



# WELL-BEING AND CITIZEN INSECURITY IN ARGENTINE CIVILIAN AND MILITARY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS



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## ABSTRACT

Numerous research studies reveal that witnessing or being a victim of a crime, or even having a high perception of insecurity, significantly impacts social dynamics and influences the quality of life and social integration of individuals. This study aims to analyze how social well-being varies based on the level of concern about insecurity, perceived risk and fear of crime among university students from different fields and their commitment to security (both civilians and military personnel). For this purpose, a descriptive, group-difference, non-experimental design study was conducted. The purposive, non-probabilistic sample consisted of 516 Argentinian university students (44% women; 56% men; Age = 23.04; SD = 4.08). Data reveal that, despite low levels of fear of crime, participants perceive a high likelihood of becoming victims of crime in the near future. Furthermore, most participants report having been a direct victim of a crime, with a higher percentage experiencing indirect victimization.

While the results show relatively high levels of social well-being, statistically significant differences are observed based on the type of victimization,



fear of crime and perceived risk. Additionally, differential profiles are observed based on whether individuals are civilians or military personnel. It is concluded that, beyond addressing and ideally reducing objective insecurity, it is crucial to deepen the study of subjective insecurity due to its impact on individuals' quality of life.

**Keywords:** well-being, citizen insecurity, university students, civilians, military.





## RESUMEN

Numerosas investigaciones muestran que tanto el haber sido testigo o víctima de algún delito como incluso una elevada percepción de inseguridad, tienen importantes efectos sociales y condicionan, de alguna manera, la calidad de vida e integración social de las personas. Este estudio tiene como objetivo analizar como varía el bienestar social en función del nivel de preocupación por la inseguridad, el riesgo percibido y miedo al delito en estudiantes universitarios de distintos ámbitos y compromiso con la seguridad (civiles y militares). Para ello se llevó a cabo un estudio descriptivo, de diferencias de grupo, de diseño no experimental. La muestra, no probabilística intencional, estuvo compuesta por 516 estudiantes universitarios argentinos (44 % mujeres; 56 % hombres; Edad = 23.04; DE=4.08). Los datos revelan que, a pesar de los bajos niveles de miedo al delito, los participantes perciben una alta probabilidad de volverse víctimas de delitos en el futuro cercano. Asimismo, la mayoría de los participantes admite haber sido víctima directa de algún delito, porcentaje aún mayor con respecto a la victimización indirecta.



Si bien los resultados muestran niveles relativamente altos de bienestar social se observan diferencias estadísticamente significativas según el tipo de victimización, el miedo al delito y el riesgo percibido. También, se observan perfiles diferenciales en función de ser civil o militar. Se concluye que, más allá de la inseguridad objetiva, que debe ser controlada e idealmente reducida, es necesario profundizar en el estudio de la inseguridad subjetiva, dado sus efectos en la calidad de vida de las personas.

**Palabras clave:** bienestar, inseguridad ciudadana, estudiantes universitarios, civiles, militares.



# INTRODUCTION

In Argentina, as in most Latin American countries, (in)security has become a significant social issue, emerging as one of the major public concerns (Föhrig, 2006; Kessler, 2012).

Security, as a fundamental human condition, is considered one of the primary basic needs, essential for personal well-being and development (Maslow, 1954/1987; Schwartz, 2001). It falls within the category of psychological needs, acting as a driving force that directs behavior toward goals that, when achieved, contribute not only to survival and well-being but also to health (Páez et al., 2007). Therefore, perceiving security in one's home, neighborhood, city and society at large, is a crucial requirement for individual well-being (Franc et al., 2012).

In this context, the impact of negative events, such as witnessing violent acts or experiencing traumatic and violent situations, can have adverse or even devastating consequences for both the affected people and their environment (Chía et al., 2011). Numerous studies reveal the effects of crime and victimization on various aspects of people's lives, ranging from physical and economic harm to moral and psychological damage (Freeman, 1994). Many researchers have focused on the consequences of victimization on people's well-being (Cohen, 2008; Hanslmaier, 2013; Hanson et al., 2010; Kuroki, 2013; Leiva and Ramírez, 2021; Lelkes, 2006; Powdthavee, 2005; Staubli et al., 2014), showing that both directed and indirect victimization have significant effects on people's health, diminishing the perception of quality of life, satisfaction and happiness. Thus, criminal victimization has proven to be a significant predictor of well-being.

