

The Hidden Mechanisms and Impact of International Economic Crime: A Bibliometric Perspective

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Abstract

In the intricate and interconnected global economic landscape, the presence of international economic crime poses a subtle yet profound menace to stability and equity. The objective of the present study is to uncover the concealed associations through which international economic crime exerts its influence, as well as to shed light on its impact on economic systems and global governance. By applying a bibliometric approach, our research analyzes the patterns, prevailing themes, and indirectly, the gaps in the current body of literature, thereby facilitating a deeper understanding of the dynamics and repercussions of this intricate quandary. Such an analysis is imperative for the formulation of effective policies to combat economic crime on an international scale, as well as for the enhancement of mechanisms for cross-border cooperation. Finally, this paper adds to the academic dialogue and the formulation of strategies to counter this form of crime, which is essential for ensuring a more transparent and equitable global economic environment.

Key words: economic criminality, humans, crime, socio-economic factors

J.E.L. classification: K14, K33, I15

1. Introduction

International economic crime encompasses a broad spectrum of unlawful actions, ranging from tax evasion and money laundering to fraudulent activities that transcend national borders and instances of corruption. These activities are frequently facilitated by the intricate and interconnected nature of contemporary financial systems, as well as the lack of transparency and disparities in global enforcement mechanisms (Munteanu, 2020). In the face of these complexities, economic crime persistently adapts and evolves in response to advancements in technology and changes in regulatory frameworks.

The ramifications of these illicit activities are extensive and diverse, impacting not only domestic economies but also global stability. Entire economies can suffer from distortions in their markets, diminished tax revenues, and decreased foreign investment (Munteanu et Mirea, 2023a). Moreover, economic crime erodes trust in institutional structures and exacerbates societal inequalities, thereby contributing to a detrimental cycle of poverty and instability.

The bibliometric investigation offers a methodical approach for mapping the current body of literature and identifying the predominant trends and gaps in research on economic crime. This facilitates a more profound comprehension of how effective policies and regulatory mechanisms can be formulated and implemented. By means of bibliometric analysis, scholars can trace the progression of fundamental concepts, collaborations among authors and institutions, as well as evaluate the influence of research on public policy.

Another pivotal element in the theoretical framework is the role of technology in both facilitating and combating economic crime. The emergence of financial technologies (FinTech) and cryptocurrencies has created new avenues for illicit activities, while concurrently providing innovative tools for monitoring and detection (Jakubowick et Munteanu, 2022).

Furthermore, the theoretical foundation of the study explores the significance of international cooperation. In an interconnected world, no country can effectively combat economic crime in isolation.

2. Theoretical background

The study's theoretical basis delves into the intricate complexities of economic crime within the framework of globalization. This occurrence not only undermines the integrity of financial markets, but also holds significant implications for social equality, the perpetuation of sustainable development, and the effective functioning of democratic institutions.

International economic crime presents a substantial challenge to global economies due to its intricate impact on governance, environmental sustainability, and the welfare of the public. Paraschiv and Stan (2023) shed light on the interwoven relationship between companies' profiles and their environmental endeavors, emphasizing the dual role these companies play in contributing to environmental degradation and seeking ways to alleviate it. By incorporating social responsibility, these corporate activities can foster sustainable local development, as Hübel (Anghel), Stan, and Tasente (2023) discovered, thereby significantly influencing the everyday experiences of individuals in both public and private sectors. Social responsibility is at the same time a mode of action, an attitude or a state of mind that a company adopts in its relationship with consumers or users but also with its business environment. The application of the principles of social responsibility involves companies in actions to balance profit-making activities with activities that benefit society in general and implies the development of businesses under the conditions of a positive relationship with the environment in which they carry out their activity (Stanciu, 2023; Grigorescu et. al, 2023).

The administrative framework within which these corporations operate is not without critical scrutiny. Stan and Tasente's (2023) evaluation of Administrative Capacity Building Projects in Romania, particularly through the POCA initiative, reveals the multidimensional role that such programs play in strengthening institutional capacities to combat economic crimes.

Digital governance, as observed by Apostol and Stan (2021) in their comparative study, presents another layer of complexity. The advance of digital tools in Romania and Bulgaria shows both opportunities and vulnerabilities in the fight against economic crime, especially in corporate governance and financial reporting, as noted by Munteanu (2021).

