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# Crime Economics And COVID-19. A Literature Review Economics Of Crime And COVID-19. A Literature Review

Lindon Vela Meléndez<sup>1</sup>, Yefferson Llonto Caicedo<sup>2</sup>, Moisés Elías Montenegro López<sup>3</sup>, Hugo Chiclayo Padilla<sup>4</sup>, Mauro Adriel Rios Villacorta<sup>5</sup>, Giuliana Fiorella Lecca Orrego<sup>6</sup>, José Florencio Vidal Meza<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universidad Nacional Pedro Ruiz Gallo, Lambayeque, Perú

<sup>2,3,4,5,6,7</sup>Universidad Nacional Pedro Ruiz Gallo, Perú

*lvela@unprg.edu.pe*<sup>1</sup>, *yllonto@unprg.edu.pe*<sup>2</sup>, *mmontenegro@unprg.edu.pe*<sup>3</sup>, *hchiclayo@unprg.edu.pe*<sup>4</sup>, *mrrios@unprg.edu.pe*<sup>5</sup>, *glecca@unprg.edu.pe*<sup>6</sup>, *jvidal@unprg.edu.pe*<sup>7</sup>

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## Abstract

The research addresses the issue of the relationship between the Economics of Crime and COVID-19 to elaborate a review of scientific literature using bibliometrics and analytical reading of the identified documents. The literature review results indicate that the topic has been addressed scientifically since 2020 but with greater dynamism since 2021, maintaining a decreasing trend in 2022. The countries that contribute most theoretically to these topics are the United States, China, South Africa, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom; the research results are disseminated through original scientific articles and are mainly addressed from the social and environmental sciences and the digital economy. Finally, the economics of crime is identified as an emerging term based on the Neoinstitutionalist approach, having as a theoretical gap the scope of the traditional paradigm of political science and economics concerning political practices that are immersed in the framework of illegality and gives way to the emerging recognition of digital crime, narco populism, nightlife crime, illegal governance, health crime, and wildlife crime.

**Keywords:** Economics of Crime, COVID-19, bibliometrics, neoinstitutionalist.

## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic not only had impacts on Health and the economy. The state's efforts to manage this complex COVID-19 crisis created spaces for the emergence of parallel markets. These markets strengthen chains of illegal economies that operate systematically. Illicit economies strengthen crime, which usually does not have the corresponding valuation regarding the consequences in society.

The low valuation of the consequences of the markets for it allows its expansion and its projection to scale. The development of informal and illegal economies fuels various crimes such as smuggling goods, drug trafficking, cybercrime, wildlife crime, and the financial system.

This new scenario has generated a reengineering in structuring a new model of adaptation of the economy of crime. A context of this nature, where the inflation of greed and social chaos strengthen new forms of express crime. Such as narco-populism, health crime, and nightlife crimes.

For Wilches et al. (2020), the fragility of Latin American markets in their economic and political models for the treatment of the health crisis. It originated a reinvention of the capacity of drug trafficking by adapting to the new structure of crime, potentiating the modalities of supply of drug trafficking that are expressed in narco-populism. On the other hand, Anagnostou et al. (2021) consider that the COVID-19 crisis also generated substantial impacts on biodiversity and how it is associated with multidimensional poverty. In turn, X. Zhang et al. (2021) addresses the generation of an ecological alarm resulting from the destructive behavior of society against wildlife.

The emergence of digital economies in various companies in the banking, social networks, education, entertainment, and software sectors created new spaces for developing criminal attacks such as *phishing*, which spread quickly to different economic sectors. (Bari and Shah, 2021)

Being one of the economic sectors in which the financial sector generated the most significant impact, causing a setback in consumer distrust in the use of digital channels due to the explosive appearance of cybercrime. (Gębski, 2021)

Kassa and Grace (2020) point out that, after the devastating effects of the coronavirus, its main impact was on the informal economic sector and the increase in human rights violence as a result of the growing trend of conflicts, chaos associated with crime, and increased crime.

