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The politics of fear and relationship with the effective level of crime and socioeconomic issues: Empirical analysis of a case study

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Abstract. The goal of this study is to analyze if a perceived risk of crime and social issues is supported by effective levels of empirical data. This study focuses on a vital case study, Italy that is one of the largest economies in Europe with socioeconomic issues also with a high flows of immigration from Africa and Middle East. Descriptive statistics and non-parametric analyses are applied on data from EUROSTAT and UNODC over a period from 2000 to 2019. Although levels of crime and immigration are declining over time, perceived risk of these social issues is high. In general, the perceived risk of crime seems to be overestimated. The only factor of concern in Italian economy for population is the increasing level of unemployment that can be a source of social issues. These results seem to be due to misleading information diffused by some political parties with media that induce people to overestimate perceived risk of crime and immigration: *the politics of fear*. The findings of this paper can provide a preliminary analysis and encourage the development of more in-depth studies to better understand the sources of fear of crime due to social issues and their possible interrelationships with social and political contexts in order to support appropriate policies in society.
Keywords. Violent crime, Homicide, Sexual violence, Fear of crime, Perceived risk, Vulnerability, Immigration, Poverty, Europe, Political party, Politics of fear.
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1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to see whether the fear of crime and public perception of risk of social issues can be explained by the effective level of crime and unemployment in society.

The vast literature of criminology and other social sciences has long debated the relationship between fear and level of crime in society (Jackson, 2009; Biderman, *et al.*, 1967; Skogan, 1981; Tyler & Cook, 1984; Stanko, 1955; Sacco & Glackman, 1987; Sparks, 1992; Hough, 1995; Hale, 1996; Bilsky & Wetzels, 1997; Vanderveen, 2007). Studies suggest that the incidence of the fear and risk of crime is associated with physical, situational and socioeconomic factors (Coccia, 2017; Killias, 1990; Jackson, 2009; Girling *et al.*, 2000; Jackson, 2006) as well as with a general sense of unease, insecurity and distrust in society (cf., Warr, 1990; Walklate, 1998; Innes, 2004). Scholars use the concept of fear of crime in the presence of a

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reduction of institutional authority, civilization and social capital (Taylor, 1996; Girling *et al.*, 2000; Jackson, 2009). Many studies have also addressed various aspects of the public perception of risk to explain high levels of public anxiety and why people worry in a specific period and/or areas more than others (Jackson, 2009). In general, fear of crime is recognized as driver of critical social and political issues that can affect behavior and decisions of people in society. In fact, the reduction of fear of crime is a well-established goal for the policy agenda of countries, being a priority for national and local authorities (Christmann & Rogerson, 2004).

Although many studies have addressed various aspects of the public perception of risk in society– we lack of empirical analyses to see whether the fear of crime and public perception of social risk are supported by the effective level of crime and social issues over the course of time. In the presence of differences between these levels, it is important to detect and explain possible determinants. This article addresses this problem by investigating the association between public perception of social and criminal risk and effective level of criminality and social issues in Italy, one of the largest countries in Europe. In particular, this study seeks to explore the relationships between risk perceptions of crime and social issues and effective levels of crime and socioeconomic indicators (e.g., unemployment) to understand situational factors and possible sources for applying appropriate strategies and policies to reduce the fear of crime and of other social issues.

2. Theoretical framework

Fear is an emotional state of repulsion and anxiety of a true or potential danger. Some psychological theories argue that "fear is a biologically basic emotion of all humans and many other animals" (as quoted by Adolphs, 2013, p.81; Panksepp, 1982). Other studies claim that emotions like fear should be differentiated in fear and panic system (Panksepp, 1982, 1998). In this context, Adolphs (2013, p.81ff) analyzes the distinction between fear and anxiety: fear is an adaptive and transient state elicited through confrontation with a threatening stimulus, whereas anxiety is a more tonic state related to prediction and preparedness. A finer-grained classification considers in this domain three typologies: anxiety, fear, and panic associated with particular packages of adaptive responses (Fanselow & Lester, 1988). In particular, panic disorder can be due to the absence of an ability to cope with a potential environmental threats, such as the sensation of suffocation for some people within elevators.

