Structural Equation Modeling of Terrorism Perception: New Correlates of Perception Formation

by Niyazi Ekici and Huseyin Akdogan

Abstract

Terrorism perceptions are significant factors in determining social and political policy responses. It has been shown by previous research that most perceptions become cognitive in individuals at an early age. This article describes an empirical study testing potential correlates of the formation of terrorism perceptions on a large sample size of high school students from Turkey. Using advanced statistical techniques, we found a structural equation model of which external powers and religion are the major factors in the formation of terrorism perceptions. These findings confirm previous perception control variables and extend them with new contributing factors. Replications in other countries are suggested.

Keywords: Turkey, terrorism perception, religion, risk perception, external powers

Previous Research

Psychological roots and potential impacts of terrorism have driven the research of many terrorism scholars in the field, especially after the tragic attacks in the United States and Europe in the last two decades. Despite the difficulties in collecting individual-level incident-based terrorism data, [1] public opinion polls and other surveys about the detrimental psychological effects of terrorism [2] began to be widely utilized.[3] Perceptions of the public in general, and politicians in particular are important factors for counterterrorism policy making. Therefore, fear of terrorism has been frequently explored by terrorism researchers and psychologists.[4] The literature provides extensive research about exposure to terrorist incidents and the resulting fear that often causes post-traumatic stress disorders and other psychological effects.[5] The relevant literature indicates that individuals who are vulnerable to terrorism have a higher likelihood of detrimental effects on their life activities compared to less exposed groups.[6] While some of the research indicates negative effects on everyday life activities such as work,[7] other research findings interestingly found that exposure to terrorism can be a less likely predictor of reactive distress.[8]

Many factors seem to have an impact on terrorism perception, one of which is gender differences. Nellis [9] found that females are more likely to have a fear of terrorism, sensitizing behaviors, and a higher tendency to look for information regarding responding to terrorism. An empirical study conducted in Pakistan found statistically significant results indicating that females experience more anxiety of death in comparison to males. [10] Goodwin, Willson, and Stanley’s study [11] conducted in London, UK, found that women with high benevolence values and those with concerned family and friends were more likely to perceive a higher terrorism threat. In Aricak, Bekici, Siyahhan, and Martinez’s study, [12] almost all females believed that terrorism could be eradicated; however, only 58.2% of their male counterparts shared this belief. Women perceived terrorism as posing a greater threat to themselves and fellow Canadians than did men in Lemyre’s study.[13] Women reported worrying more frequently about terrorism and thought more frequently about all types of terrorism scenarios, with the exception of hostage situations and bombings. Abdullah, Sukma, Jamhari, and Musa [14] determined that males tend to be more aggressive in their attitudes toward terrorism than females. Overall, studies predominantly confirm higher levels of fear of terrorism existing among females.[15]

Education also proved to be a determinant factor in how terrorism is perceived. Lemyre and her colleagues [16] reported that respondents with a higher level of educational attainment more often turned for information to university scientists, and less to friends and relatives. Shen and Liu’s study [17] concluded that respondents who were older and more knowledgeable of terrorism also relied more heavily on traditional sources of
information. Similarly, Farner and Notaro [18] evaluated the effectiveness of a college course about terrorist attacks and preparedness activities. The study found that students’ awareness of the potential of terrorist attacks increased following the course, as well as their knowledge of the procedures put in place by the state to deal with terrorist attacks. It was further found that students became more willing to abide by the rules set down by their university in the event of a terrorist incident. Those with a lower level of education perceive a higher threat of terrorism and are more likely to fear terrorism than those with a higher educational background. [19] With regard to consequences, those with higher education levels reported thinking more about a lowered sense of security and economic loss; those with a lower level of education thought more about the loss of a loved one or their job. In addition to education, race and occupation also play a role in determining how acts of terrorism are perceived. [20]

In addition to the role of age and knowledge of terrorism as relevant factors in perceptions, [21] it was found that perceptions of terrorism change over time. Lemyre, Turner, Lee, and Krewski’s study in Canada [22] illustrated that younger respondents are more frequently worried about computer viruses and hostage situations, while older respondents were more frequently concerned with dirty bombs. Compared with younger respondents, older respondents also perceived terrorism as a greater threat. As a study of Turkish elementary students revealed, the perception of terrorism is at the lowest level at an early age, and even then only covers basic knowledge of terrorist attacks. [23]

