

# The economic dimensions of transnational organised crime in Southern and Western Africa

<sup>1</sup>Tolulope Lembola Ojolo & <sup>2</sup>Shanta Balgobind Singh

## Abstract

This article explores the economic dimensions of transnational organised crime (TOC) in Africa, focusing on the Southern and Western regions. TOC in Africa, while driven by traditional motives such as power and financial gain, has evolved into a sophisticated form of criminal entrepreneurship. This evolution is closely linked to globalization, technological advancements, and socio-political instability across the continent. We examine how criminal networks exploit economic and regulatory gaps to integrate illicit activities into the formal economy, thereby blurring the distinction between legal and illegal enterprises. The article critically discusses the vulnerabilities that facilitate TOC in Africa, such as governance-related challenges, corruption, and socio-economic inequalities. A special emphasis is placed on industries such as eco-tourism and real estate, which have become key channels for money laundering and other illegal activities on the continent, as well as the impact of TOC on the continent's social and economic development. The enterprise model of organised crime and the entrepreneurial theory of crime are used as theoretical frameworks to analyse the operational dynamics of these criminal networks. By providing a comprehensive analysis of TOC as a variation of entrepreneurship, particularly within the shadow economy, this article fills a critical gap in the literature. There is an urgent need for a robust legal framework and international cooperation to combat the growing influence of TOC in Africa, which poses a significant threat to the continent's economic stability and development.

**Keywords:** *transnational organised crime, criminal entrepreneurship, shadow economy, economic development*

## Article History:

*Received: September 3, 2024*

*Accepted: October 23, 2024*

*Revised: October 17, 2024*

*Published online: November 19, 2024*

## Suggested Citation:

Ojolo, T.L. & Singh, S.B. (2024). The economic dimensions of transnational organised crime in Southern and Western Africa. *International Review of Social Sciences Research*, 4(4), 80-106. <https://doi.org/10.53378/irssr.353126>

## About the authors:

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding author. Researcher, Department of Criminology and Forensic, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Email: [ojolotolulope@gmail.com](mailto:ojolotolulope@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Department of Criminology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Email: [singhsb@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:singhsb@ukzn.ac.za)



## 1. Introduction

When investigating a social phenomenon, it is crucial to consider its political, economic, and social contexts. Without this comprehensive approach, any explanations will be inadequate. This principle applies to understanding the trends and impacts of transnational organised crime, as this phenomenon is intricately linked to and influenced by the broader societal perspective. To illustrate, organised crimes encompass systematic and continuous criminal activities that are strategically executed with the primary goal of financial gain, this is frequently perceived as a more significant social problem compared to disorganised crimes perpetrated by individuals acting alone (Kleemans & Van Koppen, 2020). Thus, to understand the nature and operations of organized crime, it is essential to examine the conditions that facilitate and sustain it, such as governance issues, economic disparities, and diverse social dynamics across varying geographical contexts (Shaw & Reitano, 2019). While organized crime and transnational organized crime share some similarities, which have been the subject of extensive debate in academic literature. Scholars have delved into these distinctions to comprehensively grasp their scope and impact, often emphasizing the multidimensional nature of these concepts.

Kleemans and Van Koppen (2020) refer to organized crime as criminal organizations that systematically engage in illegal activities for financial gain, focusing on domestic illegal activities, whereas transnational organized crime involves criminal activities that cross national borders, often involving networks that operate in multiple countries which operations involve international collaboration and coordination (Sergi, 2022). Given that context, transnational organized crime has emerged as a critical concern in Africa, influenced by recent global dynamics and socio-political upheavals. The globalization of trade, migration, and finance has substantially facilitated the growth of organized and illicit transnational markets. For instance, the rising global demand for drugs, minerals, and wildlife products has converted specific regions of Africa, particularly Western and Southern areas, into major transit hubs for these illicit commodities (Adeyanju, 2020; Bruwer, 2020). Equally, the advancement in technologies has enabled the proliferation of transnational organized crime in Africa. The digital evolution has enabled more sophisticated methods of coordination between criminal enterprises, allowing them to bypass traditional law and enforcement techniques. For example, encrypted messaging applications and anonymous online platforms provide secure channels for planning and executing illegal operations, from trafficking drugs to coordinating human

smuggling rings (UNODC, 2020; Rooi, 2021). In the same vein, socio-political shifts such as corruption, political instability, and weak governance have fostered a conducive environment for illicit enterprises to thrive. Thus, the convergence of these global and local variables has made Africa a pivotal region for transnational organized crimes (European Commission, 2021).

Though transnational organised crime is primarily perceived as a significant threat to national security, its profound influence on the shadow or illegal economy is equally critical. Studies have argued that shadow economy does not mainly refer to illegal economic activities that are unregulated but rather indicates that illicit trade can occur independently of the legal or illegal nature of the goods traded, either in legitimate markets or illicit markets, involving a range of thespians, from legally established businesses to informal actors and even criminal organizations (Medina & Schneider, 2021). As such, the connection between transnational organized crime, the shadow economy, and illicit markets is profoundly intertwined. The illicit markets involve activities such as drug trafficking, human smuggling, arms dealing, and counterfeit goods, which constitute a significant component of the shadow economy (Mackenzie, 2020). In contrast, the shadow economy encompasses both legitimate and illegal activities that remain unregulated, untaxed, and hidden from formal economic frameworks (Medina & Schneider, 2021). Consequently, transnational organized crime thrives in this environment, capitalising on governance deficiencies, economic disparities, and inadequate regulatory frameworks that allow criminal activities to operate across borders, often unimpeded by national and international laws. In view of this, Shaw and Reitano (2019) opine that organised criminal groups exploit illicit markets to generate financial profit which subsequently facilitates other illegal operations and undermines formal economies. As a result, this illicit or shadow economy substantially diminishes government revenue through tax evasion and exacerbates social inequalities by diverting resources into underground economies (UNODC, 2020). Empirically, studies have shown that there is a significant overlap between transnational organized crime and the shadow economy. This relationship is evident in the way illicit activities operate within the unregulated sectors of the economy. The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime reports in Africa reveal that criminal networks infiltrate the shadow economy by engaging in illegal mining, human trafficking, drug smuggling, and arms trafficking, all of which generate vast untaxed profits and destabilize the local economy (Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime, 2020:9). In

Africa, for instance, the illegal exploitation of natural resources such as gold and diamonds is a major driver of shadow economic activity. Studies indicate that in countries like Cote d'Ivoire, Angola and Ghana organized crime networks control significant portions of the illegal mining sector, undermining state revenue and perpetuating corruption (Østensen & Stridsman, 2017; Shaw & Reitano, 2019). These economic losses not only undermine public revenue but also disrupt local economies by fuelling corruption, displacing local businesses, and increasing societal instability (UNODC, 2020; Troisi et al., 2023).

