



Relations between police and private security officers: a case study of Serbia

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Abstract

In the last few years, under the influence of various circumstances, the demand for the private security industry has increased in Serbia. The aim of this research is to examine the extent and quality of cooperation between members of the public and private security sector as the mutual perception of its members because their relations are important for establishing a safe environment for citizens. The survey was conducted from February to June 2019 using a questionnaire among 190 police officers and 178 security personnel. The results of this research showed that mutual relations between the private security personnel and police officers are satisfactory, but also that members of private security look at these relations from a brighter side and have a very positive attitude towards members of the police, while members of the police view these relations more negatively. The results of this research can be used for planning campaigns to improve the relationships between police officers and security personnel.

Keywords Private security · Police · Perceptions · Relations · Survey · Serbia

Introduction

Modern societies are facing new sources and forms of personal and property security endangerment of citizens (Cvetković et al. 2020; Goyal 2019; Kaur 2020; Xuesong and Kapucu 2019). To satisfy the human need for the sense of security, there has been an increase in demand for services traditionally provided by state authorities, primarily the police (Cvetković and Janković 2020; Janković and Cvetković 2020). Resulting from the inability to meet all citizens' requests

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and needs, a part of the responsibility is transferred from the police to the private security (Scheerlinck et al. 2019). Although traditionally in charge of ensuring public safety, the police cannot achieve a satisfactory level of public safety independently without cooperating with other state authorities, and with the private security industry. In some countries, as a result of the global economic crisis and defunding of the police, certain security tasks have been transferred to the private sector due to budget savings (White 2014). In recent decades, there has been a declining market share of the police in performing security work all around the world (Paek et al. 2019). The growing market share of the private security sector blurs not only the lines between the private and public sectors but also the concepts of private and public interests (Nalla et al. 2017a, b). Researchers point out that the rise of the private security sector indicates a radical transition from a criminal justice system, monopolized by the state and the police, to a pluralized police system in which the private industry also provides its services (Saarikomäki and Alvesalo-Kuusi 2020).

In transition countries with new democracies and economies, the demand for the private security industry has exploded in recent decades due to strong economic growth, but also due to a lack of public affiance in state security services (Nalla and Gurinskaya 2017; Nalla et al. 2017a, b; Sotlar 2009; Cvetković 2019). This sequence of events did not bypass Serbia either, bearing in mind Serbia is among the last countries in Europe that have legally regulated the private security sector. The turning point was the year 1993, when the Law on Social Self-Protection was repealed, which until then regulated the area of property and personal security (Davidović 2009). With the abolition of regulations in the field of self-protection, norms of alternative ("secondary") legislation are what regulated the private security industry in Serbia (Nikač et al. 2013). In addition to the lack of systemic regulations, society's transition from a socialist to a capitalist system caused a significant increase in private property, which heavily influenced the process of private security industry development in Serbia (Janković et al. 2019). The owners of the private property were not able to secure it on their own but had to seek the services of newly formed private security companies. The companies operated in difficult conditions because war conflicts took place in the Western Balkans, in which Serbia was directly or indirectly involved, which is why the United Nations imposed sanctions on Serbia (Van Steden and Sarre 2010). This period in Serbian history is distinct for the increase of corruption and crime, the beginning of privatization processes, a large number of unregistered weapons from the war environment, undeclared work, "laundering" of illegally acquired money, forms of extra-institutional debt collection, and other activities of criminal groups (Labović 2017; Meško et al. 2013; Sotlar 2009). Protection of people, property, and business in Serbia was legally regulated by the adoption of new systemic regulations only at the end of 2013, when the Law on Private Security and the Law on Detective Activity was adopted, based on which regulations for training members of private security were adopted (Janković et al. 2019). Thus, the Rulebook on training, qualification, and professional exam for performing detective work (Janković 2020) envisaged the 58-h training for students. Also, the Rulebook on Programs and Manner of Conducting Professional Training for Private Security and Security Service (Janković 2020) envisages the training that may last



from 28 to 90 h, depending on the type of license needed for performing private security activities.

Earlier, there was a mention of a declining market share of police in performing security work (Paek et al. 2019). There are no exact data for Serbia, but according to the number of employees, certain indirect conclusions can be drawn. Today, the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia (MOI) has 41,157 employees (MOI 2020). The exact or approximate number of members of private security can only be assumed. Unlike the Ministry of Interior, which is a centralized state body in charge of the entire territory, many private companies perform private security activities in Serbia (Spasić and Radovanović 2019). The estimate of the number of employees in the private security industry in Serbia ranges from 30,000 (Davidović and Kešetović 2017), 40–50,000 (Nalla and Gurinskaya 2017), and according to recent data, that number goes up to 60,000 employees (Milošević 2018). Therefore, it can be concluded that the number of private security members in Serbia ranges from about 75 percent to 150 percent of the number of police employees. However, the question arises, what quality of services do police officers provide to citizens compared to private security members? Those who perform the same or similar tasks or are involved in providing the same or similar services, i.e.,s members of the police and private security can provide the best possible answer.

