

## **DOES DIRECT VICTIMIZATION REALLY AFFECT WOMEN'S FEAR OF CRIME? A QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH IN NORTHERN CYPRUS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Women's direct victimization and fear of crime are examined in this paper. This study was taken place in Northern Cyprus among 366 women who are older than 18 and are Turkish Cypriot natives.

The aim of the study is analyzing the relationship between women's direct victimization and fear of crime in Northern Cyprus where is thought as a safe country.

A questionnaire was formed by the researcher and applied to 366 women in five major districts of Northern Cyprus.

According to results, a significant relationship was not found between direct victimization and this sample group's fear of crime. This result shows parallelism with some current studies on this issue.

**Keywords:** Crime, fear, women, fear of crime, fear of crime among women, victimization, Northern Cyprus

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The raise of crime rates especially in last 50 years all over the world causes scientific studies relating crime increase. However, new studies have started focusing on the phenomenon of fear of crime instead of causes of crime. Because fear of crime affects the individuals' life quality and so it becomes a more important problem than the crime itself.

The raise of crime rates makes people to feel anxious and under the risk because they do not feel secure and may start thinking that they would be victimized in one day. This feeling of anxiety and insecurity lead to fear of crime and therefore the studies about fear of crime become significant nowadays. Mainly the reasons associated with fear of crime are searched for

understanding and dealing with this feeling. There are many factors that associated with fear of crime such as age, victimization, residence, media, social control, social disorder, etc. In this research, victimization-as direct and indirect victimization- is examined among Turkish Cypriot native women who are older than 18. While the studies about fear of crime are widespread all over the world, in Northern Cyprus there is no any other research on this topic.

It is difficult to define the term of fear of crime because it consists of individuals' wide range of emotions, ideas, beliefs, vulnerabilities, their loved ones and those people's vulnerabilities. In general, fear of crime is defined as the fear of individual who would become a crime victim. Moreover, the fear of crime expresses the anxiety of individual about general crime rates, beliefs on the risk for crime victimization of themselves and/or their loved ones and anxieties and ideas about the results of possible victimization. With the variety of definition of this term, the most acceptable definition of fear of crime is expressed by Ferraro. For Ferraro fear of crime is "an emotional response of dread or anxiety to crime or symbols that a person associates with crime" (Shoham, Knepper & Kett, 2010: 430).

Victimization is considered as one of the most important factors for explaining fear of crime. There have been many studies about this issue and most of those studies support the significant relationship between victimization and fear of crime. The term of victimization is taken into consideration as two dimensions. While the first one is known as direct victimization, the second dimension is named as indirect victimization. Direct victimization recognizes only those victims who have been directly affected by the actions of an offender or incur some immediate loss following victimization. In this context, the previous victimization experiences increase the sensitivity to risk on crime. Past victims therefore have an increased likelihood of defining situations as dangerous and perceiving the risks of victimization as greater (Doran & Burgess, 2012: 26). In indirect victimization, individuals are not exposed to crime directly but their partners, family members or friends experience the direct victimization and the individuals are affected by their loved ones' victimization negatively (Wolhuter, Olley & Denham, 2009: 33). Besides this, indirect victimization consists of the individuals who believe that they are much vulnerable, weak both physically and socially, so their levels of fear of crime are higher. Women, old people, physically disabled people, ethnic minority groups can be counted as the groups of experiencing indirect victimization (Snell, 2001: 49). In this study, direct victimization is taken into consideration.

## **2. DIRECT VICTIMIZATION MODEL**

As a result of an attack by an assaulter, direct victimized individuals have many emotional, psychological and mental damages in addition to physical damage. Stress, depression, anxiety and other mental disorders are seen on direct victimized individuals. Victims feel shocked and

scared at first and isolate themselves from the society. When this shock has passed in time, victims start adapting their society again. When victims experience all results of the victimization, they try to regain their life routines and make up with their lives. Besides this type of direct victimized individuals, some victims may have permanent mental damages. Acute stress disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder and drug addiction are some of the problems which direct victimized individuals confront (Miller, 2009: 168).

Some studies which searches the relationship between victimization and fear of crime release that this relationship changes according to crime type. In the research conducted by Dull and Wint (1997), it is stated that while the victimized individuals mostly fear of crimes against property, the non-victimized individuals fear of crimes against people (Fox, Nobles & Piquero, 2009: 26).

