

Police Legitimacy and Community Policing in Slovenia¹

Gorazd Meško², Rok Hacin³

In democratic societies, police legitimacy is an essential element of citizens' voluntary compliance with authority. Drawing on the data from a survey of 1,022 citizens in Slovenia, this study examined the correlates of police legitimacy and citizens' preparedness to cooperate with the police and their support of community policing. Multivariate statistical analyses showed that feelings of obligation to obey, trust in the police, procedural justice, police effectiveness, relations with police officers, gender and age all influence police legitimacy. In turn, positive perceptions of police legitimacy and effectiveness, positive relations with police officers, feelings of obligation to obey, gender and higher levels of education influence preparedness to cooperate with the police. Finally, support of community policing was influenced by police legitimacy, police effectiveness, relations with police officers, gender and higher levels of education. The findings highlighted the importance of police legitimacy in ensuring citizens' cooperation and their support for community policing.

Keywords: legitimacy, police, community policing, Slovenia

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1 Introduction

Police rely on the assistance of the public to help control crime, by reporting crime and victimisation, assisting them in locating suspects and reporting suspicious behaviour (Reisig & Lloyd, 2009). To do so, citizens have to trust that the police have their best interest in mind. Tankebe (2014) argued that citizens who perceive the police as legitimate are in turn more inclined to accept police decisions and comply with directives, are more satisfied with police services and prepared to help the police, and more willing to act according to laws and other rules. Empirical evidence (e.g. Reisig et al. 2007; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler & Fagan 2008) confirmed the connection between police legitimacy and the aforementioned [desirable] outcomes.

Bottoms and Tankebe (2021) pointed to the dialogical nature of legitimacy shaped by the specific features of time and place in which they occur (i.e. social context). In con-

trast, the invariance hypothesis states that benefits associated with procedural justice as the process-based variable influencing police legitimacy (i.e. enhanced police legitimacy), are equivalent across a variety of individual, cultural and ecological factors (Reisig et al., 2021; Wolfe et al., 2016). Brown and Reisig (2019: 706) argued that the effect of fair legal processes transcends situations, time and space, however, Tyler and Nobo (2022) clearly stated that the invariance model has limits. Empirical support is mixed, with certain studies supporting the invariance of police procedural justice and legitimacy (e.g. Jackson et al., 2012; Zahnow et al., 2019), while others expose variations between citizens based on their individual characteristics and pre-existing experience with the police (e.g. Murphy, 2017; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003).

The purpose of the present study is to examine the predictors of police legitimacy on a representative sample of Slovenian residents, and to test the effect of perceived police legitimacy on residents' willingness to cooperate with the police and support for community policing. The study advances the literature on police legitimacy in the following ways. First, based on Bottoms and Tankebe's (2021) arguments on the influence of social context on legitimacy, a quantitative analysis of citizens' perceptions of police legitimacy in a Slovenian (former socialist) cultural environment is conducted on a national sample, testing the generalisation of the concepts of police legitimacy in a different cultural setting (Nelken, 2009). Moreover, as Meško and Hacin (2022) found, the invariance of police officers' self-legitimacy in Slovenia can be only partially supported (differences were identified between police of-

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² Gorazd Meško, Ph.D., Professor of Criminology, Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor, Slovenia.
E-mail: gorazd.mesko@um.si

³ Rok Hacin, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Criminology, Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor, Slovenia.
E-mail: rok.hacin@um.si

ficers in urban and rural areas), and a type of setting variable was introduced to test the possible differences in perceptions of police legitimacy in urban and rural areas. Second, due to the mixed empirical support for the impact of citizens' perceptions of police legitimacy on their cooperation with the police in non-western countries (e.g. Resig & Lloyd, 2009; Tankebe, 2009), the influence of police legitimacy and its correlates on cooperation with the police in Slovenia was tested. Finally, building on Tyler and Nobo's (2022) arguments on legitimacy-based policing, the effect of perceptions of police legitimacy on support for community policing was examined. This article proceeds as follows. First, a theoretical framework of police legitimacy and its correlates is delineated, followed by a short description of the characteristics of community policing in Slovenia. In the second part, methods for testing theoretical assumptions are described, and the results of selected statistical analyses are presented. Lastly, the findings on police legitimacy, cooperation with the police, and support for community policing are discussed.

2 Police legitimacy

The legitimacy of authority is based on legality (lawful behaviour), shared values (moral values that are present in the wider society) and consent (the moral duty of citizens to comply with authority) (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012). Tyler (2006) defined police legitimacy as the belief that the legal authority held by the police is appropriate, proper and just. Such beliefs are a precondition to ensure the continuance of an effective and efficient style of policing supported by the public (Reisig et al., 2021). Police legitimacy is "concerned" with citizens' feelings of obligation and responsibility to defer to authorities (Tyler & Nobo, 2022). Kelman and Hamilton (1989) argued that when authority has legitimacy, the duty to obey replaces personal morality and individuals allow the legitimate authority to define appropriate behaviour. In contrast, the lack of police legitimacy in the eyes of the public leads to a rise of legal cynicism among citizens and the use of more repressive means by the police to ensure appropriate behaviour. However, using repression undermines the legitimacy of police officers' position, as they should act on behalf of citizens and cooperate with them (Schulhofer et al., 2011; Tyler, 2009). The police have a difficult task in establishing and maintaining the legitimacy of their position, because as Goldsmith (2005) pointed out, the police find it difficult to gain the trust of citizens, but easily lose it.

