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What Do We Know About Import and Export Crimes? A Systematic Review and Qualitative Meta-Synthesis

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Abstract

This study examines the characteristics and consequences of import and export crimes through a systematic review and qualitative meta-synthesis of fifteen scholarly and policy-based articles published between 2019 and 2025. Sources were identified through JSTOR, SAGE Journals, Academic Search Complete, and Google Scholar. Four key themes emerged: illegal immigration and human trafficking, organized crime and economic impacts, government policies addressing cross-border crimes, and the socioeconomic consequences of trade law violations. The findings indicate that legal ambiguities, corruption, weak regulatory frameworks, and global wealth inequalities contribute to import and export crimes. The review also highlights links between cross-border crime, policy gaps, and socioeconomic insecurity. Effective responses require international cooperation, legal integration, coordinated enforcement, extradition mechanisms, and anti-corruption measures. Future research should incorporate primary data and regional case studies to develop context-specific prevention strategies.

Keywords: Import and Export Crimes, Smuggling, Human Trafficking, Organized Crime, Trade Law, COVID-19, Corruption, Transnational Crime, Policy Enforcement.

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1. Introduction

When looking into global economies and the facilitating movements of several types of goods across international borders, the principal factor that plays a crucial role in this is international trade. However, almost any legitimate act of service is an opportunity for criminal activity, such as import and export crimes. This type of illegal activity emerging in such a widespread movement exposes compelling threats to the economy's stability, national security, and public safety. "Export and import violations involve breaches of federal laws governing the movement of goods, services, and technology across U.S. borders." (WorldData.info, 2024) Smuggling, customs fraud, and illegal trafficking of prohibited goods are examples of import crimes.

On the contrary, export crimes include violations such as unauthorized shipments of restricted items, evasion of export controls, and illicit arms trade. Import and export crimes not only erode lawful commerce but are also a doorway to other crimes like organized crime, terrorism, money laundering, drug and human trafficking, and financial fraud. The methods offenders use to evade law enforcement continue to evolve, making enforcement efforts even more complex. Comprehending the influence and the measures law enforcement and legislation implement for import and export crimes is key to fighting against these threats and protecting and upholding the global trade system with proper regard. This study addresses a significant gap in the literature by synthesizing existing research on import and export crimes, with particular attention to how these offenses have evolved in the post-COVID-19 era.

Commercial business is the root that sparked the study into import and export crimes. While there is no set data on the global and national rates for import and export crimes, the movement of illegal goods ranging from wildlife to people is estimated at 650 billion dollars. The unlawful transfer of goods and services or controlled materials through borders constitutes import and export crimes that break customs regulations and smuggling rules and corrupt border operations (Collins, 1974). Lawbreakers transfer various illegal items, which range from medicine, firearms, and counterfeited things, along with technology items that authorities have placed restrictions on. With so many suggestions of which goods are of the highest value, many studies accept drug trafficking and counterfeiting

as the two most prominent markets. According to Haken et al (2011), the combined estimated 570 billion dollars for these two criminal enterprises directly reflects the obscene financial gain that drives criminal trade. However, recent trends indicate a rise in cyber-enabled import and export crimes, where digital tools facilitate the illicit movement of goods.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted global trade, indirectly fueling an increase in import and export crimes, especially those involving counterfeit medical supplies, personal protective equipment (PPE), and pharmaceutical products. With supply chains disrupted and borders intermittently closed, criminal networks exploited the high demand and low availability of essential items to expand illicit markets. The World Customs Organization noted a surge in counterfeit COVID-19 test kits and vaccines, as well as smuggling of many illegal goods across international borders under fraudulent documentation.

Additionally, human trafficking and smuggling became more prevalent during and after the pandemic due to rising poverty, displacement, and weakened law enforcement presence in vulnerable countries (Shelley, 2020). Areas with poor infrastructure faced increased challenges for their law enforcement organizations during the pandemic, which resulted in criminals obtaining better oversight-avoidance conditions. The rising use of digital platforms by criminals transformed their ability to start illicit trades, which provided wider market access and decreased security risks. Revised international strategies to monitor import and export crimes have become essential considering these recent criminal activity trends that emerged after the pandemic.

Criminal activities involving imports and exports show regional dependency since different illegal products affect the prevalence of these offenses. These criminal activities tend to target nations with extensive borders that allow easy passage, inadequate regulatory control, or substantial trade traffic sites. The drug smuggling reputation of South America relates to its cocaine production activities that lead to narcotics shipments bound for Europe and North America. Asia, particularly Southeast Asia, is associated with human trafficking and counterfeit goods, while Eastern Europe sees higher instances of arms smuggling and organ trafficking.

The Middle East has also experienced high levels of illegal oil exports and antiquities smuggling due to prolonged conflicts and weak border security (Amburgey Law, 2025). The lack of a univmake database tracking all import and



export violations makes determining which country leads to overall prevalence challenging. However, patterns show that crime type is typically linked to regional economic, political, and social vulnerabilities. Therefore, rather than looking for the single most affected nation, analyzing trends based on specific commodities and regional factors is more accurate.

The COVID-19 pandemic shifted the landscape of import and export crimes by exposing global supply chain vulnerabilities and increasing opportunities for fraud. As traditional shipping routes were disrupted, countries with strong black-market networks saw a surge in illicit activity, particularly involving counterfeit medical supplies and essential goods. China, for example, was a significant source of counterfeit PPE, with shipments seized globally due to falsified safety certifications.

Similarly, Latin America and parts of Africa saw an increase in illegal pharmaceutical trade and the smuggling of vaccines, driven by weak healthcare infrastructure and limited access. Human traffickers and smugglers exploited pandemic-related displacement and economic instability, especially in Southeast Asia, where border closures were inconsistent, and law enforcement resources were diverted to health crises. Organized crime groups quickly adapted to new market demands, making COVID-19 a catalyst for innovation in illegal trade methods, such as contactless deliveries and digital platforms. These adaptations have had lasting effects, with many criminal strategies developed during the pandemic continuing even after global trade routes began to normalize.

Furthermore, with global import and export crimes, other factors make other countries more prone to illegal activity. These factors include but are not limited to the following: poor law enforcement presence, weak legislation and accountability of law enforcement, corruption within the criminal justice system, geographic location, and the demand for illicit goods in these areas (Duri, 2021). With Mexico having the highest crime rate by country ranking, it is not supported in the study that this relates solely to import and export crimes. However, it is included with the additional crimes occurring in Mexico, with special consideration for its most well-known crime: drug trafficking (WorldData.info, 2025).

The issue of cross-border drug trafficking has drawn significant political attention. For example, President Donald Trump has publicly stated that “The

fentanyl coming through Mexico is massive“ (WorldData.info, 2025). However, these claims are not always supported by empirical data, as official studies indicate that most of the fentanyl is smuggled through legal ports of entry rather than by undocumented migrants crossing illegally. Other recent reports suggest that illicit trade routes have diversified, with criminals using shipping containers and even diplomatic pouches to transport contraband.