According to direct victimization model, direct victimization experiences increase the individuals' sensitivity of risk. Thus, direct victimized individuals gain the habit of defining the situations as "dangerous" and perceive the risk of victimization at high level. When direct victimized individuals are examined, it is seen that the first feeling of a victim is the desecration of the belief in one's personal invulnerability, that victimization "won't happen to me". Similarly, the belief in the "social law" that "good people do not get hurt" is also defeated. In addition to these, notions of self-worth are affected and individuals realize their self-limitations, powerlessness, helplessness and neediness. Societal attributions of blame are also said to reinforce these views and lead the victims to have less trust in themselves and others. It is hypothesized that these reactions following victimization represent a new sense of personal vulnerability, which could result in increased fear of crime (Doran & Burgess, 2012: 26).

Fisher (1995) made a research consisting of 684 attendants of students and personnel in a university. According to results, the level of fear of crime is higher on individuals who had been victimized in last one year when compared to non-victimized individuals. Other results of this research also shows that the fear is about offences against person is higher rather than offences against property (Fox, Nobles & Piquero, 2009: 26).

On the other hand, some studies show that the individuals who have less experience of direct victimization, have higher fear of crime comparing to the individuals who have more experience of direct victimization (Karakuş, McGarrell & Başbüyük, 2010: 175). Also in this study, similar results are observed and no significant difference is determined between direct victimization and fear of crime.

### **3. THE VICTIMIZATION OF WOMEN**

While the problem of violence and assaults against women came to the fore with women's movement, unfortunately this problem had continued throughout history. Especially it is known that women are victimized mostly by their partners but they do not generally file charges against their partners. If there is a marriage, in spite of violence women could not make the decision of divorce most of the time. The most important reasons of this acceptance are cultural values and tendency of women to sustain traditional domestic roles. It is not enough to limit the violence against women with only physical violence such as beating. Even if there is a marriage, making love without permission of women is a sex crime and is defined as rape. Besides, humiliation, insult and such behaviors are accepted as emotional or psychological violence (İçli, 2007: 390-391).

Domestic violence is one and frequent victimization type that women confront. It is defined as "attack or controlled behavior of more or less physical, sexual and emotional abuse" (Jaishankar & Ronel, 2013: 353). Domestic violence can include husband-to-wife and wife-to-husband aggression however it is generally accepted that women are the targets of spousal violence (Jaishankar & Ronel, 2013: 353). It is an important phenomenon for women's fear of crime because many women are victimized by their husbands and such experiences may make them much vulnerable and fearful.

According to results of a research conducted in Great Britain by British Crime Survey in 2000, it is determined that women of 16-24 aged are high incidence of violence victims. Most of the victims are consisted of single mothers, unemployed women and private renters. In 74% of domestic violence incidents the victim is woman and the most common location for violence reported in survey is in or around home with 26%. Other incidents occurred as followed by street (23%), in pub or club (19%) and around the workplace (17%). The number of crimes reported in the 2000 BCS is still one third higher than the total number of crimes reported in the first survey (Goodey, 2005: 48). Unfortunately, this means that most of the women do not go to police and report their victimization incidents. Thus, they may be still victimized repeatedly by the offenders.

Some women who are victims of domestic violence experience this awful incident more than one or repeatedly. So the term repeat victimization gains importance in this context. Repeat victimization is defined as experiencing the same crime victimization more than one time. According to statistics, they are women who generally experience the repeat victimization. Especially it is stated that women in age range of 26-30 and 31-35 have experienced violence victimization repeatedly. The major rate of this victimization includes domestic violence (Goodey, 2005: 59).

The next frequent victimization that women confront is sex crimes. Target group of sex crimes such as sexual assault, abuse and rape is mostly consisted of women. While the women are being victimized by offenders, unfortunately they are being victimized once more by culturally and socially. Especially in Turkish culture, being victim of sex crimes is an incident for being ashamed by women. Mainly women are accused for this type of crimes and isolated from the society. In some cases, women who are raped, force to marry with their rapists. So, such patriarchal applications condemn women instead of criminal men.