The problems above have shown that during the health crisis, new parallel markets have emerged that have been addressed by the crime economy. New modalities of illegal economies are born, such as digital crime, narco-populism, nightlife crimes, illegal governance, health crime, and wildlife crime.

The theoretical underpinning of the problems under analysis is addressed by the economics of crime, which involves a series of chains of illegal economies and parallel markets that emerge systematically. (Bari & Shah, 2021)

According to the approach to reality, the research problem is formulated as follows: What is the level of theoretical approach in the relationship of the crime economy with COVID-19?

In line with the problem identified, the general objective of the research is the following: to know the state of the art of relationship between the crime economy and COVID-19; at a specific level, it seeks to understand the theoretical development of the Economics of Crime, the evolution of research on the economy of crime, which countries and authors provide theories and methodologies on the analysis of these variables.

## 2. Methodology

The methodology was approached from the qualitative paradigm through the documentary review of the phenomenon under study, showing it first from the contribution of bibliometrics for the analysis of the evolution of research interest related to the topic, authors, sponsors, countries, and the implicit and explicit trends that were shown in the clusters of the keywords of the research and then analyzing the theoretical contributions in the texts of the chosen documents referring to the event under study.

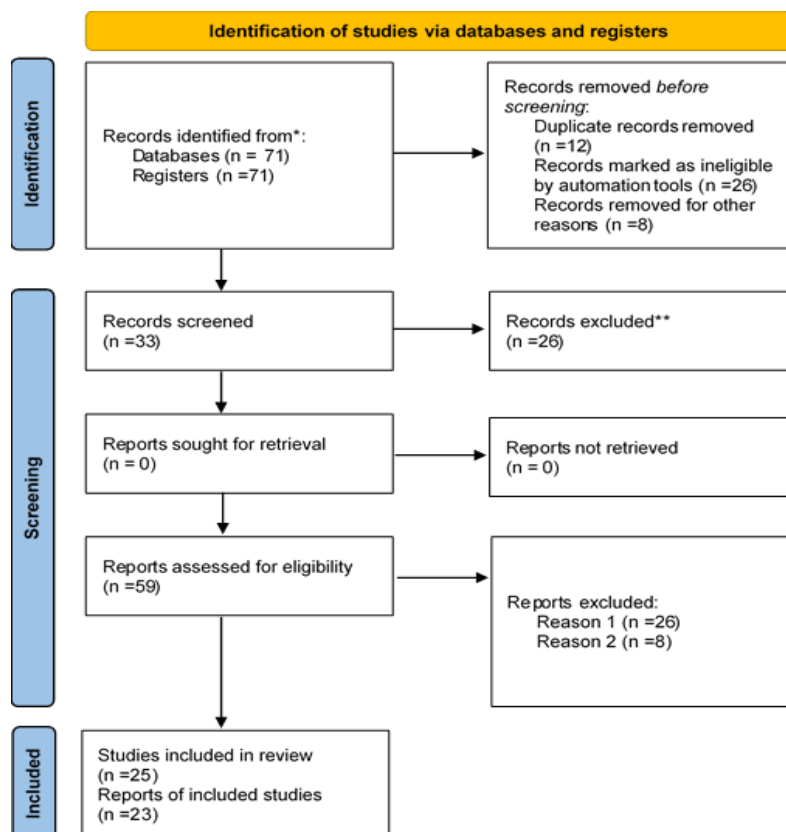
This way, the review of the scientific literature of four databases of Scopus, Web of Science (WOS), IEEE, and Google Scholar was carried out. Detailing the search protocol and ensuring the relevance and representativeness of the articles, books, reviews, conference documents, notes, and book chapters. The search was not restricted for periods, and the Boléanos operators for the search for information were as follows:

1. Scopus: (TITLE-ABS-KEY (economy) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (crime) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (covid-19))
2. WOS: ("economy" AND "crime" AND "Covid-19")
3. IEEE: ("economy" AND "crime" AND "Covid-19")
4. Google Académico: (Intitle: "Economy AND crime")

The protocol has allowed identifying of 71 documents that specifically address the relationship between both variables under study; having Scopus 34 documents, WOS 27, Google Scholar 9, IEEE 1; having duplicated a total of 12 papers, not aligned to the specific topic a total of 26 articles and not accessible a total of 8 articles and obtaining to download and read the full text a total of 25 papers, The same ones found in the following link: [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1u91LXtcXph6r91RPFv93v\\_kv3Urk4bkO](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1u91LXtcXph6r91RPFv93v_kv3Urk4bkO)

Next, the PRISMA of each stage of the process is presented, where the clarity and transparency of the published systematic reviews are evident.

Figure 1. Diagram Of The Flow Of Information Through The Different Phases Of A Systematic Review



*Note.* The selection of articles for the systematic literature review using the PRISMA scheme.

### 3. Results Of Bibliometric Analysis

Next, a theoretical and epistemological approach to the research topic is presented, for which bibliometrics was used as part of the state-of-the-art heuristics, to later use hermeneutics in the immersion to the content of related literature (Londoño et al., 2016)

The results allow us to infer the relationship between the crime economy and COVID-19. It has been analyzed since approximately 2020, maintaining a relevant interest until 2021 and falling in 2022. they are evidencing a less dynamic trend and a conjunctural analysis due to the health crisis that has shown that the subject of study was only addressed temporarily.

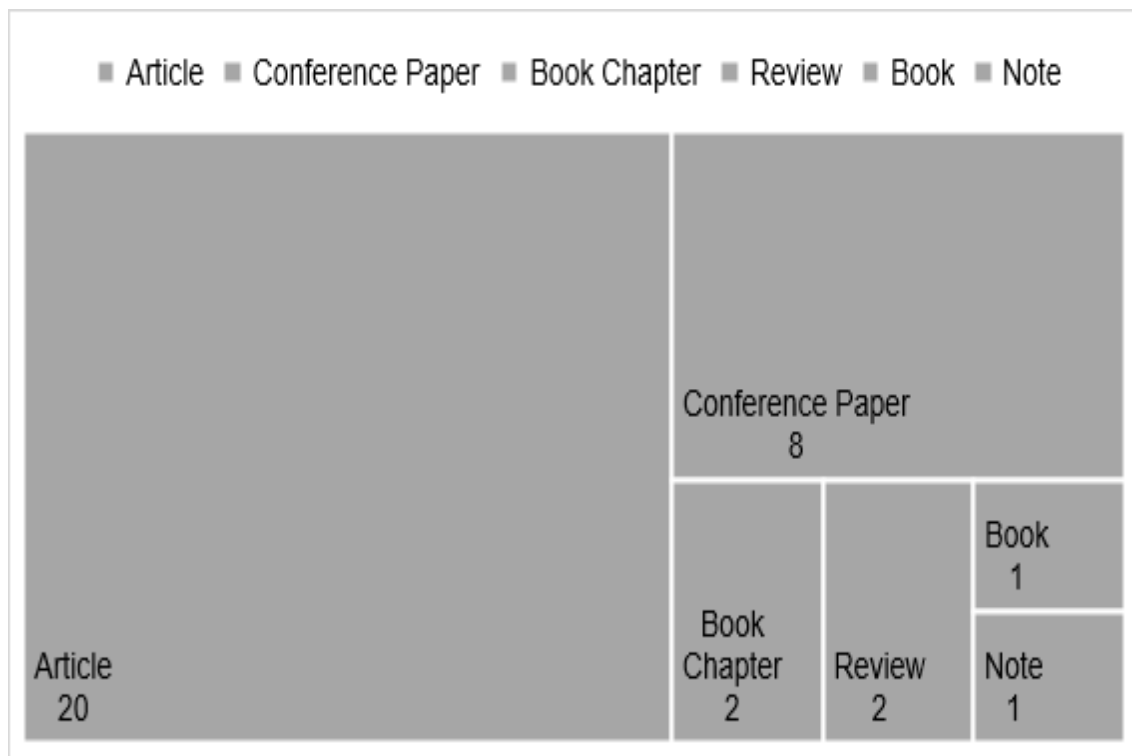
Among the most influential authors are Shah, M. A; Abby, D; Afsar, E; Allan, H.L.; Almehmadi, A.; Anagnostor, M.; Austad, W.; Aziani, A.; Baranetska, O.; Bari, N, among others

