

## **Experiences with crime and feelings of insecurity in Linz and Ljubljana: A test of cognitive theory of fear of victimization**

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The article presents an empirical examination of the cognitive theory of fear of crime, which strives to bring into line contradictory results on the relationship between personal victimization and fear of crime. Its main idea is a process of compensation between two cognitions: the perception of personal risk and the perception of the seriousness of the consequences of potential victimization. If personal victimization leads to an adjustment of exaggerated consequence expectations to a less painful reality – to a decrease of perceived negative impact – this could cancel out the fear-enhancing effects of an increase of perceived victimization risk. If no reassessment of the consequences associated with victimization takes place, personal victimization should generate more fear of crime, mediated only by higher perceived risk. Based on survey data from Austria and Slovenia, structural equation models are evaluated. The results of a study conducted in Linz, Austria and Ljubljana, Slovenia suggest rejecting many core assumptions of the “theory of psychological incapacitation”. In particular, no evidence for a decrease of perceived negative impact after personal victimization could be found.

**Key words:** fear of crime, victimization, cognitive theory, research, Slovenia, Austria

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