The most salient point of women victimization is being victimized by their acquaintances. This argument is supported by a research conducted by The National Violence Against Women Survey in America between 1998-2000. 25% of woman attendants implied that they were raped by their husbands, ex-husbands or partners. Another research by The National Crime Victimization Survey in 2005, 39% of woman attendants said they are physically attacked by their friends or acquaintances, 38% of them expressed that they were raped by again their friends or acquaintances and 39% of them mentioned that they were robbed by their friends or acquaintances (Miller, 2009: 169).

As it can be seen below, men are victimized more than women. Except for the crimes of rape and sexual assault, males are more likely than females to be the victims of violent crime. Men are almost twice as likely as women to experience robbery. Women, however, are six times more likely than men to be victims of rape, domestic violence, and sexual assault. Although males are more likely to be victimized than females, the gender differences in the victimization rate have narrowed significantly over time (Siegel, 2012: 77).

**Figure 1: Victimization Rate in USA**



Source: Siegel, 2012: 77.

#### **4. THE PHENOMENON OF CRIME IN NORTHERN CYPRUS**

Turkish Cypriots had lived with Greek Cypriots for many years until Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus had set in 15 November 1983. As a result of painful incidents which had started in 1960s, the relations between two ethnic groups had been tensed and after Turkey's invasion to Northern Cyprus in 20 July 1974 had made the relations much sensitive. In consequence of Turkey's peace operation, Turkish Cypriots had been populated in North side of the island whereas Greek Cypriots had been populated in South side. In this transitional period that a population exchange had been occurred, the Turkish people who had being living in south side had been forced to migrate to north side, while the Greek people who had being living in north side had been forced to migrate to south side. As a result of this incident, 37% of the island had started being controlled by Turkish Cypriots whereas 63% of the island had started being controlled by Greek Cypriots.

Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus that exists since 1983 is officially recognized by only Turkey and gets support for sustaining its existence. Because of many international embargos North Cyprus cannot develop economically and so there occurs many social problems as well. However, there is not any organization for researching those problems and developing solutions and unfortunately there is no effort to set such organization. Therefore, it is so difficult to find current statistical data or to reach any information about social problems, because especially social studies are quite limited.

The last census was made in 2011 and according to results the population of Northern Cyprus is 286,257. While women are 135,774, men are 150,483 (State Planning Organization, 2016). According to current population the crime rate is approximately 2,61%. Unfortunately there is not any record about crime rates in 1990s. The records generally cover 2000s even 2010s. So, there is not any chance to compare the crime rates as 1990s and 2000s.

The statistical data of State Planning Organization about crime incidents which are reported by police in five districts between the years of 2010-2014 are shown on a table below. In 2010, the crime incidents reported by police overall five districts were 7306 while in 2014 this number was 5022. It is seen that maximum crime incidents are occurred in 2012 with 8394 whereas there was a decrease on crime incidents reported by police in the period of 2013-2014.

**Figure 2: Crime Statistics in Northern Cyprus**

Yıllar Years	Toplam Total	Lefkoşa Nicosia	Gazimağusa Famagusta	Lefke / Güzelyurt Lefka / Morphou	Girne Kyrenia	İskele
2010	7,306	2,687	1,902	801	1,494	422
2011	7,479	2,806	1,792	599	1,803	479
2012	8,394	3,265	1,993	799	1,807	530
2013	6,658	2,085	1,627	581	1,825	540
2014	5,022	1,576	1,151	414	1,450	431
<b>Şahsa Karşı İşlenen Suç</b> Offences Against The Person	716	203	156	61	220	76
<b>Mala Karşı İşlenen Suç</b> Offences Against Property	1,116	229	141	143	376	95
<b>Amme Faziletine Aykırı Suç</b> Offences Against Public Morality	78	18	12	12	32	4
<b>Kanuni İdareye Karşı Suç</b> Offences Against Administration of Lawful Authority	444	169	96	17	137	25
<b>Karışık Suçlar</b> Miscellaneous	2,668	957	628	181	685	217

Source: State Planning Organization Statistical Yearbook, 2016.

According to statistical data of State Planning Organization between the periods of 2010-2014, the total numbers of prisoners who are jailed are 15826.

## 5. METHOD

This research was conducted by using a survey model as a descriptive research. Survey model is frequently used in social sciences for making to work with big sample groups more easily. In surveys, current situation is observed and reported (Büyüköztürk, 2001; Karasar, 2005).