The bibliometric analysis also makes it possible to identify the countries with the most significant contribution to the research topic under study. The largest contributors to these points are the United States, China, South Africa, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Italy, Pakistan, Poland, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, Nepal, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, and Turkey.

Regarding affiliations, the most prominent are Szkola Główna Handlowa Warszawie and COMSATS University Islamabad.

Identifying how knowledge is generated is the epistemological process of the relationship between the economics of crime and COVID-19. 59% are produced through original articles, 24% through conference documents, 6% through book chapters, 6% through revisions, 3% through books, and 3% through notes.

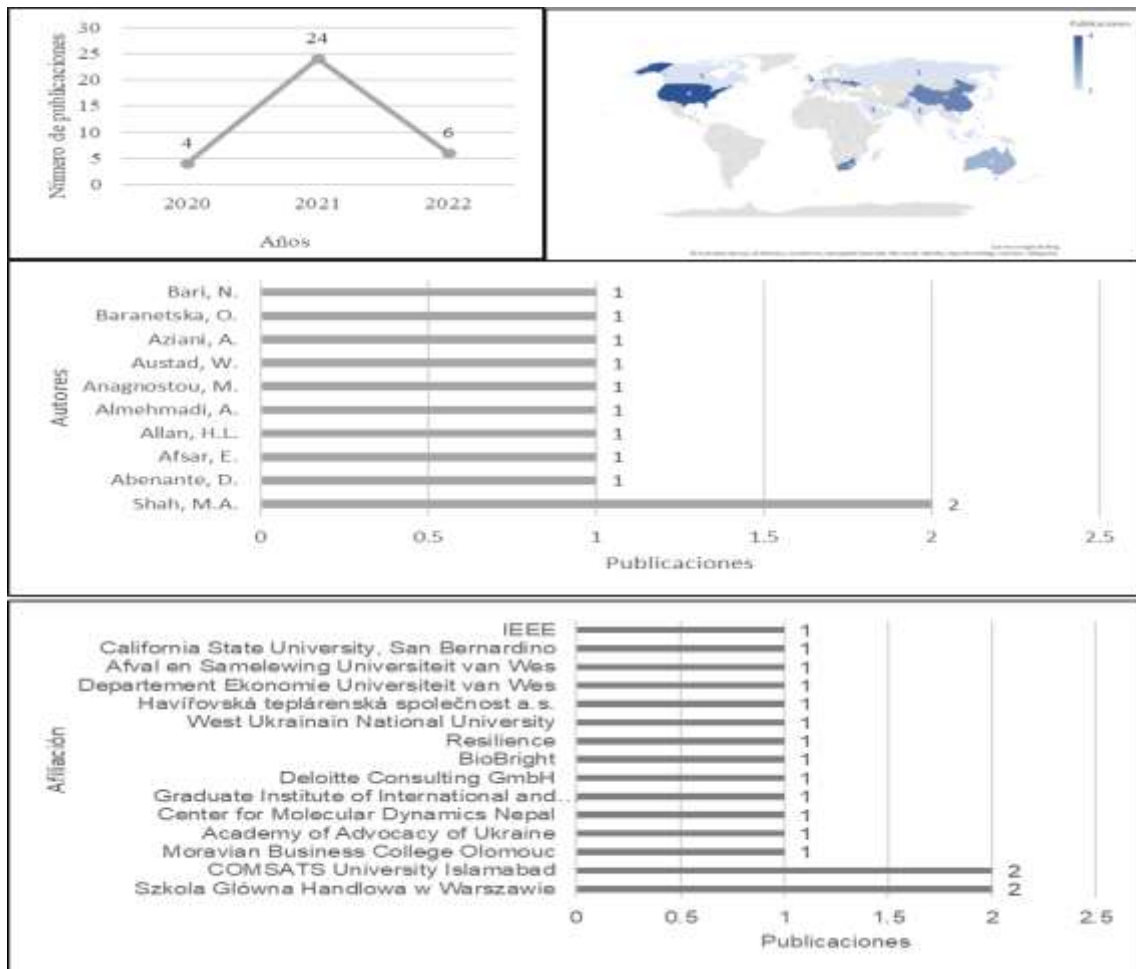
Figure 2. Publications On Crime Economics And COVID-19, By Document Type