Terror incidents have many adverse effects on civilian populations; however, the most vulnerable groups are children and older youth who are perceived as at-risk groups. Research on children who were exposed to terrorism indicates severe psychological deficits in later years of their lives. [24] For example, Malik and his colleagues [25] found, based on a study of two Pakistani youth groups from two different cities, that exposure to terrorism or the perceived risk of terrorism affects the lives of young people. Governments and policy makers’ efforts to eliminate or lessen such risks are critical not only for the prevention of post-traumatic disorders and other psychological consequences, but also for averting potential recruitment into terrorist organizations. In this regard, Yaya’s work [26] pointed out several governmental programs that aim to reach out to vulnerable Turkish youth who were on the brink of joining terrorist organizations at an early age.

Based on the literature referred to above, one major question emerges: what are the correlates of terrorism perceptions among youth? Focusing on early ages, which are critical in the formation of terrorism perceptions, many studies have been conducted about the formation of terrorism perceptions of high school and university population. Shen and Liu [27] conducted a study that evaluated the perceptions of terrorism among Chinese students, centered upon how students gained knowledge about terrorism, their evaluation of terrorist organizations, Chinese foreign policy, and the United States. The students’ perceptions of terrorism were examined along three different dimensions: cognitive, affective and evaluative, and foreign policy dimensions. This study revealed that what Chinese students knew about terrorism came from official media. Abdullah, Sukma, Jamhari, and Musa [28] conducted a similar study in Malaysia, examining support for terrorism and their government’s policy. Factors that were found to be correlated with higher support for terrorism and aggressive attitudes were deeper interest in politics, higher level of religiosity, dissatisfaction with the government, and media reporting. With regard to foreign policy, it was concluded that the majority of the respondents were favorable toward their country’s national and foreign policies and exhibited a positive perception of the United States. Al-Ameri’s survey [29] on college students found that the vast majority of them agreed with the United States government’s response to terrorism. Al-Ameri also reported that university students recognize “terrorism as a problem”; but the students did not believe action on their part was necessary to eradicate terrorism. Similarly, Chen and Noriega’s [30] study on students, faculty, and staff from the University of Tennessee indicated that faculty and staff are more likely to fear terrorist attacks than students. On the other hand, students tended to feel less comfortable at security check-points in airports as a result of measures introduced since the 9/11 attacks. In a study comparing perceptions of terrorism of American versus international students, Scorzelli [31] found that the majority of students believed that terrorism (in general) could be resolved; however, only 32.7% of respondents were American students. The reasons for this disbelief in the possibility of conflict resolution were lack of tolerance (either in themselves or the other party) and the strength of religious convictions. International
students were found to be more optimistic about resolving terrorism-related conflicts.

Apparently, each terrorist attack leaves many negative memories in the minds of the public. Research conducted by Pelletier and Drozda-Senkowska [33] investigated the relationship between terrorist threat perception, behavioral changes, and the social sharing of emotions in the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attack in France. The extent of the social sharing of emotions decreased from the initial time of the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attack in France to the next attack. More interestingly, this research revealed that terrorist threat perception has not decreased across time at the personal or collective level. As for changes in behavior, 64.4% of participants reported some change one week following the attack, and 81.5% one month later. Denovan, Dagnall, Drinkwater, Parker, and Clough [34] assessed the perception of risk and levels of terrorism-related behavior change with regard to people's thinking style and found that scores on probabilistic reasoning tasks most strongly predicted perception of risk. An intuitive thinking style was the best explanation for terrorism-related behavioral change. Behavior change in this study was found to be in connection to travel habits (i.e., using public transportation or airplanes) and avoidance of cities. Rubaltelli and colleagues [35] investigated the impact of exposure to terrorism-related pictures on psychological processes and studied whether media exposure interacts with environmental sensitivity and psychophysiological reactivity to explain people's risk perception. Their research indicated that some people were more affected by exposure to terrorism-related pictures than others, depending on individual differences in environmental sensitivity and stress response. Further findings from Pelletier and Drezda-Senkowska [36] suggest that terrorist threat perception remains stable at both the collective and personal level for up to two months following an attack. Peleg and Mass-Friedman's study [37], based on a large sample of high school and university students from Israel, revealed that terrorism perception is significantly related to post-traumatic stress and some exogenous variables such as media viewing. Their research found that younger respondents were more likely to have higher levels of stress due to exposure to terrorist events coverage in the media.

