 1988:32 et seq.; Alexiadis, 2004:289). It is precisely in the context of this recognition that the State generally does not always have the most appropriate means for the most effective and qualitative distribution and provision of services that it finances and that crime prevention as specific service provided is no exception to this finding (Karagiannidis, 2016, 2018). To this end, the prerequisite for an effective crime prevention policy is now recognized as being, on the one hand, the stimulation of citizens' confidence in the criminal justice system and, on the other hand, their active participation, with specific terms and conditions, in the formulation and implementation of crime prevention planning²⁴.

According to empirical studies that have examined the relationship between fear of crime and public trust in the police, *“the public perceives the police as the bearer of community values, charged with solving everyday problems and strengthening social order. So, to increase public confidence in the police and reduce the fear of crime, the police must act as an active member of the community, representing and defending its values and rules”*²⁵. In this context, community policing rightly occupies a central place today in the issue of crime prevention and in addressing the fear of crime. As a form of policing in particular, it is based precisely on the idea of local community cooperation and aims *not only at statistically reducing crime rates but also at improving the quality of life of citizens*. Stimulating the social relations of the members

²³ Farsedakis, J. (1991). *The social reaction to crime and its limits*. Athens: Nomiki Vivliothiki, pp. 245-246, where it is aptly underlined that: *“How is it really possible to solve an eminently social phenomenon, such as the criminal, that it is possible and feasible only or mainly through the use of the criminal justice system, through of a simply “correctly” and “fairly” measured penalty? Crime is the response of a given personality to a given situation. As long as the situation is not even treated, but the effort is focused on the “proper” handling of the personality, it is certain that no positive result can be expected”*.

²⁴Zarafonitou, C. (2019). “Community forms of crime prevention and the fear of crime: Local Prevention Councils - Neighborhood Police”, *ibid*, where there is also an in-depth reference to the cases of Local Crime Prevention Councils and Neighborhood Police. After all, the public's preference for this form of policing has been shown time and time again; the citizen wants a police that will always be available and will respond quickly and adequately to the emergency situations he faces, will have easy and unhindered access to services, the police will generally be visible and accessible to him. Citizens want to have a police station in their area, they want to know the policemen even by their name; from the pilot, at times, applications of the institution of the neighborhood policeman in our country, its general acceptance by the local communities has been confirmed.

²⁵ Zarafonitou, C. (2023). *Empirical Criminology*, *ibid*, p. 282, citing the findings of two studies conducted by Jackson, Bradford, Hohl and Farral (2009).

of a local community can lead to improved cooperation with the police and, at the same time, to improved informal social control with substantial crime prevention effects and a greater sense of security for citizens²⁶.

In the same direction, the creation and operation of adequate support and assistance mechanisms for victims of crime can help to alleviate their vulnerability, increase their confidence in the criminal justice system and, ultimately, mitigate their insecurity (Zarafonitou, 2014:130; Andrianakis, 1997:11).

The aim of a rational, long-term and ultimately effective crime prevention policy is not simply to manage the crime problem, manage the risks and instill a sense of security in citizens. Crime prevention policy is not (can be) just a security policy (Zarafonitou, 2003:1572). Crime prevention policy must study the effects of crime (victimization, fear of crime, the cost of dealing with crime), but the search for, identification and solution of the problems that act as crime generators is of prime importance (Zarafonitou, 2018:1099; Karagiannidis, 2021). Therefore, strategies to reduce fear of crime, which focus on the immediate environment in which citizens who express fear of crime reside, should focus on addressing not only crime and disorder, but also broader existing problems related to the social organization and stability of local society²⁷.

In conclusion, the adoption, implementation and regular evaluation of the so-called quality of life policies in cities in the form of participatory crime prevention policy (Zarafonitou, 2022: 2) is a one-way street for our country, as is the case at European level. As has been aptly pointed out, “*victimization is of interest to criminology from the point of view of prevention, social peace and security is also of interest to the community as directly responsible for maintaining close primary relationships*” (Panousis & Dimopoulos, 1994: 7).

²⁶ Zarafonitou, C. (2019). “Community forms of crime prevention and the fear of crime: Local Prevention Councils - Neighborhood Police”, *ibid*, p. 44, where reference is also made to the case of France and the establishment of a new police force five years ago (2018), under the name “*la police de sécurité du quotidien*” (“everyday security police”), which aims on the one hand to deal with real and perceived insecurity and, on the other hand, to stimulate the population's trust in the police and the work and implements targeted crime prevention actions that are adapted to citizens' expectations and the particular needs of each region.

²⁷ Zarafonitou, C., Courakis, N. (2008). “The fear of crime in modern Greek society and the trends of tightening criminal repression - Findings of a joint investigation by the MA Program in Criminology of Panteion University and the Criminal and Criminological Research Laboratory of the University of Athens”. *Poinikos Logos*, vol. 5, pp. 1007-1015, where the concluding remark: “*Therefore, it is necessary to promote a rational, but above all dispassionate, crime prevention policy in order to eliminate the social factors that lead to crime and in this direction criminological research can manifold contribute*” (p. 1015).

In this respect, it is a duty of the science of Criminology to promote and work towards the realization of the effective participation of the local community in the formulation and implementation of crime prevention policy at the local level, in order to achieve a truly participatory consultation and the emergence of key ideas for collaborative social action to tackle crime at the local level (Zarafonitou, 2003). Developing crime prevention activities in the local community, after all, doesn't mean much. Participatory crime prevention policy means developing actions in the local community in cooperation with the local community (Karagiannidis, 2011: 36). As Zarafonitou concludes, the fear of crime “*should be addressed scientifically, without demagogy and populism and through the adoption of immediate measures, where necessary, but mainly through the implementation of medium/long-term policies to prevent and address its generating factors*” (Zarafonitou, 2023:18).

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