Given this backdrop, sparse evidence is available in Africa to the credit of the government and policymakers towards initiating legal regulations to combat the surge of transnational organised crime spreading across the continent with varying degrees of potency. The widespread of organised criminal networks and their invisible mortality along with the social and economic implications that come with organized crimes highlight the critical need for robust legal frameworks. This situation reinforces the challenges affecting the economic climate in Africa. For instance, empirical evidence reveals that sectors such as wildlife conservation, and the oil industry have been compromised by transnational organised criminal networks (Kayira, 2022). This is evident in the poaching and illegal trafficking of wildlife products that have resulted in significant biodiversity loss in Southern Africa, destabilising local economies that rely on wildlife activities for economic growth (Rakenosi, 2020). Moreover, while considering the wider social implications of organised crime it goes beyond the economic and social costs associated with it. Considering the financial implications would suggest material consequences of these criminal activities, yet there are also intangible factors to consider. This paper draws on empirical data from the literature that has examined the illegal exportation of wildlife products in South Africa to illustrate this point. For example, the unlawful hunting of rhinos and elephants for their valuable horns and tusks has become a major societal issue in South Africa because of the illegal trading of wildlife products and its effect on the economic and social fabric of local communities (Rakenosi, 2020). These illegal business activities have resulted in a decrease in wildlife populations, causing a significant impact on eco-tourism, a crucial driver of the economy. The South African Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE) report reveals the increase in poaching incidents in 2023, with 499 rhinos illegally killed nationwide, marking a significant rise of over 10% compared to the previous year (Moore, 2023). Equally, the rise of transnational criminal organisations has significantly changed the landscape of organised crime, particularly

in Western Africa. For example, among the notorious perpetrators in this sphere are the Nigerian cybercriminals colloquially known as “yahoo-yahoo boys, and the “Sakawa Boys” from Ghana (Ugwu et al.,2024 & Esson et.al., 2022). These popular groups through criminal networking engage in various illicit activities such as advanced business email compromise schemes, romance scams, and phishing scams, these groups represent a new dimension of transnational organized crime that impacts not only West Africa but also global ramifications (Brandy 2021; Angela et al., 2020). The activities of these criminal groups exemplify another dimension of transnational organised crime that occurs in Western Africa.

While there are limited studies on the economic dimensions and entrepreneurial activities of transnational organised criminal groups in Africa, most existing research has focused on organised crime in Africa without interrogating the entrepreneurial activities and their potential. This research gap highlights the originality of this paper. In part, the objective of this paper is to understand the role of entrepreneurial and business activities that contribute to economic growth within the shadow economy and their implications for the legal economy. This paper seeks to enrich organised crime studies through the interrogation of vulnerabilities, the illegal economy, and criminal entrepreneurship in Western and Southern Africa.

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1 Conceptualization of Transnational Organised Crime***

The term transnational organized crime predates the 1980s; however, the usage and reference in literature became widely recognized in the late 20th century as globalisation intensified. In other words, the ascending awareness that globalisation ignites the development of transnational organised crime on many fronts became increasingly evident leading to more focused academic and policy discussions (Ebner, 2019). In conceptualising transnational organised crime, different viewpoints and perceptions have been chronicled in the organised crime literature with a seamless contention of depicting organised crime as transnational organised crime.

Defining transnational organised crime proves challenging due to the absence of a clear and universally accepted definition. Nevertheless, this phenomenon is continually expanding in scope and complexity, as it increasingly infiltrates economic and social infrastructures. Shaw (2019) describes transnational organised crime as crime coordinated across national borders, involving groups of individuals working in more than one country to plan and execute

illegal business ventures. These illegal businesses are tailored around activities such as the trafficking of humans, drug trafficking, cybercrime, illicit trade, and environmental crime (Hall, 2018). Specifically, advancements in technologies have enabled criminal groups and individuals to easily share information and collaborate across different parts of the world (Wall, 2024). These lines of argument support some of the popular commentaries that global crimes have become a negative externality of globalisation. In other words, transnational organised crime is classified as the dark side of globalisation and poses a significant threat to economic development (Walton & Dinnen, 2016). However, while the importance of globalisation has continued to surface in the development agenda of many economies, criminals either independent or in groups have taken advantage of the interconnectivity of the world to perpetuate crimes across different industries. Von Lampe (2021) embraces most of the perspectives given in this paper. For instance, the author describes transnational organised crime as a continuous criminal enterprise that rationally works for profit from illicit activity across the world. This signposts that transnational organised crime is a dynamic and adaptive phenomenon that has expanded its reach and influence by capitalising on recent economic, legal, technological, and social changes. This expansion has allowed organised criminal enterprises to operate on an unprecedented scale making them more formidable and challenging to combat. This explanation, no doubt, blends the question of how contemporary global changes have facilitated the expansion and entrenchment of transnational organised crime, which is sacrosanct in the conceptualisation and understanding of transnational organised crime.

Though the concept of transnational organised crime extends beyond Africa, the perception of this phenomenon differs across different continents. The opening and intensification of economic growth across regions have rejuvenated the influence of transnational organised crime as the global economy is expanding and increased trade provides new opportunities for illicit businesses. Ellis and Shaw (2015) highlight the impact of Africa's thriving economy on the proliferation of organised criminal groups, shedding light on the positive conditions that have allowed these illegal operations to thrive. This reinforces the argument that some regions are predisposed due to certain vulnerabilities such as inadequate regulatory framework and abundant natural resources. As a result, providing opportunities and resources for criminal groups to exploit (Krylova, 2023).

## *2.2 Vulnerabilities Promulgating Transnational Organised Crime in Africa*

Given the public concern about transnational organised crime and its multidimensional insecurities in modern societies, it is crucial to develop an in-depth understanding of the vulnerabilities that connect criminal groups to different forms of organised crime and how these vulnerabilities are exploited through cross-border activities such as drug trafficking, human smuggling, and illicit financial flows. Exploring the geographical context of transnational organised crime resonates with conversations surrounding the operations of organised criminal networks in Africa by showcasing how societal factors shape the perception of the phenomenon geographically. This context elucidates the theory of vulnerability, suggesting that individuals in particular situational contexts may become prone to risk and uncertainty (Mackenzie et al., 2014). The interplay of intrinsic and contextual susceptibility might present as either dispositional or occurrent (Mackenzie et al., 2014). The prevalence of transnational organised crime and the underground economy in Africa is attributable to causes such as limited possibilities, increased economic problems, and systemic corruption (Adekoya, 2020; Aborisade & Aliyuu, 2016). The scenario has led to an unstable economic climate that hinders investment in the economic activities essential for job creation and wealth building. Conversely, endorsing a desire for immediate financial rewards rather than valuing long-term, sustained endeavors as the pathway to prosperity (Adekoya, 2020).