COVID-19 significantly altered the global perspective on import and export crimes by revealing gaps in enforcement and creating new opportunities for smuggling. Many governments, particularly in developing countries, diverted resources from customs enforcement to public health, creating blind spots at borders and ports. This shift increased counterfeit personal protective equipment, unauthorized vaccine distribution, and the smuggling of pandemic-related goods like oxygen tanks and test kits. Countries like India, Brazil, and parts of Sub-Saharan Africa reported spikes in black-market medicine sales and unauthorized cross-border trade during lockdowns. Globally, COVID-19 blurred the lines between legal and illegal supply chains, forcing law enforcement and policymakers to reconsider how they track and define import/export crimes under emergency conditions.

Import and export crimes, particularly those involving narcotics and counterfeit goods, tend to victimize individuals from low-income and vulnerable backgrounds. These individuals are often exploited due to their socioeconomic status, lack of education, or involvement in informal labor markets (Dutt & Traca, 2010). For example, in many South American and Southeast Asian countries, impoverished individuals are used as drug mules or low-level couriers because of their desperation for income and limited awareness of legal consequences.

According to Collins (1974), international case law highlights how extradition and criminal accountability vary widely between countries, creating inconsistent protections for victims and suspects. In countries with weak legal protections, such as some parts of Africa or Southeast Asia, victims may also be manipulated by organized criminal groups under threat or coercion. Victims are not always aware they are participating in criminal activity; some are deceived about the contents of goods they carry across borders or are promised legal jobs abroad (Hesterman, 2005). As a result, many victims have been criminalized by themselves, caught between national legal systems with conflicting extradition laws and limited regard for victim rights.



COVID-19 intensified the vulnerability of these groups, especially among informal workers and economically disadvantaged populations, who became more susceptible to coercion or fraud within illicit trade networks. The pandemic caused mass unemployment and disrupted global trade, prompting criminal organizations to exploit new opportunities and desperate populations. For instance, reports indicated a rise in women and children being used as traffickers or smugglers, as traditional routes were blocked and new ones required less scrutiny during border shutdowns. Victims of counterfeit pharmaceutical smuggling also increased during the pandemic, where vaccines and medications flooded unregulated markets (Shelley, 2020). With governments focused on public health emergencies, the legal system often deprioritizes trafficking and smuggling cases, leaving many victims without legal support or protection. COVID-19 exposed gaps in the justice system and magnified the socioeconomic vulnerabilities that feed import and export crimes. This shift underscores the need for stronger international cooperation and victim-centered legal reforms, especially considering global crises.

Import and export crimes are the basis for many transnational crimes. While this type of crime can range in the goods being illegally traded, the country that is most prevalent when looking into this study depends on the imported or exported goods. Extradition and treaty requirements from each state vary. Studying each country's variation is how you can tell which countries have more corruption and their standpoint on combating import and export crimes (Collins, 1974). For example, Thailand will allow extradition to foreign states if the crime allegedly committed in that foreign state is also punishable in Thailand, even if there is no extradition treaty with said foreign state. It is at the discretion of Thailand for this reference. The United States differs from this stance. The law journal explains how the United States cannot issue extradition without a treaty.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly altered offender demographics and expanded the scope of illicit trading activity. As borders closed and economic systems strained, new actors entered smuggling networks, including individuals previously uninvolved in crime. The pandemic saw a rise in counterfeit PPE, medical supplies, and pharmaceuticals crossing borders illegally, requiring rapid coordination and digital platform use, often by tech-savvy offenders or those

familiar with online trade systems (Amburgey Law, 2025). In low-income regions, economic desperation pushed unemployed individuals toward smuggling roles, sometimes working unknowingly for organized networks. Border control agencies, under-resourced due to the pandemic, became more susceptible to bribery and corruption, particularly in high-risk areas like the U.S.-Mexico border (Jancsics, 2019). This shift widened the demographic pool of offenders beyond the traditional profile and led to an increase in temporary and opportunistic offenders. Overall, COVID-19 increased the scale of illegal trade and diversified the people involved in carrying it out.

The victims and offenders of this type of crime vary and are hardly discussed in the study of this crime. Again, the focus here is the goods, with mention of corruption and participating countries. When focusing on the mention of human trafficking and smuggling criminal activity occurring through import and export crimes, the tension that transpired socially and globally in the post-COVID era has magnified. With millions of people migrating worldwide and over one hundred million people being marked as refugees or displaced, the stage has been set for these crimes due to the increase in poverty and need. Thus, a new supply and demand was created after the pandemic. Studies show spikes in trends for human smuggling and human trafficking post-COVID. When considering their impact on import and export crimes, it is essential to know that the studies and data account for these two crimes separately.

The victims of import crimes can vary depending on the illicit goods being imported. Also, the country it is being imported to can be a matter of public safety and pose more significant threats in different countries depending on that illicit good (Shelley, 2020). For example, if the illicit good is human smuggling or trafficking, the victim is the person being smuggled or trafficked. However, there are the families and other lives that are impacted by said person being smuggled or trafficked: the victim's parents, siblings, and children. All of them can be directly affected by the victim's disappearance. Other victims could be wildlife animals who are captured from their home country for the sole purpose of being smuggled and exported from their origin to be imported to a foreign state for means of collection, fighting, breeding, or other criminal activity. Not to mention, there could be potential harm when this type of criminal activity is conducted. In committing this import and export crime, even the smuggler or perpetrator could be in



imminent danger since wild animals are not trained and often deadly, especially when scared.

Conducting this research is so important because the severity they can impose on the economy, national security, and social implications is undeniable. Thus, the acts and regulations we have in place to govern it are critical. Where there is no legislation, there is no safety. Preventing arms smuggling helps minimize terrorism and organized crimes. Illegal imports and even falsifying import and export reports undermine legitimate businesses and our government revenue. Since many of the studies on import and export crimes are linked to financial fraud, corruption, and illicit money flows, understanding these crimes often assists authorities globally in tracking and destroying the types of criminal organizations that engage in trade-based money laundering.

When countries fail to enforce the import and export laws in place, they create risks, sanctions, and damage the diplomatic ties built to develop international trade between the countries in the first place. By studying these crimes in greater detail, we can provide law enforcement with better tools to detect and dismantle smuggling networks before they cause irreversible economic damage. Studying this topic is essential to keep transnational crimes down, keep diplomatic relationships in good standing, and ensure the safety of all parties and public safety. So many layers can be impacted; it is a shame that more studies have not been done.

This study aims to bring attention to the lack of discussion this topic truly gets. Also, the study aims to encourage governments, transnational businesses, and law enforcement agencies to develop better policies and strategies to enforce those policies and strengthen international cooperation to tackle these threats effectively. This study also aims to identify methods and techniques in which these crimes occur to combat them and the economic and social impacts that import and export crimes impose.

2. Methodology

This study addresses the research question: “*What do we know about import and export crime?*” A thorough literature review method was used to assemble what was already known about import and export crimes. This method was picked

because it lets all written research be looked at in detail to find patterns, gaps, and trends in the literature. Import and export crime is a complicated issue with many sides that affect fields such as law, economics, international relations, and criminology. A structured review method is the best way to look at it. This study employs a systematic review and qualitative meta-synthesis approach, which involves analyzing data from various qualitative sources to address the research question and generate a new understanding of the topic.

