Perception of personal Security on the Example of Poland and Austria

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Original Article

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Abstract:

The article presents an analysis of quantitative and qualitative research carried out on a sample (N = 163) of Polish and Austrian citizens using the direct testing method. The subjective assessment of the sense of security was used in the study. Statistical analysis using the chi-square test revealed that Polish citizens assess their public security at the satisfactory level. Yet, in the public space, regardless of the region of the country, minor forms of social pathology appear many times. The obtained data is to be treated as a pilot study that can be continued on a wider group of respondents.

Introduction

The way people perceive security often results from their ability to observe the world and perceive events. As a result, security means satisfying people's own needs and freedom from fear as well as the certainty that emerging threats will be minimized by institutions established for this purpose. Security issues emerge in many different areas of human life sciences, including economics and political science. Security is broadly defined as an objective state of non-threat that is subjectively felt by individuals or groups (Korzeniowski, 2000, Urbanek, 2015). This definition covers two perspectives of understanding security - objective, related to external, objective factors that are important for a safe and active life, and subjective, related to an individual, subjective assessment of the state of possession or availability of basic goods, and related to experience.

The content of the article was conceptualized on the basis of a review of the literature and quantitative research of the authors carried out using a questionnaire on the personal sense of security perceived through the prism of public and spatial security as a result of the observed pathological social behaviors. occurring with varying intensity in their places of residence.

Personal security and public safety

Contemporary man deals with sudden problems created by the civilization of the surrounding world, experiencing a military, ecological or moral threat. But every man wants to be safe, to have a sense of security (A. Pieczywok, 2011, p. 130). Karen Horney claims that the need for security is the main motivation that directs the way of life and activity of a person (K. Horney, 2007). Security is one of the basic needs of every human being. It is a state that provides a sense of existence and guarantees its preservation, as well as gives a chance for improvement. The American psychologist Abraham Maslow, placing security at the second level in terms of needs, proved that if this need is not satisfied, it is impossible to feel and meet higher-order needs (K. Zaremba, D. Zbroszczyk, 2016, p. 166). Still another view of security is presented by N. Ferguson, who considers security "as the main need of man and the institutions he creates, because it is related to the social and civilization development of man in various historical periods and cultural conditions in which the subject of security functioned" (N. Ferguson 2013, p. 392; after: D. Zbroszczyk, 2019. p. 30.).

One cannot speak of security outside the subjective context (in relation to "someone"), because the personalistic dimension emphasizes the importance of subjectivity. The subject of subjectivity is taken up by Marian Cieślarczyk, noting that "(...) security cannot be analyzed without reference to a specific entity" (M. Cieślarczyk, 2014, p. 41). Subjectivity is identified with the conscious shaping of reality, transforming it in the direction consistent with one's own needs. The general sense of personal security in literature (Baar-Tal and Jacobsen 1998, Bańka 2002, Klamut 2012) is understood as a subjective state of belief in having sufficient resources to act. It is a state of internal balance resulting from having a certain (sufficient from the point of view of an individual) level of security (Klamut, 2014).

The objective dimension of security concerns phenomena that cause a state of uncertainty and fear. It covers actual threats and is rationally assessed. The subjective element of security refers to the feeling and perception of phenomena considered unfavorable or dangerous and focuses on their mental perception. Certainly, the perception of threat determines the overall level of security, contributing to a deeper understanding of it. (V.I. Ghebali, B. Sauerwein, 1995).

Results and discussion

Research project called *Sense of security* was carried out in Poland and Austria. The study used a simplified questionnaire of the Sense of security by Uchnasta (1990), which is used to assess the level of it. The questionnaire contains 30 questions. Four types of results are obtained in the study. General sense of security (Pb) and the results related to each security dimension. The first group includes "Sense of closeness": a sense of closeness with others, with the world, a feeling of being at home and a sense of separation, alienation and isolation. The second group "Sense of stability" includes: a sense of stability, order, and a sense of instability, randomness, chaos and anxiety. The third source of "Self-confidence" includes: a sense of self-confidence, self-affirmation, a sense of insecurity, intimidation, inferiority. The authors' concept was not to fully discuss

