

Dimitrijević, Dragomir; Jovanović, Dejan

## Article

# Economic motives and willingness of young people to participate in fraud

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# Economic Motives and Willingness of Young People to Participate in Fraud

Dragomir Dimitrijević<sup>a</sup>, Dejan Jovanović<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a, b</sup>University of Kragujevac, Faculty of Economics, Liceja Kneževine Srbije 3, 34000 Kragujevac, Serbia

dimitrijevicd@kg.ac.rs, djovanovic@kg.ac.rs

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## Abstract

Fraud is linked to economic and financial pressures that force people to commit it. Any fraud, regardless of the gender and age of the fraud perpetrators, inevitably leaves a short-term or long-term negative mark on society's economy. Many financial frauds in the past (Enron, WorldCom, Parmalat) have left profound negative consequences on global financial markets. Such "financial strikes" on the financial markets led to financial losses of many companies (not only those in which frauds were committed), the dismissal of many workers, and even the bankruptcy of companies. Successful detection and prevention of fraud imply the harmonious and efficient operation of several factors. One of them understands people's attitudes towards fraud. It is necessary to understand what motivates an individual to commit fraud and the conditions under which someone would commit fraud. Plenty of resources and time have been invested in understanding the motives for adult fraud, i.e., mature people. Experience has shown that it is much more challenging to educate people of that era about the harmful effects of fraud and thus convince them not to commit fraud. For these reasons, the subject of this paper is the consideration of the attitudes of the younger population towards fraud in Serbia. More precisely, the paper discusses the attitudes of young people aged 18 to 30 regarding motives, pressures, and opportunities to commit fraud, participate in corruption, or offer bribes. The main objective is to indicate the tendency of young people to participate in fraud and examine whether respondents' gender influences their willingness to participate in fraud. The research results suggest that, according to young people, the main motive why someone would participate in fraud is financial gain and that young people would participate in fraud only if they could get medical intervention sooner. They also believe that fraud is most prevalent in public administration and that men are more prone to fraud than women, but that the influence of gender is very small.

## Introduction

Fraud is any deception performed by somebody to deceive or mislead someone (another person, organization, company) to their detriment or the detriment of anyone else or to cause other loss or injury. At the same time, the perpetrator has explicit knowledge of their intention to deceive, falsify or take advantage of the victim of fraud (Hamilton & Gabriel, 2012). Fraud destroys individuals, the public sector, businesses, and countries. In the literature, fraud is increasingly seen as a business cost, an illegal procedure that can

affect anyone, anytime, anywhere, regardless of borders. Specifically, the expansion of global financial markets has offered international criminals many more opportunities for fraud, thus increasing the number of reported fraud cases worldwide (Stanley, 1994).

Regardless of the size of the fraud (not only the size and importance of the company where the fraud was committed but also the financial scope of the fraud), every fraud has short-term and long-term negative consequences. These consequences are noticeable in the operations of the companies in which the frauds were committed and in the financial markets where these companies operate. It is impossible for the fraud not to leave negative financial consequences on the customers and suppliers of the company (in which the fraud was committed) with whom it operates on the financial market. Also, the fraud leaves negative consequences on the financial markets through the drop in the price of the shares of the companies in which the fraud was committed, which leads to a decrease in the shareholders' profits.

The moral and material damage of fraud is very often difficult to measure. There are different types of fraud, different perpetrators, and different types of damage, but common to all is the fact that fraud is like a disease that spreads, causes damage, and leaves scars (Vassiljev, 2020).

The perpetration of fraud is always motivated by the intention of an individual or a group of people to fulfill some goal. Frauds are as old as the human population. People often use fraud to live a better life, earn more money or have a better standard of living. There are different approaches to fraud prevention. One of them is that it is best to create conditions to make it difficult for someone to commit fraud. Another approach assumes that if you want to prevent fraud, it is best to understand what motivates an individual to commit fraud and under what conditions.