**Method**

Despite such findings in the existing literature, there is, in fact, little in-depth research on the formation of terrorism perception. Most studies rely on few control variables except those relating to foreign policy reactions or perceptions of other states (external powers). There are, however, many other factors that might affect one's understanding and perception of terrorism, one of which is religion. To our knowledge, this vital element of perception formation is unfortunately not empirically tested prospectively. In addition, assessing risks and states' foreign policies in regard to future terrorist attacks are other significant factors on perceptions. Thus, central to the research resulting in this article was the question: what are the correlates of terrorism perception at a person's early age? This main research question has three sub-categories: religion, perceived risks, and external powers, whereby the latter is related to a state's foreign policies and perceptions of hostile states towards the homeland of respondents. To this end, a survey instrument for high school students was developed and tested on a large sample of young people from Turkey, to determine empirically supported modeling of terror perception formation.

**Participants**

The sample included a total of 1,088 participants from 9th grade (54.7%) and 12th grade (45.3%) high school students, consisting of 58.4% males and 41.6% females. The survey was conducted in five different types of high schools in Ankara; Anatolian High Schools (31.6%), Industrial High Schools (12.5%), Religious Vocational High Schools (27.9%), Vocational High Schools (7.3%) and Private High Schools (20.7%). Most of the respondents were born in Ankara (63.4%), while 36.5% of them were born in other cities of Turkey. In terms of geographical allocation of the respondents' birthplaces, only 10.5% of the respondents were born in the East or Southeast of Turkey, where terrorism events have been more intense than in other parts of the country. Most of the respondents had 2 or 3 siblings (34.7% for each), while 17.2% had four or more siblings.
Slightly more than half of the respondents (51.1%) said they did not play violent games. However, almost 4/5 of them (79.6%) sometimes or frequently watched violent movies. Most of the students (78.3%) also sometimes or frequently watched news about terrorism. More than half of the respondents (61.2%) talked sometimes or frequently about terrorism with their friends. Similarly, 72.9% of the respondents talked about terrorism with their family members. A closer percentage (78.2%) of the respondents said they took advice from their families about terrorism. Slightly more than half of the respondents (56.9%) did not receive any education about terrorism at school.

**Instruments**

The questionnaire was constructed specifically for this study. The *religion-terrorism perception questionnaire* was constructed to evaluate the extent of the perception of religion and terrorism. Participants were asked to report the extent of their perception on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 to 5 (1 = Totally disagree to 5 = Totally agree). Thus, the higher score means that the respondents thought that there is no place for terrorism in religion, or that religions do not support terrorism. We can also conceptualize this score using the famous saying, “terrorism has no religion”.

The *external powers-terrorism perception questionnaire* was constructed for this study to evaluate the perception of students about the role of external powers and terrorism. External power references are used by government elites in Turkey when confronted with terrorism, corruption, as well as other scandals. A three-item questionnaire was adapted for the present study to evaluate the perceptions of students about external powers and terrorism. This questionnaire asked respondents to indicate to what degree they believe that external powers feed terrorism (e.g., external powers support terrorism, protect terrorists, and finance terrorist organizations). Participants responded on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 to 5 (1 = Totally disagree to 5 = Totally agree). Lower scores represented a low level of perception about the role of external powers in support of terrorism.

The *questionnaire on risk perception related to terrorism* was also constructed specifically for the present study. Participants were again asked to report on the basis of a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 to 5, regarding the degree they perceive risk of a terrorist attack in the near future (1 = Totally disagree to 5 = Totally agree). Thus, the higher the score, the greater was the extent of risk perception related to an act of terrorism.

**Procedures**

The study was conducted in 2015 in Ankara, Turkey’s capital city. A formal request to conduct the study was submitted to the District Directorate of the Ministry of Education, and, following receipt of official approval, purposive sampling of schools was initiated. Then, in coordination with each school, one 9th grade class and one 12th grade class were surveyed. All the participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality in writing and by verbal communication. All questionnaires were filled out in Turkish. We collected the data from students at five high schools (N = 1088). More than half of the students (54.7%) were junior, and 45.3% of them were senior high school students at the time of data collection. The response percentage of samples was 83.70 (1088 out of 1300).