The paper is based on the research question what the extent and quality of cooperation between members of the public and private security sector are. The mutual perception of its members is also examined because their relations are important for establishing a safe environment for citizens. Accordingly, the objectives of the study are quantitative research regarding assessing relations between perceptions of police officers and security personnel. The research results contribute to improving the theoretical and empirical fund of scientific knowledge about the extent and quality of cooperation between members of the public and private security sector. Practical implications of this study are reflected in determining concrete measures that would bring their mutual relations to a higher level and for planning campaigns to improve the relationships between police officers and security personnel.

Literature review

A large number of papers that explore various topics of citizens' perceptions of the work of police and its members can be found in the literature. To put this number into perspective we have observed one paper in particular, still relevant despite being written almost two decades ago by Brown and Benedict (Brown and Benedict 2002), who summarize the findings of more than 100 papers in this field. The inference of this paper shows that only four variables (age, contact with the police, environment, and race) consistently affect citizens' attitudes towards the police.

Contrary to numerous papers on the perception of police work, the number of pieces dealing with the perception of private security and its members is far smaller. The public's understanding of private security was enquired in several surveys among the general population (Dvojmoč 2016; Moreira and Cardoso 2015; Van Steden and Nalla 2010). In one of the surveys done in the Netherlands, the outcome



indicated that citizens did not provide much support to members of private security, but also that a significant number of respondents did not have a negative attitude towards them (Van Steden and Nalla 2010), while the trust was higher in Portugal, compared to the Netherlands (Moreira and Cardoso 2015). In Slovenia, service users gave better ratings to private security officers than the officers did to themselves (Dvojmoč 2016), similar to North Macedonia, where service users also had a positive attitude towards the work of members of private security (Petrevski and Nikolovski 2015). In addition to the general population, the authors often use University students as respondents (Janković et al. 2019; Kesić 2008; Nalla et al. 2017a, b; Nalla and Heraux 2003; Nalla and Hwang 2004; Nalla and Lim 2003; Nalla et al. 2006). In countries where the tradition of private security is historically deeply rooted in society, most students had a positive attitude towards members of private security. This has been the case with research conducted in market economies such as the United States (Nalla and Heraux 2003), South Korea (Nalla and Hwang 2004), and Singapore (Nalla and Lim 2003). In contrast, research was also conducted in post-socialist countries, which were in transition at the time of the research, with an insufficiently developed private security industry. The research indicated that the students generally did not have a positive attitude, i.e., a small number of respondents expressed a high level of perception of private security, i.e., the opinion of most respondents was at a medium or low level of perception. Such results were obtained in research conducted in Serbia (Janković et al. 2019; Kesić 2008), North Macedonia (Janković et al. 2019), Slovenia (Nalla et al. 2006), and Russia (Nalla et al. 2017a, b).

However, current literature faces a lack of research studies in the areas of cooperation between police and private security, despite their coexistence throughout history. One of the first extensive researches was conducted by the United States (Nalla and Hummer 1999) and it showed that private security personnel generally assessed their relations with police officers as positive. However, their assessment was those police officers do not view their cooperation as positive. Police officers had a neutral attitude towards members of private security, while private security officers had high respect for the police officers. In Slovenia (Meško et al. 2005), it was found that members of private security have a superior opinion towards the police, than the police have of them, which is a finding similar to the one in the United States. In particular, police officers did not believe that private security officers and they could be equal partners in crime prevention themselves. Interesting findings were observed in a somewhat later conducted study in Slovenia (Sotlar and Meško 2009). Members of private security assessed their relationship with the police as good, and even described it as a partnership, while police officers were more reserved on this matter, but claimed that the relations are not conflicting. When it comes to the relations between their organizations, private security personnel claim that the relations between the two organizations are not competitive, and even suggested that it could be a kind of partnership. Police agreed with the same, thus not confirming the findings of previous research, in which stereotypes about the police and private security being in conflicting and competitive relations have been set. In a study in South Korea (Nalla and Hwang 2006), both sides had positive attitudes towards their mutual relations



and strategies for improving those relations, the only difference being the level of optimism which was higher among members of private security. Based on the results of previous studies in the United States (Nalla and Hummer 1999), South Korea (Nalla and Hwang 2006), and Slovenia (Meško et al. 2005), a new study (Nalla et al. 2009) was conducted and it used comparative analysis to assess the relationship between private security and police in those countries. The results found that in the United States and South Korea, police officers and members of private security viewed each other as equal partners, while findings in Slovenia showed that police officers did not view members of private security as partners (Nalla et al. 2009). In a study in the Netherlands (Van Steden et al. 2015), members of private security had a high opinion of police officers, while police officers viewed them as a “lower level of security forces”. Another study in Slovenia (Nalla and Meško 2015), which explored the attitudes of private security officers towards police officers, indicated that respondents had positive attitudes about police jobs and police officers.