Consequently, the discourse on the changing global landscape due to globalisation has led to two distinct perspectives on its impact on the world. The preliminary argument highlights the significance of cultivating common interest through improvement in areas of economics, politics, society, and culture (Osaro, 2022; Nova 2020). Above all, it highlights the importance of facilitating the free movement of people, goods, and ideas across international borders. This effort to reduce barriers is viewed as crucial for creating a more connected and collaborative global community that can effectively tackle shared challenges and seize opportunities together. However, the latter perspective emphasises the adverse effects of globalisation, illustrating that it presents a multifaceted narrative: while it promotes progress and development, it simultaneously exacerbates social and economic inequalities, and contributes to the erosion of cultural diversity (Nova, 2020). This complex duality underscores the unequal distribution of the benefits and challenges of globalisation across different regions and communities. In today's interconnected world, globalisation and organised crime have thrived together. The growing interconnectivity of the world has added further layers of complexities

to the transnational organised crime ecosystem. Most recently, Ujunwa and Okoyeuzu (2021) argue that globalisation facilitates economic interconnectedness that exposes African nations to global financial shocks and vulnerabilities. The analysis of globalisation in literature often describes globalisation as the process of eliminating borders between nations and fostering economic interdependence with minimal trade barriers (Szuper, 2020). Thus, eradicating these borders allows criminal networks to operate smoothly across borders, utilising modern communication technologies, advanced logistics, and global financial systems to enhance efficiency and extend their influence (Pasculli & Ryder, 2019). This interconnectedness enables crimes like the trafficking of drugs, arms, and even humans, with African nations often serving as both transit and destination points, amplifying vulnerability to exploitation and crime (Aïssaoui & Fabian, 2022). Subsequently, technological development and transnational organised crime demonstrate how organised criminal groups operate transnationally, linking illicit enterprises across borders.

Another factor contributing to the significant growth of transnational organised crime in Africa is corruption. Systemic corruption within governmental institutions is ingrained and takes on various forms, affecting multiple tiers of government and intertwining with the private sector. This far-reaching issue compromises the effectiveness of governance, distorts the trajectory of economic development, and undermines public confidence across the continent (Lodge, 2019). This endemic is deeply rooted in the political system, including its administrative and judicial sectors. Despite various legal reforms and initiatives aimed at promoting transparency and improving the effectiveness of public services, corruption persists. These efforts often face challenges such as weak enforcement, lack of political will, and limited resources, which hinder meaningful progress in combating corruption and establishing accountable governance (Mohammed et al., 2020). As a result, there are opportunities for criminal organisations to capitalise on illicit activities associated with these issues. As conceived by Fouladvand (2019), transnational organised crime and corruption have interconnected roles, with corruption enabling criminal networks to conduct activities such as bribery, money laundering, and evading law enforcement. In turn, organised crime perpetuates corruption by exploiting these vulnerabilities to further solidify their illicit operations. Thus, this creates a context in which corrupt activities are normalised within business operations, allowing illegal activity to operate under the veil of secrecy. This perspective highlights that criminal groups, regardless of their flexible or hierarchical structure, consider corruption an



essential expense for enabling the movement of illicit products both internationally and domestically.

### ***2.3 Illegal Economy and Entrepreneurship: A Variant of Transnational Organised Crime***

Entrepreneurship and transnational organised crime challenge the traditional positive image of entrepreneurs, revealing the complex realities of those involved in illegal activities. Entrepreneurs engaging in illicit activities are known for operating businesses without legal approval (Sonsuphap, 2022). Despite the expanding scope of the underground economy in many countries, the incentives driving entrepreneurs to operate illegal enterprises remain at an impasse. Criminal entrepreneurship presents challenges regarding its definition, regarded as a multifaceted social construct within academic discourse given its definitional complexities. Baumol (1990) elucidated criminal entrepreneurship as the pursuit of profit without regard to the means of acquiring wealth. This background buttresses the fact that transnational organised crime irrespective of the geographical context is characteristically profit-oriented and a market-driven business that allows criminal actors to adapt to things to fit their illegal activities. In a pragmatic sense, organised criminal groups engage in entrepreneurial activities by exploiting the gaps between legal regulations and social networks (Shaw & Reitano, 2019). These groups capitalize on the disparity between societal desires and legal constraints, profiting from unmet demands that cannot be satisfied within the boundaries of the law. By navigating these differences, they create opportunities to supply goods and services that are either restricted or heavily regulated, thereby generating profit by meeting demands that are otherwise illegal. This adaptive approach allows them to thrive in environments where legal and illegal markets intersect, leveraging their social networks and understanding of local dynamics to sustain and expand their operations.

This section of the paper examines the operational dynamics of organized criminal entities and their relentless pursuit of financial gains within the context of a legal economy. To begin with, the concept of economy refers to a complex system involving various individuals and entities responsible for the efficient utilisation of human, natural, and technological resources (Jahanger et al., 2022). This system encompasses the production, manufacturing, trade, and distribution of goods and services within a specific geographical area. This definition involves a wide range of economic activities, including both legal ones, and illicit ones such

as the buying and selling of stolen goods (Naylor, 2017). However, the legitimate economy can be described as the collection of economic activities that involve actions that are not illegal and are officially documented by an authority (Williams, 2019). On the other hand, the illicit economy encompasses economic activities that are against the law, unregulated, or unreported (Naylor, 2017; Williams, 2019). These activities operate outside the realm of legal oversight and contribute to the shadow economy. Therefore, the intersection between business dynamics and the entrepreneurial dimension of transnational organised crime blurs the lines between legal and illegal activities, enabling criminal enterprises to exploit lawful economic frameworks for illicit profits (Williams, 2019). This overlap enables criminal groups to incorporate illicit profits into the legitimate economy, leveraging legal business operations to conceal unlawful actions, and the implementation of entrepreneurial tactics to extend their impact and authority.

The idea of entrepreneurialism as a variant of transnational crime was initially investigated by Symeonidou-Kastanidou (2007). The author argued that organised crime is fundamentally a business enterprise that involves illegal groups. Equally, Reuter and Paoli (2020) point out that organised criminal groups operate under similar principles that govern legitimate entrepreneurship in the market space. This standpoint buttresses the idea that organised criminal groups operate like legitimate businesses by responding to the demands and needs of their customers and adjusting their strategies to meet market conditions. However, between this concept, there are different approaches in which organised criminal groups exploit and participate in illegal activities that can be regarded as legal but are carried out illegally. Given the context, criminal operations go beyond conventional economic and capitalist measures, with entrepreneurship playing a crucial role in establishing and maintaining criminal wealth. Nevertheless, the differences in global economics highlight the intricacies of transnational systems influenced by different types of imbalances that foster criminal activity. Consequently, studies on organised crime have struggled to identify consistent patterns in how criminal groups handle their illicit profits, even after satisfying their agenda. However, there is a widespread assumption that these criminal organisations frequently use legitimate businesses to launder money from their illegal activities (Teichmann, 2020; Levi & Soudijn, 2020). In light of this, criminal groups advance their agenda by infiltrating businesses and thereby transforming legitimate entrepreneurial activities as a tool for money laundering drug, trafficking, and other nefarious criminal activities commonly associated with organised crime

(Banks, 2017). With this background, several commentaries have acknowledged the fact that historically, organised criminal groups infiltrate predominantly lucrative sectors such as real estate, hospitality (i.e. hotels, bars, and restaurants), construction, and poorly regulated industries such as gambling, waste management (Savona & Berlusconi 2015; Lord et al., 2019). For instance, real estate has been identified as a common avenue for criminals to launder their illegal funds by purchasing properties and subsequently selling them, thereby effectively cleaning the money (Teichmann, 2020; Kramer et al., 2023). The appeal of this sector for illegal activity lies in its ability to facilitate the movement of large sums of money in a single transaction, making it easier to hide and legitimise illicit financial flows. While this approach continues to exist, it is gradually being replaced by more advanced criminal techniques that demonstrate practical, strategic actions against various industries. For this reason, transnational organised criminals are known to be highly adaptable and inventive criminal networks.