The main idea of the legitimacy of authority in society is in the normative compliance of citizens, achieved as the result of rational choice that is more stable than instrumental compliance. Tyler and Jackson (2014) argued that the legitimacy

of authority depends on an individual's voluntary compliance. The obligation to obey and trust in the police can be perceived as the most direct measure of citizens' assessment of police legitimacy (Tyler, 1990). The motivation to comply (i.e. obligation to obey) is morally conditioned as individuals comply with authority if they perceive it as legal and legitimate. The obligation to obey is the reflection of trust in police motives and the belief that the police share their moral values (Jackson & Gau, 2016; Tyler & Jackson, 2014). The police can enhance normative compliance by building trust between them through [procedurally just] interactions [and relations]. Certain criticisms appeared regarding the measurement of the obligation to obey (e.g. Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012), but similar to the observation of Reisig et al. (2021), for the purposes of the current study it is not relevant whether the obligation to obey is perceived as a direct measure of legitimacy, as one of the elements of a composite legitimacy construct, or an outcome of legitimacy, as the obligation to obey is a salient outcome regardless of the theoretical model.

If achieving legitimacy is the goal of the police, procedural justice is the strategy to achieve this goal (Tyler & Nobo, 2022). Citizens assess the legitimacy of the police based on police officers' approach to dealing with the public (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler & Jackson, 2014; Tyler et al., 2014). The four elements of police procedural justice, i.e. voice, neutrality, respect and trust (Tyler & Huo, 2002), are, in most studies, operationalised as two related components: 1) quality of treatment (police treating citizens with dignity and respect), and 2) quality of decision-making (fair decision, in which citizens are involved) (Reisig et al., 2007; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). Citizens' perceptions of police fairness in decisions involving them, influence their satisfaction with the police, perception of police legitimacy, acceptance of police decisions, and willingness to cooperate with the police and crime prevention programmes (Hinds & Murphy, 2007; Reisig & Chandek, 2001; Reisig & Lloyd, 2009; Tyler & Huo, 2002). Mazerolle et al. (2014) argued that procedural justice influences perceived legitimacy positively, and these effects jointly shape compliance and the preparedness to cooperate with the police.

Ponsaers (2015: 93) pointed out that the police have problems with legitimacy, which should be solved by gaining the trust of citizens and increasing the efficiency of police work. Tankebe (2008) examined the influence of police effectiveness on their trustworthiness and legitimacy. Especially in non-western countries, police effectiveness has a significant influence on police legitimacy (Tankebe, 2009). Hinds and Murphy (2007) pointed out that the effective control of crime and disorder in the community [resulting in a greater sense of safety and security] is an instrumental aspect of police legitimacy. The ineffectiveness of the police signals to individuals

(or entire communities) that they are excluded or forgotten, which weakens their belief that the police are on their side and that they share the same moral values (Bradford et al., 2014). In other words, citizens demand effectiveness from the police, as police officers through effective tackling of crime meet the normative conditions for the legitimacy of their position (Beetham, 1991; Tankebe, 2013).

Bolger and Walters (2019) found that legitimacy directly influences cooperation. Trustworthy and legitimate police in the eyes of citizens enable the implementation of collective measures against crime problems and represent a key element in the structure of stable norms and values that influence individual behaviour (LaFree, 1998). Tyler (2003) argued that internalising normative values and attitudes consistent with the concept of legitimacy influences the willingness to cooperate with the police. Perceptions of police effectiveness and the behaviour of police officers affect their willingness to intervene for the “common good” (Jackson & Sunshine, 2007; Kochel, 2012).

2.1 Legitimacy and community policing

The public’s judgments about police work are important, not only in the interactions of residents with the police but also more widely since the entire criminal justice system is based on the voluntary compliance of citizens with the law. Meško and Lobnikar (2018) argued that the legality and legitimacy of the police and police officers’ behaviour and decisions are necessary for the implementation of policing strategies (especially community policing). Tyler (2011) highlighted that the success of policing is based on the supportive behaviour of residents (i.e. obeying laws, complying with police decisions and cooperating with the police). Police legitimacy shapes acceptance of police decisions, willingness to cooperate with the police and citizen engagement in communities. Legitimate police can assist community development by providing underlying reassurance and promoting social capital (Tyler & Nobo, 2022). Police officers, as representatives of legal authority and the state, enforce compliance with laws more easily by treating residents fairly rather than by using coercion (McCluskey, 2003; Schulhofer et al., 2011; Tyler, 2006). In this context, the focus is on the personal interactions between police officers and residents, which represent the opposite of the traditional bureaucratic treatment (Cordner, 2014). This approach represents the foundation of community policing, as police officers encourage citizens to take responsibility for the neighbourhood they live in (Lombardo et al., 2010) and cooperate with police officers in ensuring safety and solving security problems.

Community policing is a policing strategy that strives to improve public trust in the police, as well as to restore the le-

gitimacy of the police (Hawdon et al., 2003). A more positive perception of police legitimacy by citizens can consequently lead to a decrease in crime since legitimate police evoke greater compliance with laws and normative compliance of citizens with police authority (Tyler, 2011). The trust that is created between police officers and citizens affects the willingness of the latter to cooperate in ensuring safety and security in the community.

3 Community policing in Slovenia

Community policing in Slovenia, following Western models (primarily those from England), began to develop in Slovenia in the 1990s. However, some aspects of this policing philosophy, strategy and policing method were present in the Slovenian police (formerly the Militia) even before the 1990s. In the socialist era, police districts were divided into policing areas where preventive police work was implemented. Every area had a head of security (a kind of community policing officer in charge of a police area, the smallest geographical unit of a police station, i.e. a neighbourhood, village or smaller community), a police officer responsible for implementing mainly preventative tasks (e.g., preventative-operational measures, provision of advice and warnings, educating residents on security issues, informal socialising and networking, etc.) and knowing the area and its citizens, including specific security problems, for which constructive solutions with residents’ cooperation were implemented. This organisation of cooperation between the police and citizens was maintained even after Slovenia gained independence in 1991, and has been “upgraded” with Western principles and approaches to community policing (Lobnikar & Meško, 2010; Meško & Lobnikar, 2018). However, as Meško (2009) highlighted, the implementation of community policing in the first decade after democratisation was characterised by various problems (e.g. lack of police officers, changed work nature of heads of policing areas [renamed from the previous security areas], everybody “doing” community policing with no real effect, etc.).