Fig. 1 Closeness Indicator (Bl) - For questions 1-9, preferred ranges 3 and 4; for question 10, the preferred ranges 0 and 1
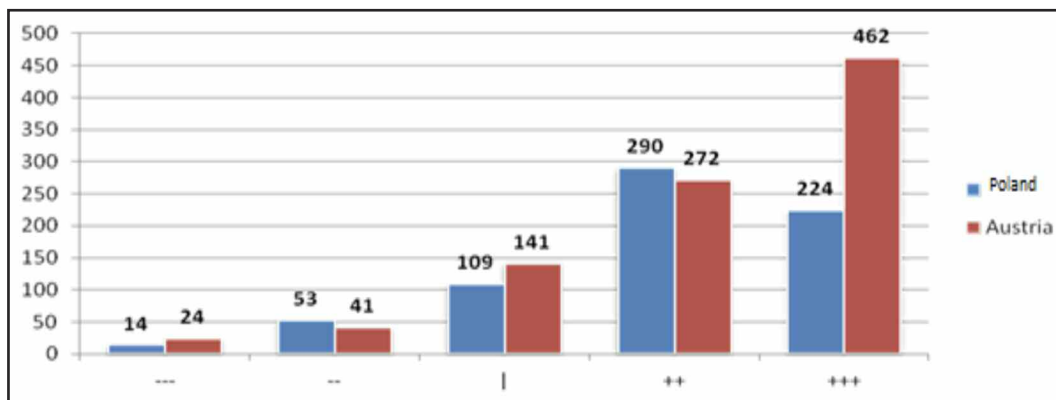
Fig. 2 Stability index (St) - preferred ranges 0 and 1 for questions 11-20; Therefore, in the conclusions, the scale must be reversed, positive answers are considered to be answers from the 0 and 1 scale; neutral ones on a scale of 2; negative ones refer to a scale of 3 and 4
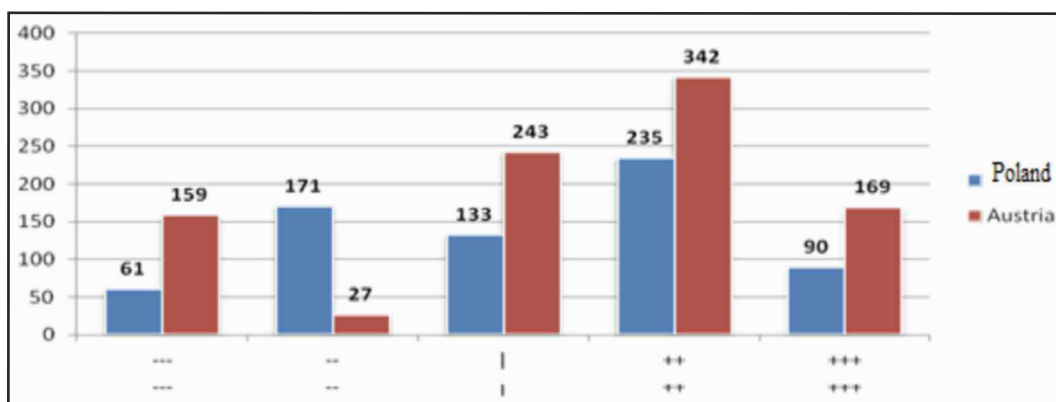
all dimensions of the sense of security, but only to indicate those that constitute a subjective assessment of this state. The following research problems have been identified in the work:

*1. Is there a difference between the respondents from Poland and Austria and their sense of closeness?*

2. Is there a difference between the respondents from Poland and Austria and their sense of stability?

3. Is there a difference between the respondents from Poland and Austria and their self-confidence?

The present-day society, often referred to as a risk society, must therefore face sudden and unexpected new situations and challenges, which bring with them threats of various nature. The emerging social threats have negative effects on various areas of social life and are dynamic and multidimensional in terms of various forms and strengths of influence.