**Results**

**Factor Analysis**

We conducted an explanatory factor analysis (EFA) for the analysis of 15 questions about terrorism. The results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) analysis yielded that the sample is large enough for this type of analysis (KMO = 0.737; χ² = 2625.718, p < 0.001). Based on the eigenvalues, only three components have eigenvalues higher than one; these four components explain 53.47% of the variation. These three components were labeled:
perception about religion, perception about external powers, and risk perception. Then, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to examine the hypothesized factor structure of these three components.

As indicated above, using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from “totally disagree” to “totally agree,” respondents were asked to indicate their perception about religion and terrorism. The figure below shows the CFA model to validate the measurement model of this latent construct for the perception of religion and terrorism, using AMOS 18 statistical software.

**Figure 1. CFA Model for Religion Perception**

![CFA Model for Religion Perception](image)

Critical ratios that help us identify statistically significant and insignificant items in the model were examined. The fifth factor, “religion5,” had a lower ratio than 1.96, which indicated a statistically insignificant relationship at .05 level. The factor loading for this indicator was also lower than the threshold level of Malthouse’s cutoff value of 0.3. Thus, indicator-5 was removed from the model (Figure 1.).

The goodness of fit statistics for the revised model for religion indicated excellent fit of the measurement model ($\chi^2 = 7.075; x^2/df = 2.358; SRMR = .015; RMSEA = .035; CFI = .99; NFI = .99$).

External powers were conceptualized as a latent construct to measure the respondents’ perception of the role of external powers in terrorism (Figure 2). It has three indicators and all of them were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale from “totally agree” to “totally disagree.” The model below was subjected to confirmatory factor analysis. Fit statistics for the model indicated excellent fit of the measurement model to the data ($\chi^2 = 9.332; x^2/df = 4.666; SRMR = .025; RMSEA = .058; CFI = .98; NFI = .98$). All the factor loadings for the indicators were higher than the level of Malthouse’s cutoff value of 0.3.
Risk perception was conceptualized as a latent construct to measure the respondents’ perception of being under a potential terrorism risk. It has five indicators, and all of them were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale from “totally agree” to “totally disagree.” The model below (Figure 3.) was subjected to confirmatory factor analysis. Fit statistics for the model indicated excellent fit of the measurement model to the data ($\chi^2 = 5.178; \frac{\chi^2}{df} = 1.726; \text{SRMR} = .013; \text{RMSEA} = .026; \text{CFI} = .99; \text{NFI} = .99$). All the factor loadings for the indicators were higher than the level of Malthouse's cutoff value of 0.3.

Variance Analysis

The data consist of some demographic characteristics of the respondents, which will not be included in the SEM analysis because of being structured as groups. Variance analysis is considered to measure the differences between these groups. Grade, gender, place of birth and geographic district have two groups and was examined in t-test analysis. School type has five groups and was examined in ANOVA analysis.

t-test analysis for grade yielded as result that there were no significant differences between 9th grade and 12th grade students in terms of their risk perception regarding terrorism. The risk perception average score for both grades were 3.31 and 3.33 on the five-point Likert-type scale. However, the analysis yielded two significant results: the perception of students about religion and terrorism significantly differed according to their grades ($p = 0.000$). Students in the 12th grade had higher mean scores than the 9th grade students. The higher score about religion and terrorism means that religions were perceived as not approving terrorism. The second significant difference based on the t-test results was the perception of the role of external powers in terrorism ($p = 0.000$). A higher score means that external powers were perceived as supporting terrorism. While students in the 9th grade showed few perceptions regarding the negative role of external powers, students in the 12th grade agreed more with the idea that external powers were supporting terrorism.
The perception of high school students on religion and terrorism and their perception of risk did not significantly differ based on the respondents’ gender. However, their perception of external powers differed ($p = 0.001$). Male students had higher mean scores than female students when it came to the perceived support of external powers in terrorism. $t$-test analysis revealed that the perception of high school students on the issues discussed here did not significantly differ based on their place of birth and their hometown.

As mentioned earlier, this study was conducted in five different types of schools in Ankara: Anatolian High Schools, Industrial High Schools, Religious Vocational High Schools, Vocational High Schools, and Private High Schools. To determine the mean score differences of students from these schools about religion, external powers and risk perceptions, a one-way ANOVA analysis was conducted. Depending on the results, there was at least one statistically significant difference in the religion and external powers scales ($F_{4/1083} = 7.911$, $p < 0.001$ and $F_{4/1083} = 7.889$, $p < 0.001$ respectively). Games Howell post hoc test results showed that the mean score for Anatolian High School students’ score on the religion scale was significantly lower than the Religious Vocational High School and Private High School students’ mean scores. The highest mean score on the religion scale belonged to students at Religious Vocational Schools. This means that students at the Religious High Schools believe more strongly that terrorism has no religion.