Although the fraudulent behavior of individuals has existed since ancient times, the fraud issue is still very current today. It attracts the attention of numerous researchers, especially regarding the individual's attitude towards fraud. Specifically, attitudes play a huge role in the formation of human behavior, resulting from personal experience, education, information, personality type, and the like. When people accept a stimulus, they process it and turn it into an attitude that affects feeling and recognition and then manifests as behavior (Omran, 2014). In line with this, the paper's main objective is to indicate the tendency (willingness) of young people to participate in fraud and examine whether respondents' gender influences their willingness to participate in fraud. More precisely, the

research in the paper should indicate whether young people are inclined to commit fraud if it leads to fulfilling their goals, i.e., to show whether their attitudes towards committing fraud change if that fraud would help solve their personal or business problems.

Young people as the target group are chosen because, according to some research, they are more prone to fraud (Hamilton & Gabriel, 2012; Agustina et al., 2019; Mack, 2016; Ramos et al., 2020; Sunday et al., 2015). These are people that feel the need to prove themselves in order to progress, so the question arises as to how ready they are to reach the goal in an immoral and illegal way and what is particularly important for society and forms the starting point is to examine the foundations of future social development. The fact that their education and training influence their behavior is no less important, so the research results can be a good starting point for the development, inclusion and propagation of new disciplines in the education system to instill ethical and moral principles in young people.

The paper analyzes young people's attitudes regarding various forms of fraud, whether there are conditions under which they would participate in these frauds, and in what situations. The survey includes 518 respondents older than 18 and younger than 30 from the territory of the Republic of Serbia. The data analysis uses the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 20.0), then descriptive statistics, the Chi-squared test, and the t-test of independent samples, all aiming to present the results as clearly as possible and draw the most detailed conclusions.

## Literature Review

In many countries worldwide, fraud that happens in big enterprises, precisely because of their size and influence on the country's economy, leaves a profound mark on the economy of those countries. However, this does not mean that fraud in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) should be neglected or that prevention thereof should be disregarded (Dimitrijević et al., 2020). Fraud is a deliberate deception made to achieve a personal or corporate goal or to cause harm to another person (Stančić et al., 2013). International Auditing Standards define fraud as an intentional act by one or more persons within management, those charged with governance, employees, or third parties, which involves cheating to obtain an unfair or illegal advantage (International Auditing Standard 240). People use fraud to achieve their personal or business goals. The question arises as to what motivates someone to choose an unfair rather than an honest way to satisfy their goals. In

the modern business environment, the struggle for survival often causes fraud. Fraud is a product of motivation and opportunity. The motivation can be economic need or greed, egocentrism, ideological conflict, and psychosis, while the possibilities for fraud depend on different control systems (Dimitrijević, 2018).

Donald Cressey, a sociologist, conducted research in the 1950s that gives the best answer to why fraud occurs (Cressey, 1950). He interviewed about 200 persons who were convicted of fraud. One of the main conclusions he drew is that all fraud is characterized by three common factors: pressure (sometimes defined as motivation and often as "a need that cannot be shared with others"), rationalization (personal ethics), and the opportunity to commit fraud. The result of this research is most often represented by the well-known "fraud triangle" (Singleton et al., 2010). Pressures (motivation) usually arise as a result of individual needs. The reasons can be greed, better living standard, the desire for power, etc. Most pressures involve financial need, although specific pressures of a non-financial nature (need for self-validation, frustration at work) may also be an incentive to commit fraud (Albrecht et al., 2009). Pressures, i.e., motivation, can be classified into four primary groups: financial pressures, vices, workplace pressures, and other types of pressures. The most common motives (pressures) that lead to fraud are financial pressures, followed by vices and pressures at work (Kakati & Goswami, 2019; Baker et al., 2016; Olaniyi et al., 2013). When it comes to opportunities for fraud, many studies have shown that the majority of fraud perpetrators have a long working experience in the companies where they committed fraud. This indicates that they had enough time to notice weaknesses in the control system and to use various opportunities to commit fraud (Dimitrijević, 2018).

