

Macroeconomic factors and the perception of criminal justice in society: the role of shadow economies and its relationship to globalization



Vincentas Giedraitis¹ & Ilona Čėsniėnė²

¹Faculty of Economics, Department of Theoretical Economics

²Faculty of Philosophy, Department of General Psychology

Vilnius University



INTRODUCTION

The perception of criminal justice in society is strongly influenced by macro-societal factors such as the status of the economy (Dobryninas et al., 2012). Perceptions of criminal justice can also be explained by psychological factors. This research shows the influence of economics and psychological factors on criminal justice perceptions. The economy has a temporal component to it, in which economic upswings and downswings occur, which in turn influence perceptions of criminal justice (Chase-Dunn, 1991). Two major immediate macroeconomic problems that are often associated with slowdowns in the economy are unemployment and inflation. Lithuania is a country rising in the core-peripheral hierarchy, shifting increasingly towards a service and high export value economy (Giedraitis et al., 2012). We first discuss theoretical economic factors, then will illustrate the theory with empirical data.

The purpose of the present research was to investigate the relationship between economic factors and public attitudes toward contraband as well as emotional responses to the criminal justice system.

A comparison between attitudes of contraband-buyers and not-buyers revealed that contraband buyers see criminal justice officers as less honest, good, polite, responsible, sensitive to others, trusted, and brave (Table 2)

Table 2. Attitudes towards criminal justice officers depending on readiness to buy contraband.

Criminal justice officers	Would buy contraband	N	M	SD	t	p
Honest	Yes	670	3,56	1,46	-3,11	0,002
	No	228	3,90	1,39		
Good	Yes	670	3,73	1,35	-4,49	0,000
	No	228	4,19	1,32		
Polite	Yes	670	4,11	1,49	-4,65	0,000
	No	228	4,63	1,39		
Works based on principles	Yes	670	3,21	1,64	-3,45	0,001
	No	228	3,64	1,55		
Professional	Yes	670	4,26	1,61	-3,07	0,002
	No	228	4,63	1,35		
Unbiased	Yes	670	3,40	1,53	-3,27	0,001
	No	228	3,77	1,37		
Responsible	Yes	670	3,82	1,39	-3,82	0,000
	No	228	4,22	1,33		
Sensitive to others	Yes	670	3,27	1,40	-6,13	0,000
	No	228	3,91	1,29		
Trusted	Yes	670	3,51	1,43	-5,66	0,000
	No	228	4,12	1,36		
Brave	Yes	670	4,38	1,60	-2,18	0,030
	No	228	4,63	1,29		

Those who would buy contraband tend to be less satisfied with their lives ($t_{(895)}=-5.83$, $p<0.001$) than people who would not buy contraband ($M=3.60$, $SD=1.77$ and $M=4.39$, $SD=1.70$ accordingly). Moreover, they tend to express negative emotions to criminal justice system more often (see Table 3).

METHODS

Interview data was used for our research. The data was collected in the country of Lithuania in May 2012. The method of data collection consisted of an interview with a standardised questionnaire. The sampling technique was multistage random sampling, and the number of respondents: $N = 1005$ (48% males, 52% females).

RESULTS

If person's willingness to obtain contraband goods is greater than tendency to express some attitudes is higher: he/she is treated unfairly, all people in Lithuania are not treated equally by the law and penalties for criminals are unfair (these are presented in Table 1).

Table 1. Attitudes of respondents toward fairness, equality and penalties depending on readiness to buy contraband

	Would buy contraband		t	p
	Yes M (SD)	No M (SD)		
He/she is treated fairly	3.77 (1.60)	4.43 (1.54)	-5.44	<0.001
All people in Lithuania are treated equally by the law	2.53 (1.74)	3.43 (1.96)	-6.55	<0.001
Penalties for criminals are fair	3.15 (1.50)	3.60 (1.66)	-3.80	<0.001

Table 3. Emotions to criminal justice depending on readiness to buy contraband.

Emotions	Would buy contraband	N	M	SD	t	p
Disappointment	Yes	670	5.24	1.56	0,68	0,494
	No	228	5.16	1,50		
Anger	Yes	670	5.13	1,72	4,05	0,000
	No	228	4.59	1,85		
Fear	Yes	670	4.25	1,86	2,45	0,015
	No	228	3.89	1,94		
Disgust	Yes	670	5.02	1,63	3,65	0,000
	No	228	4.54	1,86		
Vengeance	Yes	670	2.88	1,81	3,38	0,001
	No	228	2.42	1,72		
Happiness	Yes	670	1.76	1,32	-0,48	0,629
	No	228	1.81	1,45		
Joy	Yes	670	1.74	1,31	-0,56	0,573
	No	228	1.80	1,43		
Pride	Yes	670	1.77	1,34	-0,10	0,919
	No	228	1.78	1,39		

CONCLUSIONS

- Perceptions of criminal justice in Lithuania are dependent on economic cycles.
- Tolerance of the Lithuanian population for the shadow economy also creates favorable conditions for its very existence. The shadow economy is often neither condemned, nor rejected as immoral activity in Lithuania.
- Whether someone in Lithuania buys contraband impacts their perceptions on the criminal justice system. Namely, they tend to be more critical of it.

References

1. Chase-Dunn, C. (1991). *Global Formation: Structures of the World Economy*. New York: Blackwell.
2. Dobryninas, A., Dobrynina, M., Čėsniėnė, I., Giedraitis, V., & Merkevičius, R. (2012). On perceptions of criminal justice in society. *Sociologija: Mintis ir Veiksmas*, 2, 222-238.
3. Giedraitis, V., Notten, T., & Skurdenytė, V. (2012). Innovation in the context of the global economic core-periphery hierarchy: The potential of the biotechnology sector in Lithuania. *Theoretical and Applied Questions of Economics*, 27 (2).

For further information contact:

vincas.giedraitis@ef.vu.lt