The Police Act of 1998 (“Zakon o policiji (ZPol)”, 1998) stipulated that the police, within the scope of their powers, cooperate with local communities in areas related to safety and security. In 2013, a new Strategy of Community Policing was adopted that set the following goals: (1) more partnership cooperation between the police and local community, state authorities and civil society, (2) greater visibility and increased presence of police officers in the local community, (3) enhanced feelings of safety and security in local communities, and (4) enhanced feelings of trust and satisfaction with the work of the police (Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve, Policija, 2013). A more specific role of community policing

in Slovenian society was defined in The Resolution of the Long-term Development Programme of the Police Until 2025, adopted in 2015 (“Resolucija o dolgoročnem razvojnem programu policije do leta 2025 – “Kakovostna policija za varno Slovenijo” (ReDRPPol)”, 2015).

In recent years, under specialisation at the local level, local criminal investigators were introduced from the ranks of police officers (operatives) who took over the work of the former heads of policing areas in crime investigation in the local area. Meško and Lobnikar (2018) argued that heads of policing areas became operatives who supply criminal investigators with information and implement preventive work in schools and kindergartens. This change caused problems, as police stations were deprived of a significant number of police officers for operational work. This lack of operational personnel was usually filled with heads of policing areas whose nature of work changed from preventative to classic police tasks (i.e. car patrolling, traffic control and public order tasks).

4 The study of police legitimacy and community policing in Slovenia

The present study was conducted in 24 Slovenian municipalities chosen from all regions of Slovenia, coinciding with the areas of eight police directorates. The municipalities were chosen based on their size and the size of the population. One small, medium and large municipality was chosen from each area to achieve the representativeness of the sample. The survey instrument comprises a modified questionnaire used to measure police legitimacy (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Sun et al., 2017; Tankebe, 2008, 2009; Tyler, 2002). Parts of the questionnaire included in this study comprise questions on police legitimacy, the obligation to obey, trust in the police, procedural justice, police effectiveness, legal cynicism, relations with the police, cooperation with the police, support for community policing and demographic data. All parts of the questionnaire were pre-tested in the Slovenian environment (e.g. Meško et al., 2014). The survey was implemented in the second half of 2022, and it began with the introduction of the study to residents of the chosen municipalities who decided to participate in the study. Different approaches were used, such as surveying known residents and their neighbours, friends and family, as well as approaching people in the street, and inviting them to participate in the study. Questionnaires were distributed to all individuals who decided to participate (paper and pencil method) after the initial presentation of the study. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Collected data were entered into a dataset and analysed with the SPSS programme.

4.1 Participants

In total, 1,145 adult citizens over 18 years of age participated in the survey, however, only fully completed questionnaires were included in the sample (1,022 citizens representing 89.3% of all participants). Women represented slightly over half of the respondents (51.6%). The average age of citizens was 41.39 years, ranging from 18 to 94. Less than half of the respondents (42.8%) had achieved higher levels of education, and more than two-thirds of the citizens (67.7%) lived in urban municipalities. These data largely represented the general composition of the Slovenian population in 2022 (e.g. males represented 50.2% of the population; 43.9 years was the average age of the population) (Statistični urad Republike Slovenije, 2023).

4.2 Measures

The following section describes the variables (48) included in the factor analysis (Table 1). The scale of the variables included reflects the perceptions of citizens on the measured variables rather than the actual measure of observed variables. Modified factors were formed based on the findings of previous studies on police legitimacy (e.g. Reisig et al., 2014; Sun et al., 2017), and a principal axis analysis with varimax rotation was used. Each of the nine factors represented a small number of variables, simplifying the interpretation (Abdi, 2003). Factors scores were calculated as a sum of variables, which highly correlated with the factor (the cut-off value was set at 0.45; see Appendix). All items included in the factor analysis featured a 5-point Likert-type response ranging from “strongly disagree” (coded 1) to “strongly agree” (coded 5).

In addition to the factors described below, four socioeconomic variables were included in the regression analysis to control for spuriousness. Age was measured in years, and three binary-coded variables (1 = yes, 0 = no) – gender (male), education (secondary and lower) and setting type (urban) were included. The normality assumption of dependent variables (i.e., Police legitimacy, Cooperation with the police and Support for community policing) was tested using histograms, Q-Q plots and P-P plots (residuals). The observed variables, as well as residuals, were normally distributed.

Police legitimacy. Citizens’ perceptions of police legitimacy were measured using four survey items: 1) The police in my community are trustworthy; 2) The police can be trusted to make decisions that are right for my community; 3) I am proud of the police in this community; and 4) I have confidence in the police. *Police legitimacy* was a summated scale that exhibited an adequate level of internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.92$, Kaiser-Meyer-Okin [KMO] measure of

sampling adequacy was 0.84) and was coded so that higher values correspond to greater levels of perceived police legitimacy.

Obligation to obey. Feelings of obligation to obey were measured using three survey items: 1) You should accept police decisions even if you think they are wrong; 2) You should do what the police tell you to do even if you disagree; and 3) People like me have no choice but to obey the directives of the police. *Obligation to obey* was a summated scale that exhibited an adequate level of internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$, KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.66) and was coded so that higher values correspond to greater levels of feelings of obligation to obey.

Trust in the police. Trust in the police was measured using four survey items: 1) The police act in ways that are consistent with my own moral values; 2) When the police deal with people, they always behave according to the law; 3) The police always obey the law; and 4) If I were to talk to police officers in my community, I would find their values to be very similar to my own. *Trust in the police* was a summated scale that exhibited an adequate level of internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$, KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.79) and was coded so that higher values correspond to greater levels of citizens' trust in the police.