### 5.1 Population and Sample

According to 2011 data of State Planning Organization Statistics Department the population of the study is formed by 83,239 women who are older than 18, native Turkish Cypriot and live in the five biggest districts of Northern Cyprus such Nicosia, Kyrenia, Famagusta, Morphou and İskele. These districts were chosen because these are the areas where the population lives densely and also the mass is heterogeneous. Thus, an opportunity gained for working with women of all strata and had a chance to make generalizations.

Because of it is too difficult to reach all women within population, a sample was chosen from the population. While choosing the sample, stratified random sampling method was used for representing the population ideally. The number of sample was determined as 366 women and 366 of usable and completed surveys were reached.

In Nicosia district 130, in Kyrenia district 106, in Famagusta 84, in Morphou 33 and in İskele 13 women were reached. This numbers were calculated as regional population density. Because of Nicosia is the capital of Northern Cyprus, the population is the densest.

## **5.2 Measurement Instrument and Data Collection**

In this quantitative method based study, the research data was gathered by using survey which was designed by the researcher. The survey has closed-ended questions.

In the first part of the survey, there are questions about socio-demographical characteristics of the participants such as age, education, occupation, marital status, etc.

In the second part, there are questions about crime incidents such as “Do you think crime incidents have increased in Northern Cyprus in recent years?”, “If you think there is an increase, do you worry about it?”, “What is your resource of crime news?”, “How often do you follow the media?”.

In the third part there are questions about direct victimization. “Have you ever been victimized (robbery, physical attack, sexual abuse)?”, “If your answer is yes, what kind of victimization did you experience?”, “If your answer is yes, when did you experience this victimization?”, “What is the frequency of this victimization?”.

In last part there are five point likert scale consisted of 15 statement/questions about fear of crime. The participants were asked to give answers like “Not at all feared=1 point”, “Not very feared=2 points”, “Neither=3 points”, “A little Feared=4 points”, “Very feared=5 points”. While the lowest score that would be gotten from the scale is 16, the highest score is 64. Getting high score from the scale means the attendants’ level of fear of crime is high. This scale has 15 questions such “How feared are you about being physically attacked?”, “How feared are you about being sexually abused or raped?”, “How feared are you about being murdered?”, “How feared are you about being robbed?”, “How feared are you about having your car stolen?”, “How feared are you about having your domestic property damaged by vandals?”, “How feared are you about someone breaking into your house while you are there?”, “How feared are you about someone breaking into your house while you are not there?”.

## **5.3 Limitations**



The major limitation of this study was lack of resources. As it said before, there have been very limited studies to show as reference about Northern Cyprus. So, while forming both theoretical and methodological parts, this lack causes some difficulties for the researcher. Also, the existing outdated statistical data make limitations for this study.

Another concern was lack of support in survey process. The researcher requested some support for applying the surveys from non-governmental organizations and municipalities. Even these associations accepted to give support at first, they did not help then. So, the time planning of the research extended and it took about five months.

## 6. FINDINGS

The findings are divided into three sections. In first section, the socio-demographical characteristics of sample are described. In the second section, the relationship between direct victimization and fear of crime are stated. Lastly in third section, fear of crime level of sample is analyzed.

**Table 1: Sample Group's Demographical Characteristics (n=366)**

	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Age Group</b>		
18-25 years old	53	14,48
26-35 years old	118	32,24
36-45 years old	88	24,04
46-55 years old	64	17,49
56+ years old	43	11,75
<b>Educational Status</b>		
Literate	6	1,64
Primary	42	11,48
Highschool/College	110	30,05
Undergraduate	143	39,07
Postgraduate	65	17,76
<b>Residence Area</b>		
Nicosia	134	36,61
Famagusta	79	21,58
Kyrenia	106	28,96
Morphou	33	9,02
İskele	14	3,83
<b>Monthly Income</b>		
1000-2000 TL	82	22,40
2100-3000 TL	103	28,14

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3100-4000 TL	60	16,39
4100 TL and above	54	14,75
Don't know	67	18,31
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<b>Marital Status</b>		
Unmarried	120	32,79
Married	198	54,10
Divorced/Partner-died	48	13,11
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<b>House Population</b>		
Alone	38	10,38
2 people	81	22,13
3 people	109	29,78
4 people	114	31,15
5+	23	6,28

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### **6.1 Socio-Demographical Characteristics of Sample**

Frequency analysis was used for all variables and the results were shown by frequency distribution table.