Understanding the nuances of economic crime also involves exploring specific sectors such as commodity investing. The bibliometric analysis provided by Munteanu and Mirea (2023b) draws attention to the factors that influence these investments, which can be manipulated for fraudulent purposes.

The tax field is not immune to these challenges. The works of Mircea-Iosif Rus (2019, 2020a) on the impact of local public finances and the dichotomy between tax evasion and tax fraud underline the need for robust financial governance systems capable of detecting and deterring economic crimes at the community level. Also, Rus's research on corporate governance in R&D activity in Romania (2020b) and the impact of financing such activities (2022) reveals the intricate links between financial governance, corporate ethics and economic sustainability.

The series of studies by Braşoveanu (2009, 2016, 2023) provide a broader ecological context, emphasizing the critical importance of regional development policies that consider environmental protection and citizens' rights to a healthy living environment. The legal and institutional framework for managing these issues, especially in sensitive areas such as the Black Sea region (Braşoveanu & Golumbeanu, 2016), is fundamental for preventing the exploitation of environmental and economic systems.

Through the bibliometric lens, the interconnectedness of these domains—corporate environmental influence, social responsibility, administrative capabilities, digital governance, and financial regulation—forms a complex web where economic crime can either flourish or be effectively challenged. As we continue to unravel the hidden mechanisms of such criminality, it is

becoming increasingly clear that integrated, cross-sectoral approaches are essential in developing effective strategies for economic resilience and sustainable development.

3. Research methodology

The rapid expansion of scientific literature in recent years has strengthened the applicability of bibliometric methods as crucial tools for the synthesis of accumulated knowledge (Hernandez-Perlines, 2022, pp.428). In the digital age, advanced indexing and database systems facilitate access to a huge volume of scientific works, providing crucial data such as titles, authors, affiliated institutions and references (Gutiérrez-Salcedo et al., 2018, pp.1275). These data are fundamental to building a clear picture of the evolution and influence of economic crime research.

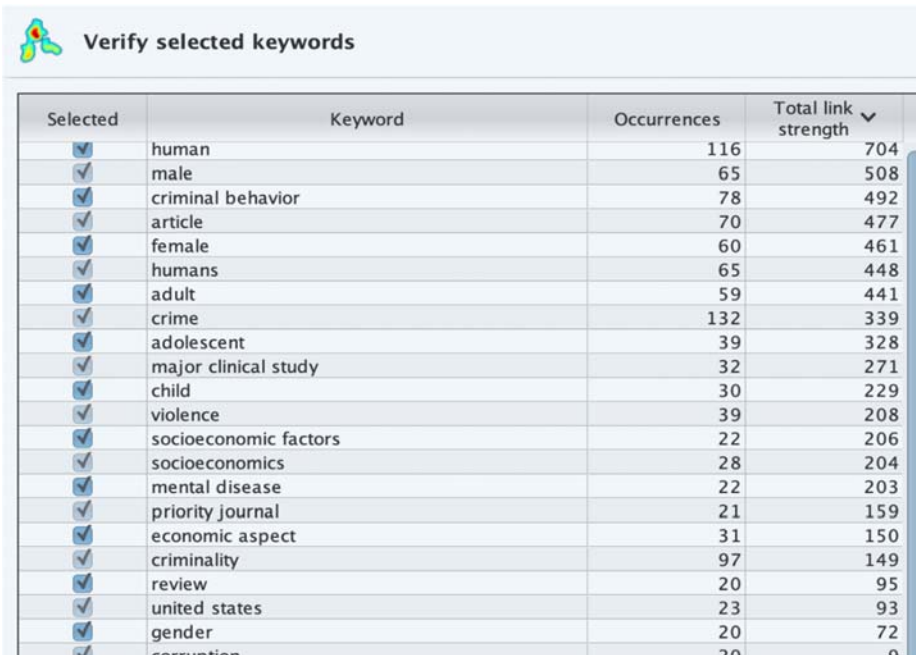
Bibliometric tools, through data collection and analysis, provide deep insight into scholarly impact and direct future investigations in the field. These methods help us quantify and visualize scientific progress and are widely used in systematic literature reviews, providing a reference base for researchers (Toro-Jaramillo, 2017, pp.229; Kraus et al., 2020, pp.1023).