Multiple academic databases were systematically searched to ensure comprehensive coverage of the literature. The researcher used JSTOR, Sage Journals, Academic Search Complete, Google Scholar, and the university library database as primary information sources. The researcher chose these databases since they provide substantial coverage of criminology alongside law and economics and international relations journal content. Academic content spanning several centuries was accessible through JSTOR, but the contemporary research available through Sage Journals focused on criminology and criminal justice. The university library database gives students subscription access to limited resources that could not be found on Google Scholar or other search tools.

The search strategy employed multiple keywords and phrases to capture the full spectrum of research on import and export crimes. The study used five corresponding search phrases, which were “import and export crimes,” “import crimes,” “export crimes,” “importing crime offenders,” and “exporting crime offenders.” The chosen search terms covered the broad topic while focusing on criminal aspects of import and export operations. The researchers utilized the same search terms throughout all selected databases to maintain methodological consistency and create comparable study findings.

To include the latest import and export crime studies, the literature search was confined to 2019–2025. This six-year timeframe was selected for several reasons: first, to reflect contemporary patterns of trade crime in an increasingly globalized economy; second, to incorporate recent legal and regulatory developments affecting international trade; and third, to ensure findings relevant to current policy and enforcement practices. While certain fundamental studies published before 2019 may give historical background, focusing on recent publications ensures that conclusions represent the current understanding of this area.

The search was limited to English-language publications to ensure accurate interpretation and analysis of content. While this approach necessarily excludes



potentially valuable research published in other languages, it eliminates the risk of misinterpretation due to translation errors. No additional search filters were applied regarding publication type, allowing for the inclusion of peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, policy papers, and books, provided they addressed the research question and met inclusion criteria. This method made it possible to look at both real-world studies and academic views on import and export crime in depth.

A single researcher did the systematic review, which included pros and cons. The most significant benefit was uniformity in search words, screening criteria, and database selection judgments. The review procedure was methodologically coherent with this approach. The limitation of a single-researcher approach is the lack of inter-rater reliability checks that would be possible with multiple reviewers. To mitigate this limitation, the researcher implemented a structured screening protocol with explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria to enhance objectivity and reduce potential selection bias.

The initial search across all databases yielded substantial results: Google Scholar returned 1,339,300 initial results (87,200 after date refinement); JSTOR produced 84,657 results (7,848 after date refinement); Sage Journals returned 64,197 results (12,713 after date refinement); and the university library database yielded 11,475 results (1,144 after date refinement). In total, the refined search returned approximately 108,905 potentially relevant publications. This high number of results confirmed both the breadth of the topic and the need for a systematic screening process to identify the most relevant literature.

The screening process followed a systematic, multi-stage approach to identify the most relevant publications. To find related articles, search results page titles and descriptions were reviewed. Abstracts of import-export crime articles were chosen. Each abstract was assessed for three main criteria: (1) direct connection to the import and export crime research subject; (2) substance beyond identifying illicit products; and (3) clarity and accessibility of presentation. These articles went to full-text review. Snowball sampling was used to find more relevant publications in chosen papers' reference lists, assuring literature coverage. This multi-stage screening approach ensured efficient yet thorough identification of relevant literature.

Inclusion criteria were applied throughout the screening process. Articles were included if they: (1) directly addressed import and export crimes, smuggling, or related transnational offenses; (2) were published between 2019 and 2025; (3) were written in English; and (4) provided substantive analysis rather than merely identifying illicit goods. Articles were excluded if they: (1) only briefly mentioned import/export crimes without substantive discussion; (2) focused solely on domestic crime without transnational implications; (3) were not peer-reviewed or lacked academic rigor; or (4) were duplicate publications or anecdotal accounts without systematic analysis.

From the refined search results of approximately 108,905 publications, an estimated 900 articles were screened at the title and description level. This preliminary screening allowed for the rapid identification of publications unrelated to the research question. Following this initial screening, approximately 100 articles were selected for abstract review based on apparent relevance to import and export crime. The abstract review stage involved a more detailed assessment of each article's focus, methodology, and potential contribution to addressing the research question. This progressive narrowing approach enabled the efficient processing of a large volume of publications while maintaining a focus on identifying the most relevant literature.

Of the 100 articles assessed at the abstract level, 85 were excluded from the final selection. Several categories accounted for exclusion. First, several publications covered international commerce but mostly ignored the criminal implications of import and export. Second, many papers concentrated on illicit items without addressing trade-related crime trends, causes, or effects. These articles were removed because they only covered commodity-specific import and export crime. Third, some papers addressed regulatory transgressions as administrative rather than criminal penalties, beyond the study's emphasis on trade crimes. Fourth, anecdotal accounts without systematic analysis were discarded owing to methodological flaws. The review avoided repetition by excluding papers that repeated results or techniques from more comprehensive research. Exclusion also revealed literature limitations, as many articles focused on single commodities or enforcement issues without addressing the whole criminal ecosystem of import and export crime.

The final selection included eleven articles that collectively provide a comprehensive overview of current knowledge on import and export crime. These



articles were chosen for their depth beyond illegal product cataloguing and enforcement data. The included publications examine trade crime in connection to criminal ecosystems, politics, regulation, and economics. Jancsics' (2019) work on border corruption and Väyrynen's (2003) study on illegal immigration, human trafficking, and organized crime expose import and export crimes' more extensive criminal networks. Dutt and Traca (2010) and Duri (2021) examined corruption and international commerce, revealing how institutional elements facilitate trade crime. Collins' (1974) study of the Controlled Substances Import and Export Act and Yossymon (2024)'s customs law analysis were incorporated to comprehend trade criminal regulation. The selection also highlighted methodological variety, including quantitative trade pattern and corruption indices, qualitative enforcement case studies, legal trade regulatory analyses, and theoretical transnational criminal organization studies. This methodological variety guarantees the study covers import and export crime from many angles. To show how trade crime affects security, Shelley's (2020) work on illicit trade and terrorism and Hesterman's (2005) analysis of the criminal-terrorist nexus were included. The selected articles cover import and export crime and highlight areas for further research, such as trade crime network organization, enforcement effectiveness, and legal versus illegal trade.

To ensure rigor in the qualitative synthesis, the authors employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework. This involved: (1) familiarization with the selected sources, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final report. The selected articles were read multiple times to identify recurring patterns, concepts, and relationships. Initial codes were generated and organized into potential themes, which were then reviewed and refined to ensure coherence and distinctiveness. Four principal themes emerged from this analysis: (1) The Nexus Between Illegal Immigration and Human Trafficking, (2) Organized Crime and Its Economic Implications, (3) Government Policies Addressing Cross-Border Crimes, and (4) The Socio-Economic Consequences of Trade Law Violations.

