Fear of crime and victimization of South East Asians in South Africa.

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Abstract

This paper looks at expressed fear of crime and the self-reported victimization of South East Asians who reside in South Africa. The study is unique in that it examines fear of crime and victimization in a single minority population in a single country. This study compares 102 identified persons of South East Asian origin and compares them to other South African respondents. Besides fear of crime and reported victimization, this study's measures included various social, demographic, perception and environmental measures. Among these measures are availability of police stations, police visibility and perceptions of police corruption, trust of the police, and other South Africans, relatives, and neighbors. While a number of statistically significant differences were found at the bi-variate level between South East Asians and all other South Africans, most of these, including fear of crime, disappeared in the studies logistical regression analysis. Factors which did predict differences between South East Asians and other South Africans were perceptions that their ethnic group was treated unfairly, the absence of a police station in their area, age, poverty, trust of neighbors as well as being the victim of a violent crime. The discussion addresses the policy implications of the findings.

Introduction

There is a growing research literature devoted to the fear of crime which signifies its importance in most areas of the world. Literature reviews such as those conducted by Hale (1996) and Farrall et al. (2009) tend to be based on national and international crime victim surveys. These surveys show that a wide range of survey populations demonstrate at least some degree of fear of crime and South Africa has been one of those countries. With a population of about 54 million people, South Africa is home to people of diverse origins, cultures, languages, as well as religions. The last census, conducted in 2011, revealed that South Africa is also home to an estimated 5 million illegal immigrants including some 3 million Zimbabweans. (Statistics South Africa, 2013), Census takers asked people to describe themselves in terms of five racial population groups. The figures for these groups were Black Africans at 79.2%, White at 8.9%, Coloured at 8.9%, Indian or Asian at 2.5%, and Other/Unspecified at 0.5%.

History of South East Asians in South Africa.

The majority of South East Asians in South Africa are descendants of Indians who came to South Africa during late 19th-century and early 20th-century. The majority of South East Asians are urban dweller and live in and around the city of Durban, making it 'the largest 'Indian' city outside India; 24 percent of the city's residents were Indian in the 2011census (Durban, Wikipedia, 2015). At times Indians were subsumed in the broader geographical category "Asians", including persons originating in present-day Iran and parts of the small Chinese community.
Since Apartheid ended, there has been a great deal of attention given to emigration of white people (Van Rooyen, 2000). and because of what is called the "brain drain" (Hagopian et al., 2004) Except for publications which target South East Asians, especially Indians, South East Asians have not been included in that discussion. However, according to Shah (2012), two decades after the historic abolishment of apartheid in South Africa, the promise of a new era has remained just that for Indians, a promise.

The discrimination, subjugation, and harassment Indians and other South East Asians faced in a past dominated by white supremacy has been replaced by discrimination in an inequitable affirmative action system that ends up benefiting the indigenous black population at the expense of other racial groups. That coupled with South Africa's status as one of the most crime-infested countries in the world has made life bleak for many of the nation's 1.2 million Indians. According to Shah they live in a cloud of perpetual fear—both for their personal safety as well as for their prospects in a young democracy where the majority black population is struggling to chart out a course after having been cowed for so many years. This has meant that many Indians, who have the means to, are fleeing the country they have called their own for generations.

Xenophobia has also been a major topic about majority-minority populations in South Africa. (see Kersting , 2009) A host of papers has looked at migration intentions (Drinkwater and Ingram, 2008; Epstein and Gang, 2006; Lam, 2000; Manski (1990) has questioned the general use of migration intentions data as a proxy for actual migration, but emigration intentions have been shown to be a good predictor of future actual emigration behaviour (see, for example, van Dalen and Henkens, 2008).