Procedural justice. Perceptions of police procedural justice were measured using nine survey items: 1) The police treat citizens with respect; 2) The police respect citizens' rights; 3) The police treat people fairly; 4) The police are courteous to citizens they come into contact with; 5) The police take time to listen to people; 6) The police make decisions to handle problems fairly; 7) The police treat everyone with dignity; 8) The police follow through on the decisions and promises they make; and 9) The police explain their decisions to the people they deal with. The scale possessed a high level of internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.95$, KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.95). *Procedural justice* was operationalised as a summated scale. Higher scale values reflected more favourable assessments of police fairness in procedures.

Police effectiveness. Perceptions of police effectiveness were measured using nine survey items: 1) The police are doing a good job preventing crime in my neighbourhood; 2) The police do a good job maintaining order in my neighbourhood; 3) The police are always ready to provide satisfactory assistance to victims of crime; 4) The police are doing well in controlling violent crime; 5) When I am walking around my neighbourhood at night, I feel safe; 6) I feel safe in my neighbourhood; 7) I feel safe when I am at home; 8) I feel safe shopping in my neighbourhood; and 9) I feel safe when I spend my

free time (e.g. sports activities) in my neighbourhood. *Police effectiveness* was a summated scale that exhibited a high level of internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$, KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.83) and was coded so that higher values correspond to greater levels of perceived police effectiveness.

Legal cynicism. The level of legal cynicism was measured using four survey items: 1) To make money, there are no right or wrong ways any longer, only easy ways and hard ways; 2) Nowadays, a person has to live pretty much for today and let tomorrow take care of itself; 3) Laws were made to be broken; and 4) It is okay to do anything you want as long as you do not hurt anyone. *Legal cynicism* was a summated scale that exhibited an adequate level of internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.74$, KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.75) and was coded so that higher values correspond to greater levels of legal cynicism among citizens.

Relations with the police. The quality of relations with the police was measured using three survey items: 1) Most citizens have a positive opinion of the police; 2) Most citizens have a positive opinion about the work of the police; and 3) Police officers are rightly trusted by the majority of citizens. *Relations with the police* was a summated scale that exhibited an adequate level of internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.83$, KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.64) and was coded so that higher values correspond to more positive citizen-police relations.

Cooperation with the police. Preparedness to cooperate with the police was measured using seven survey items: 1) I am willing to participate in the preventive activities of the police; 2) I am willing to participate in determining the goals of police work in the place of residence; 3) I am willing to participate in informal gatherings between the community and the police; 4) I am willing to report suspicious activity in my neighbourhood to the police; 5) I am willing, on my own initiative, to provide the police with information useful for the detection of the perpetrator of the crime; 6) I am willing to report an accident to the police; and 7) I am willing to report domestic violence to the police. The scale possessed a high level of internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88$, KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.82). *Cooperation with the police* was operationalised as a summated scale. Higher scale values reflected greater citizens' preparedness to cooperate with the police.

Support for community policing. Support for community policing was measured using five survey items: 1) Citizens are ready to cooperate with the police in solving problems in their municipality; 2) Problems related to crime in our municipi-

pality can be solved by cooperation between the police and local partner organisations and societies; 3) The quality of police work has a significant impact on the quality of life of people in the community; 4) Police officers should also solve problems that are not directly related to crime; and 5) Providing assistance to citizens is as important a task for police officers as en-

forcing laws. *Support for community policing* was a summated scale that exhibited an adequate level of internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.75$, KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.77) and was coded so that higher values correspond to citizens' greater support of community policing.

Table 1: Factor analysis

	FL	M	SD	Min	Max	Median	Mode
<i>Police legitimacy</i>		13.32	3.68	4	20	13	12
The police in my community are trustworthy.	0.84	3.36	1.00	1	5	3	3
The police can be trusted to make decisions that are right for my community.	0.91	3.36	0.99	1	5	3	3
I am proud of the police in this community.	0.88	3.25	1.02	1	5	3	3
I have confidence in the police.	0.82	3.35	1.06	1	5	3	4
<i>Obligation to obey</i>		8.70	3.14	3	15	9	9
You should accept police decisions even if you think they are wrong.	0.76	2.85	1.18	1	5	3	3
You should do what the police tell you to do even if you disagree.	0.95	2.91	1.22	1	5	3	3
People like me have no choice but to obey the directives of the police.	0.63	2.93	1.28	1	5	3	3
<i>Trust in the police</i>		13.07	3.54	4	20	13	12
The police act in ways that are consistent with my own moral values.	0.75	3.33	0.99	1	5	3	3
When the police deal with people, they always behave according to the law.	0.88	3.27	1.06	1	5	3	3
The police always obey the law.	0.82	3.17	1.12	1	5	3	3
If I were to talk to police officers in my community, I would find their values to be very similar to my own.	0.73	3.30	0.99	1	5	3	3
<i>Procedural justice</i>		29.99	7.41	9	45	30	27
The police treat citizens with respect.	0.80	3.34	0.97	1	5	3	3
The police respect citizens' rights.	0.85	3.41	0.98	1	5	3	3
The police treat people fairly.	0.86	3.33	0.99	1	5	3	3
The police are courteous to citizens they come into contact with.	0.82	3.45	0.97	1	5	4	4
The police take time to listen to people.	0.83	3.24	1.03	1	5	3	3
The police make decisions to handle problems fairly.	0.87	3.32	0.96	1	5	3	3
The police treat everyone with dignity.	0.85	3.36	0.96	1	5	3	3
The police follow through on the decisions and promises they make.	0.76	3.22	0.98	1	5	3	3
The police explain their decisions to the people they deal with.	0.70	3.31	0.99	1	5	3	3
<i>Police effectiveness</i>		34.17	6.07	9	45	35	36
The police are doing a good job preventing crime in my neighbourhood.	0.52	3.37	0.93	1	5	3	3
The police do a good job maintaining order in my neighbourhood.	0.55	3.42	0.95	1	5	3	3
The police are always ready to provide satisfactory assistance to victims of crime.	0.48	3.40	0.97	1	5	3	3
The police are doing well in controlling violent crime.	0.45	3.31	0.97	1	5	3	3
When I am walking around my neighbourhood at night, I feel safe.	0.75	3.87	1.08	1	5	4	4
I feel safe in my neighbourhood.	0.81	4.05	0.99	1	5	4	5
I feel safe when I am at home.	0.74	4.27	0.91	1	5	5	5
I feel safe shopping in my neighbourhood.	0.76	4.20	0.95	1	5	4	5
I feel safe when I spend my free time (e.g. sports activities) in my neighbourhood.	0.77	4.28	0.91	1	5	5	5