Panksepp (1982, p.414*ff*) suggests a further distinction between expectancy, fear, rage, and panic in humans.

- Expectancy is positive sense, as hope, desire - joyful anticipation, rather than in the negative sense in which it can also be used
- Fear is to respond to all external stimuli that have the potential of harming or hurting the body
- Rage is to invigorate behavior when the body is irritated or

uncomfortably restrained in aversive situations.

- Panic is an explosive agitated behavior that can be triggered by environmental emergencies

Instead, the concept of crime can be an absolute or relative quantity of violation in certain times, places and/or environments. Jackson (2009) discusses different perspectives and problems about the measurement of the fear of crime. Firstly, Sparks (1992) argues the difficulty to measure what level of fear is 'rational' according to what level of objective risk in society. These studies do not analyze the social and cultural significance of crime, social order and change (Girling *et al.,* 2000) and the relations between "people's fears, feelings and dispositions towards crime and the shifting political cultures in which they reside" (Hope & Sparks, 2000, p.3). Secondly, Farrall *et al.* (1997) suggest measures of the fear of crime based on a diffuse or 'ambient' anxiety about risk (cf., Farrall & Gadd, 2004; Farrall *et al.,* 2000, 2007). Moreover, worry about crime is strongly associated with levels of crime and ambient insecurities (Jackson, 2009). Scholars in social psychology argue that fear seems to depend on key factors, such as expectation of serious consequences, exposition to a non-negligible risk and lack of effective defense (cf., Bandura, 1977; Killias, 1990, p.98ff). Of course, these factors are necessary but not sufficient conditions for the emergence of fear that can be due to a complex interaction of factors, such as between risk and sensitivity or seriousness of consequences (Yin, 1985; Warr, 1990), between age, sex and specific aversive situations and stimuli (e.g., the infliction of physical pain; cf., Maxfield, 1987), etc. In fact, the interaction of manifold factors produces high levels of fear, whereas panic reactions can be due to a low perception of defense and protection to cope with environmental threats. A similar behavior of anxiety is also present in other conditions of social and psychological risks, such as the risk of developing a brain and/or pancreatic cancer produces higher levels offer and protective behavior than the risk of developing common diseases (e.g., bronchitis), because of the unavailability of efficient anticancer drugs for these cancers and long-run consequences given by likely death. These general observations are helpful for creating a theoretical framework which can support our understanding of fear of crime and of other social risks in aversive environment.

Killias (1990) shows different sources of the fear of crime according to the interaction between fear of crime and other factors. In particular,

- Interaction between fear of crime and exposure to risk generates a vulnerability of people, which is due to physical factors given by sex and age, social factors such as certain jobs (taxi drivers) and situational factors of urban area swith high criminality (e.g., North Indianapolis).
- Interaction between fear of crime and the seriousness of consequences generates different effects according to physical factors, such as victims of a rape have a higher level of trauma in the long run than victims of robbery; social factors of some crimes affect in different manner rich and poor people, for instance theft generates more serious

consequences to poor people than rich people. Instead, situational factors generate different consequences according to the availability of help: for instance, a victim attacked in a desert area may have more serious consequences than a victim in a populated area with institutional and social authorities.

- Finally, interaction between fear of crime and loss of control also generates different effects on victims. As far as physical factors are concerned, younger women are more fearful than man, as well as older man have a feebler personality than younger women (Farraro 1995, 1996; Farraro & LaGrange, 1992). About social factors, the fear of crime is higher when an individual is alone, whereas situational factors can increase the loss of control in specific situation, such as darkness is associated with a higher loss of control over time and space.