Fear of Crime in South Africa

South Africa has a fairly constant source of data regarding fear of crime, namely the National Victims of Crime Surveys (NVCS), conducted in 1998, 2003, 2007, and in 2010. In an earlier paper, Mistry (2003) showed that crime in South Africa had declined from 1998 through October 2003; however, respondents felt less safe. In the 2003 survey, 23 percent felt safe walking alone at night in their area compared to 58 percent in 1998. More than half of South Africans felt that crime had increased in the areas where they live over the past three years. The 2007 NVCS (O'Donovan, 2008) revealed that the gap between the levels of crime reflected in official statistics, which had continued to decline, and public perceptions of crime levels which had continued to increase. The 2010 Victims of Crime Survey (Victims of Crime Survey, 2011) showed that more than 40 percent of households believed the level of both violent and non-violent crime had decreased in their area from 2008 to 2010. Less than 30 percent thought crime had increased. One-third of households (33.3 percent) avoided going to open spaces alone because of fear of crime, 22.2 percent of households would not allow their children to move around unsupervised by an older person or to play freely in their areas, and 14.7 percent would not permit their children to walk to school alone. One other issue was personal fear of selected crimes, with violent crimes, murder assaults, and others most feared by both genders.

Police response time and police visibility were two issues raised in the in the 2010 VOCS and both are relevant here. Respondents in South Africa were asked about the visibility of the police in their area. Although almost 80 percent of surveyed households were satisfied with the police in their service area, police response time and police visibility were two issues that generated negative responses from those surveyed, for instance, "they do not come in our area" or "they are lazy"., When respondents were asked about traveling time to the nearest police station, 66.4 percent indicated it would take 30 minutes or less. This is important because police response time has been a continuing complaint in the NVCS since they began.

It should be noted that this study uses two of the common measures used to assess fear of crime, walking in the neighborhood, and fear of being alone at home or in an apartment. These measures and findings will be returned to below. The final issue was personal fear of selected crimes, with violent crimes, murder, assaults, and others most feared by both genders. This paper will assess the extent to which South East Asians actually live in fear of crime, the extent to which they are crime victims and their perceptions of their social and environmental settings.

The Study

Methods

The Data Source is Afrobarometer, a comparative series of public attitude surveys that was conducted in 34 African countries in Round 5 (2011-2013). The Project's objectives are as follows: 1) to produce scientifically reliable data on public opinion in sub-Saharan Africa; 2) to strengthen institutional capacity for survey research in Africa; and 3) to broadly disseminate and apply survey results to Africa. Begun in 1999, five rounds of the survey have been completed; South Africa was included in all five waves, as well as a special survey conducted in 2004.. The most recent survey, Round 5 was conducted in October and November, 2011 and released in 2013.

Based on representative national samples, the surveys assess citizen attitudes to democracy and governance, markets, and civil society, among other topics. The Survey consisted of face-to-face Interviews completed by 2,399 citizens of South Africa, 18 years of age or older; interviews were conducted in thirteen different languages.

The sampling frame included all nine South African provinces, and the final sample supports estimates to the national population of all adults in South Africa that is accurate to within a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points at a confidence level of 95 percent. The sampling procedures used in all of the Afrobarometer surveys are explained in detail in Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi (2005).

The Dependent Variable

South East Asian origin is this study's dependent variable. One question asked the respondent's race and possible responses were as follows: 1) Black /Africa ; 2) White/European ;3) Coloured/ Mixed race ; 4 Arab/Lebanese/North African ; 5) South Asian/ (Indian, Pakistani, etc.) ;6)East Asian (Chinese, Korean, Indonesian, etc.) and 7) Other. These racial categories are utilized to display the samples breakdowns on demographic factors, and then recoded as South Asian (1) and all others (0). This dichotomous variable was created in order to provide the basis for the cross-tabulation and logistical regression analysis utilized in this study.