<i>Legal cynicism</i>	10.34	3.96	4	20	10	12	
To make money, there are no right or wrong ways any longer, only easy ways and hard ways.	0.64	2.79	1.31	1	5	3	3
Nowadays, a person has to live pretty much for today and let tomorrow take care of itself.	0.73	2.62	1.34	1	5	3	1
Laws were made to be broken.	0.66	2.06	1.24	1	5	2	1
It is okay to do anything you want as long as you do not hurt anyone.	0.55	2.87	1.39	1	5	3	1
<i>Relations with the police</i>	8.90	2.69	3	15	9	9	
Most citizens have a positive opinion of the police.	0.92	2.84	1.08	1	5	3	3
Most citizens have a positive opinion about the work of the police.	0.94	2.83	1.04	1	5	3	3
Police officers are rightly trusted by the majority of citizens.	0.54	3.23	0.98	1	5	3	3
<i>Cooperation with the police</i>	24.32	6.13	7	35	25	25	
I am willing to participate in the preventive activities of the police.	0.71	2.96	1.19	1	5	3	3
I am willing to participate in determining the goals of police work in the place of residence	0.69	3.03	1.18	1	5	3	3
I am willing to participate in informal gatherings between the community and the police.	0.66	3.12	1.18	1	5	3	3
I am willing to report suspicious activity in my neighbourhood to the police.	0.79	3.54	1.18	1	5	4	4
I am willing, on my own initiative, to provide the police with information useful for the detection of the perpetrator of the crime.	0.78	3.50	1.19	1	5	4	4
I am willing to report an accident to the police.	0.66	4.14	1.05	1	5	4	5
I am willing to report domestic violence to the police.	0.66	4.04	1.10	1	5	4	5
<i>Support for community policing</i>	17.70	3.57	5	25	18	18	
Citizens are ready to cooperate with the police in solving problems in their municipality.	0.60	3.25	0.97	1	5	3	3
Problems related to crime in our municipality can be solved by cooperation between the police and local partner organisations and societies.	0.59	3.30	1.01	1	5	3	3
The quality of police work has a significant impact on the quality of life of people in the community.	0.67	3.70	0.99	1	5	4	4
Police officers should also solve problems that are not directly related to crime.	0.53	3.46	1.05	1	5	3	3
Providing assistance to citizens is as important a task for police officers as enforcing laws.	0.69	4.00	1.02	1	5	4	5

$n = 1,022$; Principal Axis Factoring, Rotation Varimax; Scale: 1 – Strongly disagree to 5 – Strongly agree; FL – factor loadings; M – mean; SD – standard deviation.

5 Results

First, a correlation analysis (Pearson's correlation test) was conducted to establish initial associations between the substantive research variables (Table 2). Obligation to obey ($r = 0.33, p < 0.01$), Trust in the police ($r = 0.75, p < 0.01$), Procedural justice ($r = 0.82, p < 0.01$), Police effectiveness ($r = 0.48, p < 0.01$), Legal cynicism ($r = 0.14, p < 0.01$), Relations with the police ($r = 0.53, p < 0.01$), Cooperation with the police ($r = 0.33, p < 0.01$), and Support for community policing ($r = 0.34, p < 0.01$) were all positively correlated with perceptions of police legitimacy.

In turn, Police legitimacy ($r = 0.33, p < 0.01$), Trust in the police ($r = 0.26, p < 0.01$), Procedural justice ($r = 0.31,$

$p < 0.01$), Police effectiveness ($r = 0.26, p < 0.01$), Relations with the police ($r = 0.25, p < 0.01$), and Support for community policing ($r = 0.40, p < 0.01$) correlate with their preparedness to cooperate with the police.

Finally, Police legitimacy ($r = 0.34, p < 0.01$), Trust in the police ($r = 0.28, p < 0.01$), Procedural justice ($r = 0.33, p < 0.01$), Police effectiveness ($r = 0.41, p < 0.01$), Relations with the police ($r = 0.42, p < 0.01$), and Support for community policing ($r = 0.40, p < 0.01$) correlate with citizens' support for community policing. The results of Pearson's test rule out threats of multicollinearity. Further diagnostic tests confirmed the initial assessment as the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for variables was less than 2.82.

Table 2: Correlation matrix for key variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Police legitimacy	–							
Obligation to obey	0.33**	–						
Trust in the police	0.75**	0.33**	–					
Procedural justice	0.82**	0.32**	0.76**	–				
Police effectiveness	0.48**	0.11**	0.39**	0.49**	–			
Legal cynicism	0.14**	0.20**	0.14**	0.16**	0.02	–		
Relations with the police	0.53**	0.09**	0.46**	0.49**	0.34**	0.07*	–	
Cooperation with the police	0.33**	0.03	0.26**	0.31**	0.26**	0.00	0.25**	–
Support for community policing	0.34**	0.05	0.28**	0.33**	0.41**	–0.02	0.42**	0.40**

n = 1,022; * *p* < 0.05, ** *p* < 0.01.