When analyzing the closeness index (Bl), a repetition of the tendency from the components of the questions can be noticed. In the group "Poland" most of the respondents (approx. 42%) indicated the answer - "++", while in the group "Austria" most of the respondents (approx. 49%) indicated the answer "+++". If you compare the

Fig 3. Self-confidence indicator (Zs)
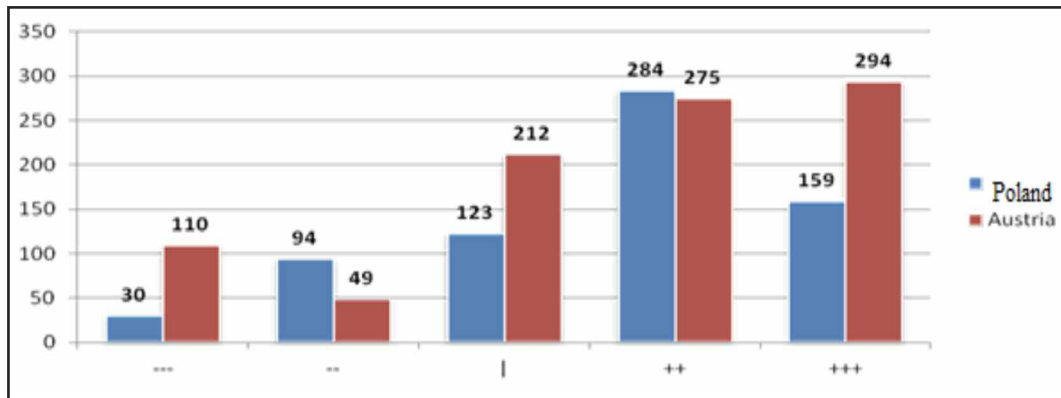
highest indicators on the scale (++ and +++), it should be noted that the group "Poland" indicated them approx. 74% (514 times selected positive levels), while the group "Austria" indicated them in approx. 78% of all selections (734 times selected positive levels). High results of the index indicate in both groups that the need for belonging and personal relationship with the immediate environment; a sense of closeness and openness to direct contacts with the environment are relatively well met. It should be emphasized that the "Austria" group has this indicator higher by approx. 4% of all indications (It is not worth comparing the number of indications, because the studied groups "Poland" and "Austria" are different in terms of numbers, and thus the percentage comparison is more appropriate).

When analyzing the stability index (St), a repetition of the tendency from the components of the questions can be noticed. In the group "Poland" the majority of respondents (approx. 34%) indicated the answer - "++", similarly in the group "Austria" most of the respondents (approx. 36%) indicated the answer "++". If you compare the highest indicators on the scale (++ and +++), it should be noted that the group "Poland" indicated them in approx. 47% (325 times selected positive levels), while the group "Austria" indicated them in approx. 54% of all selections (511 positive levels selected). High results of the index indicate in both groups that the need for safe functioning in everyday life; to ensure the orderly functioning, to predict and influence the course of events and matters in which

one participates are relatively well met. It should also be noted that in the group "Poland" approx. 25% of respondents indicated answers like "- (rather true)", while the group "Austria" indicated answers like "l (I'm not sure) ". Such a relatively high percentage of choice is associated with a sense of tension, instability, randomness, chaos and generalized anxiety, as well as a limited sense of security among the respondents.

When analyzing the self-confidence indicator (Zs), a repetition of the tendency from the components of the questions can be noticed. In the group "Poland" most of the respondents (approx. 41%) indicated the answer - "++", while in the group "Austria" most of the respondents (approx. 31%) indicated the answer "+++". If you compare the highest indicators on the scale (++ and +++), it should be noted that the group "Poland" indicated them in approx. 64% (443 times selected positive levels), while the group "Austria" indicated them in approx. 60% of all selections (569 positive levels selected). High results of the index indicate in both groups that relatively well satisfied are: the need for self-respect ; sense of competence, internal consistency, personal preferences and confidence in coping skills in life in a way that is right for you. It should also be noted that in the "Poland" group, approx. 18% of respondents indicated neutral responses "l (I am not sure) ", similar behaviors were revealed in the" Austria "group, where approx. 23% indicated neutral responses" l (I'm not sure) ". Such a relatively high percentage of choice is associated with the disclosure of features that affect the feel-

ing of insecurity, intimidation, discouragement, a sense of inferiority, tendencies to compulsively analyze one's own experiences.