In terms of the external powers scale, the highest mean score also belonged to students of Religious Vocational High Schools, while the lowest mean score belonged to Vocational High Schools for girls. While the students of Religious High Schools mostly agreed with the notion that external powers were feeding terrorism, the students of Vocational High Schools for girls had generally no idea about the possible role of external powers and terrorism.

**Structural Equation Model**

For the conceptual model, the estimated structural equation model is presented in the figure below (Figure 4.). The hypothesized structural equation model was developed after confirming the measurement models of the latent variables in the first step. Two exogenous latent variables (perception about religion and perception about external powers) and an endogenous variable (risk perception) were used to establish a generic structural equation model. This generic model also included a number of control variables: demographic characteristics of the respondents and others; grade, gender, number of siblings, dummy coded violent games, dummy coded
violent movies, dummy coded terror news, dummy coded chat in family, dummy coded chat about terrorism, dummy coded advice, and dummy coded in-class briefing.

The initial SEM analysis model did not fit well. Modification indices were examined to improve the model's fit. Modification indices required to correlate error terms to improve the model fit further. One path at a time between error terms was added to a model based on logical and theoretical considerations, and the modification indices reexamined again until reaching the best fitting model. The revised model yielded considerable improvement at the goodness of fit statistics. Results show that the revised model provided a good fit to the data ($\chi^2/df = 1.994$, SRMR = .015, RMSEA = .030, CFI = .958, NFI = .922, TLI = .933). Table 1 provides the parameter estimates for the revised model. It shows the parameter estimates of risk perception and the mediating variables, perception about religion, and perception about external powers.

### Table 1. Parameter Estimates for Structural Equation Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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Note: ***Correlation significant @ p ≤ .001, **Correlation significant @ p ≤ .05. R.W. = Regression Weights, S.R.W. = Standardized Regression Weights, S.E. = Standard Error, C.R. = Critical Ratio.
The number of siblings in the family has a significant positive relationship with perception about religion ($\beta = 0.162$, $p \leq .001$). The more siblings the respondents have, the more they have a positive perception of religion. These respondents think that terrorism has no religion and that religions do not support terrorism. The other significant variable related to religion was the grade ($\beta = 0.116$, $p \leq .05$). The grade is a variable that has two categories: 9th grade and 12th grade. Based on these categories, students from the 12th grade had more positive perceptions than 9th grade students regarding the role of religion. The last significant result for the religion dimension was chat in family about terrorism issues ($\beta = 0.09$, $p \leq .05$). Students who talked about terrorism in their family had more positive perceptions of the (non-)role of religion than students who never talked about terrorism in their family circle. It can be inferred that family chats about terrorism created a more positive perception of religion. These students believe that religion does not feed terrorism, and that there is no place for terrorism in religion (Islam).

The other latent variable in this study was the perception of external powers and feeding terrorism. The grade is the common significant variable for both religion and external powers ($\beta = 0.139$, $p \leq .001$). Students from the 12th grade have a more positive perception than the 9th grade students about a causal relationship between external powers involvement and terrorism. They did think that external powers support terrorism. Gender is another significant variable ($\beta = 0.095$, $p \leq .05$). Male students have a more positive perception than female students. Male students thought that external powers feed terrorism. Talking about terrorism with friends and family also had a positive effect on attributing a negative role to external powers. ($\beta = 0.169$, $p \leq .001$; $\beta = 0.078$, $p \leq .05$ respectively). Additionally, talking about terrorism with friends and family members was also affecting students’ perception of external powers as a source of terrorism. These kinds of perceptions—blaming external powers for varying cosmic evils are also reflecting the propaganda of the Turkish government and mainstream media.

The two external latent variables in this study were religion and external powers. These two external variables showed a significant relationship ($\beta = 0.396$, $p \leq .001$). Students who were of the opinion that religion does not support terrorism also held that external powers were supporting terrorism.