5.1 Police legitimacy

The results of the examination of predictors of police legitimacy by applying multiple regression analysis with robust standard errors tackling the problem of clustering of respondents within municipalities are displayed in Table 3. Model 1 considers the influence of demographic variables in combination with trust in the police, procedural justice, police effectiveness and legal cynicism. Similar to the results of other studies on police legitimacy (e.g. Reisig et al., 2014; Tankebe, 2008; Tyler & Fagan, 2008), procedural fairness ($\beta = 0.53$, $p < 0.001$) most significantly influenced citizens' perceptions of police legitimacy, followed by their trust in the police ($\beta = 0.27$,

$p < 0.001$). Feelings of obligation to obey police officers ($\beta = 0.07$, $p < 0.001$) and perceived police effectiveness ($\beta = 0.10$, $p < 0.001$) also influenced views of the police as the legitimate authority in society. Finally, women ($\beta = -0.04$, $p < 0.05$) and older citizens ($\beta = 0.05$, $p < 0.01$) perceived police legitimacy more positively. Overall, the model explained 71.6% of the variance in the citizens' perception of police legitimacy.

The introduction of a new variable, Relations with the police in Model 2, presents a deviation from the previously used model for exploring police legitimacy in Slovenia (Meško et al., 2014). In combination with variables from Model 1, these variables accounted for 72.7% of the variation

Table 3: OLS regression analysis: Predicting police legitimacy

Police legitimacy	Model 1			Model 2		
	β	<i>se</i>	<i>t</i>	β	<i>se</i>	<i>t</i>
Obligation to obey	0.07	0.02	3.35***	0.07	0.02	3.67***
Trust in the police	0.27	0.03	8.86***	0.25	0.03	7.82***
Procedural justice	0.53	0.03	17.16***	0.50	0.03	16.30***
Police effectiveness	0.10	0.02	4.72***	0.09	0.02	3.92***
Legal cynicism	0.01	0.02	0.47	0.00	0.02	0.22
Relations with the police				0.13	0.03	5.25***
Gender (male)	-0.04	0.03	-2.40*	-0.04	0.03	-2.32*
Age	0.05	0.00	2.69**	0.02	0.00	0.79
Education (secondary and lower)	-0.02	0.03	-1.26	-0.01	0.03	-0.71
Setting type (urban)	0.00	0.04	-0.24	-0.01	0.04	-0.31
<i>F</i>		286.13***			272.13***	
<i>R</i> ² (<i>adjusted</i>)		71.6%			72.7%	
<i>n</i>		1,022			1,022	

se – robust standard error; * *p* < 0.05, ** *p* < 0.01, *** *p* < 0.001.

in citizens' perceptions of police legitimacy. While citizens' relations with the police correlated with their perceptions of police legitimacy ($\beta = 0.13, p < 0.001$), they were overshadowed by Trust in the police ($\beta = 0.25, p < 0.001$) and Procedural justice ($\beta = 0.50, p < 0.001$). As in Model 1, procedural fairness had the most significant impact on perceptions of police legitimacy. Once again, feelings of obligation to obey the police ($\beta = 0.07, p < 0.001$) and perceived police effectiveness ($\beta = 0.09, p < 0.001$) and gender ($\beta = -0.04, p < 0.05$) influenced views of the police as legitimate power holders in society. With the introduction of a new variable, the strength of some regression coefficients slightly decreased.

5.2 Cooperation with the police

In table 4, correlates of citizens' willingness to cooperate with the police were examined. In Model 1, the influence of Police legitimacy on cooperation with the police was examined. Similar to other studies (e.g. Reisig et al., 2007; Sun et al. 2017; Tyler & Fagan, 2008), citizens' perceptions of police legitimacy influenced their willingness to cooperate with the police ($\beta = 0.33, p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that perception of police legitimacy represents the fundamental element of preparedness to cooperate with the police in different social/cultural contexts. Overall, the model explained 10.9% of the variance in the willingness to cooperate with the police.

In Model 2, Police legitimacy was replaced with variables traditionally correlating with citizens' perceptions of police

legitimacy. As in Tankebe's (2008) study in Ghana, and Sun's et al. (2017) study in China, procedural justice ($\beta = 0.19, p < 0.001$) was found as a significant predictor of willingness to cooperate with the police. When citizens feel that police officers treat them fairly, they express greater preparedness to cooperate. Good relations with the police ($\beta = 0.12, p < 0.001$), perceived police effectiveness ($\beta = 0.13, p < 0.01$), feelings of obligation to obey ($\beta = -0.07, p < 0.05$), age ($\beta = -0.06, p < 0.05$) and gender ($\beta = -0.07, p < 0.05$), also influenced willingness to cooperate with the police. These findings indicate that in addition to the perceived legitimacy of the police and procedural fairness of police officers, preparedness to cooperate with the police is enhanced by their ability to tackle crime and establish relations with citizens based on trust. Overall, the model explained 12.8% of the variance in the willingness to cooperate with the police.

5.3 Support for community policing

In the final step, following Tyler and Nobo's (2022) work on legitimacy-based policing, in which they argued that a legitimacy-based approach to policing facilitates controlling crime while simultaneously reducing harm and promoting community vitality, correlates of citizens' support for community policing were examined (Table 5). Perceptions of police legitimacy were identified as a significant correlate of support for community policing ($\beta = 0.33, p < 0.001$). Results also indicate that women ($\beta = -0.08, p < 0.05$) and more highly educated citizens ($\beta = -0.08, p < 0.05$) are more inclined towards

Table 4: OLS regression analysis: Predicting cooperation with the police

Cooperation with the police	Model 1			Model 2		
	β	<i>se</i>	<i>t</i>	β	<i>se</i>	<i>t</i>
Police legitimacy	0.33	0.03	9.50***			
Obligation to obey				-0.07	0.03	-2.01*
Trust in the police				0.05	0.05	0.87
Procedural justice				0.19	0.06	3.31***
Police effectiveness				0.13	0.04	3.10**
Legal cynicism				-0.04	0.04	-1.27
Relations with the police				0.12	0.04	3.28***
Gender (male)	-0.05	0.06	-1.81	-0.07	0.06	-2.41*
Age	-0.03	0.00	-1.07	-0.06	0.00	-1.99*
Education (secondary and lower)	0.01	0.06	0.39	0.03	0.06	0.87
Setting type (urban)	-0.01	0.06	-0.22	-0.01	0.06	-0.33
<i>F</i>		25.89***			15.95***	
<i>R</i> ² (<i>adjusted</i>)		10.9%			12.8%	
<i>n</i>		1,022			1,022	

se – robust standard error; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

community policing. Overall, the model explained 12.3% of the variance in support for community policing.