Independent Variable

The questionnaire included a number of single items which generated the study's demographic independent variables, like gender, age, residence (rural-urban), employment status, and education level. Others included trust of the police, other people the respondent knew, relatives, neighbors, and foreigners living in South Africa

This study utilized a poverty scale, referred to as Lived Poverty, used in the Afrobarometer studies which was adopted from Mattes et al. (2003). The questions included were factor scaled, scale scores were calculated and assigned to each respondent; The Questions which generated the scale were: over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without the following; enough food to eat; enough clean water for home use; without medical care; enough fuel to cook your food and a cash income. This scale's reliability Coefficient was .83 (Cronback's Alpha). As indicated above, the control variables listed in Table 1were measured by a single item, like age, and were collapsed into fewer categories. Other variables were also measured by single items, including the fear of crime in the home and walking in the neighborhood as well as property crime victimization. Fixed categories were provided for a question which asked whether the respondent thought the government treated his or her ethnic group fairly; these ranged from never to always. Others, like the presence of a police station in the respondent's local area and whether police were visible in the local area were recorded by the interviewer and supplemented/checked by the interviewer's supervisor.

Results

The first task in the analysis was to compare the South East Asian sub-sample with the rest of the South African sample. These results appear in Table 1, which also shows whether there was statistical significance on that item between the two groups.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the South African Sample Broken down by racial group (N=2,399)

	South East Asian (N=102)	All other respondents (N=2297)		
	N (%)	N (%)	Total N (%)	__P__
Residence				
Urban	100 (98)	1,512 (66)	1, 612 (67)	.000
Rural	2 (2)	781 (34)	783 (33)	
Gender				
Male	49 (48)	1,150 (50)	1,199 (50)	.69
Female	53 (52)	1,147 (50)	1,200 (50)	
Age				
18 through 29	26 (26)	788 (35)	814 (35)	.001
30 thru 49	34 (33)	914 (40)	948 (40)	
50 and over	42 (41)	557 (25)	599 (25)	
Employment				
Unemployed	57 (56)	1,461 (64)	1,518 (63)	.000
Work part-time	7 (7)	203 (9)	210 (9)	
Work full-time	37 (37)	629 (27)	666 (28)	
Education				
None	3 (3)	94 (4)	97 (4)	N/A
Primary school	19 (18)	401 (18)	420 (18)	
High school	66 (65)	1,453 (63)	1,519 (63)	
Post -secondary	11 (11)	260 (11)	271 (11)	
University	3 (3)	86 (4)	89(4)	

Table 1 shows that the study's South East Asian population is overwhelmingly urban, 98 percent. They are also older, with 41 percent over 50 years of age, compared to 25 percent of the rest of the sample. South East Asians had a higher rate of persons employed full-time. 37 percent, compared to 27 percent of other South Africans. The educational levels of the two groups were almost identical, with 2 percent the greatest difference to be found at any educational attainment level.

The next task was to compare the rest of the study's independent variables again with South East Asians compared to all other respondents. These results appear in Table 2.

Table 2, Study independent variables broken-down by racial group (N=2.399)

| | Victim of Violent Crime | | | |
| | South East Asian | All other respondents | | |
Variable	Yes (%)	NO (%)	Total (%)	P value
Property crime victim				
Yes	39 (38)	572 (25)	611 (25)	.00
No	63 (62)	1,725 (75)	1, 788 (75)	
Violent Crime victim				
Yes	19 (19)	240 (10)	259 (11)	.01
No	83 (81)	2,057 (90)	2,140 (89)	
Police station in area				
Yes	34 (33)	1 178 (51)	1,212 (51)	.00
No	68 (67)	1,111 (49)	1,179 (49)	
Police Visible in area				
Yes	33 (32).	1,083 (47)	1,116 (47)	. .00
No	69 (68)	1,214 (53)	1,293 (53)	
Fear of crime-walking				
Yes	**71 (70)**	**1,299 (57)**	**1,370 (57)**	**.01**
No	**31 (30)**	**995 (43)**	**1,026 (43)**	
Fear of crime-home				
Yes	62 (61)	1,159 (51)	1,221 (51)	.04
No	40 (39)	1,134	1,174 (49)	
Ethnic group treated unfairly				
Never	26 (31)	1,204 (59)	1,230 (58)	.00
Sometimes, often, always	58 (69)	828 (41)	886 (42)	
Other people you know can be trusted				
Yes	23 (23)	519 (23)	542(23)	.96
No	79 (77)	1,761 (77)	1,840 (77)	
Trust relatives				
Yes	90 (88)	2,157 (94)	2,247 (94)	.01
No	12 (12)	131 (6)	143 (6)	
Trust Neighbors				
Yes	81 (79)	1,996 (87)	2,077 (87)	.02
No	21 (21)	289 (13)	310 (13)	
Trust foreigners living in South Africa				
Yes	26 (26)	748 (33)	774 (33)	.15
No	74 (74)	1,529 (67)	1,603 (67)	
Trust the police				
Yes	**77 (78)**	**1,902 (83)**	**1,979 (83)**	**.14**
No	**22 (22)**	**377 (17)**	**399 (17)**	
Paid Bribe to police				
Yes	**3 (3)**	**149 (7)**	**152 (6)**	**.15**
No	**149 (7)**	**2,135 (93)**	**2,234 (94)**	
People tried to extort money				
Yes	9 (10)	225 (11)	234 (11)	.82
No	**83 (90)**	**1,909 (89)**	**1,992 (89)**	

