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**Doctoral School of Social Sciences**  
**Doctoral field: Management**

**CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE  
MANAGEMENT OF CRIMINAL GROUPS AND  
FIGHTING THEM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF  
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH THE  
MANAGEMENT OF ECONOMIC  
ORGANIZATIONS**

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Sibiu  
2023

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## Summary

The challenges of today's society are complex, and societal vulnerability also includes the risks generated by the activities carried out by criminal groups. The post-revolutionary Romanian society became democratic with a strong orientation towards Western doctrines and way of organization. In this context, at the same time with the natural economic development and with a considerable flow of doctrines, ideology and democratic thought coming from countries with a liberal tradition, a development in the field of organized crime inevitably occurred. This evolution took place through the assimilation of criminal patterns of Western origin, but with regional Balkan and even local influences.

The decision-makers in the field of law enforcement, even at the political level, were put in a situation to choose between a genuine strengthening of the system and the prioritization of their own or group interests, due to a deep penetration of the scourge of corruption in the institutional system, corruption being the sine-qua-non condition for the operation and development of the activity of criminal groups.

However, perhaps under the pressure of European and world forums, the Romanian legislation was updated and the phenomenon of organized crime was addressed through specialized institutional structures, created to make combating the activity of criminal groups more efficient. The emergence of specialists in the documentation of these criminality groups and the acquisition of vast experience due to the expansion of the phenomenon, favored the emergence of scientific research works in Romania, with predilection in the branch of legal sciences.

Although organized crime existed even before the Revolution of 1989, the phenomenon was recognized and transparently addressed with preference by the newly established structures operating in the judicial branch and aroused less interest from specialists in the economic field, although in Western countries it proved that the study from the point of view of profit and an economic approach can make combating the activities of criminal groups more efficient.

This state of affairs is due both to the reduced interest of the authorities to recover as much of the damage created through illegal activities as possible, and to the post-destructuring experience, which proved that the place occupied by a destructured group will be taken by another. Often the authorities are provided with data by rival groups themselves to facilitate their expansion by eliminating competition. All these aspects are, in fact, basic principles of the market economy, regulations of a free economic market, and are found in the legal economy through concepts such as "demand", "supply", "market", "consumers", "competition", "monopoly", etc.

Identifying common economic concepts in the activity of commercial companies and criminal groups (demand-offer ratio, profit orientation, consumption, etc.) the idea of this doctoral thesis was born, according to which there may be other economic similarities, perhaps even from the perspective of management and leadership styles, and the profit orientation could determine the structural modeling of the organization in a way known by the economic doctrine or in a newer, unknown one. The identification of the economic characteristics of the organization of criminal groups and their classification into types already known and analyzed in scientific works determines, in addition to a better knowledge of criminal activity and the broadening of the spectrum of activities of law enforcement institutions to improve the fight against illegal activities.

A streamlining of policies and strategies to combat the criminal phenomenon, in general and organized crime in particular, proved to have become an international priority through the lens of the globalization of criminality, not just the economy, due to the emergence of international drug trafficking networks, the migration of the phenomenon of prostitution from one country to another, the emergence of networks specialized in the trafficking of migrants or in the commission of violent crimes.

The present thesis firstly approaches the bibliographic study by representing some landmarks identified within the current state of knowledge. In this section there are three large chapters that present, in chronological order, the conceptual and epistemological framework of the scientific approach regarding the organization of economic entities, in which organization as a function of management, formal and informal organization, but also modern organizational systems, trends are presented and organizational innovation, as well as new types of organizational structures identified in the study. Also, the trends observed internationally in the structural organization of companies are presented.

The second chapter presents conceptual elements in the organization of criminal structures addressing the phenomenon of corruption, its influences on the development and organization of crime and concepts found in the studied literature, characteristics and typologies of the identified criminal structures. At the same time, the chapter naturally includes typologies of criminal structures by reviewing the main types of groups existing worldwide, European or identified in Romania.

Chapter number three emphasizes the comparative approaches between the management of criminal entities and that of legally constituted economic organizations, so that a more accurate picture can be drawn of the similarities identified in the activity of the two types of structures, some legally constituted and the others illegally.

The comparative study carried out in this section of the thesis managed to highlight some similarities such as the profit orientation of all organizations regardless of the environment in which they operate or the local, regional, national or international organization, as well as some differences such as leadership autocratic - discretionary used in the leadership of criminal groups or informal communication within these groups. To achieve success within a company, it is necessary to have a cohesive staff, a positive organizational culture, as well as effective communication with decisions made in accordance with democratic principles. At the same time, it is equally important to effectively exploit the similarities and differences identified to combat the activity of criminal groups. All these identified characteristics, some similar to those of the firms, others distinct, aim to identify new methods or improve existing ones, for the destructuring of criminal groups and combating their activity.