In Model 2, instead of Police legitimacy, the influence of variables traditionally correlating with the legitimacy of the police on citizens' support of community policing was tested. The results indicate that Relations with the police ($\beta = 0.30, p < 0.001$) and Police effectiveness ($\beta = 0.29, p < 0.001$) contribute to support for community policing. Hinds and Murphy (2007) emphasised that efficient control of crime and disorder in a community represents an instrumental aspect of police legitimacy. Perceptions of police effectiveness influence citizens' preparedness to cooperate in preventing and controlling crime for the "common good" (Kochel, 2012). Once again, women expressed greater support for community policing than men ($\beta = -0.11, p < 0.001$). Contrary to the findings of Mazerolle et al. (2014) on the procedural justice elements in community policing, it seems that police officers' procedural fairness has no influence on citizens' support for community policing. Overall, the model explained 26.7% of the variance in support for community policing.

Tankebe, 2013). Moreover, empirical tests gave mixed results regarding correlations between police legitimacy and willingness to cooperate with police officers (e.g. Reisig et al., 2007; Sun et al. 2017; Tankebe, 2009). Based on the national sample of residents of Slovenia, the present study aims to address this gap and advance our understanding of correlates of perceptions of police legitimacy, and their impact on willingness to cooperate with the police and support for community policing in the former socialist cultural environment of Slovenia.

First, two models of correlates of citizens' perceptions of police legitimacy in Slovenia were tested. Procedural justice was identified as the strongest predictor of police legitimacy. Findings indicate that Slovenia is similar to Western countries, where procedural justice represents the dominant correlate of police legitimacy (e.g. Reisig et al., 2007; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). Despite different cultural contexts, it seems that police fairness in interactions with citizens is invariant. Similar to Reisig's et al. (2014) findings on police legitimacy in Slovenia, police effectiveness correlated with police legitimacy; however, its effect was not as strong as in other

Table 5: OLS regression analysis: Predicting support for community policing

Support for community policing	Model 1			Model 2		
	β	<i>se</i>	<i>t</i>	β	<i>se</i>	<i>t</i>
Police legitimacy	0.33	0.04	8.54***			
Obligation to obey				-0.02	0.03	-0.83
Trust in the police				0.01	0.04	0.27
Procedural justice				0.05	0.04	1.05
Police effectiveness				0.29	0.04	7.46***
Legal cynicism				-0.05	0.03	-1.45
Relations with the police				0.30	0.03	7.95***
Gender (male)	-0.08	0.05	-2.64*	-0.11	0.05	-4.04***
Age	0.04	0.00	1.47	-0.02	0.00	-0.61
Education (secondary and lower)	-0.08	0.05	-2.59*	-0.04	0.05	-1.38
Setting type (urban)	-0.02	0.06	-0.48	0.00	0.05	-0.11
<i>F</i>		29.71***			38.07***	
<i>R</i> ² (<i>adjusted</i>)		12.3%			26.7%	
<i>n</i>		1,022			1,022	

se – robust standard error; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

6 Discussion

Legitimacy studies have pointed out the impact of social and cultural contexts on citizens' perceptions of police legitimacy (e.g. Bottoms & Tankebe, 2021; Reisig & Lloyd, 2009;

non-western countries (e.g. Ghana, China) (Sun et al., 2017; Tankebe, 2008).

In modern and complex democratic societies, police effectiveness alone (predominately focused on deterrence) is not

sufficient in facilitating law-abiding behaviour from its citizens (Beetham, 1991; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tankebe, 2008). Tyler (1990) argued that feelings of obligations to obey and trust in the police are the most direct measures of assessment of police legitimacy. Obligation to obey was treated as a correlate and not the outcome of police legitimacy (Tankebe, 2013), and its influence was confirmed. However, in contrast to trust in the police, the obligation to obey was a relatively weak predictor of police legitimacy. Finally, the new variable Relations with police, introduced in the second model, measuring the quality of relations between police officers and citizens, was confirmed as a significant predictor of police legitimacy. Due to the specific nature of settlement in Slovenia, dominated by small communities, police interactions with citizens are more frequent and consequently relations are more intensive (Meško et al., 2019), influencing perceptions of police legitimacy.

To test the invariance thesis of citizens' perceptions of police legitimacy in urban and rural areas, a variable "type of setting" was introduced. Contrary to expectations, as previous studies in Slovenia (Reisig et al., 2021) addressed the effect of social context (i.e. neighbourhood level) on police legitimacy, it seems that there are no significant differences in perceptions of police legitimacy in urban and rural environments. However, the invariance thesis in different settings (i.e. urban and rural) should be confirmed with some reservations, as introducing the type of setting as a variable in Hacin and Meško's (2022) study on police officers' self-legitimacy in Slovenia show no influence on this, but a later in-depth study (Meško & Hacin, 2022) identified certain differences in self-legitimacy of police officers in urban and rural areas. Further research is needed.

Second, following previous research on cooperation with the police (e.g. Tankebe, 2009; Tyler & Fagan, 2008), the effects of police legitimacy and its correlates on citizens' willingness to cooperate with the police were tested. Cooperation with the police (e.g. reporting crime, identifying suspects, etc.) is an essential component of police work in tackling crime. Bolger and Walters (2019) argued that legitimacy directly influences cooperation with the police, and police legitimacy was identified as the strongest predictor of cooperation with police officers. These results support the findings of previous studies (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler & Fagan, 2008) on the overwhelming influence of police legitimacy on citizens' likelihood to cooperate with the police. Tyler (2003) argued that when citizens believe that they share moral values with the police and perceive them as a legitimate authority in society, they are more willing to help them fight crime.