In addition to victimization, many research studies have explored the implications of fear of crime on people's physical and mental health (Chandola, 2001; Davies & Hinks, 2010; Franc et al., 2012; Jackson & Stafford, 2009; Méndez et al., 2020; Morrall et al., 2010; Stafford et al., 2007; Sulemana, 2015), revealing that fear of crime has negative effects on psychological well-being for both crime victims and non-victims. In some cases, fear of crime and concern for personal safety can have a greater impact

on well-being and life satisfaction than victimization itself. As Pegoraro (2002) points out, these perceptions are undeniably embedded in the daily life of modern life and carry consequences for democratic life, beyond the objective reality of the phenomenon.

One of the most widely accepted premises in the various fields studying this issue is that reducing crime is key to diminishing fear of crime (Ferraro, 1995). Much of the academic, social and political interest in fear of crime has focused on the relationship between crime and fear, and the negative impact it has on individuals and communities (Jackson, 2009; Vozmediano et al., 2010). However, different studies have shown that there is no direct correspondence between crime rates and citizens' subjective perceptions of insecurity (Kessler, 2009; Smulovitz, 2006; Vozmediano, 2010a). Furthermore, as Míguez and Isla (2010) argue, it is not only the increase in crime frequency that spreads the perception of insecurity socially; other factors, such as media influence and the levels of trust in State agencies responsible for controlling criminal activity and proposing preventive policies, also play a role. According to Moreno (2014), it is essential to evaluate the problem of insecurity from its dual nature: both as a victim of a criminal act and as a perception of insecurity, since both aspects have significant social consequences and affect the quality of life and social integration of people. Thus, there is a clear need to understand the relationship between subjective insecurity and social well-being.

In other words, it is important to assess how people perceive their environment in terms of personal safety and how these perceptions might alter their evaluation of well-being. On the one hand, this study aims to understand how criminal acts and the perceptions they generate impact a sample of university students, especially given their high probability of victimization. This research seeks to contribute to the analysis of differential profiles of subjective insecurity and well-being by introducing a variable not considered in previous studies: the degree of personal involvement with control and security, operationalized in this study by the type of sample (civilians vs. military personnel). Furthermore, this study is justified by the need to reflect on how subjective insecurity, in terms of fear of crime and perceived risk—beyond actual and objective victimization—affects social well-being and quality of life. From this perspective, the research aims to contribute to understanding the phenomenon by addressing a local gap in the analysis of the psychosocial aspects of insecurity and perceptions of the social context.



# METHODOLOGY

## STUDY DESIGN

A descriptive, group-difference, cross-sectional, non-experimental study was conducted, focusing on university students of both genders as the unit of analysis.

## PARTICIPANTS

The purposive, non-probabilistic sample consisted of 516 university students, representing two different contexts regarding involvement with security: civilian ( $n = 267$ ) and military ( $n = 249$ ). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 40 years, with a mean of 23.04 years ( $SD = 4.08$ ). The sample was 56% male and 44% female.

## INSTRUMENTS

The following scales were utilized in this study:

5. Social Well-Being Scale (Keyes, 1998; adaptation by Muratori & Zubieta, 2021). This scale, consisting of 17 items, uses a Likert-type scoring system from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to evaluate people's perception of five aspects of their social environment that contribute to their well-being. The dimensions are:
  - a. Social Integration: Feeling part of the community, having support and sharing with others ("I feel close to other people"). This dimension facilitates the satisfaction of needs for attachment, affiliation and belonging (3 items:  $\alpha = .633$ ).
  - b. Social Acceptance: Having a positive attitude towards others in general ("I believe people only think about themselves" – reverse item). It involves perceiving that relationships with others allow for self-acceptance and self-esteem (4 items:  $\alpha = .800$ ).