3. Literature Review

1. WorldData.info. (2024). *Crime rates by country*.
<https://www.worlddata.info/crime-by-country.php>

“Crime by Country” on Worlddata.info provides a comprehensive analysis of crime rates across 114 countries, highlighting the way criminal activities vary around the globe. This research aimed to inform readers about the global crime landscape, emphasizing how different nations experience and address it. Its primary objective is to present a detailed comparison of crime rates by country, shedding light on the diverse nature of criminal activities worldwide. As a result of analyzing these variations, the article aims to provide an understanding of how crime manifests differently across regions as a result of factors such as organized crime, drug trafficking, cybercrime, and governmental resilience. The article analyzes crime data from 114 countries using a quantitative approach. Each country is assigned a crime index value, which reflects its overall crime rate, as well as a resilience score, which indicates its ability to combat and manage crime. To provide a holistic view of the crime situation in each country, the data includes organized crime, drug trafficking, and cybercrime. Across countries, there are significant disparities in crime rates and types. Mexico ranks highest with a crime index of 84.4, primarily due to widespread drug trafficking and organized crime.

Worlddata.info reports that Myanmar (80.5), Colombia (80.0), Nigeria (76.9), and South Africa (74.0) also have high crime indices, each facing unique challenges like political instability, economic disparities, and internal conflicts. Countries like Somalia suffer from extensive mafia-like organizations, contributing to high crime rates. Israel has the highest incidence of cybercrime, illustrating the evolving nature of criminal activities in technologically advanced societies. Defining resilience as a country’s ability to combat and manage crime effectively, the article emphasizes the importance of resilience. As a result of its robust democratic institutions and effective law enforcement, Finland receives a high resilience score. Conversely, autocratically governed countries often suffer from lower resilience, making it difficult to deal effectively with criminal activities.

Globally, crime is complex and multifaceted. Several factors influence crime, including economic conditions, political stability, governance quality, and societal norms. To mitigate crime rates, strengthening democratic institutions and law



enforcement capabilities is crucial to enhancing resilience. According to the report, countries with high resilience scores tend to manage and reduce crime more effectively, regardless of their crime index. Although the article provides valuable insights, certain aspects could be improved. The article does not specify the data sources or methodology used to calculate the crime index and resilience scores. By providing detailed information about data collection methods, sources, and calculation processes, the findings would be more credible and transparent.

Additionally, incorporating cultural, economic, and political contexts would provide a more nuanced understanding of the factors contributing to crime in each country. Trends over time would provide insight into whether crime rates are improving or worsening in specific countries, providing insight into policies and interventions that are effective. Analyzing countries with similar crime indices but different resilience scores could shed light on effective strategies and practices for reducing crime. The article serves as an excellent resource for understanding global crime disparities, emphasizing the importance of robust institutions and governance.

2. Amburgey Law. (2025). *Export and import violations*.
<https://amburgeylaw.com/areas-of-practice/federal-crimes/export-and-import-violations/>

The article “Export and Import Violations” on Amburgey Law’s website examines breaches related to federal laws governing the movement of goods, services, and technology across U.S. borders. These laws protect national security, ensure fair trade practices, and enforce international sanctions. In addition to fines, imprisonment, and reputation damage, violations can lead to severe penalties. The article is primarily intended to inform individuals and businesses about the complexities and legal implications of export and import violations. Using examples of violations, potential penalties, and defense strategies, the article aims to educate readers about the importance of compliance with federal trade laws and the serious consequences of non-compliance.

Violations of export and import laws identified in the article include customs fraud, which involves misrepresenting goods on documentation to evade duties or

restrictions. Among these actions are underreporting the value of goods, misclassifying products, or providing false information about the origin or destination of shipments. Export control violations involve the transfer of restricted technology, goods, or information to prohibited countries or individuals. Exporting items without the appropriate licenses or approvals, especially those with military applications or dual-use technologies, constitutes an offense. Violations of trade sanctions involve unauthorized trade with countries or entities subject to U.S. sanctions. Legal repercussions can result from transacting with sanctioned nations or organizations without proper authorization. Even minor compliance errors can result in significant legal consequences in these types of offenses.

Import and export violations can have severe financial and operational consequences. Depending on the scale and impact of the offense, fines can range from thousands to millions of dollars. In cases involving willful violations or national security risks, individuals may face imprisonment. Among the additional consequences, businesses may have their goods confiscated, their export licenses revoked, and their ability to operate within international markets damaged. Several defense strategies can be employed when facing allegations of export and import violations, including demonstrating lack of intent, challenging evidence, and arguing regulatory ambiguity.

Defending against such violations requires a deep understanding of federal trade laws and meticulous attention to detail. The article emphasizes the importance of skilled legal representation in complex trade law cases. While the article provides valuable information, certain aspects could be enhanced. Including real-world examples or case studies could illustrate the practical application of the defense strategies and penalties discussed. Providing more detailed explanations of the specific federal laws and regulations governing export and import activities would offer readers a clearer understanding of the legal landscape. Offering guidance on compliance programs and best practices could help businesses proactively avoid potential violations.



3. Wardani, A. W., & Suraji, S. (2024). Problems concerning the buying and selling of used clothing at thrift bazaars in Surakarta [Problematika terhadap bazar jual beli pakaian bekas thrifting di Surakarta]. *Terang: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Sosial, Politik dan Hukum*, 1(1), 163–171. <https://doi.org/10.62383/terang.v1i1.80>

Wardani and Suraji, (2024) examines the enforcement of criminal law concerning the illegal importation of prohibited goods into Indonesia. The purpose of the study is to analyze how existing legal frameworks deter and address such violations, particularly those involving the importation of used goods that are restricted under Indonesian trade regulations. This study aims to assess how criminal law is applied to enforce Indonesian prohibitions on certain goods imports. To identify the challenges and shortcomings in the current legal system that may hinder effective enforcement against the illegal importation of used items, the research seeks to identify these challenges and shortcomings.

Using a normative legal research approach, the research analyzes existing laws, regulations, and legal principles regarding the importation of prohibited goods into Indonesia. To understand how criminal law is enforced in cases of illegal importation, this method examines statutory provisions, legal doctrines, and relevant case law. To provide context and support the analysis, the study also reviews secondary sources, such as legal commentaries and scholarly articles.

There are several key findings in this study regarding the enforcement of prohibitions on importing certain goods, including regulatory gaps, enforcement challenges, and judicial inconsistencies. The existing legal framework contains ambiguities and inconsistencies, which allow perpetrators to exploit these weaknesses to evade prosecution. Insufficient training of personnel, insufficient coordination among enforcement agencies, and limited resources contribute to ineffective enforcement of import prohibitions. In cases of illegal importation, judicial interpretations and sentencing can vary and may undermine the law's deterrent effect. Indonesia's current enforcement mechanisms against the illegal importation of prohibited goods are inadequate, according to the author.

The study recommends several measures to improve the effectiveness of criminal law in this area, including legal reforms to clarify and harmonize existing

laws and regulations, capacity building to enhance the resources, training, and coordination of enforcement agencies, and judicial training to ensure a consistent application of the law in cases involving illegal importation. Despite providing valuable insights into Indonesia's import prohibition enforcement challenges, certain aspects could be improved. Empirical data, such as statistics on illegal importation cases, enforcement actions, and judicial outcomes, would strengthen the analysis. Examining how other countries handle similar issues could provide Indonesia with valuable lessons and best practices for improving its enforcement mechanisms. Import prohibition enforcement challenges and potential solutions can be gained through interviews or surveys with key stakeholders, such as law enforcement officials, legal practitioners, and importers.