Methods

Starting from the research questions what the extent and quality of cooperation between members of the public and private security sector is and what the mutual perception of its members is, the aim of this research is to examine the extent and quality of cooperation between members of the public and private security sector, i.e., the mutual perception of its members because their relations are important for establishing a safe environment for citizens. Also, the authors' wish was to determine concrete measures that would bring their mutual relations to a higher level. During the national course "Combating Domestic Violence" intended for police officers from all police administrations (the total of 27) from the territory of Serbia, during February 2020, at the Criminal Police University, 190 police officers were interviewed, out of the total of 297, who attended a course. Questionnaires were distributed to all police officers present and they were asked to participate voluntarily in a survey aimed at improving the relationship between police and private security officers. Of the total number of members who attended the course, 63.97% of police officers submitted the completed questionnaire. On the other hand, during the basic course for members of private security, "Professional training for physical and technical protection of persons and property and maintaining order at sports events, public gatherings, and other gathering places of citizens," in March 2020, at the institution, 170 members of the private security out of a total of 210 were interviewed. Similar to the procedure with police officers, the questionnaires were distributed to all members of the private security present and they were asked to participate voluntarily in the survey. Of the total number of members who attended the course, 80.95% of members of private security submitted the completed questionnaire in the form of a paper. Data for the study were collected from 190 police officers and 178 members of private security. The research was conducted from February to June 2019.



Socio-economic and demographic characteristics

Out of a total of 190 police officers, 83.7% are men, while 16.3% are women. Most police officers are between the ages of 26–35 (43.6%), while the fewest police officers are over 60 years old (0%) and from 18 to 25 years old (1%). Concerning the level of education, most respondents have higher education (53.2%), and the minority of them have a high school diploma (15.3%). The majority is married (77.9%), while the minority is divorced (1.6%). Regarding work experience, most respondents have a work experience of over 15 years (36.8%). Also, the majority of respondents did not serve military service.

Out of 178 members of private security, 93.3% are men, while 6.7% are women. Given the ages of respondents, most of the private security members are 51–60 years old (30.3%), and the fewest are over 60 (6.7%). About the level of education, the majority of respondents have a high school degree (87.6%), and the minority have higher education (5.6%). Regarding work experience, most respondents have over 15 years of work experience, and the majority of them did not serve military service (Table 1).

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of police and private security respondents (*n*/percent)

Variable	Category	Police (<i>n</i> =190)	Security (<i>n</i> =178)	Total (<i>n</i> =368)
Gender	Male	159 (83.7)	166 (93.3)	325 (88.3)
	Female	31 (16.3)	12 (6.7)	43 (11.6)
Age (years)	18–25	2 (1.0)	16 (9.0)	18 (5)
	26–35	83 (43.6)	14 (7.9)	97 (27.4)
	36–45	82 (43.1)	42 (23.6)	124 (35)
	46–50	21 (11.0)	26 (14.6)	47 (13.2)
	51–60	2 (1.0)	54 (30.3)	56 (15.8)
	Over 60	/	12 (6.7)	12 (3.3)
Education level	Secondary school	29 (15.3)	156 (87.6)	185 (69.3)
	High school	60 (31.6)	12 (6.7)	72 (26.8)
	University	101 (53.2)	10 (5.6)	111 (4.1)
Marital status	Married	148 (77.9)	104 (58.4)	252 (68.8)
	Single	37 (19.5)	64 (36)	101 (27.6)
	Divorced	3 (1.6)	10 (5.6)	13 (3.5)
Working experience	No	/	20 (11.2)	20 (5.4)
	1–5 years	22 (11.6)	30 (16.9)	52 (14.2)
	6–10 years	46 (24.2)	16 (9.0)	60 (16.4)
	11–15 years	52 (27.4)	32 (18)	84 (23)
	Over 15 years	70 (36.8)	78 (43.8)	148 (40.6)
Served military service	Yes	35 (18.4)	144 (80.9)	179 (49.5)
	No	150 (78.9)	32 (17.9)	182 (50.4)