As it can be seen from Table 1, 32,24% of the sample is aged as 26-35, 24,04% of them are 36-45, 17,49% of them are 46-55, 14,48% of them are 18-25 and 11,75% of them are 56 years and plus.

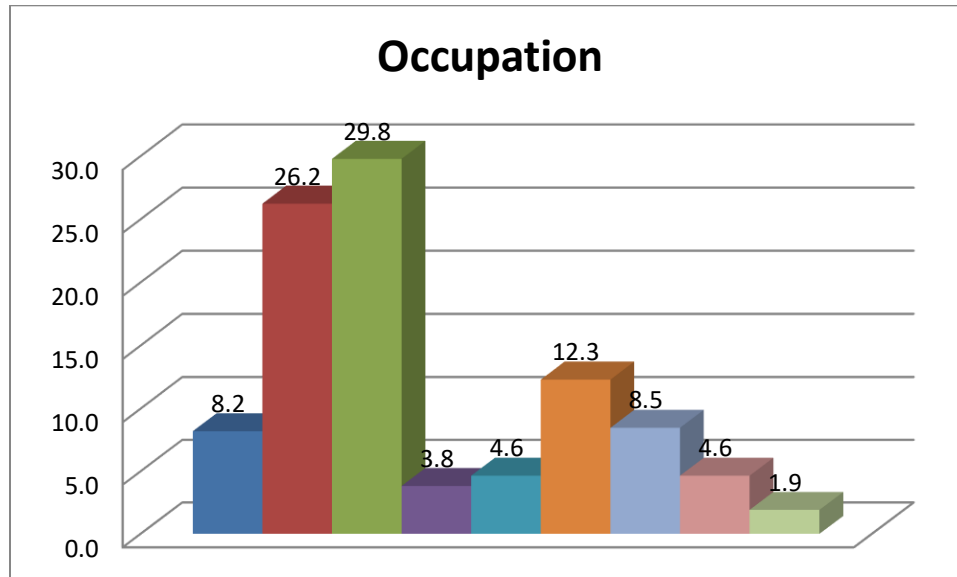
The educational level of the sample group is described as 39,07% of them are undergraduate, 30,05% of them are high school/college, 17,76% of them are postgraduate, 11,48% of them are primary and 1,64% of them are literate.

36,61% of the sample group live in Nicosia, 28,96% of them in Kyrenia, 21,58% of them in Famagusta, 9,02% of them in Morphou and 3,83% of them live in İskele.

28,14% of the attendants' monthly income is 2100-3000 Turkish Liras, 22,40% of them is 1000-2000 TL, 18,31% said "don't know", 16,39% of them is 3100-4000 TL and 14,75% of them is 4100 TL and above.

When the marital status of the sample is considered, it is seen that 54,10% of them are married, 32,79% of them are spinster and 13,11% of them are divorced/partner-died. The house population of the group; 31,15% of them live with 4 people, 29,78% of them live with 3 people, 22,13% of them live as 2 and 10,38 of them live alone.

**Figure 3: Sample’s Distribution of Occupation**



29,8% of the sample are state official, 26,2% of them are private sector employee, 12,3% of them are housewives, 8,5% of them are students, 8,2% of them are self-employed, 4,6% of them are retired, 4,6% of them are unemployed, 3,8% of them are freelancer and 1,9% of them chose other.

**6.2 The Relationship between Direct Victimization and Fear of Crime**

First of all, distribution of direct victimization is shown on Table 2 and it is analyzed by frequency analysis. Then for searching the difference between direct victimization and fear of crime, independent samples t-test was used.

On Table 2, it is seen that only 22,68% of the sample victimized directly. 45,78% of the direct victimized women are exposed to robbery, 30,12% of them are exposed to threat, 24,10% of them are exposed to assault and again 24,10% of them are exposed to sexual assault. 36,14% of them said they experienced direct victimization before 10 years, 27,71% of them said they experienced direct victimization in last 2-5 years, 22,89% of them said they experienced direct victimization in last 6-10 years and 13,25% of them said they experienced direct victimization in last a year.

