RESUMEN

La inseguridad pública, robos, secuestros y extorsiones, es una problemática que indica el grado de riesgo de un país. En México la inseguridad está vinculada con la ingobernabilidad producto de la corrupción y la negligencia de las autoridades. Ambas problemáticas son estudiadas a partir de la percepción que tiene la ciudadanía en torno a la prevención del delito. Dicha percepción se diagnosticó en dos modalidades; directa o por experiencia personal e indirecta o por experiencia mediatizada. A partir de la validez y la confiabilidad de instrumentos que midieron cuatro factores; acción gubernamental, acción policíaca, acción mediatizada e inseguridad pública de la percepción de riesgo, se establecieron sus relaciones causales. Mediante un modelo de regresión se demostró que la percepción mediatizada de la acción policíaca determina la percepción de la inseguridad pública.

Palabras clave: Sociedad de riesgo, percepción mediatizada y percepción de inseguridad.

ABSTRACT

The public safety crisis (robberies, kidnappings and extortions) is a problem that indicates the degree of risk of a country. In Mexico, the insecurity is tied up with the corruption and negligence lawlessness of the authorities. Both problems are studied from the citizens’ perception around crime prevention. This perception diagnosis has two modalities; direct (personal experience) and indirect (mediated experience). The causal relations were established based on validity and reliability of instruments that measured four factors (Government action, police action, mediated action and public safety crisis) of the risk perception. By means of a regression model showed that the mediated perception of police action determines the perception of public safety crisis.

Key words: Society of Risk, Mediated Perception and Perception of Insecurity.

Introduction

The Information Era was understood as an economic, social, educational, scientific and technological revolution producer of certainty and security, it was sponsored by the State in the developed economies and it has been explained in three dimensions: economic, political and social (Jarquin & Allamana, 2005).

The Information Era, in its economic and political dimension, involved a political-financial system known as Neoliberal globalization. In Mexico the scientific and technological institutes have not received sufficient funding recommended by the World Trade Organization (WTO). The country allocated 0.5 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP). In contrast WTO member countries devoted 3 per cent on average. While the Government of the United States of America (USA) financed the technology corridor of Silicon Valley (space where companies and the world’s most important technological institutions are found) in Mexico only the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) is responsible for 90 percent of scientific
research and technological innovation. The State deregulation allowed the investment, development and the application of technological innovations in the exploitation of natural resources, electoral representation, migration of people and the consumption of products and services. As a result, in its social dimension, it involved a risk society. As scientific and technological advances were produced and implemented in the social dynamics, it increased uncertainty and especially the insecurity (García & D’adamo, 2006).

Precisely, in this social dimension, the mass media broadcast events of risk that impact on the perception of the television-audiences.

In Mexico, the State and the media have been spreading a society of risk in which people are immersed in a structure of incompetence, corruption, neglect and impunity arising from uncertainty and social insecurity (Salazar, 1995).

The origin of this broadcast is in the new Electoral law, Parliament, political parties and the electoral authorities have designed a program of electoral communication which consists on the promotion of values (respect, equity, participation and responsibility) democracy and political participation through voting. That law prohibits the dissemination of other democratic values (strikes, rallies, demonstrations, marches, sit-ins), other political manifestations (ultra-conservative and Liberals) and even the express or implicit support to actors or conventional political entities or alternates.

Because of these restrictions, ads for or against actors and political entities have been deleted and the media revenues have declined. The media being affected by the new Electoral law have developed a strategy of aversion to the political class which is to present cases of incompetence, corruption, neglect and impunity resulting from the action of the Government, Parliament, parties, electoral institutions and the police.

Studies on the risk society, in particular on the uncertainty and insecurity have been made since four decades ago.

In the 1970s, Paul Slovic and Baruch Fishhoff, from the (uncontrollability and unpredictability) dimensions of risk society, developed the first diagnoses of fear and anger before risk events. Psychometric risk studies are influenced by cognitive social psychology. The effects of the distribution of the spaces and the technologies on cognition are being studied. Theories of Social amplification, the Social stereotype, deterrence, Social stigma, the activation of the norm, Social categorization and reasoned action attempted to explain the reactions of individuals to immeasurable events; unexpected and uncontrollable. These studies were mainly conducted in the United States.

In the Decade of the 80’s, Howard Kunreuther, Elke Weber and Bern Rorhmann, strengthened the psychometric investigations using multivariate analysis to demonstrate the effects of the values, beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, knowledge and skills about risky behavior. Its studies were influenced by advances in the statistical software that allowed the multi-causal, multidimensional and multifactorial analysis through simulation models. The diagnoses were mostly in the United States.