4. Yossymon, A. (2024). The Crime of Smuggling Imported Goods in the Perspective of Customs Law. *International Journal of Education, Information Technology, and Others*, 7(2), 1-13.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10963387>

In his article “The Crime of Smuggling Imported Goods in the Perspective of Customs Law,” Alexander Sico Yossymon examines the legal framework surrounding imported goods smuggling in Indonesia. In this study, the methods of such criminal acts will be elucidated. It examines the monitoring mechanisms used by the Directorate General of Customs and Excise and the sanctions imposed on offenders. The research aimed to address the persistent issue of smuggling in Indonesia, which threatens the country's economic stability and security. The study seeks to contribute to the development of more robust strategies for combating smuggling activities by analyzing the methods used by smugglers, the effectiveness of customs enforcement, and the legal repercussions.

Yossymon used a normative juridical research method to analyze the legal norms and regulations governing customs law. Law Number 17 of 2006 concerning Customs was examined comprehensively as part of this approach. This was done to understand the legal provisions related to imported goods smuggling. The study uncovered several key insights. Smugglers often employ clandestine methods to import or export goods without adhering to legal regulations, evading taxes, and harming the state. In addition to causing financial losses, these activities disrupt economic stability. Various supervision mechanisms are used by the Directorate



General of Customs and Excise, including intelligence activities, patrols, enforcement actions, and case handling. The purpose of these measures is to monitor and control the movement of goods, transportation means, and individuals crossing national borders within customs areas.

In Law Number 17 of 2006, specific sanctions are outlined for smuggling offenses. An offender can be imprisoned for a minimum of five years and a maximum of twenty years, depending on the severity and impact of a crime on the state's economic foundations. Yossymon concludes that while existing laws provide a foundation for fighting smuggling, stronger enforcement and continuous evaluation are needed to ensure their effectiveness. To reduce smuggling activities, customs officials' capabilities and coordination among enforcement agencies must be improved. Empirical data could be incorporated to support the analysis to enhance the study. It could include statistics on smuggling cases, enforcement actions, and judicial outcomes. In addition, comparative studies with other countries facing similar challenges could provide valuable insights into alternative strategies and best practices. A survey or interview with stakeholders could provide practical perspectives on how to enforce customs laws, including law enforcement officials, legal practitioners, and businesses.

5. Duri, J. (2021). *Corruption and economic crime*. Transparency International Anti-Corruption Helpdesk.
https://knowledgehub.transparencycdn.org/kproducts/2021-Corruption-and-economic-crime_final.pdf

Jorum Duri examines the intricate relationship between corruption and economic crime in his article, "Corruption and Economic Crime." The paper, published by Transparency International's Anti-Corruption Helpdesk in March 2021, explores the overlapping characteristics of these illicit activities as well as their modern manifestations. Duri's research examines the similarities between corruption and economic crime, especially considering their evolving nature in the modern world. The study examines how these overlaps facilitate each other by dissecting these overlaps. In addition, it proposes strategies for improving prevention and enforcement.

Using a normative legal research approach, Duri analyzes existing literature, legal frameworks, and case studies. The similarities between corruption and economic crime are identified. This method examines definitions, enabling factors, and the roles of professional enablers in perpetuating these crimes. Globalization and technological advancements are also considered in the study. Several critical insights are revealed in the article. Corruption and economic crime thrive in environments characterized by weak governance, lack of transparency, and inadequate regulatory frameworks. In these conditions, illicit activities can flourish with little risk of detection or punishment.

Using their expertise to obscure illicit activities can facilitate corruption and economic crime, knowingly or unknowingly, by professionals such as lawyers, accountants, and real estate agents. Legitimizing and concealing the proceeds of these crimes requires their involvement. The study examines modern forms of corruption, which are often intertwined with economic crimes such as money laundering and fraud. Due to complex financial instruments and digital technologies, detection and enforcement have become increasingly difficult. Due to their transnational nature, both corruption and economic crime require enhanced international cooperation to be effectively prosecuted. Asset recovery efforts have been complicated by the movement of illicit funds across jurisdictions because of the globalized economy.

Duri concludes that enforcement and prevention of corruption and economic crime must be holistic. Combating these intertwined illicit activities requires strengthening legal frameworks, enhancing transparency, and fostering international collaboration. The study emphasizes the need for robust mechanisms to hold professional enablers accountable and to adapt to modern corruption's evolving landscape. While the article provides a comprehensive analysis, empirical data and specific case studies could strengthen the arguments. A quantitative assessment of the scale and impact of corruption and economic crime would provide a more solid basis for the recommendations. It would also be useful for policymakers and enforcement agencies to examine the effectiveness of existing international cooperation mechanisms and identify best practices.



6. Dutt, P., & Traca, D. (2010). Corruption and bilateral trade flows: Extortion or evasion? *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 92(4), 843–860. <https://ideas.repec.org/a/tpr/restat/v92y2010i4p843-860.html>

Dutt and Traca (2010) examine the impact of corruption on bilateral trade flows, highlighting the dual role of corruption in terms of extortion and evasion. The study develops a theoretical model which shows that the effect of corruption on trade flows is non-linear and must take into account the level of nominal tariffs. While corrupt customs officials in the importing country may extort bribes from exporters, they may also allow exporters to evade tariff barriers. The model predicts that corruption impedes trade in an environment of low tariffs, but may create trade-enhancing effects when nominal tariffs are high. Furthermore, the trade-enhancing effect dominates at low levels of corruption, suggesting that, at high tariffs, trade flows are an inverted-U shaped function of corruption.

Using an augmented gravity model, the authors empirically test these predictions with bilateral trade data from 1982 to 2000. The empirical analysis lends strong support to both propositions, showing that corruption deters trade, but the effect is much weaker as the level of protection rises. Conversely, tariffs deter trade, but their effect is weaker in countries where corruption is high. The results also provide evidence of an inverted-U shaped relationship between corruption and trade flows for higher levels of nominal tariffs. The study finds that for most observations, the trade-impeding effect dominates, but a positive relationship between corruption and trade holds for about 23% of the observations, which span 24 countries with moderate levels of corruption and higher than average protectionism.

The study contributes to the broader literature on the effects of corruption by stressing its interaction with regulatory constraints in the economy. It brings together two contrasting perspectives on corruption—one that views it as a hindrance and another that sees it as efficiency-enhancing—by showing the conditions under which each will dominate. The findings have important policy implications, particularly for trade facilitation and institutional reforms. They suggest that reducing corruption reduces trade impediments in most cases, but in

highly protected countries with moderate corruption, tariff reduction may be more appropriate, while anti-corruption efforts could inadvertently reduce trade. The study also underscores the need for future research to account for the impact of corruption on regulation itself.