When Table 3 is analyzed, it is determined that there is no significant difference between scores from general scale and scores from sub-dimensions of scale according to sample’s direct victimization ( $p>0,05$ ). The possible reasons of this result and other studies on this issue will be taken place on discussion section.

**Table 2: Distribution of Direct Victimization (n=366)**

	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Direct Victimization</b>		
Yes	83	22,68
No	283	77,32
<b>Victimized Crime Type (n=83)</b>		
Robbery	38	45,78
Threat	25	30,12
Physical Assault	20	24,10
Sexual Assault	20	24,10
<b>Victimization Time (n=83)</b>		
In last 1 year	11	13,25
In last 2-5 years	23	27,71
In last 6-10 years	19	22,89
Before 10 years	30	36,14

**Table 3: Direct Victimization-Fear of Crime**

Scale	Direct Victimization	n	$\bar{x}$	s	t	p
Fear of Crime of Offences against The Person and Property	Yes	83	18,99	6,59	-0,19	0,85
	No	283	19,16	7,34		
Fear of Crime of Near Abroad	Yes	83	9,17	3,44	0,08	0,94
	No	283	9,13	3,36		
Fear of Crime on Darkness	Yes	83	6,87	3,17	0,57	0,57
	No	283	6,69	2,20		
<b>Fear of Crime Scale</b>	Yes	83	35,02	11,26	0,03	0,98
	No	283	34,98	11,49		

\* $p < 0,05$

### 6.3. Level of Fear of Crime among Women in Northern Cyprus

As it can be seen on Table 7, the maximum score of fear of crime scale is 75 whereas the minimum score is 15. According to results, the total score of this scale is 34,99 which is more than half. For this score, it may be stated that generally every other women's fear of crime level is high. This issue will be placed in conclusion part thoroughly.

**Table 6: Fear of Crime Level**

Scale	$\bar{x}$	s	Min	Max
Fear of Crime of Offences against The Person and Property (9 items)	19,12	7,17	9	36
Fear of Crime of Near Abroad (4 items)	9,14	3,37	4	19
Fear of Crime on Darkness (3 items)	6,73	2,45	3	14
<b>Fear of Crime Scale (15 items)</b>	<b>34,99</b>	<b>11,42</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>64</b>

## 7. CONCLUSION

In this study, direct victimization which is a very important variable in explaining fear of crime, is examined in the context of fear of crime among women in Northern Cyprus. The phenomenon of victimization was explained in theoretical section. It is seen that the results that was gained from this study do not show parallelism with literature.

According to results, it is found that direct victimization experience does not have an effect on women's fear of crime. However, many studies of related literature suggest that there is a strong relationship between direct victimization and fear of crime. Especially previous studies on this issue assumed that there is a significant relationship between direct victimization and fear of crime, while current studies have started reaching complex results. Similarly, some studies show that the individuals who have less experience of direct victimization, have higher fear of crime comparing to the individuals who have more experience of direct victimization (Karakuş, McGarrell & Başibüyük, 2010: 175). The researchers who are opposed to direct victimization-fear of crime relation, focus on that in spite of the most directly victimized group is young male individuals, according to studies they have the minimum level of fear of crime (Farrall, Jackson & Gray, 2009: 83-84). In this study, the one of the reasons of such results may be caused by the sample group whom only 11 of them had direct victimization in the recent year. Because current studies show that the level of fear of crime is higher on individuals who have experienced direct victimization in the recent year. Fisher (1995) conducted a research in a university among 684 individuals consisted of students and personnel. Results show that the individuals who have experienced direct victimization in last a year have higher fear of crime level comparing to ones who did not have any victimization experience. This study reflects that direct victimization experience occurred in the near feature has an impact on the level of fear of crime. Also according to results of this study, it is determined that the high level of fear of crime is related to offences against the person instead of offences against the property (Fox, Nobles & Piquero, 2009: 26). In brief, for this study it may be stated that there were few women who experienced

direct victimization in the recent year, so in this term, the results are coherent with some studies that were mentioned above.

From this study, it is determined that direct victimization is not the reason of women's level of fear of crime in Northern Cyprus. However, the level of fear of crime is average-34,99 out of 75- so it means there are other reasons associated with the fear such as age, media, social disorder, social integration etc. The researcher will conduct the studies on those areas as well to find out the reasons that affect fear of crime on women in Northern Cyprus.

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