In the second model, police legitimacy was replaced with correlates of legitimacy. Procedural justice, police effectiveness

and relations with the police were identified as significant predictors of citizens' willingness to cooperate with the police. It seems that the effect of procedural justice on cooperation with the police is "universal" as its influence was confirmed in different cultural contexts (Reisig & Lloyd, 2009; Sun et al., 2017; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tankebe, 2009). Police fairness in interactions with citizens influences their satisfaction with the police and preparedness to cooperate with them (Mazerolle et al., 2014). Fairness in decision-making and frequent interactions due to the specifics of Slovenian settlements lead to the development of positive relations between police officers and citizens. "Familiarity" between citizens (i.e. residents of local communities) and "local" police officers has a positive impact on cooperation and willingness to help them resolve crime and increase safety and security in neighbourhoods. Police efficacy in tackling crime and security problems evokes citizens' trust in the competence of police officers, which in turn leads to their cooperation. Simply put, citizens who do not believe that the police can protect and help them will not be predisposed to assist them. Tankebe (2009) argued that the more people evaluate police effectiveness positively, the greater their willingness to cooperate with the police.

Finally, police legitimacy and its correlates were tested as predictors of citizens' support for community policing. Hawdon et al. (2003) argued that this form of police strategy(ies) strives to improve the public trust and the legitimacy of the police. This study follows Meško and Lobnikar's (2018) argument that police legitimacy is a precondition of implementing community policing; police legitimacy is seen as a correlate of community policing and not as part or the outcome of community policing. The results revealed police legitimacy as the strongest predictor of support for community policing. Tyler and Nobo (2022) argued that legitimate police assist community development and promote social capital, which is essential for intensive cooperation between citizens and police officers in tackling crime and problems in the neighbourhood, as anticipated by community policing strategies.

Replacing police legitimacy with its correlates exposed police effectiveness and relations with the police as significant predictors of citizens' support for community policing. Good relations between the police and citizens represent the basis for community policing, as citizens will not cooperate with police officers who they do not trust (at least to a certain extent) and would see them as "outsiders". The previously mentioned "familiarity" between police officers and residents of local communities in Slovenia, can be seen as the key to evoking support for community policing among citizens, as police officers do not simply represent authority but also their neighbours, friends or even family. Besides good relations, citizens

demand results from police officers if they actively participate in resolving crime problems in local communities; citizens will not help police officers if they perceive them as incompetent. Their perceptions of police effectiveness and the behaviour of police officers, affect an individual's preparedness to intervene for the "common good" (Jackson & Sunshine, 2007; Kochel, 2012). It can be argued that in contrast to cooperation with the police, which in addition to obeying laws, demands occasional active interactions with police officers (e.g. reporting crimes), support for community policing, where individuals have to actively participate with the police for longer periods (more or less constantly), demands more than police fairness in procedures and decision-making, and besides police efficacy, more personal relations with police officers.

6.1 Limitations

The study is not without limitations. First, the problem of the sincerity of respondents should be highlighted, as the possibility exists that in the process of responding to the survey, citizens gave socially desirable answers. Such behaviour was omitted by researchers, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity before administering the survey. Second, the possibility of response bias should also be mentioned, as data capture perceptions of police legitimacy at a single point in time. As changes in correlates of police legitimacy can vary over time, a longitudinal study should be implemented in the future. Finally, the problem of the missing variable, distributive justice, as an important element of legitimacy (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tankebe, 2013), in the models testing perceptions of police legitimacy should be discussed. Questions measuring perceptions of police distributive fairness were part of the survey, however, operationalisation of the factor was not possible, as the level of internal consistency was not adequate. No sufficient explanation can be provided for this phenomenon, as distributive justice was operationalised as an independent variable in previous studies on police legitimacy in Slovenia (e.g. Reisig et al., 2021).

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Legitimnost policije in policijsko delo v skupnosti v Sloveniji

Dr. Gorazd Meško, redni profesor za kriminologijo, Fakulteta za varnostne vede, Univerza v Mariboru, Slovenija.
E-pošta: gorazd.mesko@um.si

Dr. Rok Hacin, izredni profesor za kriminologijo, Fakulteta za varnostne vede, Univerza v Mariboru, Slovenija.
E-pošta: rok.hacin@um.si

V demokratičnih družbah legitimnost policije predstavlja temeljni element prostovoljne podreditve avtoriteti pri prebivalcih. Študija se, izhajajoč iz vzorca 1.022 prebivalcev Slovenije, osredotoča na korelacije med legitimnostjo policije ter pripravljenostjo za sodelovanje in podporo policijskemu delu v skupnosti pri prebivalcih. Multivariatne statistične analize so pokazale, da se občutek podrediti se, zaupanje v policijo, postopkovna pravičnost, učinkovitost policije, odnosi s policisti, spol in starost povezujejo z zaznavo legitimnosti policije pri prebivalcih. Hkrati pozitivna zaznava legitimnosti in učinkovitost policije, dobri odnosi s policisti, občutki dolžnosti podrediti se, spol in višja raven izobrazbe vplivajo na pripravljenost prebivalcev za sodelovanje s policijo. Na podporo policijskemu delu v skupnosti pri prebivalcih vplivajo legitimnost policije, učinkovitost policije, odnosi s policisti, spol in višja raven izobrazbe. Ugotovitve so izpostavile pomembnost legitimnosti policije pri zagotavljanju sodelovanja prebivalcev in njihovo podporo policijskemu delu v skupnosti.

Ključne besede: legitimnost, policija, policijsko delo v skupnosti, Slovenija

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