Questionnaire design

To estimate the extent and quality of the cooperation between the members of the private and public security sector, i.e., to assess the mutual perception of its members, a modification of previous surveys has been made in the United States (Nalla and Hummer 1999; Nalla et al. 2009), South Korea (Nalla and Hwang 2006; Nalla et al. 2009), and Slovenia (Meško et al. 2005; Nalla et al. 2009). The survey was anonymous with 4-point Likert scale questions (1 – I absolutely disagree; 4 – I absolutely agree). During February 2019, a pilot pre-test of the questionnaire was conducted in Belgrade with 30 people (15 police officers and 15 members of private security) to test the comprehensibility and performance of the questionnaire developed for this research. All respondents voluntarily agreed to participate in the research.

Analyses

Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents were explored using descriptive statistical analyses (Fig. 1). The analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA) and the regression analysis were used to examine the relation between the variables (gender, age, education, marital status, military service, previous experience) and the participants' attitudes. All tests were two-tailed, with a significance level of $p < 0.05$. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS Statistic 26 (IBM SPSS Statistics, New York, United States).

Results

The results of multiple linear regression analysis used to assess the explicit power of six selected variables (gender, age, marital status, education level, working experience, and served military service) on the total score of private security workers' attitudes show that the most important predictor is marital status. ($\beta = 0.276$). The model ($R^2 = 0.105$, Adj. $R^2 = 0.125$, $F = 3.30$, $t = 14.82$, $p = 0.004$) with all the independent variables shown explains 12.5% of the variance of the total scores of the attitudes. In contrast, in the second observed model (attitudes of police officers), the correlation between the observed variables and police officers attitudes was not determined ($R^2 = 0.05$, Adj. $R^2 = -0.014$, $F = 0.277$, $t = 21.12$, $p = 0.078$) (Table 2).

Security officers

Members of the private security were asked to assess (on a scale of 1 to 5) the extent to which they agreed with the statements concerning the nature of work relations between members of the police and private security, and it was found that: (a) members of the private security generally have positive attitude towards the police ($X = 3.77$); (b) state training of private security members improves their



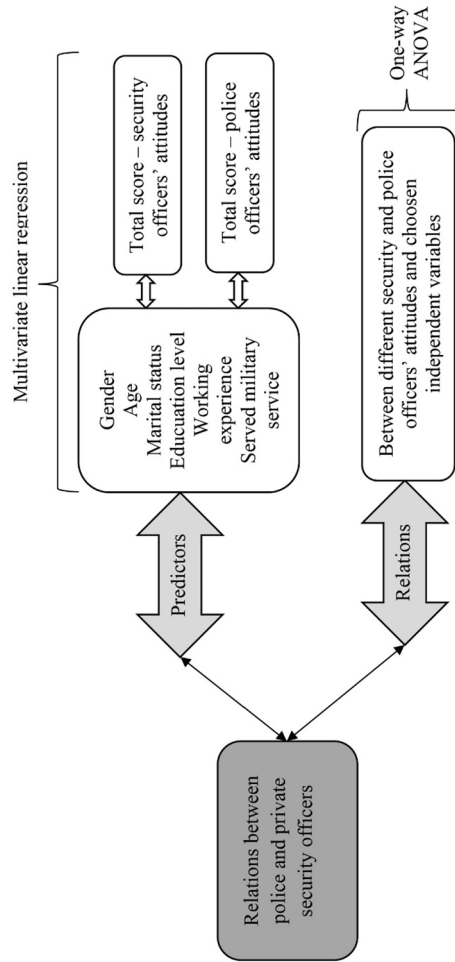


Fig. 1 The study design



Table 2 Results of a multivariate regression analysis concerning subscales (Security officers' attitudes and police officers' attitudes) ($n = 368$)

Predictor variable	Security officers' attitudes			Police officers' attitudes		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β
Gender	-.198	.209	-.087	.073	.121	.050
Age	-.210	.185	-.106	.426	.557	.058
Marital status	.312	.092	.271**	.023	.119	.018
Education level	.207	.144	.120	.081	.113	.054
Working experience	-.128	.160	-.071	-.066	.153	-.430
Served military service	-.199	.154	-.138	-.039	.090	-.037
Adjusted R^2				-.23		

Males, young, single-headed households, secondary-school respondents, low income and disabled people have been coded as 0; 1 has been assigned otherwise

B: unstandardized (*B*) coefficients, *SE*: std. error, β : standardized (β) coefficients

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$

image ($X = 3.43$); (c) the professionalism of private security officers improves the relationship between police and private security ($X = 3.38$); (d) the individual attitude of each individual respondent towards police is very positive ($X = 3.34$); (e) relations between police and private security are good ($X = 3.32$); (f) in general, police and private security cooperate in crime prevention ($X = 3.14$); (d) private security plays a primary role in crime prevention $X = 2.91$); (h) police are willing to share information with private security ($X = 2.79$); (i) the police and private security agencies are equal partners ($X = 2.46$) (Table 3).