The $\chi 2$ test was adopted to check whether the selection of given scale values depends on belonging to a given group: Poland (P) or Austria (A) in response to the research problem. It should be explained that the just noticed diversity of answers in multiple-choice questions (Q1 and Q2) has become a factor influencing the verification whether the choices of respondents are statistically determined by belonging to a given group: Poland (P) or Austria (A).

Tab. 1. Examination of the described dependences with the $\chi 2$ test

$$k = 0{,}05$$
$$\chi^2 = 74{,}669$$
$$\chi^2{}_1 = 9{,}488$$
Result: There is a dependency

$$k = 5$$
$$r = 2$$
C-Pearson = 0,2093
$$\mathbf{C_{max}} = 0{,}8008$$
$$\mathbf{C_{kor}} = 0{,}2614$$
Result: Weak correlation
$$\mathbf{T} = 0{,}1513$$
$$\mathbf{T^2} = 2{,}29\%$$

p-value= 0,000000
df= 4

V-Cramer's= 0,21403
Result: Weak connection
$$\chi^2 = 0{,}045809$$
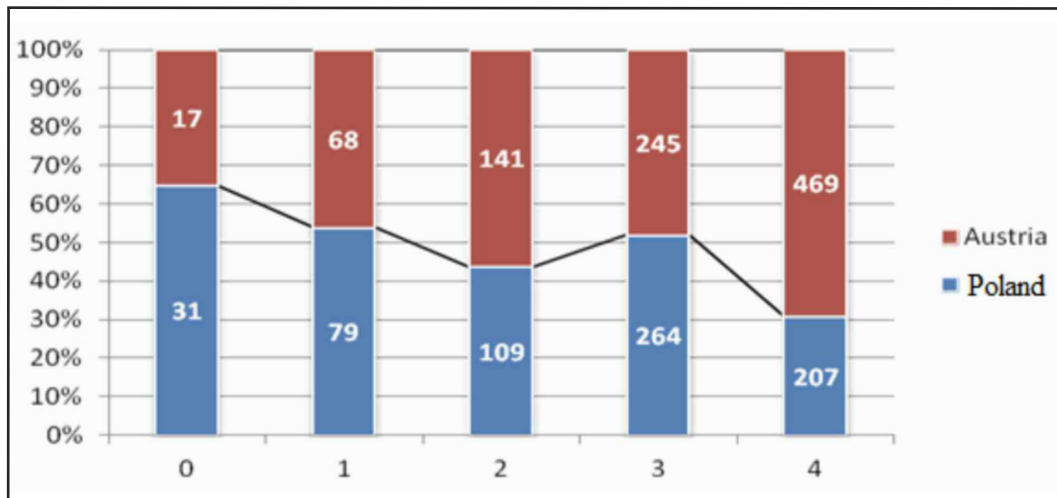$$\chi = 0{,}214031$$

Source: own elaboration

The data obtained in order to verify research problem 1 and 2 are presented in Table2.

Tab. 1 Closeness (BI) - $\chi 2$ test

		Levels					
		0	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**Total number**
	Poland	31	79	109	264	207	**690**
Country	**Austria**	17	68	141	245	469	**940**
	Total number	**48**	**147**	**250**	**509**	**676**	**1630**

Source: own elaboration

Fig. 4 Closeness (BI) - $\chi 2$ test

Source: own elaboration

Tab. 2 Stability (St) - χ2 test

		Levels					
		0	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**Total number**
Country	**Poland**	90	235	133	171	61	**690**
	Austria	161	331	259	25	164	**940**
	Total number	**251**	**566**	**392**	**196**	**225**	**1630**

Examination of the described dependencies with the χ2 test.

Tab. 2. Examination of the described dependences with the χ2 test

$k =$ 0,05

$\chi^2 =$ 199,113

$\chi^2{}_1 =$ 9,488

Result: There is a depedency

$k =$ 5

$r =$ 2

C-Pearson = 0,3299

$C_{max} =$ 0,8008

$C_{kor} =$ 0,4120

Result: Mean correlation

T = 0,2471

T² = 6,11%

p-value= 0,000000

df= 4

V-Cramer's= 0,34951

Result: Moderate connection

$\chi^2=$ 0,122155

$\chi =$ 0,349507

Fig. 5 Stability (St) – test χ2

The data obtained in order to verify research problem 1 and 2 are presented in Table 3.