*Note.* Scopus Database

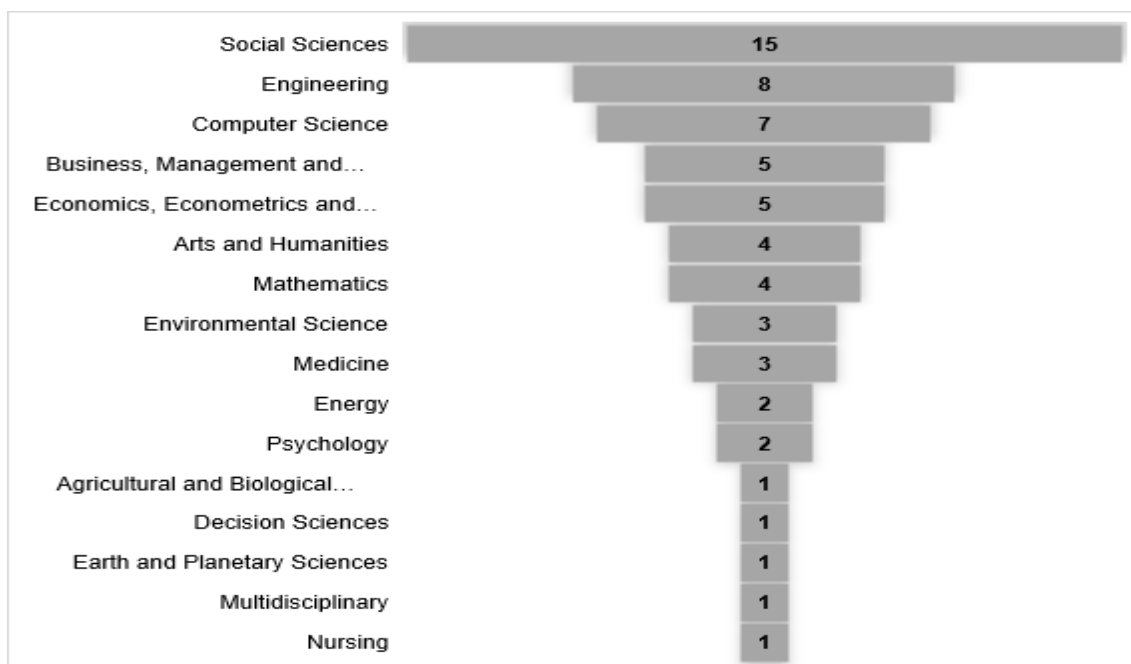
The areas of knowledge that address the relationship between the variables under study highlight the social sciences with 15 studies, followed by engineering with 8, computer science with 7, and Business, Management, and Accounting with five. As well as Economics, Econometrics, Finance, and finally Arts and Humanities and Mathematics, with 4, among others. (see Figure 3)

Figure 2. Evolution Of Publications By Year, Countries, Authors, And Affiliations On Crime Economics And COVID-19



Note. Scopus Database

Figure 3. Publications On Crime Economics And COVID-19, By Area Of Knowledge





#### 4. Results of analytical reading of documents

Research related to digital crime, narco-populism, nightlife crimes, illegal governance, health crime, and wildlife crimes is reported in the studies that constitute international antecedents.