Table 3 Security officers' attitudes on the different aspects of police

Variable	Mean/Std. dev	Gender	Age	Education	Marital status	Military	Working experience
a)	3.77 (4.46)	.122 (.728)	.995 (.423)	.045 (.956)	.867 (.460)	2.62 (.061)	.014 (.906)
b)	3.43 (.842)	1.06 (.305)	1.03 (.400)	.479 (.620)	3.26 (.023*)	.101 (.904)	2.87 (.092)
c)	3.38 (.863)	.781 (.378)	3.84 (.003*)	1.06 (.347)	7.01 (.000*)	1.07 (.051)	3.06 (.082)
d)	3.34 (.844)	.434 (.511)	2.01 (.079)	.158 (.854)	6.58 (.000*)	.128 (.880)	3.71 (.056)
e)	3.32 (.906)	.497 (.482)	1.37 (.236)	.041 (.960)	1.66 (.176)	.096 (.908)	3.48 (.064)
f)	3.14 (.975)	.270 (.604)	3.01 (.013*)	1.826 (.164)	1.45 (.229)	1.66 (.058)	1.79 (.182)
g)	2.91 (.993)	.749 (.388)	3.03 (.012*)	.943 (.391)	.65 (.580)	2.17 (.054)	.058 (.809)
h)	2.79 (1.02)	.527 (.469)	1.76 (.123)	1.00 (.369)	.536 (.658)	2.92 (.057)	1.61 (.206)
i)	2.46 (.938)	.026 (.872)	2.99 (.013*)	1.19 (.306)	1.07 (.059)	2.99 (.053)	.088 (.767)



The results of ANOVA have shown that there is no relationship between gender, education, military services served, working experience, and variables (a–i), but they have found the relationship between age and variables; (c) professionalism of members of private security improves the relationship between police and private security; (f) in general, the police and private security cooperate in crime prevention; (d) private security plays a primary role in crime prevention; and (i) the police and private security agencies are equal partners. Respondents aged 46 to 50 ($X=3.50$) emphasize a higher level of professionalism of members of private security to a greater extent than respondents aged 18 to 25 ($X=2.50$). Also, respondents of the same age category from 46 to 50 ($X=3.46$) point out to a greater extent that the police and private security cooperate in crime prevention compared to respondents aged 18 to 25 ($X=2.35$). Respondents aged 51 to 60 ($X=3.08$) are more likely to point out that private security plays a primary role in crime prevention compared to respondents aged 18 to 25 ($X=2.50$). In contrast, respondents aged 18 to 25 ($X=2.05$) were more likely to point out that the police and private security agencies were equal partners compared to respondents aged 51 to 60 ($X=1.95$) (Table 3).

Members of the private security were asked to assess how much (on a scale of 1 to 5) the following measures could help improve the working relationship between the police and the private security agencies. On that occasion, the following was determined: (a) improving communication between the police and private security agencies; ($X=3.37$); (b) connecting private security agencies with regional police stations ($X=3.36$); (c) conducting regular meetings of police representatives and private security agencies ($X=3.35$); (d) joint work on prevention and suppression of specific types of crime ($X=3.33$); (e) creation of databases for shared use ($X=3.27$); (f) joint efforts in local citizen protection programs ($X=3.17$); (d) participation in joint training ($X=3.13$); and (h) exchange of training staff ($X=3.11$) (Table 4).

Table 4 Security officers' attitudes on the different aspects of police

Variable	Mean/Std. dev	Gender	Age	Education	Marital status	Military	Working experience
a)	3.37 (.882)	.303 (.583)	6.02 (.000**)	1.32 (.270)	1.34 (.052)	.628 (.535)	1.28 (.259)
b)	3.36 (.884)	.009 (.923)	5.13 (.000**)	2.092 (.127)	1.96 (.051)	2.34 (.099)	.918 (.339)
c)	3.35 (.911)	.564 (.454)	4.80 (.000**)	2.42 (.091)	2.52 (.054)	1.91 (.151)	.000 (.982)
d)	3.33 (.887)	1.79 (.182)	5.29 (.000**)	7.11 (.001*)	1.85 (.139)	1.95 (.061)	.765 (.383)
e)	3.27 (.922)	.146 (.702)	5.24 (.000**)	5.10 (.007*)	1.76 (.156)	1.65 (.194)	.054 (.817)
f)	3.17 (1.04)	.000 (.994)	1.75 (.127)	.855 (.427)	.989 (.400)	1.97 (.051)	.145 .704
g)	3.13 (.976)	.232 (.631)	.420 (.324)	.610 (.545)	1.32 (.268)	.953 (.388)	1.92 (.167)
h)	3.11 (.925)	3.05 (.082)	1.90 (.097)	4.13 (.018*)	2.46 (.064)	1.05 (.352)	.304 (.582)