- c. Social Contribution: The feeling of having something positive to offer society and that one's activities are valued ("I think what I do is important for society") (3 items:  $\alpha = .767$ ).
  - d. Social Actualization: Believing that the social world is developing or can develop for the better ("For me, social progress is something that does not exist" – reverse item). It is associated with perceiving that the environment allows for personal growth (3 items:  $\alpha = .618$ ).
  - e. Social Coherence: Believing that the world is predictable, intelligible, and logical ("I don't understand what is happening in the world" - reverse item) (4 items:  $\alpha = .603$ ). The reliability coefficient of this scale was satisfactory ( $\alpha = .791$ ).
6. Concern and Perception of Insecurity. To assess the level of concern about insecurity, participants were asked to rate, on a scale from 1 = no concern to 10 = very concerned, the degree of concern felt by people in general about citizen insecurity versus their own in their daily lives. In addition, participants were asked to indicate how safe they felt in their residential area, using a scale from 1 = very safe to 10 = very unsafe. Participants also responded to a three-point Likert scale, rating their experience living in the country and their neighborhood from 1 = safer, 2 = just as safe to 3 = less safe, (Vanderveen, 2006). Furthermore, they rated how they perceive changes in crime and insecurity on a continuous scale from 1 = significantly decreased to 10 = significantly increased.
7. Risk Perception. This measure included two questions about the perception of risk at personal and general levels. Participants were asked to rate how likely they think it is that they could become a victim of a crime in the next year, versus how likely they think it is that a city resident could be a victim of a crime in the next year, on a scale from 1 = unlikely to 10 = very likely.
8. Fear of Crime Scale (Vozmediano, 2010). Based on a list of 12 security-compromising crimes, participants were asked to answer the question: how often have you been afraid or worried about being a victim of these crimes? (1 = never to 5 = always).

9. **Victimization Scale.** To measure the frequency of direct victimization, a scale was constructed based on the victimization scale used by Vozmediano (2010). This scale included the same crimes as the Fear of Crime Scale, except for the homicide item. Participants answered the question: In the past year, have you ever been a victim of these crimes? (0 = never, 1 = 1 or 2 times and 2 = 3 or more times). To assess indirect victimization, participants were also asked if they had witnessed any crimes in the past year (0 = never, 1 = 1 or 2 times and 2 = 3 or more times). In addition, they were asked if friends, family or relatives had been victims of any crime (1 = no, 2 = yes). Finally, a variable was constructed combining the three categories: direct victim (yes/no), indirect victim as witness (yes/no), indirect victim by knowledge of family or friend (yes/no), resulting in a variable of exposure to violence with four values: 1 = not affected; 2 = indirect victim, 3 = direct victim, 4 = both direct and indirect victim.

## RESULTS

### SOCIAL WELL-BEING

As shown in Table 1, participants report relatively high levels of social well-being. The highest scores were observed in the contribution dimension, while the lowest scores were found in the acceptance dimension. On the one hand, this indicates that participants feel most positive about their sense of utility and value, viewing themselves as essential members of society who are effective and contribute to the common good. On the other hand, the dimension with the greatest deficits is acceptance, reflecting lower trust in others, less positive attitudes among people, and a lack of perceived honesty, kindness, and competence.



**Table 1.** *Mean Scores in Social Well-Being*

Dimension	Mean	SD
Social Integration	4.03	0.69
Social Acceptance	3.05	0.86
Social Contribution	4.22	0.83
Social Actualization	3.72	0.88
Social Coherence	3.82	0.77

**Note.** Continuous response for the Social Well-Being Scale (1= strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree).

## CONCERN ABOUT INSECURITY AND PERCEIVED RISK

Regarding the perception of insecurity, participants consider that crime has significantly increased in recent months ( $M = 7.78$ ;  $SD = 1.97$ ). 74.1% of the participants think that living in the country is becoming less safe, 22.7% believe it is just as safe and only 3.2% feel it is becoming safer. Regarding their neighborhood, 51.2% believe that it is becoming less safe, 45.7% think it is just as safe and 3.1% feel it is becoming safer. Although both contexts are perceived as very unsafe, these perceptions differ significantly from the assessment of the country ( $M = 2.71$ ;  $SD = .51$ ) or the neighborhood ( $M = 2.49$ ;  $SD = .56$ ) being that the more general, distant or less controllable scope is even less safe ( $t_{(504)} = 9.48$ ;  $p = .00$ ).