In the references to wildlife crime, the relationship between poverty and environmental degradation is shown; A trend of mindless consumption of natural resources emerges, which in turn generates depredation of them by the population in poverty to obtain economic benefits and face their unsatisfied needs. (Anagnostou et al., 2021)

In this way, the theoretical concept of wildlife crime is associated with five dimensions related to political, protection, sociocultural, human, and economic capacities, facing the limitations of access to natural resources.

Other studies conducted by (Vu et al., 2020) and (Zhang et al., 2021) emphasize ecological ethics and economics, which consider that an end is not an end but leads to an action that has a purpose. Environmental and economic ethics highlights the controversial polarity of prioritizing the conservation of natural resources or the economic interests resulting from exploiting these resources.

For Zhang et al. (2021), there are two aspects to the ecological crime that was generated by the health crisis, derived from controversy with economic ethics. The first considers the behavior model of the human being in the relationship "human or-nature-human" and the second related to the rules and ethical practices that imply closing the gaps of crimes against wildlife.

On the other hand, the referents of digital crime are evidenced in the studies of (Bari and Shah, 2021), whose relevance of cybercriminal attacks has highlighted one of the most critical challenges in the digital economy, which proposed to take extraordinary measures in the face of the most significant attacks by hackers. As a result of the interrelationships in digital media.

In this way, one of the studies reveals that traditional methods to detect digital attacks have only worked around 20%, with heuristic methods to detect *phishing* being the most relevant in the rate of false positives. Proposing in the future a comprehensive solution that leads to detect *phishing* site attacks without user participation. Bari and Shah (2021)

For his part, Gębski (2021) asserts that the exponential acceleration of the digital transformation of the financial sector brought with it a growth in cyberattacks, being the result of the growing interaction of the use of the internet and its cybercrimes, which implies security challenges for the actors involved such as the police, governments, financial institutions, and e-commerce companies.

Oliynychuk et al. (2021) demonstrated that computer crimes result from unauthorized interference in the work of computers, automated systems, computer networks, or telecommunications networks. The proposed descriptors can rightly be considered factors of the criminal act to combat computer crimes.

Growing financial crime in financial institutions has required a new way of combating financial crime, identifying flaws in high-tech economic systems instead of declining physical crime. (Jamil et al., 2022)

Kamensky (2021) notes that during the COVID-19 pandemic, as nations simultaneously cooperated and competed in their efforts to create vaccines, improve national public health regimes, and regulate border control and passenger traffic, fraudulent behavior became more aggressive in digitization as white-collar criminals operated on a larger scale than ever before.

The globalization of cybercrime, with economic globalization as a general background, requires experts in the field of criminal law to strengthen international cooperation and deepen ways to solve a series of problems related to the fight against criminal behavior beyond the scope of national criminal law systems.

Tam et al. (2020) contribute in their research that COVID-19 generated not only the exponential leap to the intensive use of digital channels in microenterprises; but also the generation of chaos due to the shortage in cybersecurity skills; the same one that grew at an exponential rate.

Tawalbeh et al. (2020) point out that the transition to virtual spaces without planning caused terrible actors in cyberspace to generate the most significant cyber attacks in history in companies, governments, and Health, among others, given the vulnerability of systems that before phishing attacks using neural networks was proposed a model IoT, being crucial the security and privacy policy

In the references to narco-populism, Wilches, Ruiz, and Guerrero (2020), adopting a qualitative methodology to investigate the weaknesses of the state in the face of COVID-19, has revealed that the strengthening of illegal economies has been revealed from a systematic review and narrative proposals.