Table 2 reveals that there were statistically significant differences between South East Asians and the rest of the sample in terms of fear of crime, victimization, and some of the perception indicators, trust issues and others.

There were significant differences in fear of crime, with 70 percent of South East Asians reporting fear walking in the neighborhood and 61 percent reporting fear at home. Those numbers compared to 57 and 51 percent respectively for the rest of the sample. In terms of the victim indicators, 38 percent of the South East Asians reported being a property crime victim and 19 percent reported violent crime victimization. These statistics compare to 25 percent and 10 percent respectively for the rest of the sample.

The police related measures were not as clear. The physical aspects of police services were significant, with 33 percent of South East Asians living in an area with a police station. This compared to 51 percent of all other respondents living in an area with a police station. Police were less visible in areas where South East Asians lived, visible on the streets of where 32 percent of South East Asians lived, compared to 47 percent of other South African residents. There were no significant differences between respondent trust of the police or the payment of bribes to the police by South East Asians and the rest of the sample.

The results for the other trust measures were mixed. There was no significant difference regarding whether other people the respondent knew could be trusted, or whether foreigners living in South Africa could be trusted. There were significant differences in the trust placed in neighbors or relatives. The rest of the sample was more likely to trust relatives, 94 percent compared to 88 percent, and more likely to trust neighbors, 87 compared to 79 percent. There was no difference reported by South East Asians and the rest of the sample regarding whether more powerful people tried to extort money from them. The final issue in Table 2 was whether the respondent perceived that the government treated their ethnic group more unfairly than others, South East Asians felt this was the case, in that 69 percent chose sometimes, often or always as their response to this item, compared to 41 percent of all other respondents. This item will be discussed in more detail below.

The final step in the analysis was to conduct a logistical regression analysis which treated all of the items included in Tables 1 and 2 as independent variables. These results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.   Logistic Regression: South East Asian

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	z	P
Ethnic group treated fairly	1.19	.28	4.43	.00
Police station in area	- 1.15	.32	-3.59	.00
Trust neighbors	-.28	.10	-2.78	.01
Age	.49	.17	2.79	.00
Poverty	-.11	.04	-2.62	.00
Violent crime victim	.82	,35	2.31	.02
Trust foreigners	-.52	.31	- 1.64	.10
Trust relatives	-.77	.47	-1.63	.10
Trust other people you know	.29	.36	.83	.41
People can be trusted	.38	.33	1.15	.25
Fear of crime walking	.38	.34	1.10	.27
Police visible	-.32	.31	-1.04	.30
Extorted for money	-.40	.44	-.90	.37
Paid police bribe	-.56	.63	-.88	.38
Trust other people you know	.29	.36	.83	.41
Employment status	.11	.14	.77	.44
Education	.10	.17	.61	.54
Property crime victim	.17	.29	.59	.55
Fear of crime-home	.20	.34	.59	.55
Trust police	.10	.36	.29	.78
Constant	**3.78**	**.65**	**5.86**	**.000**

Number of observations =   1805
Chi square = 102.96
Probability = .000
Pseudo R2 = .17

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Table 3 shows that 6 variables reaches statistical significance in the logistical regression analysis. In order these were whether the respondents ethic group was perceived to be treated fairly by the government, whether there was a police station located in the respondents area, whether the respondent trusted their neighbors, the respondent's age, the lived poverty scale and whether a violent crime had been committed the previous year in the respondent's home. Collectively these results produced a Pseudo R2 of .17.