Other studies analyze the fear of crime considering cognitive factors that lead to risk perception (Wilcox Rountree & Land, 1996; LaGrange *et al.*, 1992). Some scholars confirm that risk perception is associated with age and gender (Farraro 1995, 1996; Farraro & LaGrange, 1992; LaGrange *et al.*, 1992). In fact, many studies confirm that women are more fearful and that fear increases with age (e.g., Baumer, 1985; Clarke & Lewis 1982; Garofalo 1979, 1981, Garofalo & Laub, 1979; Baumer 1985; Ortega & Myles 1987). Moreover, Skogan & Maxfield (1981) indicated that previous victims are more fearful than non-victimized counterparts. Skogan and Maxfield also found significant association between fear and indirect victimization, given by interpersonal communication of crime to family members, friends, etc. Other researches indicate that serious crimes diffused by TV news can also increase levels of fear (cf., Liska & Baccaglini, 1990; Wilcox Rountree & Land, 1996). In addition, socio-psychological characteristics and routine-activity attributes can affect fear of crime and perceived risk in society (van der Wurff *et al.*, 1989; Lagrange *et al.*, 1992; Stafford & Galle 1984; Stafford *et al.*, 2007; Vrij & Winkel, 1991).

In general, aggregate studies show structural factors associated with crime, such as weather (Anderson, 2001), income inequality (Coccia, 2017), high physical and social incivility, low social integration, high segregation, high population density, and community, etc. Some of these factors can also increase, in aversive situations, the levels of fear among people (Lewis & Maxfield 1980; Lewis & Salem 1986; Liska *et al.*, 1982; Liska & Warner 1991; Skogan & Maxfield 1981; Taylor *et al.*, 1984; Taylor & Hale 1986).

Next section presents a study design to explore the relation between perceived risk and effective levels of crime and social issues.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample and source of data

The case study here is Italy, one of the largest countries in Europe with a total population of 60,431.28 million in 2018 (The World Bank, 2019). The period under study is from 2000 to 2019. Data were obtained from the

EUROSTAT (2019) database and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2019). EUROSTAT obtains data on crime from national authorities who collect information from multiple sources, including police and other law enforcement agencies, courts and prosecutors, correctional agencies, statistical offices, and relevant ministries (EUROSTAT, 2019). Instead, UNODC (2019) research constitutes the key global authority in the field of drugs and crime, providing high-quality, essential evidence to inform policy-making and valuable sources of knowledge in drugs and crime domains. Data of Italian elections are from Wikipedia (2019).

3.2. Variables and measures of perceived risk, crime and social issues

Perceived risk of crime and social issues. This study measures the perceived risk with votes that Italian citizens give to a political party called Lega (English: League), a right-wing political party in Italy that in the political agenda emphasizes some Italian problems, such as the increasing level of crime and immigration that in Italy can be the causes of socioeconomic issues (Spektorowski, 2003). Lega party is an example of a right-wing populist party and takes a socially conservative stance on social issues. In fact, the political programme of the Lega party takes a tough stance on crime, illegal immigration and terrorism (Pop, 2011)[1]. This study assumes that a high percentage of votes to Lega party is a proxy of a higher perceived risk of Italian population about crime, immigration and other social issues. This study considers votes obtained at Regional, European and Political Election in Italy from 2000 to 2019, a period when all data of variables under study are available.

Crimes examined in this study include intentional homicide, assault, sexual assault, and theft. Rates per 100,000 inhabitants are reported over the years 2000-2019. Other variables of crime under study are crime, violence or vandalism in the area, crime, violence or vandalism in the area by degree of urbanization.

Immigration. This study considers the total immigration number over time by EUROSTAT (2019). In fact, EUROSTAT collects data on migration and migration flows, stating that "migration that has become one of the key components of population change in Europe. Migration flows over past decades among EU Member States and in- and outside of the EU have had a significant impact on the current population size in most Member States".