For its part (Sedova et al., 2022) address the crime of money laundering in various countries, showing that in COVID-19, after the imposed restrictions, it was the perfect weapon for the legalization of illegal income in the banking system as a result of the inefficiency of the methods that led to the legalization of illicit funds resulting from drug trafficking and terrorism.

Illegal governance(Aziani et al., 2021) addresses that illicit authority, infiltration of the illegal economy, and misappropriation of public funds should not be shared or treated as three unrelated dynamics; policymakers should design policies that take into account the interconnectedness between these elements, carefully evaluating the

advantages and disadvantages, as well as finding the balance between them.

While (Lemekha & Schur 2020) considers that economic crimes in the various contemporary realities have generated different causalities of crimes in the field of economics, producing a social and legal phenomenon that leads to understanding the underground economy and the legal responsibility for its infractions, which from criminal law not only involves the punishment of the offender but also compensation for damage and correction of the offender.

For (Shipkova, 2005), economic indicators had a close relationship with those of crime, presenting a heterogeneity of corruption in various regions of the country of Russia, where criminalization evidences one of the threats and determinants in economic indicators leading to a quantitative aspect of the impact of crime on the economy, forming part of the new Neoinstitutionalist current.

Regarding nightlife crimes (Laverde, 2013), theoretical gaps are observed for the explanation from the traditional theory of economics to explain trade and sex work, which is associated with factors such as income poverty, growing international mobility, and an explanation from the feminist theory critical of the legality of the phenomenon, that from the epistemological plane leads to a structural need of society.

For (Ejrnæs and Scherg, 2022), COVID-19 brought with it that the economy of nightlife is associated with the density of alcohol points of sale in the face of irrational human behavior in the front of restrictions generated during the health crisis, having a strong association that allows us to identify that closing times had a high association with the reduction of crimes in nightlife.

Nofre (2021) considers the potential of nightlife as an efficient space-time mechanism for social wellbeing, community building, multicultural understanding, and even psychological mutual support, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic amid the new emergency and a still murky world, but with the social phenomenon of explosive crime.

But the Economics of Crime was not only addressed from the aspects described above, but also criminology appeared with the health crisis in the field of Health, where inequality and injustice were accentuated in the model of modern capitalist political economy, allowing to show that millions of people who did not access medicines or treatment for COVID-19 generated millions of deaths faced by state-type crime where those who lived and who died in one of the world's biggest health crises were discriminated against. (Friedrichs and Weis, 2021; Kassa and Grace, 2020; Kumar et al., 2020; Muzammil et al., 2020)

## 5. The theory of the economy of crime

This theory emerges from the new Neo-institutionalist current based on the imperative to think about a new relationship under an emerging approach oriented to analyze the criminal aspects in parallel and informal markets that have been addressed from the economy of crime, expressing itself in the resulting evils—from the social crisis, weak job creation, and food shortages, giving birth to digital crime, narco-populism, nightlife crimes, illegal governance, health crime, and wildlife crime.

Zhang et al. (2021) address an emerging approach of the economic-centric model that leads to a revision of the ethical worldview, using statistical methods to quantify wildlife crime to discover a new pattern of study where the crime phenomenon originates a causal analysis and solutions for new innovative thinking.

Wilchez, Ruiz, and Guerrero (2020) consider that Narcovid originated during the pandemic health crisis as an illegal instrument where the acquisition of the illicit has been incurred from extortion and kidnappings, generating problems in governance such as welfare and the stability of the business of criminal organizations in a globalized world, orienting itself to a different political and economic model.

Wilchez, Ruiz, and Guerrero (2020) evidence a theoretical vacuum in the scope of the traditional paradigm of political and economic science, referring to political practices that are submerged in the framework of illegality and that, without a theoretical approach to populism associated with illegality, becomes the perfect scheme to commit crimes through the use of micro power. The axiological bases of social groups on the margins of illegality lead to interaction with the legality that allows a discourse of narco-populism, economic system, inequality, and failures of justice.