For the current study, the preliminary analysis was carried out using an accessible tool, such as Microsoft Excel (Ribeiro-Navarrete et al., 2021; Araya-Castillo et al., 2021, pp.1), which allows a first organization and filtering of the data. Later, for a deeper and more complex analysis, I resorted to using the VOSviewer software, version 1.6.16 (Van Eck and Waltman, 2010, pp.523). It is customized for bibliometric analysis and is valuable due to its ability to integrate numerical analysis with graphical representations such as co-occurrence maps, thus facilitating the visual interpretation of the links between different aspects of research (Ribeiro-Navarrete et al., 2021, pp.1).

4. Findings

The study performed a comprehensive analysis of the frequency with which the keywords of the selected articles appear together in the literature, a process known as co-occurrence mapping. This technique, which reveals the structure of relationships between keywords, can be compared to a network of interconnected concepts.

Figure no. 1 Keywords



The screenshot shows the 'Verify selected keywords' interface in VOSviewer. It contains a table with the following data:

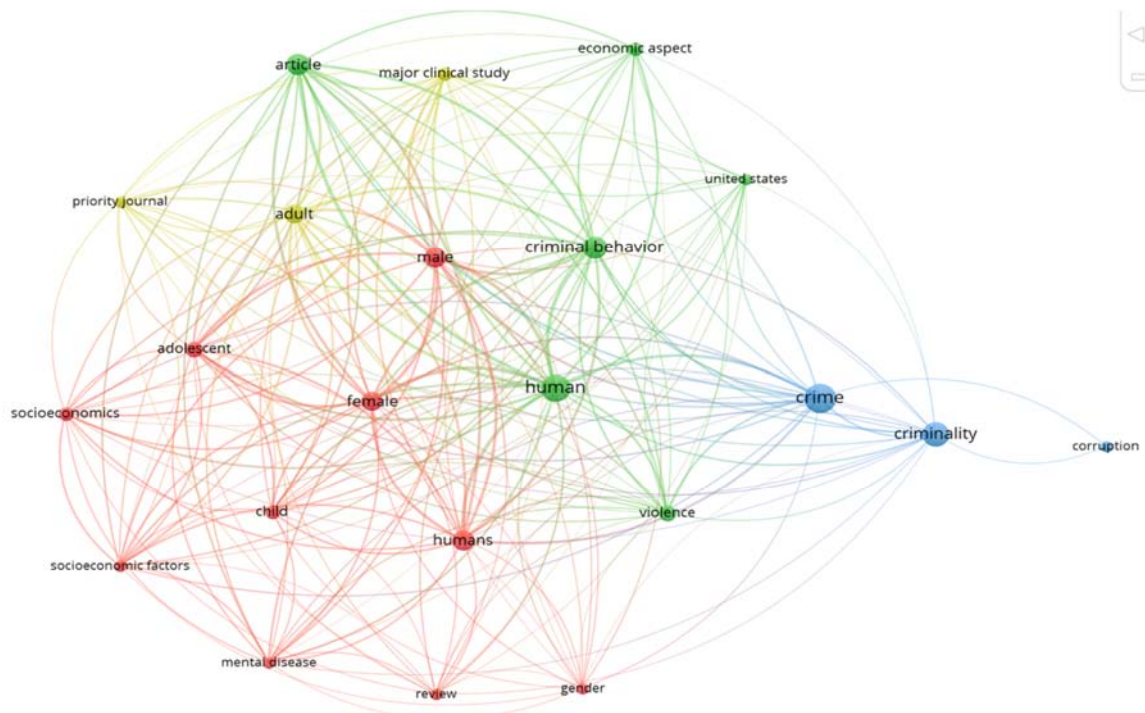
Selected	Keyword	Occurrences	Total link strength
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	human	116	704
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	male	65	508
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	criminal behavior	78	492
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	article	70	477
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	female	60	461
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	humans	65	448
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	adult	59	441
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	crime	132	339
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	adolescent	39	328
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	major clinical study	32	271
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	child	30	229
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	violence	39	208
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	socioeconomic factors	22	206
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	socioeconomics	28	204
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	mental disease	22	203
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	priority journal	21	159
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	economic aspect	31	150
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	criminality	97	149
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	review	20	95
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	united states	23	93
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	gender	20	72
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	corruption	20	9

Source: Authors' own results through VOSviewer program

To achieve this mapping, all key terms were considered as reference points, using an analysis method based on the total frequency of occurrences. The study imposed certain thresholds for the inclusion of terms in the analysis, establishing that a term was considered significant only if it was mentioned at least 20 times, i.e. in 20 studies. Thus, from the total of 94 articles selected from the SCOPUS database based on the keyword *economic crime*, although 3475 co-occurrences resulted, only 22 key terms exceeded the threshold set for the frequency of occurrence (figure no.1).