The results of ANOVA have shown that there is no relationship between gender, marital status, military, working experience, and variables (a-h) but a relationship between age and all variables from a) to e) was found. The obtained results show that the respondents aged 51 to 60 ($X=3.77$) to a greater extent point out that there was an improvement in communication between the police and the private security agency compared to the respondents aged 18–25 ($X=3.00$). On the other hand, respondents aged 46 to 50 ($X=3.82$) are more likely than respondents aged 18 to 25 ($X=2.888$) to point out that private security agencies have been linked to regional police stations. The fact that meetings between representatives of the police and private security agencies are held more regularly is emphasized more by respondents aged 46 to 50 ($X=3.64$) compared to respondents aged 18 to 25 ($X=2.75$). Moreover, respondents aged 46 to 50 ($X=3.38$) indicate increased joint work on the prevention and suppression of specific types of crime to a greater extent compared to respondents aged 18 to 25 ($X=2.75$). Also, a link between education and variables has been found: (d) working together to prevent and combat specific types of crime; e) creation of databases for joint use, and (h) exchange of training staff. Respondents who completed high school confirm all the mentioned attitudes to a greater extent than university-educated respondents (Table 4).

Police officers

The same as members of the private security, police officers were asked to assess (on a scale of 1 to 5) the extent to which they agreed with the allegations concerning the nature of working relations between members of the police and members of the private security. The following was found: (a) state training of members of private security improves the image of them ($X=3.13$); (b) the professionalism of members of private security improves the relationship between the police and private security ($X=2.76$); (c) relations between the police and private security are positive ($X=2.63$); (d) the individual attitude of each respondent towards members of private security is very positive ($X=2.57$); (e) members of the police generally have a positive attitude towards members of private security ($X=2.41$); (f) the police

Table 5 Police officers attitudes

Variable	Mean/Std. dev	Gender	Age	Education	Marital status	Military	Working experience
a)	3.13 (.805)	6.25/.013*	.659/.621	.728/.484	1.33/.060	1.37/.252	3.26/.060
b)	2.76 (1.02)	.835/.362	1.95/.103	2.40/.093	2.58/.055	.303/.823	3.30/.059
c)	2.63 (.753)	1.21/.271	4.85/.001**	1.27/.051	.420/.658	.969/.409	2.04/.053
d)	2.57 (.766)	.088/.767	2.98/.020	3.00/.052*	.714/.491	2.14/.096	2.58/.054
e)	2.41 (.735)	1.67/.197*	2.28/.062	7.19/.001**	3.84/.069	1.75/.158	7.08/.051
f)	1.98 (.879)	3.05/.082	2.43/.049*	2.27/.106	1.08/.339	.017/.997	2.20/.113
g)	1.97 (.831)	.023/.880	.783/.538	2.23/.110	3.05/.059	.046/.987	2.61/.076
h)	1.74 (.887)	.003/.954	1.89/.113	1.95/.145	3.87/.052	.504/.680	2.71/.069
i)	1.61 (.853)	.108/.743	3.11/.016	2.24/.108	.363/.696	.313/.816	.422/.656



are willing to share information with private security ($X=1.98$); (d) in general, the police and private security cooperate in crime prevention ($X=1.97$); and (h) private security plays a primary role in crime prevention ($X=1.74$) (Table 5).

The results of ANOVA showed that there is no relationship between military or marital status and the variables (a–i). On the other side, a relationship between some attitudes and gender, age, education, and working experience was found. Men emphasize to a greater extent that state training of private security members improves the image of them (3.19/2.18). On the other hand, women are more likely to point out that the police are willing to share information with private security (2.25/1.94). Younger respondents aged 18 to 25, compared to older respondents, are more likely to point out that the relations between the police and private security are good (3.77/3.45) and that the police are willing to share information with private security (1.75/1.45). Concerning education, respondents who have completed college point out that their attitudes towards members of private security are very positive to a greater extent than respondents with completed high school (1.75/1.45) and that members of the police generally have a positive attitude towards members of private security (1.75/1.45) (Table 5). It should be pointed out that mentioned positive attitudes towards members of private security and police are generally low.