In contrast to other types of criminal activity, organised criminal organisations are attracted to legitimate businesses due to the potential to combine illegal economic activities with legal trade. This is an apparent opportunity for organised criminal networks to exploit both private and government-owned industries (Zabyelina & Thachuk, 2022). However, the presence of these deceptive appearances of legitimacy facilitates various criminal activities, such as the integration of illicit funds into the legal economy, tax evasion, and fraud (Sonsuphap, 2022). The infiltration of criminal groups into legitimate businesses is a common occurrence, and research has indicated that corrupt government officials in both developed and developing countries often facilitate the involvement of organised crime in the private sector. They assist criminal organisations by abusing their authority to circumvent legal regulations and shield them from legal consequences (Di Gennaro, 2018). In situations where political elites perceive their positions as opportunities for personal gain, the shadow economy can flourish. While no country is exempt from these negative influences, nations afflicted by corruption often experience a more profound entrenchment of illicit activities, a weakened rule of law, and increased challenges in achieving sustainable economic development.

Consequently, this paper aims to comprehend entrepreneurial practices within a criminal context by analysing how criminal networks camouflage legitimate business operations. Contextually, entrepreneurship is a learned cognitive behavior that influences an individual's approach to managing business activity. While intentions stem from entrepreneurial behavior, they are predominantly influenced by three distinct variables: attitude

toward specific behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Botsaris & Vamvaka, 2016). Entrepreneurial activity epitomises deliberate behavior, therefore, understanding the business environment, including the decision to initiate an entrepreneurial venture is essential. As for criminal entrepreneurship, intention concerning a behavior stems from discovering and exploring opportunities, which can simply be defined as a situation in which there is a profit to be made by engaging in illegal business activities (Smith & McElwee, 2014). In this sense, the discovery of an opportunity is about the valuable goods and services for which there is a demand. For instance, transnational organised crime in Africa operates on the complex economic dynamics of supply and demand that underpin criminal activities. On the supply side, contemporary global markets have fuelled the trade in illegal goods such as drugs, illegal exportation of wildlife products, and counterfeit goods, which are profit-driven and tailored to consumer needs (Sollund, 2019). For example, the demand for ivory and rhino horns in the Asian market has driven poaching activities in Southern African wild reserves. As a result, those involved in illegal wildlife crime seek to meet market demand through a supply chain that originates with poaching or illegal harvesting of wildlife, driven by high profitability and market demand (Wittig, 2017). Equally, the exploitation of human needs for financial gain is a pervasive practice among organised criminal groups, particularly in the context of human smuggling and sex trafficking. These criminal syndicates target vulnerable individuals, often from impoverished regions, and entice them with promises of better opportunities in wealthier nations (Ellis, 2018). Once transported across borders, these individuals are frequently coerced into exploitative situations, such as prostitution, and forced labor, resulting in substantial profits for their traffickers. Sex traffickers, for example, manipulate fundamental human desires for security, employment, and a better life to lure victims into situations where they can be controlled and exploited (Miller-Perrin & Wurtele, 2017; Sikka, 2019). The primary aim of entrepreneurial criminals is to maximise their profits while concurrently inflicting substantial harm on the social fabric of societies and the global economy. Overall, it is evident that illicit enterprise and illegal entrepreneurship activities co-exist in the shadow economy and the legitimate business environment, and to achieve their agenda, criminal entrepreneurs exploit several facets of society, encompassing political, social, and cultural elements.

### **3. Methodology**

This paper synthesises insights from academic literature, peer-reviewed journals, and media reports. A comprehensive search was conducted using Google and Google Scholar, focusing on keywords such as "organised crime," "criminal entrepreneurship," and "transnational organised crime in Western and Southern Africa." The rationale for selecting these regions stems from the significant role that Western and Southern Africa play in examining the link between illicit economic activities and international organised crime. Both regions possess considerable geopolitical and economic importance, with Western Africa being the hub for activities such as drug trafficking, human smuggling, and illegal mining (Ukaeje & Iheanacho, 2023). On the other hand, Southern Africa is heavily involved in wildlife poaching, arms smuggling, and the exploitation of natural resources (Mozer & Prost, 2023). The search yielded numerous scholarly articles, which were carefully analysed and narrowed down to those relevant to the investigation of this study.

The selected articles provide compelling evidence that underscores the pervasive nature of transnational organised crime in the region. This issue presents significant challenges, as it undermines state institutions, fosters corruption, and contributes to instability across the continent, all of which impede development, economic growth, and governance. Souiki and Bessas (2024) reinforce a theoretical foundation that transnational organised crime has evolved from individualised and isolated environments to well-organised, structured groups that operate internationally, integrating into legitimate economies and leveraging international networks to expand their illicit activities. Supporting this assertion, Zabyelina and Thachuk (2020), suggest that criminal networks are increasingly resembling corporate organisations, employing sophisticated tactics, hierarchical structures, and global connections to facilitate their operations. By infiltrating legitimate markets, laundering illicit gains, and exploiting global supply chains, these criminal networks expand their reach and enhance their profitability while evading law enforcement across jurisdictions

### **4. Enterprise Model of Organize Crime: A Theoretical Insights**

This article explores the enterprise model of organised crime as a theoretical leaning to understand illegal entrepreneurial activities, their impacts, and their inherent challenges to legitimate businesses in Africa. The enterprise model, also known as the illegal enterprise

theory, was developed by Schelling and Smith in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It is not surprising that a sub-field, the enterprise or economics of organized crime was developed by economists. Peter Reuter's research is particularly notable within this approach. However, more than economists, it was criminologists and sociologists who expanded Reuter's research idea on the organisation of illegal markets by delving deeper into the social structures, networks, and behaviors that sustain these markets, examining the roles of power dynamics, social capital, and cultural norms in shaping the functioning and resilience of illegal enterprises (Paoli, 2017).