The second part of the thesis exposes the proposed research theme starting from the methodological framework of the research and the need for research within the chosen theme, later being revealed, in turn, the qualitative research and the quantitative research carried out. As part of the qualitative research, starting from the specific methodology of this type of research, a number of 15 people were interviewed (police officers, prosecutors, members/former members of criminal groups). Through the use of a semi-structured interview guide, the research participants were asked to answer some questions related to the functioning, organization and development of criminal groups known to them. Aiming at a number of 10 specific objectives, the analysis and interpretation of the information allowed a careful analysis of the text, which resulted in a series of pertinent conclusions, but also a number of 14 working hypotheses that were evaluated and validated through a research quantitative type.

The sixth chapter represents the quantitative research component of the thesis and is supported by a transversal exploratory research, based on a number of 11 specific objectives. This research aimed *to identify the way and forms of organization of criminal groups in Romania compared to the forms of organization of economic entities, in order to develop strategies and policies to combat organized crime*. Using as a research tool the questionnaire consisting of 24 questions (combining several scaling methods and di- and multichotomous questions) applied, between May and December 2022, to a sample of 91 people (approximately 8.25% of the population investigated), the results were analyzed and interpreted using a combination of statistical-mathematical methods and graphic components to illustrate the research results.

Following the analysis and interpretation of the results, a number of 8 working hypotheses were **confirmed**, 3 hypotheses were **partially confirmed**, and 3 hypotheses were **disproved** by the research results. Following the analysis and interpretation of the results, it emerged that: the

recruitment of members of criminal groups is carried out on the basis of direct relationships and among known persons; relationships within criminal groups are: (a) direct, subordinate; (b) personal/friendship/family ties; the average size of criminal groups is in most cases no more than 30 members; the coordination of criminal groups is done by the leader of the group, in a discretionary manner; the communication method is carried out hierarchically through the lower level, without direct contact with the general manager/coordinator; the management style is autocratic, and the main types of activities carried out within organized criminal groups are: prostitution, drug trafficking, violence and blackmail, theft/robbery, and there are a number of links between the criminal environment and the business environment; And so on

Chapter number seven of this thesis represents the original component of the work, because, until this date, it has not been possible to identify a research of this type. Thus, starting from the data obtained as a result of qualitative and quantitative research, in this chapter a conceptual theoretical model was developed, analyzed and validated **regarding the way criminal groups are organized (M-OGI-RO)**.

By means of some statistical-mathematical analyses, the model and the accuracy of the measurements were analyzed with the help of the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (0.717), following the analysis of each of the 27 variables included in the analysis. Another component of the modeling process was the development of a confirmatory factor analysis, and by applying the Kaiser -Meyer- Olkin test (0.700) the suitability of the chosen sample was measured.

From the factor analysis and through the resulting correlation matrix, it emerged that 10 of the 27 components of the model accumulate 71.439% of the variation of all extracted components ( Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings ) and initials ( Initial Eigenvalues ). Thus, by reorganizing the variables resulting from the factorial analysis, a number of 9 categories of general variables of the model emerged:

- Recruitment – 1, 2, 3, 4 to be renamed Recruitment and Selection (0.369);
- Motivation – which will remain unchanged (0.680);
- Fin sources 1 and 2 – which will be renamed funding sources (0.591)
- Relations 1 and 2 - to be renamed Relations (0.607)
- Members - to be renamed Dimension (0.401)
- Style 1-3 - to be renamed Driving Style (0.468)
- ComInt 1 – 4 - which will be renamed Internal Communication (0.459)
- Organize 1–3, Organize – level and Organize – shapes – will be renamed Structure (0.490)
- Dev 1 – 5 - will be renamed Development (0.650).

At the same time, the Coefficient of Determination was calculated -  $R^2$  (0.351 / 31.5%) was calculated, which means that the form of organization of criminal groups is influenced by 31.5% of components such as: size, structure, leadership style, etc. The factor analysis shows that the way criminal groups are organized is a general element that influences the future development of this organizational type (with a connection coefficient of 0.498 and a determination coefficient  $R^2 = 0.231$ ), which represents a relatively strong correlation and linear.

Reviewing the statistical data from chapters six and seven and their significance leads to the conclusion that **the model identified regarding the organization of criminal groups in Romania (M-OGI-RO) is validated by the results of the research carried out.**

The last component of the doctoral thesis is represented by the eighth chapter that highlights the final conclusions and original contributions. Structuring the final conclusions in the two components: theoretical and practical, we went on to highlight the main original contributions and the way to capitalize on the results of the thesis. It can also be emphasized that a series of practical applications aimed at making the activities of combating criminal organizations more efficient, starting from the research results, have been highlighted.

Following the analysis of the specialized literature, but also of qualitative and quantitative research and from the applied statistical-mathematical modeling process, it results that there are **a number of similarities and a clear parallel can be drawn between the way of organization and management of criminal groups, and that of legally constituted economic entities, in order to facilitate the identification of new ways and strategies to combat the activity of criminal groups.**

By making a comparison between the way of organization of the two types of structures, common characteristics can be identified, such as the hierarchical structure and the communication methods used within the economic entities. However, it is noted that in the case of criminal groups, communication prevails in an informal way.