The results of the analysis were visualized through a graphical network, highlighting how the key terms clustered and interacted with each other. According to figure no. 2, the co-occurrence structure organized into four main groups, each represented by a distinct color and classified according to the density and strength of interactions: the first group in red, the second in green, the third in blue and the fourth in yellow. The size and position of each circle in the graph reflects the degree of association with other terms, and the lines between them illustrate mutual links and dependencies.

Figure no. 2 Co-occurrences of keywords



Source: Authors' own results through VOSviewer program

The interaction between these clusters can provide valuable insights into how different demographic and socioeconomic variables influence criminal behavior or how different forms of crime are perceived and addressed in society. Using different colors to distinguish between clusters also helps identify how research topics are interconnected, and the proximity of terms on the map can suggest closer or more direct relationships between topics. Overall, such a map is a valuable tool to guide further research, identifying areas of major interest or gaps in the existing literature and thereby facilitating the development of new research questions or new theoretical directions.

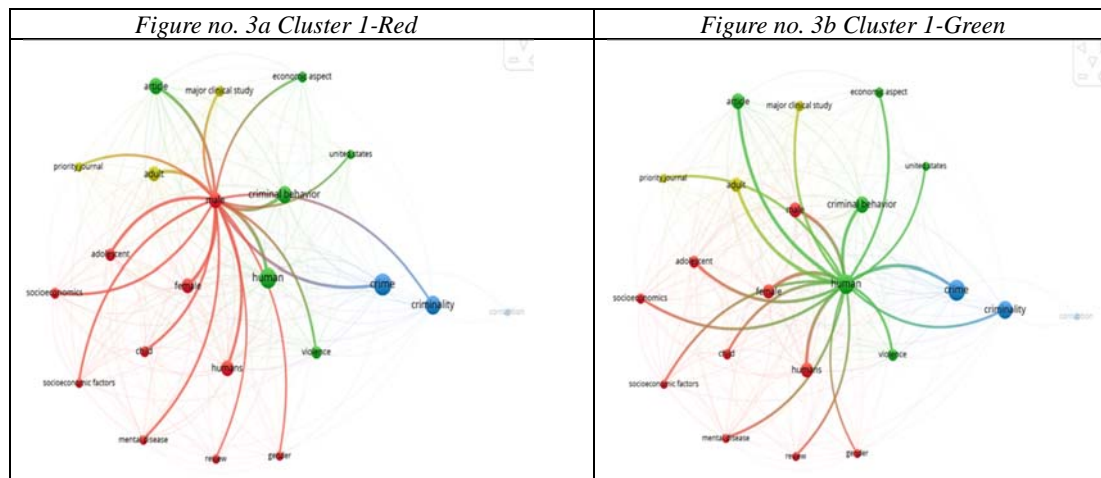
Cluster 1-Red, consisting of 10 keywords: *adolescent, child, female, gender, humans, male, mental disease, review, socio-economic factors, socioeconomic* is illustrated in figure no.3a. In a globalized world, international economic crime is no longer an isolated problem of financial systems, but becomes a factor affecting all layers of society, including its most vulnerable segments: children and adolescents. The association of these keywords suggests that young people, both female and male, are differently affected by turbulent economic realities, often generated by large-scale criminal activity. Children and adolescents face specific challenges at critical developmental stages, and mental disorders can be exacerbated by economic instability and inequality. In this context, gender

becomes a lens through which significant differences can be seen in the impact of socio-economic factors on mental health.

The obtained cluster 1 may indicate that variations in income, access to resources and other economic aspects influence adolescent development, with special attention paid to gender differences. Understanding these dynamics is crucial to developing effective interventions and support programs that take into account the specific needs of each gender and varying socio-economic circumstances.