The enterprise model serves as a theoretical tool to understand the intersection between legal and illegal activities. One of the key principles of the enterprise model of organised crime is that criminal groups are driven by profit motives and operate similarly to legitimate businesses (Varese, 2017). Thus, criminal groups engage in illicit activities driven by the same economic principles that govern the legal market. Importantly, there is a range of legal and illegal markets, with demand for certain goods and services existing outside of legality (Smith, 1975). Scholars have used this theory to study how organised criminal groups integrate themselves into the legal economy to achieve their goals. This integration allows criminal actors to take advantage of legal market infrastructures, resources, and opportunities (Spagnoletti et al., 2022). This perspective aligns with the entrepreneurial theory of crime, which suggests that entrepreneurship plays a key role in understanding organised criminal enterprises (Smith, 2020; Levi, 2019). According to this view, criminal enterprise exists because of entrepreneurship (Kleemans et al., 2020). The ability of individuals to innovate, adapt, and create strategies allows criminal organizations to navigate and dominate illicit markets, ensuring their profitability and longevity. In other words, entrepreneurship remains an inviolable feature of modern transnational organised crime; therefore, understanding the trajectory of the market, and socio-economic conditions remains important (Paoli, 2017). Nonetheless, transnational organised crime is a complex activity and cannot be explained by one theoretical perspective.

This study seeks to incorporate both an enterprise model and the entrepreneurial theory of crime to offer a comprehensive understanding of how organised criminal groups operate within legal and illegal economies. The operational activities of organised criminal groups with human trafficking, illicit drug trade, and the illegal exportation of animal products are activities central to highly profitable, secretive, and transnational markets that follow basic supply and

demand rules, with economic incentives serving as the primary motivators for individuals and groups involved in these criminal activities (Tudor, 2019). Conversely, the entrepreneurial theory of crime proposes that the participation of criminal groups in illegal markets is not solely motivated by economic incentives but is also influenced by the entrepreneurial skills of those seeking to capitalise on these opportunities (Tudor, 2019). The theory emphasises the importance of embracing an entrepreneurial mindset, characterised by innovation and risk-taking. This mindset is essential for organised criminal groups to adapt and thrive in the illegal market, by strategically leveraging economic opportunities with entrepreneurial tactics to maximise profits, expand operations, and sustain their activities over time.

This context provides an insight into the challenges legitimate businesses face within the economic landscape in Africa. In this context, organised criminal groups operate much like legitimate entrepreneurs, swiftly adapting and innovating to exploit market opportunities (Bueger & Edmunds, 2020). This agility allows them to capitalise on the vulnerabilities in Africa's socio-economic and regulatory environments, placing legitimate businesses at a distinct disadvantage. As a result, the distinction between illegal and legal activities becomes increasingly distorted, making it difficult for legitimate businesses to operate transparently and profitably in an environment where the rule of law is undermined by the activities of organised criminal networks. This scenario does not only present operational challenges but also systemic ones, as legitimate businesses must navigate a corrupt economic environment deeply influenced by organised crime.

## **5. Discussion**

Transnational organised crime no doubt has undergone several transformations in the past and in recent times, evolving in response to globalisation, technological advancements, and shifting economic landscapes (Sergi, 2020; Reuter & Paoli, 2020). Expectedly, this transformation has enabled organised criminal groups to diversify their activities and expand their networks across borders, integrating deeply into legitimate sectors of the economy of many countries. As transnational organised crime is evolving globally, it has affected the government's responsibilities in undeveloped countries, particularly in Africa, to provide the necessary environment for economic development and social well-being (see table 1).

**Table 1***The trend of transnational organized crime in Western and Southern Africa.*

Type of transnational organized crime	Key countries involved	Region	Trend (2010-2023)	Statistics and Economic Impact
<b>Human Trafficking</b>	Nigeria, Senegal, Burkina Faso	Western Africa	The abuse of vulnerable populations is escalating, especially along the smuggling routes towards Europe. Within these routes, thousands of migrants and refugees are exposed to various forms of exploitation, including trafficking, forced labor, and sexual exploitation.	Approximately 20-25% of individuals who are victims of human trafficking worldwide are from Africa, and West Africa is identified as a significant origin region for these victims, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 2021. Trafficked individuals are often forced into exploitative labour, prostitution, or modern-day slavery, which leads to economic losses both in their home countries and globally.
<b>Illegal exportation of wildlife products</b>	South Africa, Mozambique, Namibia	Southern Africa	The region is experiencing a persistent high demand for rhino horns and ivory, leading to an increase in wildlife crimes. Illegal trade networks spanning multiple continents are driven by lucrative black market prices, especially in Asia.	According to a 2020 report from the WWF, Southern Africa is responsible for 80% of global rhino poaching. The illicit trade in wildlife products not only endangers biodiversity and conservation initiatives but also has a detrimental impact on tourism, which serves as a crucial economic catalyst for numerous Southern African nations.
<b>Drug Trafficking</b>	Nigeria, Guinea-Bissau, Ghana	Western Africa	The West African region is increasingly serving as a critical transit point for the trafficking of cocaine from South America to Europe. Criminal networks exploit the region's weak law enforcement and corrupt officials to establish well-organized routes for the transportation of illegal drugs.	In 2021, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime revealed that a significant 40% of the cocaine intended for Europe passes through the trafficking networks in Western Africa. Weak governance, widespread corruption, and porous borders in West African countries have created an environment conducive to the establishment of trafficking routes by criminal syndicates, making it relatively easy for them to facilitate the transit of illicit drugs.
<b>Illegal mining</b>	Ghana, Mali, Sierra Leone	Western Africa	Persistent illegal gold mining, with limited governmental control in rural areas, continues to pose significant challenges to both environmental and economic stability in this region.	In Ghana, 30% of total gold production is estimated to be from illegal sources (IMF, 2020). This unregulated activity often leads to extensive environmental



Type of transnational organized crime	Key countries involved	Region	Trend (2010-2023)	Statistics and Economic Impact
<b>Maritime Piracy</b>	Gulf of Guinea, Nigeria, Benin, Ivory Coast	Western Africa	Maritime piracy, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea, poses a growing threat to shipping and trade. Criminal groups are involved in hijackings, kidnappings, and oil theft, significantly impacting the region's economy and security	degradation and significant economic loss  As per the 2021 reports released by the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), it has been noted that the Gulf of Guinea has emerged as one of the most perilous maritime regions globally, with over 40% of all piracy incidents occurring in this area in recent years. The resulting economic consequences have been severe, significantly impacting trade and investment within the region.
<b>Counterfeit Goods</b>	Nigeria and South Africa	Western and Southern African	Both West and Southern Africa have witnessed a significant increase in counterfeit pharmaceuticals and consumer goods, which pose serious health and safety risks to their populations and undermine local economies.	The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that up to 30% of medicines sold in certain West African countries are counterfeit or substandard. This contributes to widespread health crises, including treatment failures and drug resistance (WHO, 2021). Additionally, legitimate businesses have substantial financial losses, with estimates suggesting that South Africa alone loses around \$10 billion each year due to counterfeiting (Business Against Crime, 2020).