In the Decade of the 90’s, Lenart Sjöberg, Midori Aoyagi, Henk Vinken, Atsuko Kuribayashi, Robert Bechtel, Victor Corral, José Queirós, Javier Urbina and Marcos Bustos developed theoretical models of the previous decade. Studies on the impact of human behavior risk events are extended to Asia and Latin America. As in the developed economies financial and energy risks are investigated, in emerging economies studies are conducted on the impact of natural disasters on the behavior.

In the current decade, the diversity of studies derived from terrorist events, summits on climate change, its consequences in the form of disasters and economic crises spread in the media, implicate an opening to the study of the risks as indicators of sector conflict and factors of social change (Mota, 2002).

**The perception of insecurity**

The problem of the aversion to the political class is explained from a theoretical model derived from the theories of conflict and social change (TCS).

The TCS pose that asymmetrical power and influence relationships exist in societies among individuals, groups and institutions. That is, the social structure facilitates the dissemination of ideas (beliefs and values) of those who have sufficient capabilities and resources. Such promotions
of ideas influence those lacking in resources. These latter will initiate a conflict to compensate for asymmetry and balance the inequality (Jimenez, 2007b). It is a structural conflict that will promote a change (citizen mobilizations, electoral abstentions or votes of punishment) in those who disagree with the ideas of the dominant group. This change is accomplished by persuading the adversaries and deterring the allies through the mass media. It will try to persuade adversaries to recognize the posture of the discrepant sector and will try to dissuade allies of the omnipotent power of adversaries (Contreras, Correa & Garcia, 2005).

Recognition consists of designing and promoting an image for the dissenting position that evidences an accusatory, complaining and supervisor of the power of the adversary posture (Luhman, 1986). In this sense, the power of the adversary decreases depending on the increased recognition of dissent and limits of their actions (Jimenez, 1997).

Thus, the risk society which is built in Mexico consists more of an unfair confrontation for the resources in the field of economic, political, social, and institutional and media than in the impact of natural disasters or technological innovations. Such discrepancy would have their origin in the relational asymmetry, the structuring conflict and the undetermined change (Jimenez, 2007a).

A way of highlighting the asymmetric or symmetric relationship in contemporary societies is the perception that the electorate has of its authorities. This perception can be direct (testimonies about insecurity) or indirect (news about insecurity).

Figure 1 explains the start of the structural conflict in an asymmetrical partnership with actors (the political class and the media) in dispute for the handling of spaces public-media for the dissemination of their ideas.

From direct and indirect perceptions of the police actions and the Government Act it is explained the perceptions of public insecurity in the inhabitants of the city of Mexico.

**Method**

**Procedure**

The survey was applied at the end of the semester 2009-I in the libraries of the faculties of psychology, social work, science and administration from the National Autonomous University of Mexico. Questionnaires were distributed intentionally (strategy was to choose those that had more than half an hour studying in the library) to the students and professors who attended alone (without companions that could distract them at the time of answering the survey) to libraries. Response time was 15 minutes on average. Once respondents completed the answers it was verified that

![Figure 1. The perceived social insecurity](image-url)
each component was answered. In cases in which respondents not answered some reagent(s) it was asked of them to write back the reason why they preferred to abstain. In the capture of the surveys it was used the strategy of confronting the double capture of each questionnaire by comparing the similarities and the differences. In cases in which there were many differences you chose to delete both screenshots of the same questionnaire. Finally, not mostly answered questionnaires were also removed from the final capture and the corresponding analysis. The statistical program SPSS version 12 was used to capture and process the analysis of normality, validity, reliability, factorial, correlational and regression.

Subjects

We intentionally selected 188 students of a public University in the city of Mexico. 141 men (75%) and 47 women (25%). 59 (31.2%) have less than 20 years, 63 (33.9%) between 20 and 25 years, 38 (20.1%) between 26 and 30 years and 28 (14.8%) over 30 years, 62 earning less than 3000 pesos per month (33%), between 3000 and 6000 (42%) and 47-79 win more than 6000 per month (25%). 55 belong to the area of basic sciences (29.3%)82 to the area of social sciences (43.6%) and 51 to the area of Health Sciences (27.1%).

Variables

- **Perception of police action.** It is the degree of the crime prevention and police intervention in a area that is perceived as high-risk by its citizens from police travels and the capture of suspects.

- **Perception of public insecurity.** It is the degree of personal suspicion of alleged assailants from their acts toward passers-by, homes or business.

- **Mediated perception of police action.** It is the degree of transparency or corruption, efficiency or incompetence, effectivity, or negligence of the police, spread in the media.

- **Mediated perception of Government.** It is the degree of government procurement through its institutions against organized crime which is spreading in the media.