This optimistic bias, likely linked to control and the sense of belonging felt regarding the place where one lives, is evident in the participants' response about how unsafe they feel in the area they live ( $M = 5.66$ ;  $SD = 2.54$ ), where the score slightly exceeds the theoretical mean. On the other hand, the level of concern about insecurity was analyzed at two reference levels: general concern and personal concern. It was found that the level of concern participants believe people generally feel about citizen insecurity ( $M = 8.80$ ;  $SD = 1.76$ ) and personally in their daily lives ( $M = 7.81$ ;  $SD = 2.29$ ) are both very high, with significant differences between the both assessments ( $t_{(510)} = 10.49$ ;  $p = .00$ ).

## Risk Perception

Regarding risk perception, or the perceived probability of victimization, participants believe it is highly likely that they themselves will become victims of a crime in the next year ( $M = 6.01$ ;  $SD = 2.51$ ). However, these values are significantly higher when referring to city residents in general ( $M = 8.55$ ;  $SD = 2.07$ ) rather than to oneself ( $t(507) = -20.51$ ;  $p = .00$ ). This data supports the illusion of invulnerability to victimization in relation to the previously mentioned illusory optimism, as a result of a social comparison process where people estimate that their own risk is lower compared to others.

## Fear of Crime

Participants exhibit relatively low scores for fear of crime, with street robbery being the only crime that exceeds the theoretical mean. Additionally, fear of property crimes ( $M = 2.82$ ;  $SD = 1.09$ ) is significantly higher than fear of personal crimes ( $M = 2.06$ ;  $SD = .98$ ) ( $t_{(487)} = 18.92$ ;  $p = .00$ ).

**Table 2.** *Descriptive Statistics of Fear of Crime*

	Mean	SD
Fear of crime	2.48	0.94
Fear of property crime	2.82	1.09
Street robbery or mugging	3.40	1.29
Burglary when no one is home	2.82	1.36
Theft or damage to vehicle	2.73	1.45
Burglary while someone is home	2.64	1.29
Credit card fraud or theft	2.47	1.30
Fear of personal crimes	2.06	0.98
Kidnapping or being held against your will	2.41	1.33
Sexual assault	2.25	1.36
Homicide	2.10	1.31

	Mean	SD
Victim of excessive use of public force	2.00	1.92
Terrorist attack	1.58	1.05
Physical assault	2.80	1.29
Harassment, threats, or verbal abuse	2.56	1.34

**Note.** Author's own work

## Victimization

Regarding victimization, 56.7% of participants report having been direct victims of at least one crime. Among these, 51% have experienced both direct and indirect victimization (having a family member or friend who has been a victim of a crime and having witnessed a crime in the past year), which significantly increases their degree of victimization or exposure to violence. It is noteworthy that 79.2% of participants know someone (a friend, family member or relative) who has been a victim of a crime and 35.4% have witnessed a crime, indicating that the rate of indirect victimization is also very high. Consequently, 12.3% of participants in this sample have not been victims in any form, whether direct or indirect. When analyzing direct victimization in terms of the nature of the crime, it is observed that 39.7% were victims of property crimes, with street robbery and theft from/in their vehicle being the most common, and 14% experienced personal crimes, with excessive use of public force being the most reported crime.

## Differences by Sample Type (Civilian/Military)

Regarding social well-being, statistically significant differences were observed in social actualization ( $F_{(1,512)} = 5.80$ ;  $p = .02$ ;  $\eta^2 p = 0.01$ ) and social contribution ( $F_{(1,506)} = 34.03$ ;  $p = .00$ ;  $\eta^2 p = 0.06$ ) based on the type of sample.