There were several surprising findings in these results. One was that the strength of the item which dealt with the respondent's ethic group being treated fairly by the government (Z=4.43). A closer look verified that finding. The cross-tab between the ethnic group and the fairness measures revealed that 25 percent of South East Asians thought the government treated them fairly, while 26 percent thought the government always treated them unfairly, these numbers are 8 percent lower than any of the major population groups in the never category and 10 percent higher than any other group in the always category.

Another surprising finding was that the lack of a police station in the respondent's vicinity was also a strong predictor, Since South East Asians are urban dwellers, and the assumption had been that they would automatically have access to a police station. The thinking was that lack of access to a police station would be a rural, not an urban problem. The other significant factors in the logistical regression analysis were to be expected, South East Asians are older as a group than other South Africans and less likely to be found at lower levels on the poverty scale. It was another surprising finding that only the violent crime measure reached significance in the logistical regression. Fear of crime, walking and in the home, as well as property crime victimization were not significant factors in the logistical regression analysis.

Discussion

In summary, rather than fear of crime and victimization being the primary dimensions that define the lives of South East Asians in South Africa, a different picture emerged from this study, South East Asians were crime victims, but only violent crime that occurred in their homes was significant in separating them from the rest of the South African sample, and the fear of crime measures were found not to be significant in the logistical regression analysis. The study's findings do need to be discussed, at both the national as well as the local level.

The study's result indicate that South Asians residing in South Africa believe the South African government treats them unfairly. How important this is to South Africa is an open question. Since South East Asians represent only slightly over two percent of the Country's total population, the government might not be concerned; whether the government would want them to stay or emigrate is also an open question. Since no items in the study's survey dealt with possible emigration, it is not possible to comment on that aspect of the implications of the study.

The history of South Africa, and the fact that South East Asians have been in South Africa for over 150 years would seem to point to the fact that South East Asians should be an important, valued sub-population. The fact that Durban is the largest Indian city outside of India should also be noted. There is no question that public policy in South Africa works to the disadvantage of South East Asians. Blacks are given preference in employment, in order to try to rectify past discrimination. Whether the government can take any action that will create more balance for South East Asians is unknown and unclear. Xenophobia has captured the spotlight in South Africa, and this source of unrest is perhaps the government's biggest concern at this time.

One of the issues identified in the findings is the suggestion that the South East Asian community does not receive adequate public services, particularly police services. The lack of police stations in the areas where East Asians live, and the fact that they are less visible in South East Asian areas speak to that issue. The results showed that there were no significant statistical differences between South East Asians and the rest of the sample regarding trust of the police or payment of bribes to the police. The thought had been that perhaps South East Asians did not trust the police and/or were required to pay bribes to police, but they were like other South Africans in that regard. What is clear is that local communities with substantial residents of South Asian origin need to enhance police services, and to reach out to South Asian communities. These findings echo some of the earlier crime victimization studies in South Africa where respondent indicated police did not come in their areas

In conclusion, the findings indicated that South East Asians are not living in fear of crime or their inordinate victimization. Rather they think the government treats them unfairly, and given South Africa's history, there does not appear to be any immediate solution to that problem. The findings about police services, or lack thereof, suggested the need to reach out to South East Asian communities, and provide more immediate and visible services.

The findings related to the provision of police services to the South East Asian community also suggested the need to follow up on those findings, but the study was unable to isolate the source of the respondent's responses. The Afrobaromter South African file contains districts, which includes several cities, but unfortunately Durban was not one of these identified, and this issue is left to future research.

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