Police officers were also asked to assess the extent to which they agreed that the following measures could help improve working relations between the police and private security agencies. On that occasion, it was determined that: (a) conducting regular meetings of police and private security agencies ($X=2.89$); (b) connecting private security agencies with regional police stations ($X=2.84$); (c) joint efforts in local citizen protection programs ($X=2.83$); (d) participation in joint training ($X=2.56$); (e) joint work on prevention and suppression of specific types of crime ($X=2.45$); (f) exchange of training staff ($X=2.44$); (g) creating databases for shared use ($X=2.23$); and (h) improving communication between the police and private security agencies ($X=3.36$) (Table 6).

The results of ANOVA showed that there is no relationship between gender, age, education, military service, and variables (a-h). A relationship between marital status and variables from a) to d) was found. Divorced respondents to a greater extent point out that regular meetings of representatives of the police and private security

Table 6 Security officers' attitudes on the different aspects of police

Variable	Mean/Std. dev	Gender	Age	Education	Marital status	Military	Working experience
a)	2.89 (.916)	2.21/.139	.476/.754	1.30/.059	3.98/.020*	.141/.936	3.60/.057
b)	2.84 (.911)	2.95/.057	1.07/.371	2.89/.058	3.74/.025*	.102/.959	2.40/.093
c)	2.83 (.929)	.058/.810	.490/.743	1.30/.275	4.71/.010*	.026/.994	1.93/.148
d)	2.56 (.986)	.888/.347	.652/.626	1.38/.253	6.90/.001*	1.49/.219	1.95/.154
e)	2.45 (1.01)	.151/.698	.477/.753	3.04/.214	3.81/.024*	.871/.457	3.67/.027
f)	2.44 (.961)	.295/.588	.797/.528	.758/.470	5.43/.005*	1.46/.227	2.55/.080
g)	2.23 (1.01)	.024/.876	1.52/.198	.986/.375	3.29/.039*	.441/.724	1.43/.054
h)	3.36 (.882)	.56/.423	1.38/.232	.785/.235	1.24/.056	.332/.541	1.37/.042



agencies are held, that there is a greater connection of private security agencies with regional police stations, and that joint work on the prevention and suppression of specific types of crime is encouraged. On the other hand, married respondents point out that there are joint efforts in local citizen protection programs, as well as that training staff is exchanged to a greater extent (Table 6).

Discussion

In this research, we can observe a series of specific findings that do not agree with similar findings, found in earlier studies in other countries. The first of such specifics is that members of private security look at their relations with police officers with more optimism than their colleagues in the police. Their opinion is such concerning all the allegations made in the survey. Unlike the United States (Nalla and Hummer 1999) and South Korea (Nalla and Hwang 2006), where both groups of respondents had similar views, in Serbia, police officers had a high opinion of their fellow policeman, as well as of their mutual relations with private security. This is in contradiction with the attitudes collected in surveys conducted in Slovenia (Meško et al. 2005) where, according to the majority of answers, police officers were the ones who had a more positive attitude, versus the members of private security, about their mutual relations. By contrast with the United States and South Korea, where the private security industry had a long tradition (Nalla and Hwang 2006) in Slovenia, this development began in the 1990s, and in Serbia, it slowly began in the early twenty-first century and flourished in the second decade of the twenty-first century when regulations related to the work of private security have been enacted. Due to recent developments in Serbia, members of private security do not have enough experience (Janković et al. 2019), and its members are often former members of the police, who have transferred certain methods of work from the police "subculture" (Nalla and Hummer 1999). Also, the differences in the results between this and previous research may be attributed to various aggravating socio-economic and cultural environmental factors related only to Serbia, especially those that took place at the end of the twentieth century: war events, the rise of corruption and crime, the beginning of privatization processes, a large number of unregistered weapons from the war environment, etc. (Janković et al. 2019). Finally, we can assume that the one possible reason that members of private security have a higher opinion of police and why the cooperation between members of private security and the police is weak is that because in Serbia, the control of private security, licensing, examinations, proposing legislation, etc., is the responsibility of the police (Janković 2020). Subconscious awe towards members of the police can also come out of that. This can cause a lack of trust of police officers towards private security, weaker cooperation, and as a final consequence, endangering the safety of citizens. On the other hand, the presence of the former police among the ranks of security personnel would heighten the police's regard for security.