Civilians ( $M = 3.86$ ;  $SD = .85$ ) tend to believe that their environment allows for greater personal growth compared to the military personnel ( $M = 3.58$ ;  $SD = .88$ ). However, military personnel ( $M = 4.41$ ;  $SD = .83$ ) feel more useful and perceive, to a greater extent, that they can contribute something to the community compared to civilians ( $M = 4.03$ ;  $SD = .80$ ). This finding is confirmed when controlling for the variable of gender.

## Perception of Insecurity

Firstly, as shown in Table 3, military participants are more concerned about insecurity in their daily lives and consider themselves most likely to become a crime victim in the next year. Conversely, regarding hetero-perception, civilian participants more strongly believe that people in general are concerned about insecurity and that city residents are more likely to become crime victims.

Secondly, military participants perceive a higher degree of danger in various geographical areas, feel more insecurity in the area where they live, and perceive, to a greater extent, that crime has increased recently.

**Table 3.** *Differences in Perception of Insecurity by Sample Type*

	Civilians	Military	F	df	p	$\eta^2p$
Self-Perception	6.87 (1.96)	6.95 (2.00)	5.34	1,506	.02	.01
Hetero-Perception	9.08 (1.11)	8.22 (1.96)	17.95	1,505	.000	.03
Security in the Area Where One Lives	5.44 (2.25)	5.90 (2.80)	8.78	1,493	.003	.02
Perceived Increase/Decrease in Crime	7.67 (1.92)	7.90 (2.01)	11.38	1,509	.001	.02

**Note.** Author's own work

## Fear of Crime

As shown in Table 4, military participants exhibit higher levels of fear of crime, both for common and extreme crimes, compared to civilian participants. These findings are consistent with previous results, indicating that the military personnel experience more fear and believe that they are more likely to become crime victims, reflecting alignment between the affective and cognitive levels of their perceptions.

**Table 4.** *Differences in Mean Fear of Crime by Sample Type*

	Civilians	Military	F	df	p	$\eta^2p$
Fear of Crime	2.42 (.89)	2.46 (.99)	7.08	1,485	.01	.01
Fear of Common Crime	2.80 (1.03)	2.84 (1.15)	4.95	1,497	.03	.01
Fear of Extreme Crime	1.92 (.07)	2.23 (.08)	6.65	1,491	.01	.01

**Note.** Author's own work

### Differences in Social Well-Being Based on Risk Perception, Fear of Crime and Victimization

Statistically significant differences in social well-being are observed based on risk perception, fear of crime and victimization. As shown in Table 5, participants who perceive low probabilities of becoming crime victims have more positive attitudes towards others, feel more useful and perceive, to a greater extent, that they can contribute something to the community and that their environment allows for personal growth compared to those with high perceptions of risk.

**Table 5.** *Differences in Mean in Well-Being Dimensions Based on Risk Perception*

	Low	Medium	High	F	df	p	$\eta^2p$
Acceptance	3.21 (0.08)	3.00 (0.07)	3.00 (0.06)	2.98	2,500	.05	.01
Contribution	4.31 (0.07)	4.10 (0.06)	4.26 (0.06)	2.82	2,498	.06	.01
Updating	3.93 (0.07)a	3.75 (0.07)	3.58(0.06)b	6.86	2,504	.001	.03

**Note.** Only well-being dimensions with significant differences are presented. Different letters indicate different groups in the post hoc Bonferroni analysis. Response scale from 1 to 5.

Although *post hoc* tests do not specify which groups differ, it is evident that participants with high levels of fear of crime ( $M = 2.82$ ;  $SD = 0.12$ ) feel less integrated with their environment, compared to those with medium ( $M = 3.00$ ;  $SD = 0.06$ ) and low ( $M = 3.12$ ;  $SD = 0.05$ ) levels of fear of crime ( $F_{(2,478)} = 3.00$ ;  $p = .05$ ;  $\eta^2p = 0.01$ )



When assessing victimization (see Table 6), it is observed that people who were direct victims of personal crimes experience a lower sense of belonging to their community, compared to those who were not victims. Regarding indirect victimization, those who witnessed a crime show less positive attitudes towards others but believe more strongly that the world is predictable and logical, and they are more interest in and concerned about their community.