Examination of the described dependencies with the $\chi 2$ test

Tab. 3. Examination of the described dependences with the $\chi 2$ test

$$k = 0{,}05$$
$$\chi^2 = 78{,}745$$
$$\chi^2_1 = 9{,}488$$
Result: There is a depedency

$$k = 5$$
$$r = 2$$
$$\text{C-Pearson} = 0{,}2147$$
$$C_{max} = 0{,}8008$$
$$C_{kor} = 0{,}2681$$
Result: Weak correlation
$$T =$$
$$T^2 = 0{,}1554$$
$$2{,}42\%$$
$$\text{p-value} = 0{,}000000$$
$$df = 4$$

V-Cramer's=
Result: 0,21980
$$\chi^2 = \text{Weak connection}$$
$$\chi = 0{,}349507$$

Source: own elaboration

Psychologists pay attention to the personality determinants of a sense of security, which include:

- Permanent anxiety experienced in life accompanied by a feeling of danger
- Passive egocentrism- low self-esteem and critical evaluation from other people
- Low self-esteem or affective attitude towards oneself
- Tendency to engage in risky behavior

The above-mentioned conditions are only a signal of selected risk factors. They usually appear in interrelationships and are subject to various modifications.

Tab. 3 Self-confidence (Zs) - test $\chi 2$

		Levels					
		0	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**Total number**
	Poland	75	202	123	176	114	**690**
Country	**Austria**	140	208	212	116	264	**940**
	Total number	**215**	**410**	**335**	**292**	**378**	**1630**

Fig. 6 Self-confidence (Zs) - $\chi 2$ test
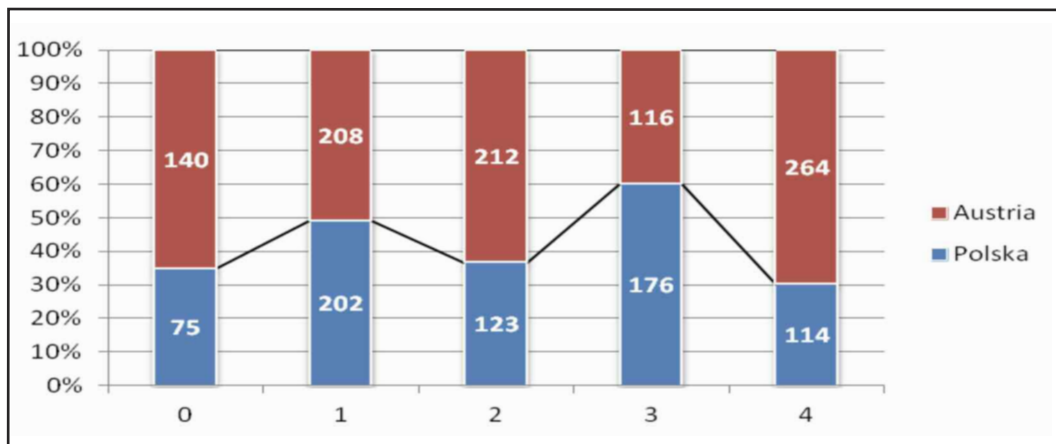
Source: own elaboration

Conclusions and implications

Bearing in mind the phenomena to which the psychosocial context of security relates, the article indicates the subjective dimension of security. The $\chi 2$ test was used examined whether there was a relationship between individual indicators and the respondents' country of origin. Despite the similarity with the previous tests, it should be emphasized here that marking 0 on the indicated scale did not always mean a negative answer. In all three indicators, the $\chi 2$ test detected a relationship between the group of respondents and their choices. In the first case, concerning the closeness indicator (Bl), weak correlations were detected. A similar correlation was found in the third self-confidence indicator (Zs). In the second indicator, i.e. stability (St), the calculated correlation was at the average level.

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