It is noticeable that in several claims, there is a difference in attitudes depending on the age of the respondents. Thus, e.g., older members of private security have a high opinion of the professionalism of private security, its primary role



in crime prevention, and cooperation with the police on various forms of crime, unlike their younger colleagues, which is not in line with research conducted in the United States (Nalla and Hummer 1999) and South Korea (Nalla and Hwang 2006). In the mentioned countries, less experienced members had a positive opinion on police/private security relations. This can be explained by the fact that younger employees do not have the necessary experience (Janković et al. 2018) in performing private security work and that is why they do not have a clear picture of these jobs. The situation in Serbia is different from in the countries listed above. The attitude of private security members in Serbia could have been influenced by several factors. Besides the fact that the private security market is still developing in Serbia (Trivan et al. 2016), unlike in the mentioned countries, one of the factors that can influence the attitudes of respondents is the quality of training private security personnel receives (Sazdovska and Gjurovski 2017). The better the training, the more certain it is that members of private security will have a clearer picture of their powers, abilities, and skills as well as of those of police officers.

The second segment of the research referred to the claims that alluded to the proposed measures that can help improve mutual relations. Serbian police officers had less faith in the proposed measures than private security officers did. This has not been the case in studies in other countries (Meško et al. 2005; Nalla and Hummer 1999; Nalla and Hwang 2006). In those countries, members of the police had more confidence in the proposed measures. It can be assumed that members of the police, due to the long tradition of private security, in countries such as the United States and South Korea, had a better insight as to what is missing in the work of private security, or what can help improve mutual relations. As private security in Serbia is more recent, police officers have not had the opportunity to gain sufficient experience in working with private security officers, because that experience cannot be gained by working together just for a few years, but it is acquired over decades. However, when you look at the results that refer to the attitudes of police officers in Serbia and the mentioned countries, the results do not differ drastically. The big difference in attitudes is noticed within the members of private security in Serbia and the mentioned countries, which have much more confidence in the proposed measures that could improve police/private security relations. This fact may indirectly indicate that members of private security in Serbia are aware of the fact that they lack certain knowledge and skills, compared to the police.

Finally, an analysis can be made of whether the attitudes of members of the police and private security from this research differ from the general population. As for police officers in this research, members of private security had a high opinion of them, which also applies to the general population in Serbia, which is also satisfied with the work of the Serbian police (Lajić 2016; Spasić and Radovanović 2019). Contrary to such favorable attitudes towards the police, in previous surveys of the general population on private security, the standpoint of police officers from this survey was confirmed, a small number of respondents express a high level of perception of private security, i.e., the opinion of most respondents is medium or low (Janković et al. 2019; Kesić 2008). All these indicate that members of the police as respondents from this research, as well as the general population in previous



research, do not perceive members of private security as equal partners with members of the police.

Conclusions

Serbia is among the last countries in Europe in which legal acts regulating the field of private security were adopted. In fact, private security is still in its early development stages. This also affects the development of the relationship between the police and private security, as this research has shown. These relations are not bad but are still not at the level that the professional, as well as the general public, would like them to be. Members of private security look at those relations with more optimism, while members of the police have a more realistic view of the problems that accompany those relations. Police officers do not perceive private security as equal partners and do not have much confidence in their work. Due to all the above, it is necessary to take certain measures to improve these relations. One of the measures could be the abolition of the monopoly of the Serbian police on the control and regulation of the work of private security. It is necessary to leave certain levels of control to private security itself, and for certain segments to remain under the jurisdiction of the police. The conduct of examinations for obtaining licenses for private security should be organized in such a way that the commissions are of mixed composition. It is necessary to significantly increase the number of classes for training members of private security, to improve their knowledge and skills, but also to get them acquainted with the duties of police officers. It is recommended that representatives of the police, with extensive experience, and the Chamber of Private Security compose training programs together, as this would improve the training plans. Private security should promote its work in public, in campaigns similar to those conducted by the police to bring their work closer to the citizens, and sometimes, it would be desirable to include members of the police in them. Joint training could also help to improve relations, it would improve the knowledge and skills of participants, allow them to exchange experiences, and in that way gain a better picture of each other. Also, in the training programs of police officers, it is necessary to include one segment that refers to the rights and obligations of members of private security, because it is necessary for situations when they are engaged in mutual tasks, which will be more and more in the future.

The limitation of this research is that it was only conducted on the territory of Serbia, with a relatively low number of respondents who completed the questionnaire, and not in a larger number of countries. Having in mind the imbalance in the sampling of participants (objective and mentioned reasons) that created the bias between the smaller group (178) of security personnel participants against the larger group of (190) police officers participants, we compared the obtained relative values of results. However, the findings of this research can help us assess situations and improve police and private security relations, as a basis for further research, especially in developing countries in transition, but also in countries where there is a long tradition of private security.



Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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