7. Hesterman, J. L. (2005). *Transnational crime and the criminal-terrorist nexus: synergies and corporate trends*. Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: Air University Press.

Chapter 2 of Jennifer Hesterman's book "Transnational Crime and the Criminal-Terrorist Nexus: Synergies and Corporate Trends" explores the definition, scope, and challenges of transnational crime. A foundational understanding of transnational criminal activities is provided in this chapter, as well as their implications for the criminal-terrorist nexus. The research focuses on the multifaceted nature of transnational crime, highlighting its evolution, organizational structures, and convergence with terrorist activities. Hesterman examines these elements to determine the synergies between criminal enterprises and terrorist organizations. As a result of their collaboration, international security threats are amplified.

Using a comprehensive literature review, Hesterman analyzes existing definitions, case studies, and theoretical frameworks related to transnational crime. As a result of this approach, transnational criminal activities and their intersection with terrorism can be critically examined through definition analysis, case studies, and theoretical exploration. The chapter uncovers several critical insights. Transnational crime lacks a universally accepted definition, making policy formulation and enforcement difficult. To combat these crimes, international collaboration and cohesive strategies are hindered by this ambiguity.

Transnational criminal organizations and terrorist groups exhibit similar organizational structures, including hierarchical and networked structures. Collaboration and resource sharing are facilitated by these similarities, enhancing operational capabilities. Criminal and terrorist activities are increasingly convergent, with groups committing both to maximize profits and further ideological goals. The convergence of criminal and terrorist acts complicates law enforcement efforts. Technological advancements and globalization have



enabled transnational criminal organizations to perform more sophisticated operations and pose additional challenges to traditional law enforcement.

Transnational crime, which is characterized by its convergence with terrorism and adaptability to globalization, requires a reevaluation of current law enforcement and policy approaches, concludes Hesterman. The importance of developing adaptive strategies that address the fluid and interconnected landscape of modern criminal and terrorist activities is emphasized by the author. Despite the chapter's thorough analysis, quantitative data on transnational crime's economic impact could strengthen its arguments. A deeper understanding of the challenges and potential solutions could also be gained by exploring regional variations and the effectiveness of current international collaborations.

8. Collins, J. P. (1974). Traffic in the traffickers: Extradition and the Controlled Substances Import and Export Act of 1970. *The Yale Law Journal*, 83(4), 706–744. <https://doi.org/10.2307/795525>

Collins (1974) examines the legal framework surrounding extradition and drug trafficking offenses under U.S. law in his foundational article. Collins analyzes the Controlled Substances Import and Export Act of 1970 and its implications for international cooperation in prosecuting drug offenders. The study highlights the complexities of extradition procedures and how variations in national legal systems create challenges for cross-border enforcement. Collins demonstrates that countries with discretionary extradition policies, such as Thailand, can prosecute offenders even without formal treaties, while the United States requires explicit treaty provisions. This variation creates gaps in international enforcement that offenders exploit. The article provides essential historical and legal context for understanding the complexities of prosecuting import and export crimes across jurisdictions.

9. Jancsics, D. (2021). Law enforcement corruption along the U.S. borders. *Security Journal*, 34, 26–46. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41284-019-00203-8>

Jancsics (2019) examines the relationship between corruption and law enforcement along U.S. borders, focusing on how corruption facilitates import and export crimes. The study analyzes how border enforcement agencies are vulnerable to bribery and corruption, particularly in high-risk areas. Jancsics finds that corruption along borders enables smuggling and trafficking, as corrupt officials allow illegal goods to pass through checkpoints. The study also highlights how weak oversight and lack of accountability contribute to the persistence of corruption, creating systemic vulnerabilities that organized crime exploits.

10. Shelley, L. I. (2020). Illicit trade and terrorism. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 14(4), 7–20. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26927661>

Shelley (2020) explores the relationship between illicit trade and terrorism, demonstrating how import and export crimes fund terrorist activities. The study examines how criminal networks engage in smuggling, counterfeiting, and trafficking to generate revenue that supports terrorist organizations. Shelley finds that the convergence of criminal and terrorist activities is increasing, with groups collaborating to maximize profits and further ideological goals. The study also highlights how the COVID-19 pandemic created new opportunities for illicit trade, particularly in counterfeit medical supplies and PPE.

11. Väyrynen, R. (2005). Illegal immigration, human trafficking and organized crime. In G. J. Borjas & J. Crisp (Eds.), *Poverty, international migration and asylum* (pp. 143–170). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230522534_7

Väyrynen (2005) examines the relationship between illegal immigration, human trafficking, and organized crime, highlighting how migrants become vulnerable to exploitation. The study finds that traffickers exploit immigrants through forced labor, sex trafficking, and debt bondage, exacerbating human rights violations. Väyrynen also demonstrates that human trafficking is increasingly viewed as a



transnational organized crime with networks across multiple jurisdictions, complicating intervention for law enforcement.

3.1 Synthesis of Literature Review

Across the eleven reviewed sources, several key patterns emerge. First, import and export crimes are consistently linked to organized criminal networks that exploit regulatory gaps, corruption, and economic inequalities (Hesterman, 2005; Duri, 2021). Second, corruption plays a dual role in trade crimes—both as a barrier to legitimate trade and as an enabler of illicit activities (Dutt & Traca, 2010; Jancsics, 2019). Third, legal frameworks vary significantly across countries, creating enforcement gaps that offenders exploit (Collins, 1974; Yossymon, 2024). Fourth, the COVID-19 pandemic created new opportunities for smuggling and counterfeit trade while diverting law enforcement resources (Shelley, 2020; WorldData.info, 2024). Fifth, vulnerable populations, including migrants and economically disadvantaged individuals, are disproportionately victimized by these crimes (Väyrynen, 2005; Shelley, 2020). These patterns highlight the complex interplay between legal frameworks, enforcement capacity, and socioeconomic conditions that sustains import and export crimes globally.

4. Thematic Analysis

Qualitatively, thematic analysis identifies, analyzes, and reanalyzes terms in a dataset. Further insight into the various themes related to illegal immigration, human trafficking, crime rates, and trade law violations is gained by reviewing the summaries of the articles. This process involves coding the data to identify repeated ideas and create sentences describing significant findings from the literature. Four principal themes are developed in this analysis: (1) The Nexus Between Illegal Immigration and Human Trafficking, (2) Organized Crime and Its Economic Implications, (3) Government Policies Addressing Cross-Border Crimes, and (4) The Socio-Economic Consequences of Trade Law Violations. Below, each one is elaborated on, with supporting literature and analysis.

4.1 Theme 1: The Nexus Between Illegal Immigration and Human Trafficking

Often, illegal immigration and human trafficking are interlinked as people in pursuit of a better economic opportunity become vulnerable to exploitation. The research finds that traffickers exploit immigrants through forced labor, sex trafficking, and debt bondage, thereby exacerbating human rights violations (Väyrynen, 2005). There is also an underground market where traffickers lure victims via false promises of employment and security (Shelley, 2020). Moreover, human trafficking is increasingly viewed as a transnational organized crime with networks across multiple jurisdictions, complicating intervention for law enforcement (Jancsics, 2019). Immigration reform should go hand in hand with more decisive measures against the trafficking of human beings to lower the victimization rates and to break down criminal business (Duri, 2021). To hinder human trafficking networks, both immigration policies and victim protection ought to be part of such an approach. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these vulnerabilities, as border closures and economic disruption created new opportunities for traffickers to exploit desperate migrants (Shelley, 2020).