Socioeconomic indicators. Unemployment rates (%) from 15 to 74 years and Young people aged 15-24 neither in employment nor in education and training.

Table 1 shows the list of variables of this study, with their abbreviations and description.

[1] Cf., Bell *et al.*, 2013, Bianchi *et al.*, 2012, Dai *et al.*, 2013.

Table 1. *Variables from EUROSTAT and UNODC database, 2000-2019 period*

Variable	*Acronym*	*Description*
Electoral results of the party League (%)	Vote% Lega	Votes given to the Lega parties at Regional, Political and European Election
Intentional homicide per hundred thousand inhabitants	HOM	Intentional homicide per 100,000 inhabitants. Involves the willful and illegal killing of a human being. The crime does not have to be planned in advance but must involve the intent to cause death or serious injury.
Assault	ASSAULT	Assault per 100,000 inhabitants. Involves engaging in intentional or reckless actions that cause serious bodily injury.
Sexual violence	SEXV	Sexual violence per 100,000 inhabitants. A Sexual violence means an unwanted and sexual act as a result of physical force, threat, coercion, intimidation, deception, drugs/alcohol, or abuse of vulnerability.
Sexual assault	SEXSASS	Sexual assault means an unwanted sexual act — except rape — as a result of physical force, threat, coercion, intimidation, deception, drugs/alcohol, or abuse of vulnerability.
Theft	THEFT	Theft per 100,000 inhabitants. Involves unlawfully taking property with the intent to keep it permanently without consent and without violence, force, threat, coercion, or deception.
Crime, violence or vandalism in the area	CRVAND	Type of household: total, unit of measure is percentage, income situation to the risk of poverty threshold total
Crime, violence or vandalism in the area by degree of urbanization	CRVANDURB	Data about Cities, unit of measure is percentage, income situation in relation to the risk of poverty, below 60% of median equalized income
Immigration number	IMM	Immigration is the action by which a person establishes his or her usual residence in the territory of a Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another Member State or a third country
Material and social deprivation rate by income quintile and household type	MATDEPINC	Material deprivation rates gauge the proportion of people whose living conditions are severely affected by a lack of resources.
Material and social deprivation rate by age	MATDEPAGE	
Unemployment Total - annual average %	UNM	from 15 to 74 years
Young people aged 15-24 neither in employment nor in education and training	YOUNGUNMP	
Intentional homicide victims rates UNODC	HOM2	
Serious assault rates UNODC	ASS2	
Theft rates UNODC	THEFT2	

4. Analysis procedure

This research focuses on the relationship between perceived risk of crime and social issues, and effective level of crime, immigration, and unemployment, using as case study Italy.

In order to assess if the level of perceived risk is supported by data, the study design divides the period under study in two sub-sets:

- Period 2000-2010
- Period 2011-2019

The research strategy is to verify if the perceived risk is increased from first to second period and if the increased level of perceived risk is

supported by a higher level of crime, immigration and other socioeconomic variables from first to second period.

4.1. Descriptive statistics

The preliminary statistical analysis is based on descriptive statistics of variables under study (arithmetic mean and standard deviation) based on two independent groups given by Period 2000-2010 vs. Period 2011-2019.

4.2. Nonparametric Mann-Whitney U Test

The study design here performs a non-parametric statistical analysis based on Mann-Whitney *U* Test. The Mann-Whitney U test is used to compare differences between two independent groups, periods in our case, when variables are not normally distributed. The Mann-Whitney U test is often considered the non-parametric alternative to the independent t-test of parametric analyses. The objective of the Mann-Whitney U test is to know whether period 2000-2010 and period 2011-2019 scores are similar or not. The procedure explicitly states the null and alternative hypotheses for Mann-Whitney U test, and then states which was accepted and rejected at the end of the experiment.