*Source:* Author's compilation

The table effectively illustrates the trends of transnational organised crime in Western and Southern Africa, shedding light on the impact of criminal activities such as human trafficking, wildlife trafficking, drug trafficking within each region. The significant rise of transnational organised crime in Africa has been linked to environmental and societal conditions prevalent across the continent (Witbooi et al.,2020). The abundance of natural resources, combined with economic and political challenges such as poverty, unemployment, political instability, and corruption, has created a fertile environment for organised criminal networks to thrive (Dukku & Yunusa, 2022). As such, criminal groups and individuals involved in organised crime have capitalised on these conditions, using Africa's resources and vulnerabilities to establish intricate operations across borders. The table demonstrates a

significant percentage of the global victims of human trafficking originate from Western Africa, highlighting the region's vulnerability to exploitation and the prevalence of trafficking networks that target economically disadvantaged populations for forced labour, sexual exploitation, and other forms of modern slavery (Sikka, 2019; Majidi & Oucho 2016).

The data presented in the table highlights that Southern Africa is a significant hub for wildlife crimes, with a particular focus on the illegal poaching of rhinos. The surge in demand for rhino horn in Asian markets has driven an increase in poaching activities, especially in South Africa. South Africa, as a primary habitat for rhinos, has witnessed a substantial uptick in poaching incidents, resulting in a 59% decline in the rhino population at Kruger National Park since 2013 (Save the Rhino International, 2022). This alarming trend in illegal wildlife trafficking across Southern Africa underscores the role of environmental and socio-political factors in fuelling the growth of transnational organised crime in the region. Conversely, the conservation of wildlife is pivotal for the economic prosperity of Southern African nations. However, the illicit exportation of wildlife products has led to the depletion of natural capital stocks, thereby undermining the local population's capacity to generate sustainable revenue (Moreto & Van Uhm, 2021). The illegal wildlife trade not only impacts national budgets but also leads to illicit financial flows that deprive governments of revenue. Those involved in harvesting and exporting animal products often rely on organised criminal groups to carry out illegal trade through money laundering, resulting in significant externalisation of funds (Mackenzie, 2020). In many Southern African countries where illegal wildlife exportation is prevalent, the socio-economic challenges in those regions place biodiversity constraints on the growth of legal wildlife tourism, further entrenching the involvement of organised crime in the social and economic fabric of these areas (Zain, 2020).

The analysis presented from the table reveals that transnational organised crime and its illegal activities have been on a rising trajectory. Of particular concern is the situation in Nigeria where the petroleum oil and gas industry has been compromised. Soremi and Okwelum (2020; 2021) conferred that the oil and gas sector is a critical revenue source for the Nigerian government and pivotal to economic sustainability. Unfortunately, the sector has been faced with constant threats from the prevailing occurrence of oil bunkering. The widespread prevalence of oil theft in Nigeria has evolved into a highly organised and profitable form of transnational crime undermining the smooth operations of legitimate businesses, which in turn leads to substantial revenue loss for the government (James & Ozimede, 2023). In contrast,

recent commentary pragmatically espouses the oil theft situation in Guinea and its evolution into a large-scale illegal enterprise that reflects the involvement of organised criminal groups and their illicit appropriation of resources highlighting a pattern of criminal exploitation that transcends borders and demonstrates the complex and interconnected nature of transnational oil theft networks (Balogun, 2022).

Aside from investigating transnational organised crime as a criminal act, this paper examines the economic dimension of transnational organised crime. The findings suggest that the economic aspect of transnational organised crime which is heavily dependent on the shadow and illicit economy, plays a significant role in undermining legitimate economic structures. For example, illicit activities such as wildlife poaching, human trafficking, and illegal mining generate significant profits that encourage corruption and inhibit economic development in Africa. The interaction between transnational organised crime and economic development is characterised by the ambiguous overlap of legal and illegal business activities. In other words, criminal groups can exploit legitimate enterprises for money laundering, facilitating illicit transactions, and camouflaging unlawful activities within the facade of lawful operations (Pavlović, 2019). Under this circumstance, the proceeds generated from illegal operations can be integrated into legitimate industries like construction or real estate, further complicating the distinction between lawful and unlawful economic endeavors (Pavlović, 2019). Correspondingly, Zabyelina and Thachuk (2022) contend criminal entrepreneurs have taken advantage of the unclear boundaries between illegal and legal markets to leverage legitimate businesses to facilitate a wide range of illicit activities. The ambiguity has sparked significant debate in criminological and entrepreneurial literature, highlighting the difficulties in differentiating between legal and illegal activities. It also brings to light crucial questions about regulatory systems, law enforcement, and the ethical implications of business practices that practices that straddle the line between legality and criminality (Albanese, 2004; Lord et al., 2019).

This paper examines the complex economic aspects of organised crime in Western and Southern Africa. The findings show that organised crime involves large-scale illegal activities and the strategic maneuvers of criminal entrepreneurs who exploit the shadow economy to expand their influence. The paper highlights the crucial role played by these criminal groups in using legitimate businesses and informal markets to coordinate and conceal unlawful operations. The differences in regulatory frameworks and widespread corruption allow for the

blending of legal and illegal economic activities, enabling the growth of sophisticated criminal organisations (Olujobi, 2023). For example, West Africa acts as a significant transit hub for drug trafficking to Europe, contributing billions to the underground economy. This situation disrupts legitimate markets and worsens governance challenges (UNODC, 2021). In addition, human trafficking generates approximately \$105 billion annually from forced labor across Africa, leading to economic consequences such as reduced productivity and increased social costs, perpetuating poverty and inequality (Rizk, 2024; IOM, 2021). Additionally, the impact of organised crime through wildlife trafficking in Southern Africa is particularly noteworthy. This illegal trade extends beyond conventional economic implications, significantly affecting critical sectors such as tourism. For instance, the illicit trade in rhino horn and ivory, valued at approximately \$23 billion globally, has resulted in substantial declines in wildlife populations, posing a threat to conservation initiatives and endangering wildlife ecosystems. In a recent study, Dinerstein et al. (2024) identified crucial areas for global conservation efforts. The authors anticipate that the cost of wildlife conservation will reach US\$169 billion in 2024. While this may seem substantial, it pales in comparison to the estimated \$44 trillion in economic value at risk due to biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, as projected by the World Economic Forum. Wildlife crime significantly exacerbates this menace as illegal poaching and trafficking of wildlife products continue to destroy the ecosystem. Recent trends in wildlife studies have demonstrated the detrimental impact of poaching on tourism and local economies. The common argument is that when there is a decline in the visibility of the wildlife population it results in a substantial loss in revenue. In contrast, the decline in revenue adversely affects the financing of conservation initiatives and the development of communities dependent on tourism. Moreover, it is challenging to comprehensively assess the economic and cultural repercussions resulting from the depletion of plundered species. These issues divert resources from the formal economy, exacerbate economic inequities, and hinder governmental enforcement of effective governance and conservation programs (Mozer & Prost, 2023).