Legality and legitimacy are the fundamental basis of the rule of law; however, with a static structure, it would mean that the political and legal instruments do not address the paralegal activities that are formed in the framework of crime and crime as an aspirational culture, which leads to social and money revenge that contextualizes that illicit life is the justification to get out of poverty, legitimizing the actions of the lifestyle of crime and crime, where the rules and culture of non-compliance are transgressed, where the health crisis has led to diplomatic responses at a frantic and globalized pace of corruption and crime driven by underdeveloped economies, allowing to question the inertia of governments in the face of illegal and criminal economies.

In the previous paragraph, there is a new look at the relationship between the crime economy and COVID-19. A step is taken to the emerging recognition of digital crime, narco-populism, nightlife crimes, illegal governance, health crime and health crime, and wildlife crime.

For this research, the emerging Neoinstitutionalist approach of the economic-centric model leads to a review of

the ethical worldview, the narcotic, cybercrime, and the theoretical vacuum of the scope of the traditional paradigm of political and economic science, referring to political practices that are submerged in the framework of illegality; it becomes an edge of a broader phenomenon that includes activities paralegals. Those formed in the context of crime and crime result from an aspirational culture generated from social revenge and the causality of money, justifying poverty for the actions of corruption and crime.

## 6. Discussion

The findings above show that the Crime Economy was approaching from various angles related to digital crime, narco-populism, nightlife crimes, illegal governance, health crime, and wildlife crime.

Shows that, when studying the close relationship between both variables, reviewed by the *clusters* indicate a closeness between variables such as a pandemic, computerized crime, cybersecurity, network security, social aspects, financial consumption, and financial risks. Still, it also incorporates an environmental approach referring to the economy of crime where the variables of ecological protection stand out, air pollution, corruption, degradation, and conservation.

These findings are supported by Anagnostou et al. (2021); Aziani et al. (2021); Bari and Shah (2021); Ejrnæs & Scherg (2022); Friedrichs and Weis (2021); Gębski (2021); Hao et al. (2022); Jamil et al. (2022); Kamensky (2021); Kassa and Grace (2020); Lemekha and Schur (2020); Li et al. (2022); Muzammil et al. (2020); Nofre (2021); Oliynyuk et al. (2021); Rena et al. (2022); Sedova et al. (2022); Shipkova (2005); Tam et al. (2020); Tawalbeh et al. (2020); Vu et al. (2020); Wilches Tinjacá et al. (2020) who approach criminology from different perspectives based on economic science, emerging from the new Neo-institutionalist current and an economic-centric model approach that leads to a revision of the ethical worldview from the problems in governance. AD drives the welfare and stability of the business of criminal organizations in a globalized world and illegal systems that lead to a different political and economic model.

## 7. Conclusions

The relationship between the crime economy and COVID-19 has been scientifically addressed since 2020, but with greater dynamism since 2021, maintaining a decreasing trend in recent years.

The countries that contribute most theoretically to these issues are the United States, China, South Africa, Ukraine, United Kingdom

Knowledge on the subject is disseminated through original scientific articles, conference documents, book chapters, and literature reviews, which are addressed mainly by the social sciences.

Semantic analysis, according to cluster formations on scientific maps based on Scopus publications' metadata, indicates a strong relationship between crime economics constructs and COVID-19.

The analytical reading of the publications requires a new look at the relationship between the economics of crime and COVID-19 based on the Neo-institutionalist approach, having as a theoretical void the scope of the traditional paradigm of political and economic science regarding political practices that are submerged in the framework of illegality that becomes an edge of faith. The broader name includes paralegal activities formed in the framework of crime. It gives way to the emerging recognition of digital crime, narco-populism, nightlife crimes, illegal governance, health crime, and wildlife crime.

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