The null hypothesis here is given by:

H_0: the distribution of scores for the two periods under study are equal (period 2000-2010 vs. period 2011-2019).

the alternative hypothesis is:

H_A: the distribution of scores for the two periods are not equal

Results of Mann-Whitney U test are:

- Descriptive Statistics (arithmetic mean and standard deviation)
- Ranks table provides information regarding the output of the actual Mann-Whitney U test. It shows mean rank and sum of ranks for the two groups tested (i.e., variables before 2010 and after 2010).
- Test statistics. This table shows the actual significance value of the test. Specifically, the Test Statistics table provides the test statistic, *U* statistic, as well as the asymptotic significance (2-tailed) *p*-value.

Overall, the expectation of these statistical analyses is a high incidence of all variables under study in the period 2011-2019. If statistical evidence substantiates this hypothesis, the findings may be able to be generalized to explain one of the causes of perceived risk of crime and social issues over time and space. Statistical analyses are performed with the Statistics Software SPSS® version 24.

5. Results

Table 2. *Descriptive statistics*

2000-2010	Vote % Lega	HOM	ASSAULT	SEXV	SEXASS	THEFT	CR VAND	CR VAND URB
Valid	8	3	3	0	3	3	2	2
Missing	3	8	8	11	8	8	9	9
Mean	6.85	0.98	110.99		8.29	1877.77	14.30	31.00
SD	3.05	0.08	1.30		0.15	253.74	2.26	3.11
2011-2019								
Valid	4	6	6	4	5	6	7	7
Missing	5	3	3	5	4	3	2	2
Mean	15.49	0.82	110.31	6.94	7.35	1964.17	15.71	26.56
SD	13.85	0.09	5.24	0.43	0.55	187.80	2.32	3.45
2000-2010	IMM	MAT DEPINC	MAT DEPAGE	UNM	YOUNG UNMP	HOM2	ASS2	THEFT2
Valid	5	0	0	2	2	11	7	7
Missing	6	11	11	9	9	0	4	4
Mean	448669.00			4.40	18.25	1.11	103.06	1839.81
SD	102762.85			0.28	1.06	0.13	8.33	255.38
2011-2019								
Valid	7	4	4	8	8	6	7	5
Missing	2	5	5	1	1	3	2	4
Mean	320855.86	18.53	17.33	6.26	20.61	0.82	111.76	1801.37
SD	40278.20	4.68	4.93	0.77	1.12	0.09	3.01	60.31

Note: *Mean=arithmetic mean; SD= Standard deviation.* Acronyms of variables are: Vote% Lega=Electoral results of the party League (%), HOM= Intentional homicide per hundred thousand inhabitants; ASSAULT per hundred thousand inhabitants; SEXV= Sexual violence per hundred thousand inhabitants; SEXASS=Sexual assault per hundred thousand inhabitants; THEFT per hundred thousand inhabitants; CR_VAND=Crime, violence or vandalism in the area; CR_VAND_URB=Crime, violence or vandalism in the area by degree of urbanization; IMM=Immigration number; MATDEPINC=Material and social deprivation rate by income quintile and household type; MATDEPAGE=Material and social deprivation rate by age; UNM=Unemployment by sex and age - annual average; YOUNGUNMP=Young people aged 15-24 neither in employment nor in education and training; HOM2=Intentional homicide victims rates UNODC; ASS2=Serious assault rates UNODC; Theft2=Theft rates UNODC

Descriptive statistics in table 2 shows that the average percentage of votes by Lega party is increased from 6.85% over 2000-2010 period to about 15.5% over 2011-2019, suggesting an increase of perceived risk about crime, immigration and other social issues in Italian population.