The endogenous variable in this study was risk perception. Average risk perception related to terrorism among high school students was 3.33 over 5 (5 indicating the highest point for terrorism-related risk). Based on the results of the SEM analysis, students who watched news about terrorism have higher risk perceptions than students who did not watch the news. This relationship is statistically significant ($\beta = 0.081$, $p \leq .05$). The other variables that significantly affected the risk perception were perceptions about religion and the role of external powers ($\beta = 0.144$, $p \leq .001$; $\beta = 0.321$, $p \leq .001$ respectively). The more students in the sample had positive perceptions of religion and the negative role of external powers, the higher these students perceived risks related to terrorism. In other words, students who thought there was no place for terrorism in religion perceived a high level of risk related to terrorism. Moreover, students who thought that external powers were the sources of terrorism perceived a high level of risk related to terrorism. Figure 4 depicts the structural equation model.
Discussion and Conclusions

This empirical study found several statistically significant correlates of terrorism perception among junior and senior high school students in Turkey’s capital. In sum, this research concludes with the four findings related to the previous studies.

First, as mentioned in the literature, there is a change of perception of terrorism over time.[38] Age was found to be a significant variable when it comes to terrorism perception. Older students score higher averages of terrorism disapproval in line with their religion. Simultaneously, senior students were found to have a more powerful notion of the impact of foreign policy on terrorism compared to juniors. This finding also confirms results of previous research.[39]

Second, unlike previous research, we found that gender is not a statistically significant correlate of terrorism perception, the exception being that male students believed more strongly in foreign (external) powers’ support for terrorism inside Turkey. Despite the predominantly supportive evidence regarding female fear and anxiety of terrorism,[40] the present study found no statistically significant differences between males and females. We grant that many respondents in our study may not have had a full understanding of international relations, the interests of other states, as well as the role of their own country and other factors related to this variable. This is likely due to their level of education and their young age. However, it is equally likely that the government and the media’s use of external powers as a scapegoat for ‘explaining’ failures in internal and external politics has a statistically significant impact on terrorism perceptions of Turkish people, including the young.[41]

Third, religion has a statistically significant impact on terrorism perception. Youth from parochial high schools have a better understanding of the relationship between ideology (Islamic belief system) and terrorism. These students, however, become more conservative in their view of the state’s foreign policies. Older students have
more positive terrorism perception of ‘no place of terrorism in my religion (Islam).’ This finding contradicts with Abdullah and his colleagues’ study that was conducted in another Muslim country, Malaysia.[42] Youth in Turkey seem to be more moderate and less aggressive regarding foreign power perceptions. Chatting with family members at home and the number of siblings in the family were statistically positively correlated with religion and terrorism perception.

Fourth, viewing violent games and movies does not have a statistically significant impact on the perception of terrorism;[43] however, watching the news about terrorism increases the risk perception of future terror attacks/incidents. This is a clear confirmation of Peleg and Mass-Friedman’s study[44] conducted in Israel. Though our study did not directly test exposure to terrorist attacks, Turkish students’ perceived risk of future attacks was not found to be an issue. Considering Turkey is a country with one of the highest risk and number of terror incidents in the world, this finding conflicts with some of the previous research.[45]

Despite holding limitations of survey research and limitations of our convenience samples that may not represent the general population of the study country, this research contributes largely to the previous implications that speak out on the psychology of terrorism and their communication with the targeted populations.[46] Perceptions—the focus of this study—are important factors in combatting violent extremism and radicalization since these perceptions become cognitive at an early age, and later impact our decisions and behaviors. Therefore, large-scale tests on larger samples can give insights for effective policy implications in the future. This study also strongly suggests replications in other countries for more generalizable findings. Not only general public perceptions, but also the perceptions of law enforcement officials can be tested for broader policy implications. Considering that publicity is one of the primary purposes of terrorists,[47] it is also becoming a major factor in forming our/one’s perceptions. Thus, variables tested in this study, such as news about terrorism, chat about terrorism in class or in a family setting, potential terror attacks from other countries, and religious views on terrorism are proven to be statistically significant contributors to our perception formations. Terrorism is a form of psychological warfare—a means to an end. Thus, risk awareness to prevent future attacks, increasing citizen vigilance, and religion need to be earnestly considered by the policy makers and other stakeholders.

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Notes


[2] Susan Brandon, and Andrew Silke, “Near- And Long-Term Psychological Effects of Exposure to Terrorist Attacks”; in: Psychology