Considering these findings, our bibliometric study highlights the relationship between international economic crime and increased risk of mental disorders in adolescents. It is noted that in families affected by economic fraud or job loss due to corporate corruption, children and adolescents may experience increased levels of stress and anxiety, which may contribute to or exacerbate mental disorders.

Moreover, the links between the keywords of this cluster bring up the importance of gender equality in the economic context and how discrepancies can affect boys and girls differently. For example, in families where girls are forced to take on domestic responsibilities in the face of financial hardship, the added pressure can contribute to post-traumatic stress disorder or depression. In contrast, boys, often encouraged to be the primary providers from an early age, can be affected by conduct disorders or substance abuse when faced with the impossibility of meeting these expectations.



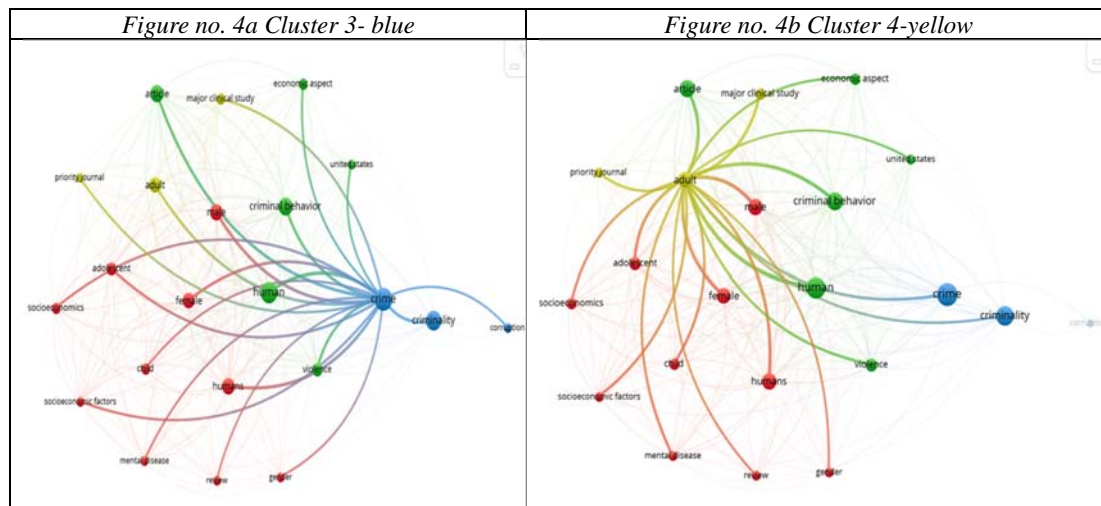
Source: Authors' own results through VOSviewer program

Cluster 2-Green, consisting of 6 keywords: *article*, *criminal behavior*, *economic aspects*, *human*, *united states*, *violence*, is illustrated in figure no.3b.

Criminal conduct, especially when linked to the economic realm, feeds off and perpetuates social inequalities and tensions. A good part of the published studies come from the United States, an economy with significant global influence, with the authors showing an interest in understanding how economic crime, through fraud, tax evasion and other similar crimes, contributes to the destabilization of the economic foundations of society. This, in turn, can lead to increased violence and the erosion of public confidence in economic institutions. The bibliometric analysis reveals a worrying trend: a direct correlation between the increase in economic crime and the intensification of violence, suggesting that these two elements feed each other. It is also noted that in situations of economic crisis, often caused by high-level criminal activity, individuals and groups may resort to violence in response to a sense of injustice and loss of financial security.

This cluster also brings to the fore the need to better understand the profile of economic criminals and the motivations behind their criminal behavior. This is essential for the development of effective policies to prevent and combat economic crime. Through extensive literature review, the article provides a synthesis of current research and identifies future directions for studies, laying the groundwork for multidisciplinary approaches in understanding this complex phenomenon.

Cluster 3- Blue, consisting of 3 keywords: *corruption, crime, criminality*, is illustrated in figure no.4a. Corruption, crime and criminality represent three interconnected elements that, together, make up a complex triad that affects the structure and functioning of societies globally. Our study, which adopts a bibliometric perspective, aims to investigate the hidden links that support this triad and assess the impact that international economic crime has on different national and international systems. In an era marked by accelerated globalization, corruption transcends national borders and becomes a phenomenon with international repercussions, undermining laws and economies, while economic crime manifests itself in a variety of forms, from tax fraud to money laundering and evasion fiscal.