Table 3. *Mann-Whitney test, Ranks*

		N cases	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Vote % Lega	2000-2010	8	5.75	46.00
	2011-2019	4	8.00	32.00
HOM	2000-2010	3	7.50	22.50
	2011-2019	6	3.75	22.50
ASSAULT	2000-2010	3	5.67	17.00
	2011-2019	6	4.67	28.00
SEXV	2000-2010	0[a]	0.00	0.00
	2011-2019	4	2.50	10.00
SEXASS	2000-2010	3	7.00	21.00
	2011-2019	5	3.00	15.00

THEFT	2000-2010	3	4.33	13.00
	2011-2019	6	5.33	32.00
CR VAND	2000-2010	2	4.00	8.00
	2011-2019	7	5.29	37.00
CR VAND URB	2000-2010	2	8.00	16.00
	2011-2019	7	4.14	29.00
IMM	2000-2010	5	8.80	44.00
	2011-2019	7	4.86	34.00
MATDEPINC	2000-2010	0[a]	0.00	0.00
	2011-2019	4	2.50	10.00
MATDEPAGE	2000-2010	0[a]	0.00	0.00
	2011-2019	4	2.50	10.00
UNM	2000-2010	2	1.75	3.50
	2011-2019	8	6.44	51.50
YOUNGUNMP	2000-2010	2	1.50	3.00
	2011-2019	8	6.50	52.00
HOM2	2000-2010	11	11.86	130.50
	2011-2019	6	3.75	22.50
ASS2	2000-2010	7	4.71	33.00
	2011-2019	7	10.29	72.00
THEFT2	2000-2010	7	6.71	47.00
	2011-2019	5	6.20	31.00

Note: Acronyms of variables are: Vote% Lega=Electoral results of the party League (%), HOM= Intentional homicide per hundred thousand inhabitants; Assault per hundred thousand inhabitants; SEXV= Sexual violence per hundred thousand inhabitants; SEXASS=Sexual assault per hundred thousand inhabitants; Theft per hundred thousand inhabitants; CR_VAND=Crime, violence or vandalism in the area; CR_VAND_URB=Crime, violence or vandalism in the area by degree of urbanization; IMM=Immigration number; MATDEPINC=Material and social deprivation rate by income quintile and household type; MATDEPAGE=Material and social deprivation rate by age; UNM=Unemployment by sex and age - annual average; YOUNGUNMP=Young people aged 15-24 neither in employment nor in education and training; HOM2=Intentional homicide victims rates UNODC; ASS2=Serious assault rates UNODC; Theft2=Theft rates UNODC

However, measures of crime show a general reduction, except for theft of EUROSTAT data. Immigration is also reduced from 2000-2010 to 2011-2019 period. Finally, the increase of unemployment rate and in particular of young unemployment rate may be a source of social issue in Italy.

Table 2 above is very useful because it indicates which period can be considered considering the higher level of crime, immigration and other social issues given by the period with the highest mean rank. In this case, the period with the highest mean rank of crime and immigration is the period 2000-2010, *vice versa* for unemployment is 2011-2019. In general, table 3 confirms previous results of table 2.

Table 4 shows the actual significance value of the test. Specifically, Table 4 provides the test statistic, U statistic, as well as the asymptotic significance (2-tailed) *p*-value. From this statistical analysis, it can be concluded that homicide in the first period 2000-2010 was statistically significantly higher than period 2011-2019 (U = 1.5, p = .005), *ibidem* sexual assault (U = 0.00, p = .03), criminal violence and vandalism (U = 1.0, p = .08), immigration (U = 6.0, p = .06); whereas unemployment, *vice versa*, was statistically significantly higher in the period 2011-2019 (U = 0.5, p = .05), *idem* young unemployment (U = 0.0, p = .04). The Test Statistics also shows both exact and asymptotic statistical significance levels, which are rather

similar and consistent to reinforce the findings of these analyses. In general, the perceived risk of crime is overestimated. The only factor of concern in Italian economy for population is the increasing level of unemployment that can be a source of social issues, rather than levels of crime and immigration. The sources of this overestimation effect of crime can be due to misleading information provided by some political parties and amplified by TV news (cf., Ditton *et al.*, 2004) for political and electoral reasons, generating the so-called effect of the politics of fear to obtain public agreement (cf., Gore, 2004; Huddy, 2004).