Zhuang et al. (2005) studied 538 companies in 15 European countries to indicate that fraud cost is at least 3.6 billion euros. The 2008 Association of Certified Fraud Examiners research suggests that corporations lose about 7% of revenue annually to fraud or a total of 994 billion dollars. The same study suggests that 27% of reported fraud cases involve corruption, making it the most common fraud scheme. An international survey of business executives found that one in four reported that their company had experienced an incident of bribery or corruption in the past two years; that is, 23% knew someone who had been asked to pay a bribe to get or keep a job (Ernst & Young, 2008). Hamilton & Gabriel (2012) indicate that men participate in fraud more often than women and conclude that although fraud cannot be eliminated from society, its occurrence can be minimized through better internal control systems and by placing types of personalities with the least propensity

for fraud in sensitive and corruption-prone positions.

Every fraudster has justifications for his/her actions. The most common rationale for fraud is the circumstances in which perpetrators found them. Justifications given by fraud perpetrators are varied. There are several common excuses given by fraudsters: the company owes me money, I'm just borrowing money – I'll pay it back, Nobody gets hurt, I deserve more, It's done in good faith, We'll get the paperwork done as soon as we're out of financial trouble, Something must be sacrificed – either my honesty or my reputation (Coenen, 2008).

Continuous monitoring of the position, attitudes, and needs of young people is of particular importance, bearing in mind that young people are the source of innovation and the driving force of society (The position and needs of young people in the Republic of Serbia, 2019). There are three characteristics that distinguish youth from other social categories: young people have an objectively different social position in relation to other social groups; young people self-produce self-awareness and group identity, and young people develop distinctive patterns of behavior (Tomanović et al., 2012).

Every second citizen of Serbia believes that corruption is very present in Serbia, while 25% believe that it is present. Only 2% of respondents believe that corruption is not present in our society (Citizens of Serbia on corruption in the police, 2013). Respondents with college and university education also have a more positive attitude than those with lower education. Students (still) believe in a brighter future more often than the unemployed and the retired. Almost 90% of Serbian citizens consider corruption common in the Republic of Serbia. The presence of corruption and citizens' indifference (or acceptance) is reflected in the fact that 59% of respondents believe that a certain level of corruption is expected. (Public opinion survey on corruption, 2010). One of the three biggest problems citizens of Serbia face is corruption. Corruption remains in this negative list dominated by problems of economic nature, with 12% of those who perceive it as the primary problem they face. More than half of the respondents (55%) believe this phenomenon is widespread in Serbia. In addition, 84% of the respondents, primarily young and highly educated, believe that corruption significantly influences Serbian society as a whole. However, it is noticeable that even young and highly educated respondents, those who recognize the emerging forms of corruption, are not able to connect the impact of corruption on social and political circumstances with their personal and family life and are not fully aware of the consequences of this phenomenon on the quality of their life. It is for this reason in particular that, compared to

84% of those who see the impact of corruption on society as a whole, only 47% of respondents believe that corruption affects their personal life very much (Project for Responsible Government, 2019).

Given the aforementioned theoretical research framework, the authors will try to answer the following research questions:

1. Are finances the primary motive for someone to participate in fraud?
2. In the opinion of young people, which sector is the most corrupt, i.e., where are frauds most prevalent?
3. In what situations are young people ready to participate in fabrication?
4. Is there a statistically significant difference between men and women regarding the tendency to commit fraud?

## Methodology of Research

### Questionnaire design

Empirical research was conducted in central Serbia among the population of young people aged 18 to 30. In procedural terms, the research included: a) creating a research framework based on the study of existing literature, including identifying potential motives and tendencies of young people towards fraud; b) designing the questionnaire following the set objectives and the data collection process; c) analyzing the obtained data and drawing conclusions. The analysis of relevant literature, i.e., research papers (Hamilton & Gabriel, 2012; Agustina et al., 2019; Mack, 2016; Ramos et al., 2020; Sunday et al., 2015) made it possible to identify potential motives and tendencies that determine the readiness of young people (respondents) to participate in fraud. After that, a questionnaire consisting of 22 closed questions was created.

The first three questions related to general information about the respondent, within which information about gender, age, and occupation was collected. The remaining questions were related to information related to fraud, whereby the respondents answered questions numbered 4, 7, 8, and 9 by choosing one of the offered answers, while in questions numbered 5, 6, 10, and from 15 to 22 respondents were supposed to agree or disagree with a particular item (a yes or no answer was offered). In the questionnaire's remaining questions (from 11 to 14), a five-point Likert scale was used, indicating the respondents' degree of agreement

with the expressed views. Respondents were given answers from 1 – *I do not agree at all* to 5 – *I completely agree*.