Source: Authors' own results through VOSviewer program

Corruption, often seen as the conduct of access to power or economic resources, is a catalytic force for a wide range of criminal activities. By associating the keywords in this cluster, corruption can be seen as the abuse of power for personal gain, which can erode trust in public institutions and have a negative impact on economic efficiency. The impact of corruption is extensive, leading to distortion of markets, inhibition of economic growth, exacerbating social inequality. Economic crimes, a subfield of crime involving the illegal acquisition of funds or other economic advantages, have become a major concern of the international community. These not only affect the economy directly through financial losses, but can also have dire consequences for social and political stability.

Crime, in its broadest sense, includes a variety of illegal acts, from street theft to sophisticated cross-border crime. In the international economic context, crime takes forms that transcend borders and jurisdictions, making criminals difficult to track and prosecute. The effects of crime reverberate over all of humanity, negatively influencing the quality of life, the safety of citizens and the functioning of democratic institutions.

Cluster 4- Yellow, consisting of 3 keywords: *adult, major clinical study, priority journal*, is illustrated in figure no.4b. International economic crime represents a major challenge for the global community, with effects that transcend financial markets, directly influencing the lives of adult individuals and society as a whole. The bibliometric study we propose is an analytical approach that aims to provide a detailed understanding of the hidden mechanisms that facilitate economic crime and to assess its impact on social and individual structures. In this context, priority journal articles are an essential source of data for our analysis, providing major clinical trials and research perspectives that address the consequences of this form of crime, being able to identify the ways in which they influence the physical and psychological well-being of the population. So, priority journals, characterized by their high research rigor and relevance, become a crucial tool in the effort to map the landscape of this complex phenomenon and extract valuable information for the academic community and policy makers.

Economic crime, which includes a wide range of illegal activities - from fraud and corruption to money laundering and tax evasion - has a significant impact on the mental and physical health of adults. Major clinical studies show that the stress and anxiety associated with financial uncertainty and economic instability can lead to a number of health problems such as depression, high blood pressure and other chronic conditions. These problems are often exacerbated among those who are directly affected by the consequences of economic crime, such as victims of fraud or employees of companies involved in economic scandals.

In addition, the literature review in priority journals allows us to lean into the long-term implications of exposure to economic crime. Adults, who are often at the center of these economic turbulences, either as victims or witnesses, may experience a decline in quality of life and productivity, an aspect that requires increased attention in public policies and social intervention programs.

5. Conclusions

The results of our study provide a synthesis of the multifaceted impact of international economic crime on different demographic segments and social domains. The detailed bibliometric analysis highlighted the need for a holistic framework to understand and address the complexity of the phenomenon.

Beginning with adolescents, the study revealed how the interaction between economic factors and psychosocial development can negatively influence youth mental health. This underlines the imperative to develop educational policies and programs designed to protect and support them in the face of these risks. It also highlighted that understanding and combating economic crime must include special attention to the specific vulnerabilities of youth. In the context of the United States, the study identified a link between economic crime, violence, and criminal behavior. This demonstrates that an integrated approach combining economic, social, and behavioral perspectives is essential to address the challenges posed by these phenomena. Corruption, crime and criminality, as investigated in the third cluster, are recognized as not only legal or economic, but also ethical and social problems, requiring a global and coordinated strategy to respond effectively to these challenges. Our study contributes to the knowledge base with the goal of developing more effective approaches for a safer and more prosperous future. Finally, the analysis on adults underscores the profound and diverse effects of international economic crime. By focusing on major clinical trials and the literature, we aimed to elucidate the complex mechanisms that support and perpetuate economic crime globally. This contributes to the theoretical basis necessary for the development of preventive and intervention strategies that are adapted to the complexity of today's world.

In conclusion, by interconnecting these findings, the study provides a platform for developing a comprehensive response to economic crime that considers its wide-scale impact and provides tailored solutions for all affected groups. It paves the way for more effective policies and interventions, with the potential to positively influence the mental health of both young people and adults and strengthen social structures against the risks involved in international economic crime.

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