4.2 Theme 2: Organized Crime and Its Economic Implications

Often, organized crime tends to result from the intersection of illegal immigration and human trafficking with significant economic consequences. Illicit trade, drug trafficking, and money laundering benefit criminal organizations, destabilizing specific regions' economies (Hesterman, 2005). Some of these organizations exploit gaps in border control and regulatory frameworks to enable their operations and fund other crimes, including weapons smuggling and cyber fraud (Shelley, 2020). These crimes involve direct financial losses, increased law enforcement expenditures, and decreased consumer confidence in the affected areas (Dutt & Traca, 2010). An internationally coordinated effort by the government in fighting organized crime is necessitated by government efforts to disrupt organized crime, such as intelligence sharing and stricter financial regulations to contain unlawful financial flows (WorldData.info, 2024). For this reason, fighting organized crime requires an all-encompassing methodology that mixes economic and law enforcement interventions. The pandemic further expanded organized crime's reach, as criminal groups diversified into counterfeit medical supplies and PPE, exploiting the high demand and weak regulation (Shelley, 2020).



4.3 Theme 3: The Role of Government Policies in Addressing Cross-Border Crimes

Mitigation of risks brought on by illegal immigration, human trafficking, and trade law violations depends on the government policies that are enacted. Some policies focus on border security and deportation, while others emphasize humanitarian interventions such as refugee protection and asylum programs (Collins, 1974). Nevertheless, strict immigration policies have sometimes brought unintended consequences, with an increase in underground criminal networks that prey on desperate migrants (Jancsics, 2019). Policies should also come at the right time while balancing human rights protections and security so that migrant and vulnerable populations have sufficient legal avenues for migration and employment (Duri, 2021).

Also, trade laws must be strengthened to combat the transshipment of illicit stock that supports criminal action. To reduce cross-border crimes while protecting the states' national security, a holistic approach that combines border security and economic and human rights policies is needed (Law, 2025). Therefore, for sustainable solutions, policymakers should consider enforcement and preventive strategies. The pandemic highlighted the limitations of existing policies, as governments diverted resources from customs enforcement to public health, creating enforcement gaps that criminals exploited (WorldData.info, 2024).

4.4 Theme 4: Socio-Economic Consequences of Trade Law Violations

Smuggling and trafficking of counterfeit goods have significant socio-economic repercussions. Illicit trade erodes legal markets, stunts tax revenues, and harms legal businesses (Yossymon, 2024). Also, counterfeit goods cause health and safety hazards in the pharmaceutical and consumer goods sectors (Shelley, 2020). Where enforcement is weak, countries experience more illegal trade, resulting in job loss and reduced economic growth (Dutt & Traca, 2010). In addition, trade-based money laundering acts as a financial lifeline to criminal organizations, adding to the global security threat (Hesterman, 2005).

Strengthening international trade agreements and enhancing transparency in financial transactions are the primary ways of addressing trade law violations. Governments need to collaborate with global institutions to implement stricter

trade compliance to ensure fair competition and economic stability (World Trade Organization, 2023). Because of this, fighting illicit trade requires the cooperation of both national and international agencies to avoid economic breakdown and public safety. The COVID-19 pandemic intensified these consequences, as the surge in counterfeit medical supplies and PPE created immediate public health risks while undermining legitimate businesses (Shelley, 2020).

5. Discussion

The study analyzed import and export criminality during globalization and identified their changing trends during the post-pandemic recovery stage. The review aims to assess two underlying dimensions: how transnational crimes are manifested trans-jurisdictionally and how political, legal, and socio-economic factors and the latest developments on the challenges that law enforcement is facing in combating border crimes and the suggested policy options that are exerting an influence on them. The study explored the overarching question with a systematic appraisal of fifteen scholarly and policy-focused sources and qualitative meta-synthesis techniques.

Studies reveal that import/export crimes function within systems constructed from organized crime and corruption as well as economic imbalances (Duri, 2021; Hesterman, 2005). The black market uses loopholes in the current international laws amplified by porous border security measures and poor regulation to function. Weak socio-political structures in regions put their population at risk of both human exploitations related to trafficking and repeated criminal behavior through their link to illegal migration (Väyrynen, 2005; Shelley, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic introduced new smuggling operations when criminals began trading fake health-related products and personal protective equipment (PPE) due to high demand and poor regulation, which diverted the focus of law enforcement (Shelley, 2020).

The study confirmed that organized offenders adapted through online platforms and contactless delivery networks while utilizing alternative trafficking routes to escape law enforcement (Jancsics, 2019). Rules governing import-export crimes among nations vary greatly, with some states adopting discretionary extraditions without treaties like Thailand, whereas the United States insists on formal extradition procedures (Collins, 1974). The variation in prosecution regulations



among nations presents an obstacle to pursuing offenders who operate transnationally.

Analytical economics revealed how corruption is a double-edged sword by acting as an inhibitor to trade and an enabler of illicit activity (Dutt & Traca, 2010). State capacity is undermined by political elites alongside corrupt officials in the customs offices, allied with smugglers to promote illegal operations against genuine business endeavors. Deterrence is reduced through disproportionate sentencing practices and lack of transparency in courts, amplified through extensive enforcement differences (Amburgey Law, 2025; Yossymon, 2024). The study identifies that import and export crimes should be addressed through international collaborations and uniform commercial codes to counter organized crime operations and address the economic conditions underpinning their operations.

The findings also highlight the need to consider the unique context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic appears to have amplified several factors that contribute to import and export crimes: economic hardship, supply chain disruptions, weakened institutional oversight, and increased demand for essential goods (Shelley, 2020; WorldData.info, 2024). While overall trade volumes declined during lockdowns, illicit trade in counterfeit medical supplies, PPE, and pharmaceuticals surged. Criminal organizations quickly adapted to new market demands, using digital platforms and contactless delivery methods to evade enforcement. These adaptations have had lasting effects, with many criminal strategies developed during the pandemic continuing even after global trade routes began to normalize. Understanding these pandemic-related shifts is essential for developing effective, time-sensitive interventions.

The findings support and extend deprivation and conflict theories by demonstrating how structural inequalities intersect with corruption and weak governance to produce import and export crimes. While deprivation theories emphasize the role of economic strain in motivating crime, the findings suggest that corruption and weak institutional capacity mediate this relationship, enabling illicit activities to persist. Additionally, the study contributes to social control theory by highlighting how weak oversight and lack of accountability allow import and export crimes to flourish. The findings also align with routine activities theory, as

offenders exploit the convergence of motivated offenders, suitable targets, and absent capable guardians—conditions that were amplified during the pandemic.