Instruments

**Scale of perception of police action.** Measured the degree of prevention of crime from four response options ranging from «uncommon» until the «common» with a reliability (alpha of .60) of acceptable.

**Scale of perception of public insecurity.** Measured the degree of suspicion of crime from four response options ranging from «uncommon» until the «common» with a reliability (alpha of .64) of acceptable.

**Scale of mediatized perception of police action.** Measured the performance of the widespread police by media from four response options ranging from «uncommon» until the «common» with reliability (alpha of .72) acceptable.

**Scale of mediatized perception of governmental action.** Measured the performance of the Government diffused by means of communication from four response options ranging from «very rare» to «very common» with reliability (alpha of .80) of acceptable.

Table 1 shows that the data from the responses to the items meet the requirement of distribution in the range established for inclusion.

Factor analysis was carried out to verify the perceptual dimensions referred to in Figure 1. The convergent validity of the latent variables in Figure 1 was established from a confirmatory factorial analysis.

Once excluded the control variables (marital status and level of study) and three scale reagents (R.4 = asked a patrol or a police intervention and R.5 = known emergency numbers and R.15 = has heard that «drug trafficking is winning the game against the Government»). It was proceeded to reduce the variables in factors using the factorial analysis technique of principal components and varimax rotation (see Table 2).

The analysis of normal distribution of the responses to the reagents which measured the perceptual variables was realized from the media, deviation, bias and asymmetry of the distribution of responses to the reagents measuring the perceptual variable. The criteria to include variables in subsequent analyses were the range of distribution less than -3 and less than 3 (see Table 1).
Table 1
The distribution of the perceptual variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reagent (s)</th>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Deviation</th>
<th>Bias</th>
<th>Asymmetry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police monitors your street</td>
<td>4,65</td>
<td>2,628</td>
<td>.125</td>
<td>-1,111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police has captured some criminal in his colony</td>
<td>3,74</td>
<td>3,021</td>
<td>.764</td>
<td>-788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A patrol through their neighborhood</td>
<td>5,74</td>
<td>2,941</td>
<td>-.296</td>
<td>-1,247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know emergency numbers</td>
<td>5,87</td>
<td>3,716</td>
<td>-.237</td>
<td>-1,643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you been aware of an assault on a business</td>
<td>2,31</td>
<td>2,524</td>
<td>2,010</td>
<td>2,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have been witness of a theft from a passerby</td>
<td>3,24</td>
<td>3,103</td>
<td>1,079</td>
<td>-.324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have observed a suspect in your neighbor’s House</td>
<td>2,79</td>
<td>2,902</td>
<td>1,459</td>
<td>.679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’ve heard the phrase «police negligence»</td>
<td>7,16</td>
<td>3,347</td>
<td>-.886</td>
<td>-.801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’ve heard the phrase «judicial corruption»</td>
<td>7,36</td>
<td>3,399</td>
<td>-1,000</td>
<td>-.634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’ve heard that «the Government had to resort to the army»</td>
<td>6,97</td>
<td>3,469</td>
<td>-.390</td>
<td>-.342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’ve heard that «there were officials involved with»organized crime»</td>
<td>8,42</td>
<td>2,553</td>
<td>-1,796</td>
<td>2,173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you heard that «senior officials of the Government died»</td>
<td>8,13</td>
<td>2,786</td>
<td>-1,468</td>
<td>.962</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four factors were obtained with a value KMO = .697, through the test of sphericity of Bartlett = 364,279 with 66 degrees of freedom and a significance of .00. The first component explained the 26.24% of variance, the second component explained 14.76%, the third explained 13.99% and the fourth component explained 8.35%. The criteria to include reagents, was the factorial higher weight of .300.

Results

The correlation analysis was conducted to establish the strength of association between the perceptual variable. The criterion to include the factors in the following multivariate analysis was the value of the statistical r of Pearson and the significance (probability less than .05).

In order of appearance relations are analyzed between perceptual factors (see table 3).

Mediated Perception of police action ↔ mediated perception of government action. The statistical correlation (r = .516; p < .001) indicates a strength of positive association between two variables. Namely that to the extent that increases a value of perception of public insecurity through the media also increases the value of the representation of the action of the Government. This indicates that the media perception can influence the perception of the authorities.