The comprehensive analysis of transnational organized crime in Western and Southern Africa has unveiled a multitude of concerning trends and their far-reaching economic and social repercussions. The pervasive presence of organised crime in these regions encompasses a wide array of illicit activities. The paper concludes by emphasising the urgent need for comprehensive and effective strategies to address transnational organised crime in Western

and Southern Africa. To effectively address these complex challenges there is a need to strengthen regional cooperation, enhance law enforcement capabilities, and promote international collaboration to dismantle intricate criminal networks. It emphasises the significance of promoting good governance, investing in sustainable socio-economic development, and addressing the root causes of vulnerability, including poverty and weak institutions. These measures are indispensable in diminishing the allure of illicit activities and in safeguarding long-term stability and economic prosperity in these regions.

### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

### **Funding**

This work was not supported by any funding.

### **ORCID**

Tolulope Lembola Ojolo – <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6353-2405>

Shanta Balgobind Singh – <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9469-6552>

### **Reference**

- Aborisade, R. A., & Aliyuu, N. B. (2018). Corruption and Africa. In O. Akanle & J. O. Adésinà (Eds.), *The development of Africa: Issues, diagnoses and prognoses (pp. 227–254)*. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Adekoya, A.F., (2020). Youth unemployment and violent crime: Evidence from developing countries in Africa. *Journal of Academic Research in Economics (JARE)*, 12(3), 408-419.
- Adeyanju, C.G. (2020). Drug trafficking in West Africa borderlands: From Gold Coast to Coke Acost. *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs*, 6(1), 70-86. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5398-0183>
- Aïssaoui, R. & Fabian, F. (2022). Globalization, economic development, and corruption: A cross-lagged contingency perspective. *Journal of International Business Policy*, 5(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s42214-020-00091-5>

- Angela, N.N. & Ijeoma, O.B.I. (2020). Framing of cybercrime (Yahoo-Yahoo Business) by The Guardian and Vanguard Newspapers GUANAH, Seigha Jammy. *The Nigerian Journal of Communication (TNJC)*, 17(1), 41-61.
- Antonopoulos, G.A. & Papanicolaou, G. (2018). *Organized crime: a very short introduction*, Vol. 553. Oxford University Press.
- Armao, F. (2014). Criminal clusters: State and organised crime in a globalised world. *The European Review of Organised Crime*, 1(1), pp.122-136.
- Botsaris, C., & Vamvaka, V. (2016). Attitude toward entrepreneurship: Structure, prediction from behavioral beliefs, and relation to entrepreneurial intention. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 7(2), 433–460. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-014-0227-2>
- Bruwer, C. (2020). Smuggling and trafficking of illicit goods by sea. *Global challenges in maritime security: an introduction*, 49-73. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-34630-0\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-34630-0_4)
- Bueger, C. & Edmunds, T. (2020). Blue crime: Conceptualising transnational organised crime at sea. *Marine Policy*, 119, 104067. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2020.104067>
- Campbell, L. (2016). Corruption by organised crime: A matter of definition? *Current legal problems*, 69(1), 115-141. <https://doi.org/10.1093/clp/cuw004>
- Dinerstein, E., Joshi, A. R., Hahn, N. R., Lee, A. T., Vynne, C., Burkart, K., & Zolli, A. (2024). Conservation imperatives: securing the last unprotected terrestrial sites harboring irreplaceable biodiversity. *Frontiers in Science*, 2, 1349350. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsci.2024.1349350>
- Di Gennaro, G. (2018). The camouflage of the extortion activity and the different types of extra-legal authority in illegal and legal markets. *Global research publishing house Stockton California*, 27.
- Dukku, A. & Yunusa, A. (2022). Trafficking of illicit drugs in the West African Region: Factors, implications and solutions. *Gusau Journal of Sociology*, 3(2).
- Ebner, K. (2019). Transnational criminal law: A tool to further Western interests? *King's Student L. Rev.*, 10, 19
- Ellis, R. E. (2018). *Transnational organized crime in Latin America and the Caribbean: From evolving threats and responses to integrated, adaptive solutions*. Lexington Books.
- Ellis, S. & Shaw, M. (2015). Does organized crime exist in Africa? *African Affairs*, 114 (457), 505—528. <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adv035>

- Esson, J., Amankwaa, E. F., & Mensah, P. (2021). Boys are tired! Youth, urban struggles, and retaliatory patriarchy. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 46(1), 193-207. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12411>
- Fouladvand, S. (2019). *Corruption and human trafficking: a holistic approach (Version 1)*. University of Sussex. <https://hdl.handle.net/10779/uos.23459516.v1>
- Hall, T. (2018). *The economic geographies of organized crime*. Guilford Publications.
- Jahanger, A., Usman, M., Murshed, M., Mahmood, H., & Balsalobre-Lorente, D. (2022). The linkages between natural resources, human capital, globalization, economic growth, financial development, and ecological footprint: The moderating role of technological innovations. *Resources policy*, 76, 102569. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resourpol.2022.102569>
- James, O.E. & Ozimede, C.O. (2023) Impact of sabotage, oil theft and illegal oil bunkering activities on the Nigerian environment and economy. *Journal of Agriculture, Environmental Resources and Management*, 5(5), 876-888.
- Kayira, M. N. (2022). Organized Crime in Africa. In: *The Palgrave Handbook of Sustainable Peace and Security in Africa* (pp. 303-321). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Kleemans, E., & Van Koppen, V. (2020). Organized crime and criminal careers. *Crime and Justice*, 49(1), 385-423. <https://doi.org/10.1086/707318>
- Kramer, J. A., Blokland, A. A., Kleemans, E. R., & Soudijn, M. R. (2023). Money laundering as a service: Investigating businesslike behavior in money laundering networks in the Netherlands. *Trends in Organized Crime*, 1-28. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-022-09475-w>
- Krylova, Y. (2023). *Smugglers' paradises in the global economy: Growing threats of hubs of illicit trade to security & sustainable development*. Arlington: TraCCC.
- Levi, M. (2019). Theoretical perspectives on white-collar crime. In: *Oxford research encyclopedia of criminology and criminal justice*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264079.013.266>
- Levi, M., & Soudijn, M. (2020). Understanding the laundering of organized crime money. *Crime and Justice*, 49(1), 579–631. <https://doi.org/10.1086/708047>
- Lodge, T. (2019). Corruption in African politics. In: *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.848>