Regarding the management style or leadership, the democratic style with a consultative leadership prevails and is promoted in the economic entities. This style involves involving employees in the decision-making process and promoting open communication between leaders and team members. On the other hand, in the case of criminal groups, we often observe an autocratic leadership style, where the leader has full authority and makes decisions on a discretionary basis, without actively involving the rest of the members.

In the context of research on the organization of criminal groups, it is important to emphasize that the leader of the organization is often perceived more as an entrepreneur and informal leader than as a formal manager. As the group develops and expands, the leader is forced



to adapt his leadership style and become more concerned with the practical aspects of the business, dealing with customers, suppliers and subordinates.

This process of growth and development implicitly leads to the transformation of the leader into a manager who must perform various managerial roles such as planning, organizing, leading and controlling the operations of the criminal group. In this sense, the leader of the organization must make decisions about the overall strategy of the business, coordinate the operational activities and ensure the continuous development of the organization.

Within criminal structures, the leader is more than just an authoritarian boss, he begins as an entrepreneur and informal leader, later being forced to adapt his leadership style as the organization develops. Also, the leader must fulfill his managerial roles to ensure the success and survival of the criminal group in a competitive and dangerous environment, and the lack of managerial knowledge, combined with the large amount of time allocated to management activities, generally leads to the neglect of the organization's security and of the activity, a vulnerability that can be professionally exploited by law enforcement.

This scientific initiative can be approached as a starting point through which the results obtained from both qualitative and quantitative investigations lead to the formulation of practical conclusions that have a significant potential in terms of improving professional practice in the field studied, the development of effective policies and strategies to combat organized crime in Romania, as well as providing valuable insights for future research. Among the possible practical applications, based on the results of the doctoral research and aimed at making the activity of combating criminal groups more efficient, we mention:

- identifying and proving the criminal activity of the leader of the criminal group absolutely leads to the destruction of the group; this effect can occur as a result of the autocratic leadership style within the organization;
- informal communication can be exploited to fragment the internal and external communication of the organization in order to contribute to the destructuring of the group;
- the existence of a small number of levels within criminal groups can lead to an easy identification of the hierarchical levels in a group, an aspect that can significantly contribute to the time and resources allocated to its destruction;
- establishing the hierarchy, organization, roles and responsibilities of each member of the group can also reveal its vulnerabilities, thus allowing the authorities to more easily identify and neutralize key elements of the organization, such as the leader or his main collaborators;

- the determination of hierarchical levels can contribute to limiting informal communication and decisions made by the leader of the organization by revealing the formal and informal structure of the group and limiting its access to lower members of the organization;
- the rapid and unjustified increase in the standard of living of the leaders and members of criminal groups can be easily identified and tracked, being able to intervene with a strategic fiscal and effective mechanism for the confiscation of assets acquired unjustifiably and for discouraging the population from potentially engaging in criminal activities;
- the development and use of the theoretical model of the organization of criminal structures and the link between the identified elements, allows the law enforcement forces to calibrate their activities and resources according to the targeted link element, being able to emphasize investigative-operative activities on segments with strong influence (structure, leadership style, relationship) and to predict the development of the criminal group in terms of time and volume, depending on the existing organizational mode at a given time;
- by identifying common elements in the theoretical model of the organization of criminal structures, combined with the known tactics of bankrupting companies, such as sabotaging products, infiltrating or inducing false information, hybrid strategies can be developed to combat criminal activities.

This last chapter concludes with the presentation of possible future research directions (comparative research, longitudinal studies or the development of strategies to combat criminal groups).

Throughout the entire scientific process, ethical norms and appropriate conduct for scientific research were strictly followed. In the critical analysis of the state of knowledge, specialized articles published in reliable databases were used and a variety of opinions expressed in the specialized literature were taken into account, highlighting these aspects through the use of appropriate citations and bibliographic references.

The innovative character of this thesis consists in the fact that it carried out an unprecedented empirical research at the level of Romania, making valuable contributions by generating new information. Also, the thesis approached the subject from an economic perspective, highlighting new horizons and bringing novel knowledge to an insufficiently explored field so far.

Apart from the mentioned aspects, the note of originality of this thesis is given by the innovative approaches that have generated new results and opportunities for improving efforts to combat criminal groups. The significant contribution of the thesis to the development of knowledge

was the result of a systematic approach, which began with the identification of a research niche, followed by the determination of relevant research problems and questions, finally materializing through an appropriate research methodology.

So, in conclusion, it can be considered that this thesis contributes significantly to the development of knowledge of how criminal groups are organized, compared to the organization of economic entities, and qualitative and quantitative research, accompanied by statistical-mathematical analysis and the identified conceptual model, represent a step forward in identifying and creating more effective tools to combat the activity of criminal structures.

**Keywords:** management of criminal groups, management of economic organizations, formal organization, informal organization, comparative analysis, combating and deconstructing criminal groups, criminal groups in Romania, organization of criminal groups.