**Table 6.** *Differences in Mean in Well-Being Dimensions Based on Victimization*

		No	Yes	F	df	p	$\eta^2p$
Victim of Personal Crime	Integration	4.06 (0.67)	3.86 (0.78)	4.10	1,491	.04	.01
Indirect Victim (Witness)	Acceptance	3.13 (0.88)	2.91 (0.82)	7.69	1,493	.01	.01
	Coherence	3.76 (0.78)	3.92 (0.75)	6.39	1,491	.01	.01

**Note.** Only well-being dimensions with significant differences are presented. Different letters indicate different groups in the post hoc Bonferroni analysis.

# CONCLUSIONS

In this final section, the main findings of the study are discussed, contrasted with previous literature. The derived contributions are also highlighted.

Descriptively, it should be noted that the study participants exhibited a generally satisfactory level in terms of social well-being criteria. They perceive their relationship with their environment and what it provides them to meet their social needs positively. Both civilian and military students valued social contribution highly, indicating that they feel vital members of society and contribute to the common good. However, the evaluation was more deficient regarding the dimension of social acceptance,

which refers to interpersonal trust, feeling that others are honest and kind, and that this generates positive attitudes towards people. The findings are consistent with a general trend observed in both international (Bilbao, 2008; Cicognani et al., 2008) and national (Fernández et al., 2013; Muratori et al., 2012; Muratori et al., 2014; Muratori and Zubieta, 2013; Zubieta and Delfino, 2010; Zubieta et al., 2012) studies. Good levels of well-being are also likely associated with the sample's characteristics: they are young, have high levels of education and possess intellectual skills, with the possibility of studying at the university.

With respect to subjective insecurity, several issues can be highlighted. First, it was found that study participants consider it highly likely that they themselves will become victims of a crime in the next year. This likelihood increases significantly when referring to the average city resident, confirming findings reported by the *Barómetro de la Deuda Social Argentina* (Barometer of the Social Debt Argentina) (Moreno, 2014). Additionally, nearly eight out of ten participants believe that living in the country is becoming less safe, decreasing to five out of ten when referring to their neighborhood. Although both areas are perceived as very unsafe, perceptions differ significantly, since the country is seen as a more general, distant and less controllable area, making it more insecure compared to the neighborhood. This demonstrates an optimistic bias linked to control and a sense of belonging to the place where one lives.

Second, the findings show that the levels of fear of crime are relatively low. However, in line with previous studies, fear of street robbery is the crime that generates the most fear among participants. Furthermore, from an ecological-social perspective, the trend observed in vulnerability model-based studies indicates that young populations are less fearful. As for the degree of concern about insecurity, the university students analyzed attributed high concern to the general public, and they themselves exhibited significant concern, although this decreased significantly from the general to the personal level. This is consistent with the findings from the *Barómetro de las Américas del Proyecto de Opinión Pública de América Latina* (Barometer of the Americas of the Public Opinion Project of Latin America) (2012), which indicate that four out of ten respondents feel insecure, and the *Centro de Opinión Pública* (Center of Public Opinion) (July, 2015), which shows a progressive deterioration in the perception of insecurity since 2006, with six out of ten individuals in Buenos Aires expressing high levels of insecurity. Regarding the objective dimension of insecurity, half of the participants in the sample reported having been directly and indirectly affected by a crime in the past year, reflecting high exposure to crime. Moreover, most participants were direct victims of crimes, with property crimes being the most common. These figures corroborate data provided by the *Barómetro de la Deuda Social Argentina* (Moreno, 2014), the Lab-

oratorio de Investigaciones sobre Crimen (Crime Research Laboratory, Institutions and Policies) (March, 2015), and the Observatorio Electoral (Electoral Observatory) (January, 2015), which reveal a concerning and objective increase in insecurity.