Perception of police action media ↔ mediated perception of police action. The strength of Association between the variables (r = .167; p > .05) indicates a high correlation that can be interpreted as: major media hearing means higher will be the perception of the intervention of the authorities. However, having one significance greater than .05 indicates a spurious relationship preventing its inclusion in the analysis of regression.
Table 2
Validity of perceptual factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor(s)/Reagents</th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
<th>Factor 3</th>
<th>Factor 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perception of police action (alpha,60)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police monitors your street</td>
<td>0.437</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>-0.094</td>
<td>0.069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police has captured some criminal in his colony</td>
<td>0.314</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>-0.226</td>
<td>-0.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A patrol through their neighborhood</td>
<td>0.502</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>-0.076</td>
<td>0.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Public insecurity (alpha,64)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you been aware of an assault on a business</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>0.443</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>-0.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have been witness of a theft from a passerby</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>0.507</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>0.223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have observed a suspect in your neighbor’s House</td>
<td>0.136</td>
<td>0.459</td>
<td>0.288</td>
<td>0.034</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3
Correlation between perceptual factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable(s)</th>
<th>Mediated perception of police action</th>
<th>Mediated perception of governmental action</th>
<th>Perception of police action</th>
<th>Perception of Public insecurity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mediated perception of police action</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediated perception of governmental action</td>
<td>0.516***</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of police action</td>
<td>0.167</td>
<td>0.231**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Public insecurity</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.261**</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Mediatic perception of police action ↔ perception of public insecurity. The statistic of Pearson Correlation. \( r = .002, p > .05 \) indicates a low ratio between what people see in the media and what experiences directly in their colony. This means that primetime media not necessarily has more experience in assaults or robberies. Also the probability of significance is low so the relationship of the following analysis was excluded.

Mediatic perception of government action ↔ perception of police action. Parameter of correlation \( r = .231; p < .01 \) indicates a strength of acceptable association which is insufficient for inclusion in the regression analysis since the relationship is significant. i.e., to the extent that people perceive the actions of the police through the media it associates the information with their personal experiences.

Perception of government action media ↔ perception of public insecurity. The relationship \( r = .261, p < .01 \) between these two perceptual variables was direct and significant so it is included in the multiple linear regression model. An increase in the values of the information perceived in the media corresponds to another increase in the values that established the direct perception of insecurity.

Perception of police action ↔ perception of public insecurity. The strength of Association \( r = .023; p > .05 \) between both perceptual variable indicates an insufficient relationship for inclusion in the model of regression. Seems to be personal experiences of the actions of the authorities do not have a direct correspondence with the perception of insecurity.

Analysis of multiple linear regressions with the technique of successive steps was made to establish ground, direct, positive and significant relations between the perceptual variables (see Figure 2).

Mediatic perception of police action ↔ perception of public insecurity. The parameter of regression \( \beta = -.17; p > .05 \) showed a relationship with a direct, negative and not significant effect, among the first independent variable on the dependent variable or criterion. This finding indicates that the prevention and intervention of the policy released in the media does not explain the perception around the assault on business, theft from passers-by and House room.

![Figure 2. The determinants of public insecurity perception](image-url)
Perception of police action ↔ perception of public insecurity. The regression parameter ($\beta = -.03; p > .05$) showed a direct, negative and non-significant relation, between the second independent variable over the dependent variable or criterion. The prevention of crime by the police doesn’t explain the perceived insecurity.

Mediatic perception of governmental action ↔ perception of public insecurity. The regression parameter ($\beta = .36; p < .001$) indicated a direct positive and significant relation, between the third independent variable over the dependent variable or criterion. The perceived insecurity is caused by the perception of police actions through the media.

The model ($R = .994; R^2 = .891; R^2$ajustada = .890 and standard error = 2.94) explained 89% of criterion balance.

Conclusion

The information around police actions spread through the media influences in the perception of public insecurity in Mexico City.

Studies on uncertainty and insecurity have advanced in the prediction of risk preventive behavior. From valuation variables, perceptual, evaluative and attitudinal explanatory models of the impact of the risks on the behavior have been established. Perceptions of risk and the perceptions of utility have been the determinants of citizen participation (mobilizations and elections). Derivatives of both perceptual dimensions, this study established the causal relationship among four factors (police action, Government action, mediated action and public insecurity), of the perception of risk. Through a model the effect of mediated perception on the perception of insecurity was established. However, the inclusion of valuation, evaluative variables, attitudinal and intentional will allow to configure a more comprehensive model that explains the cognitive dimension of uncertainty and security as main features of societies in which the mass media increasingly have influence in the sectors. These claims are then discussed.

In the transmission and processing of advertising and publicity in order to explicitly persuade or dissuade the citizens to participate, the media obtained the privilege to connect to the economic, political and social elites with the citizens. This media power was deregulated by the State and was used as an instrument of conflict and social change.

In Mexico, the media are not only intermediaries of the structuring conflict, they are more a social, political and economic actor in asymmetrical relationships that are built in the country. This role of the media involves a direct confrontation with the State, the political elite and the institutions of law enforcement and justice for the attention and support of the citizens.

References