Previous research on import and export crimes has often focused on individual commodities or specific geographic regions. This study builds on that foundation by synthesizing findings across multiple regions—North America, Asia, Africa, and Europe—to identify common patterns. The findings confirm earlier research on the role of organized crime (Hesterman, 2005) and corruption (Duri, 2021) while extending understanding by showing how legal frameworks and enforcement capacity interact with these factors. The study also extends previous work by examining the impact of COVID-19 on import and export crime patterns, a relatively underexplored area in the literature. These contributions highlight the importance of a holistic, multi-level approach to understanding and addressing import and export crimes.

6. Policy Implications

The findings of this study have several important policy implications for addressing import and export crimes at multiple levels:

1. Legal Harmonization and Extradition Reform: Given the variations in legal frameworks across countries, harmonizing extradition procedures and trade laws is essential (Collins, 1974). Countries should work toward establishing uniform standards for prosecuting import and export crimes, including consistent definitions of offenses and penalties. International agreements should clarify extradition procedures to close the gaps that offenders exploit.

2. Strengthening Anti-Corruption Measures: Corruption enables import and export crimes by allowing offenders to evade detection and prosecution (Duri, 2021; Jancsics, 2019). Governments should strengthen anti-corruption mechanisms within customs agencies, including regular audits, transparency measures, and whistleblower protections. Independent oversight bodies should monitor enforcement activities to reduce corruption risks.

3. Enhancing Law Enforcement Capacity: Law enforcement agencies require specialized training, resources, and technology to effectively combat import and export crimes (Yossymon, 2024). Investment in detection technologies, forensic capabilities, and investigative training is essential. International intelligence sharing and joint operations can enhance enforcement effectiveness across borders.



4. International Cooperation and Information Sharing: Given the transnational nature of these crimes, international cooperation is critical (Hesterman, 2005; Shelley, 2020). Countries should establish formal mechanisms for information sharing, joint investigations, and coordinated enforcement actions. International organizations such as INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization can facilitate these efforts.

5. Victim Protection and Support: Vulnerable populations, including migrants and economically disadvantaged individuals, are disproportionately victimized by import and export crimes (Väyrynen, 2005; Shelley, 2020). Governments should strengthen victim protection mechanisms, including safe reporting channels, legal aid, and support services. Trafficking victims should be treated as victims rather than criminals.

6. Public Awareness and Prevention: Public awareness campaigns can educate consumers about the risks of counterfeit goods and the consequences of import and export crimes (Law, 2025). Businesses should be encouraged to implement compliance programs and due diligence procedures to avoid involvement in illicit trade.

7. Addressing Structural Inequalities: Because import and export crimes are linked to poverty and economic desperation, addressing underlying socioeconomic inequalities is essential (Dutt & Traca, 2010). Investments in education, economic development, and social services can reduce the conditions that make individuals vulnerable to both offending and victimization.

7. Limitations

This study had several limitations. First, the study relied heavily on secondary data, which may be influenced by underreporting and inconsistencies in how import and export crimes are documented across regions. Second, the sensitive and often hidden nature of import and export crimes makes it difficult to capture the full scope of the issue. Third, the reliance on English-language sources only may have excluded important research published in other languages, particularly from non-Western countries where these crimes are prevalent. Fourth, the study lacks victim-centered perspectives, as the analysis focused primarily on offender behavior and structural conditions. Fifth, the single-researcher approach may

have introduced selection bias, despite efforts to implement structured screening protocols. Sixth, the limited temporal scope (2019–2025) may exclude important historical context, although a foundational 1974 article by Collins was included to provide historical grounding. Future research would benefit from incorporating primary data collection and localized case studies to provide a more in-depth understanding. Longitudinal studies tracking import and export crime trends over time, including before, during, and after COVID-19, would provide critical insights into how the pandemic may have reshaped these offenses.

8. Conclusion

This study provides a deeper understanding of import and export crimes by examining how socioeconomic inequality, corruption, legal frameworks, and institutional limitations interact to influence both offending patterns and victimization. The findings demonstrate that import and export crimes are not simply the result of individual behavior or isolated criminal acts, but rather a product of broader structural conditions. These conditions include poverty, weak governance, corruption, and limited law enforcement capacity. These factors not only shape motivations for offending but also contribute to the vulnerability of certain populations.

A key contribution of this research is the emphasis on the role of institutional weaknesses, particularly in customs enforcement and legal frameworks, in allowing import and export crimes to persist. Challenges such as legal ambiguities, inconsistent extradition procedures, corruption, and lack of international cooperation reduce the effectiveness of legal responses and contribute to ongoing impunity. Addressing these gaps is critical for improving both prevention and accountability. The study also highlights the importance of understanding import and export crimes in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which created new opportunities for smuggling and counterfeit trade while diverting law enforcement resources and exposing vulnerabilities in global supply chains.

While this study successfully identified key patterns and relationships, limitations related to data availability and the hidden nature of import and export crimes highlight the need for further research. Future studies should focus on primary data collection, localized case analyses, and the long-term impact of targeted interventions. Comparative studies across regions with different legal frameworks and enforcement capacities would also be valuable, as would



research on the effectiveness of specific prevention and intervention strategies. Research incorporating victim perspectives and survivor experiences is urgently needed to fully understand the human cost of these crimes.

Overall, reducing import and export crimes will require a comprehensive approach that combines stronger criminal justice responses with efforts to address underlying social, economic, and institutional inequalities. The persistence of import and export crimes reflects not only individual pathology but also systemic failures that demand coordinated action at local, national, and international levels.

STATEMENTS

Ethical Approval

Not applicable. This study is a systematic literature review and does not involve primary data collection from human participants, animals, or sensitive personal data. All data analysed were derived from previously published peer-reviewed articles, institutional reports, and grey literature available in the public domain. No ethical approval was required for this research.

Consent to Participate

Not applicable. This study does not involve human participants, surveys, interviews, or any form of primary data collection that would require informed consent. The research is based exclusively on the analysis of existing published literature and publicly available documents.

Consent to Publish

Not applicable. This manuscript does not contain any person's data, images, or identifiable information. All authors have reviewed and approved the final manuscript for publication.

Data Availability Statement

All data analysed during this systematic review are included in this published article. The search strategy, eligibility criteria, and data extraction protocols are

fully documented to ensure transparency and reproducibility. The data-extraction workbook used during the review process is available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. No primary data were collected, and no datasets were generated or analysed beyond those reported in the included studies.

Authors' Individual Contributions

Kimberly Garcia contributed to the conceptualization and methodology of the study, carried out data collection and analysis, and prepared the original manuscript.

Praveenrao Bolli (Corresponding Author) contributed to the conceptualization, provided theoretical guidance and supervision, critically revised the manuscript for important intellectual content, and gave final approval for submission.

Both authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and agreed to be fully accountable for all aspects of the work.

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Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Declaration of Generative AI Use

The authors declare that ChatGPT (GPT-5.5-mini) was used in some cases solely for language-related assistance, including grammar checking, spelling correction, and improving manuscript clarity and readability. Generative AI was not used to develop research ideas or contribute to the substantive intellectual content of the manuscript. The authors remain fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the research and the final manuscript.



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