Table 4. *Test statistics[a] using grouping variable Period 2000-2010 vs. 2011-2019*

	Vote % Lega	HOM	ASSAULT	SEXASS	THEFT	CR VAN	VCR VAND URB
Mann-Whitney U	10.00	1.50	7.00	0.00	7.00	5.00	1.00
Wilcoxon W	46.00	22.50	28.00	15.00	13.00	8.00	29.00
Z	-1.02	-1.94	-0.52	-2.24	-0.52	-0.59	-1.76
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.31	0.05	0.61	0.03	0.61	0.56	0.08
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.368[b]	.048[b]	.714[b]	.036[b]	.714[b]	.667[b]	.111[b]

	IMM	UNM	YOUNG UNMP	HOM2	ASS2	THEFT2
Mann-Whitney U	6.00	0.50	0.00	1.50	5.00	16.00
Wilcoxon W	34.00	3.50	3.00	22.50	33.00	31.00
Z	-1.87	-1.97	-2.09	-3.17	-2.49	-0.24
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.06	0.05	0.04	0.00	0.01	0.81
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.073[b]	.044[b]	.044[b]	.000[b]	.011[b]	.876[b]

Note. a. Grouping Variable is based on Period 2000-2010 vs. 2011-2019; b. Not corrected for ties. Acronyms of variables are: Vote% Lega=Electoral results of the party League (%), HOM= Intentional homicide per hundred thousand inhabitants; Assault per hundred thousand inhabitants; SEXV= Sexual violence per hundred thousand inhabitants; SEXASS=Sexual assault per hundred thousand inhabitants; Theft per hundred thousand inhabitants; CR_VAND=Crime, violence or vandalism in the area; CR_VAND_URB=Crime, violence or vandalism in the area by degree of urbanization; IMM=Immigration number; MATDEPINC=Material and social deprivation rate by income quintile and household type; MATDEPAGE=Material and social deprivation rate by age; UNM=Unemployment by sex and age - annual average; YOUNGUNMP=Young people aged 15-24 neither in employment nor in education and training; HOM2=Intentional homicide victims rates UNODC; ASS2=Serious assault rates UNODC; Theft2=Theft rates UNODC

6. Discussion, limitations and conclusion

Overall, this study suggests that in general, the perceived risk of crime is overestimated of Italy. Of course, the results and arguments of this study are tentative. In fact, the phenomenon is complex and analyses here are not sufficient to explain the manifold economic, psychological, social and political factors associated with relationship under study, since we know that other factors are often not equal over time and space[2]. However, this

[2] For instance, the development of technology generates economic growth with main effects on geoeconomic regions and as consequence in society; cf. Cavallo *et al.*, 2014; Coccia 2005, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2010a, 2011, 2012, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2013, 2014, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e, 2015, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2016, 2016a, 2016b, 2017, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d, 2018, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d, 2018e, 2018f, 2018g, 2018h,

study may form a ground work for development of more sophisticated studies and theoretical frameworks. Future efforts in this research field should provide more statistical evidence to substantiate the results here.

To conclude, identifying generalizable relationship at the intersection of criminology, economics, sociology, anthropology, and perhaps biology is a non-trivial exercise. To reiterate, the study here is exploratory in nature and there is need for much more detailed research to shed further theoretical and empirical light on relation between fear of crime, perceived risk and effective levels of crime and social issues as well as on possible distal factors affecting this relation within national psychology of nations to support policies directed to a reduction of these social issues.

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Data Availability Statement: The data that support the findings of this study are openly available from Eurostat. [Retrieved from].

2018i, 2018l, 2018m, 2019, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d; Coccia & Rolfo, 2002, 2009, 2013, Coccia & Wang, 2015, 2016.

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