The study explored differences based on a variable not considered in previous studies: sample type (civilian vs. military students). The distinction between military and civilian students revealed that military students exhibit a high perception of insecurity, both cognitively and affectively. Compared to civilians, military participants reported feeling more insecure about their residential area and perceived a greater increase in crime in recent years. They also feel that they are more likely to become crime victims and are more afraid of both property and personal crimes. Although previous studies did not consider this analytical variable, the observed differences may stem from various aspects. Perception of insecurity can be related to the socialization and training processes typical of the military field, since training in military academies has certain characteristics that differ from civil ones.

Military academies, being responsible for training future military officers, focus on national security issues, providing students with tools and knowledge that prepare them for defense, conflict, or extreme external threats. Therefore, having more preparation, more knowledge and commitment to security issues make them feel more vulnerable and alert to citizen insecurity in their daily lives. The unidentified criminal poses a constant threat, leading to higher perceived risk, greater fear, and more self-protective behaviors. The results open an interesting line of research as this social category can be further explored and incorporated into studies of individual factors, particularly in relation to the vulnerability model. As Vozmediano (2010a) points out, certain groups are more vulnerable to crime and, therefore, to the perception of insecurity. Findings can also be interpreted in relation to the perceived insecurity linked to values and beliefs. As Muratori and Zubieta (2015) show in their study, the military population, compared to civilians, has higher levels of social dominance and authoritarianism, leading to higher perceived risk and fear of crime, due to viewing the environment as more insecure and threatening.

Finally, the results become relevant in the light of the victimization model. Since military students were direct victims of personal crimes at a higher rate than civilians, it is not surprising that they exhibit greater concern and perception of insecurity. Studies indicate that direct victimization is a cause of higher subjective insecurity (Ferraro, 1995; Hale, 1996; Kury and Ferdinand, 1999; Russo & Roccato, 2010; Visser et al., 2013).

The comparative analysis of civilian and military students confirms that the assessment of well-being varies based on context and cultural differences. Military students reinforced social contribution more, partially corroborating previous findings (Muratori et al., 2014). It is somewhat expected that those in military training institutions, which impact national defense, need to feel useful and vital to society. In contrast, civilian students rated social actualization higher.

Finally, the findings verified differential profiles in social well-being levels based on indicators of insecurity. Those who assigned higher probability to crime also showed less positive attitudes towards others, less social utility and less confidence in the potential for growth and development of society. Similarly, those who exhibited greater fear of crime reported feeling less integrated into their environment in terms of social well-being. These results align with several previous studies showing that people with higher levels of risk perception and fear of crime exhibit lower life satisfaction and well-being (Chandola, 2001; Davies & Hinks, 2010; Franc et al., 2012; Jacskon & Stafford, 2009; Møller, 2005; Morrall et al., 2010; Pearson & Breetzke, 2014; Stafford et al., 2007; Sulemana, 2015; Vuanello, 2006). The data are also consistent with the local study by Muratori and Zubieta (2013) conducted with a general population sample in Argentina, which shows that people with higher fear of crime show less trust and acceptance of others and perceive a more negative emotional climate. In terms of objective insecurity, those who were direct victims of crimes against the person feel less integrated. In terms of indirect victimization, those who witnessed crime exhibited lower levels of social acceptance. The findings are in line with other studies showing that being both a direct or indirect victim has significant implications for health, satisfaction, and happiness (Chía et al., 2011; Cohen, 2008; Denkers & Winkel, 1998; Hanslmaier, 2013; Hanson et al., 2010; Kuroki, 2013; Lelkes, 2006; Lorenc et al., 2012; Powdthavee, 2005; Staubli et al., 2014). Locally, Muratori and Zubieta (2013) verify that having been a victim of crimes, compared to not having been one, decreases social acceptance, that is, positive attitudes towards others.

Based on these results and in line with other studies (Enders et al., 2009; Ruiz, 2007; Ruiz and Turcios, 2009; Wilcox Rountree & Land, 1996), it is relevant to promote a line of psychosocial research. Understanding the complexity of citizen insecurity as a perception influenced by multiple factors reflects the need to design security policies that not only address crime reduction but also incorporate active community participation, emphasizing preventive and control measures rather than repressive and violent ones. This approach contributes to fostering cultures of peace and improving living conditions with significant multiplier effects.

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