- Lord, N. J., Campbell, L. J., & Van Wingerde, K. (2019). Other people's dirty money: professional intermediaries, market dynamics and the finances of white-collar, corporate and organized crimes. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 59(5), 1217-1236. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azz004>
- Mackenzie, S. (2020). *Transnational criminology: trafficking and global criminal markets*. Policy Press.
- Majidi, N. & Oucho, L. (2016). East Africa. In: M.L. McAuliffe & F. Laczko. *Migrant smuggling data and research: A global review of the emerging evidence base*. International Organization for Migration
- Medina, L., & Schneider, F. (2021). The evolution of shadow economies through the 21st century. *The Global Informal Workforce: Priorities for Inclusive Growth*. International Monetary Fund, Washington DC, USA, 10-6.
- Miller-Perrin, C., & Wurtele, S. K. (2017). Sex trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. *Women & Therapy*, 40(1-2), 123-151. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02703149.2016.1210963>
- Mohammed, M. I., Hossein, A., & Nwokolo, C. C. (2022). Organized crime, corruption and the challenges of economic growth in the economic community of West African states. *Journal of Financial Crime*, 29(3), 1091-1101. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JFC-05-2021-0115>
- Moore, K. C. (2023). *The Case for the Legal Protection of Animals: Humanity's Shared Destiny with the Animal Kingdom*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Moreto, W.D. & van Uhm, D. (2021). Nested complex crime: assessing the convergence of wildlife trafficking, organized crime and loose criminal networks. *Br. J. Criminol*, 61(5), 1334–1353. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azab005>
- Mozer, A., & Prost, S. (2023). An introduction to illegal wildlife trade and its effects on biodiversity and society. *Forensic Science International: Animals and Environments*, 3, 100064. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fsiae.2023.100064>
- Nova, M. (2020). Globalization-its influences & impacts on specific regions of Africa. In: *SHS Web of Conferences* (Vol. 74, p. 06020). EDP Sciences. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20207406020>
- Okwelum, C. O. (2021). Rights to oil theft and illegal refinery in Nigeria. *Scholarly Journal of Advanced Legal Research*, 1(4), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.46654/SJALR.1411>



- Olujobi, O. J. (2023). Nigeria's upstream petroleum industry anti-corruption legal framework: the necessity for overhauling and enrichment. *Journal of money laundering control*, 26(7), 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMLC-10-2020-0119>
- Osaro O. A. (2022). Globalization and development in Africa. *Afro Eurasian Studies*, 10(1), 47-57. <https://doi.org/10.33722/afes.1100952>
- Østensen, Å. G., & Stridsman, M. (2017). *Shadow value chains: Tracing the link between corruption, illicit activity and lootable natural resources from West Africa*. U4 Issue.
- Paoli, L. (2017). The paradoxes of organized crime. In: *Transnational Organized Crime* (pp. 295-342). Routledge.
- Pasculli, L., & Ryder, N. (2019). Corruption and globalisation: towards an interdisciplinary scientific understanding of corruption as a global crime. In: *Corruption in the Global Era* (pp. 3-23). Routledge.
- Pavlović, Z. S. (2019). Fighting money laundering and control of real estate transactions. *Finansijski Kriminalitet I Korupcija*, 79.
- Rakenosi, M. M. (2020). *Illegal trade in wildlife products as a threat to Botswana's national security*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Botswana.
- Reuter, P., & Paoli, L. (2020). How similar are modern criminal syndicates to traditional mafias? *Crime and Justice*, 49(1), 223-287. <https://doi.org/10.1086/708869>
- Rizk, J. (2024). Exploring the nexus between armed groups and the trafficking and smuggling of human beings in the Central Sahel and Libya. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 47(7), 771-791. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2021.2002687>
- Rooi, S. M. (2021). *The Narco-Terror nexus: the cases of Afghanistan, Colombia, and West Africa*. Doctoral dissertation, University of the Free State.
- Scheye, E. (2020). Measuring political will in an organised crime environment. *ENACT Research Paper*, (16).
- Sergi, A. (2023). Organised crime and power in the modern world. In: *A Research Agenda for Organised Crime* (pp. 57-75). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Shaw, M., & Reitano, T. (2019). Organized crime and criminal networks in Africa. In: *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*.
- Sikka, A. (2019). Trafficking in persons: How America exploited the narrative of exploitation. *Tex. Int'l LJ*, 55, 1.

- Smith, R. (2020). The evolution of “entrepreneurial policing”: a review of the literature. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Public Policy*, 9(1), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEPP-03-2019-0005>
- Sollund, R. A. (2019). *The crimes of wildlife trafficking: Issues of justice, legality and morality*. Routledge.
- Sonsuphap, R. (2022). The structure of the illegal economy and its relationship to money laundering. *Corporate & Business Strategy Review*, 3(1), 45–54. <https://doi.org/10.22495/cbsrv3i1art5>
- Soremi, T. (2020). The implications of oil theft on social and economic development in the Niger Delta. *Global Journal of Social Sciences*, 19, 1-11. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gjss.v19i1.1>
- Souiki, H., & Bessas, M. (2024). Updating and harmonizing updating and harmonizing legislation: A proactive step in combating transnational organized crime. *Law & World*, 10(2).
- Spagnoletti, P., Ceci, F., & Bygstad, B. (2022). Online black-markets: An investigation of a digital infrastructure in the dark. *Information Systems Frontiers*, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10796-021-10187-9>
- Szuper, K. (2020). Globalization of modern economies. *Przegląd Prawno-Ekonomiczny*, (2), 85-99.
- Teichmann, F. (2020). Recent trends in money laundering. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 73, 237-247.
- Troisi, R., Nese, A., Blanco-Gregory, R., & Giovanniello, M. A. (2023). The effects of corruption and innovation on sustainability: a firm-level analysis. *Sustainability*, 15(3), 1848. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15031848>
- Tudor, K. (2019). *Fraudulent investment schemes: A study of illicit entrepreneurship in late-capitalism*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Sunderland.
- Ugwu, E. C., & Mgbeci, K. G. (2024). Cybercrime; identification and exclusion: A study of language use of yahoo-boys in Awka Metropolis. *Nigerian Journal of Arts and Humanities (Njah)*, 4(1).
- Ujunwa, A. I., Ujunwa, A., & Okoyezu, C. R. (2021). Rethinking African globalisation agenda: Lessons from COVID-19. *Research in Globalization*, 3, 100055. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resglo.2021.100055>

- Ukaeje, O., & Iheanacho, J. (2023). Illicit drug trafficking in West Africa: The contending issues and way forward. *University of Nigeria Journal of Political Economy*, 13(1).
- Von Lampe, K. (2021). The practice of transnational organized crime. In: *Routledge handbook of transnational organized crime* (pp. 200-214). Routledge.
- Wall, D. S. (2024). *Cybercrime: The transformation of crime in the information age*. Cambridge: Polity (Outline of update).
- Walton, G., & Dinnen, S. (2016). The dark side of economic globalisation: politics, organised crime and corruption in the Pacific. *Development Policy Centre Discussion Paper*, (48).
- Williams, C. C. (2019). *The informal economy*. London: Agenda Publishing.
- Witbooi, E., Ali, K. D., Santosa, M. A., Hurley, G., Husein, Y., Maharaj, S., & Salas, O. (2020). Organized crime in the fisheries sector threatens a sustainable ocean economy. *Nature*, 588(7836), 48-56. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-020-2913-5>
- Wittig, T. (2017). Poaching, wildlife trafficking and organised crime. In: *Poaching, Wildlife Trafficking and Security in Africa* (pp. 77-101). Routledge.
- Zabyelina, Y., & Thachuk, K. L. (Eds.). (2022). *The private sector and organized crime: criminal entrepreneurship, illicit profits, and private sector security governance*. Routledge.
- Zain, S. (2020). Corrupting trade: An overview of corruption issues in illicit wildlife trade. *Targeting Natural Resource Corruption*.