The questionnaire passed the stage of preliminary testing; that is, before the immediate implementation, the questionnaire was subjected to a pilot study. The pilot study aimed to determine the necessity of implementing changes before starting the main study. After the pilot research, the questionnaire underwent minor changes, mainly related to the wording of the questions.

### Characteristics of the sample

The data for the analysis was collected from primary sources electronically using a Google Forms survey for two months – from the beginning of January to the end of February 2021. Questionnaires were sent to 18- to 30-year-olds in person and via social networks, selected by random sampling. 518 respondents answered the questionnaire.

Table 1 provides basic data on the respondents. It can be concluded that there are more women among the respondents (78.2%) and that the most numerous category of respondents is between the ages of 21 and 24 (47.9%). The sample is dominated by respondents who are still studying (70.3%), while there are the fewest respondents who are not employed (5.4%) and are between 27 and 30 years old.

**Table 1**  
*Characteristics of the sample*

Variable	Frequency	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Men	113	21.8
Woman	405	78.2
<b>Age (years)</b>		
18-21	98	18.9
21-24	248	47.9
24-27	110	21.2
27-30	62	12.0
<b>Occupation</b>		
Student	364	70.3
Employed	126	24.3
Unemployed	28	5.4

Source: Authors

Data from the questionnaire was analyzed in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 20.0). Measurement of reliability and internal consistency of variables, questions in which a Likert scale was used, was

performed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Descriptive statistics were used to measure central tendency (arithmetic mean, median, and mode) and variability (standard deviation). Also, the Chi-squared test and t-test of independent samples were used in the paper, all aiming to present the results as clearly as possible and draw the most detailed conclusions.

## Results and Discussion

### Reliability of measurement scale and descriptive statistics

The value of the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the reliability of the measuring scale (for questions 11 to 14, which will be the subject of more detailed analysis) is 0.85, which is higher than 0.7, so based on the above, it can be concluded that the questionnaire has excellent reliability and internal agreement. The generally agreed lower limit for Cronbach's Alpha is 0.70, although it may drop to 0.60 in exploratory research (Hair et al., 1998; DeVellis, 2003).

Before indicating whether the respondents agree or disagree with certain items, it seems necessary to point out that more than 97% of the respondents gave the correct answer to the question of what fraud means, which is an essential parameter for further interpretation of the research results. When it comes to motives, 55% of respondents believe that finances are the primary motive for fraud, 24.7% believe that it is vices, 5.6% pressures at work. In comparison, 14.7% believe that it is some other reason – they decided for the answer "Other#" (similar results as in the research by Kakati & Goswami, 2019; Baker et al., 2016; Olaniyi et al., 2013). Also, the most significant number of respondents (61.6%) believe that fraud mainly occurs in public administration. In comparison, 5 and 10% of respondents said that for healthcare, the financial sector, the police, manufacturing companies, and trade. The smallest number of respondents opted for education (0.4%) and the army (0.2%).

Table 2 shows respondents' views on their willingness to participate in fraud. The items are arranged in the table according to the order of expression of the variables. In general, the results in the table show that respondents would not participate in fraud (more than 50% of respondents). The exception is if accepting/giving a bribe would lead to faster medical intervention, where 76.2% of respondents declared that they would participate in fraud in the given situation. In the second place, 43.6% of respondents reported that if accepting/giving a bribe would get them out of a problem (e.g., a traffic violation), they would participate in fraud. More

than 30% of respondents would participate in fraud if they could save the company from bankruptcy and closure (38.8%) and if they could get a job faster and easier (35.1%). In all other items, less than 30% of respondents witnessed some fraud (29.7%) or were in a situation to commit a fraud (16%) and were ready to participate in fraud to achieve some goal (11.4%). Also, it is interesting to point out that less than 10% of respondents would participate in fraud when it comes to easier passing of university exams (9.7%), achievement of personal goals at work, such as bonuses and promotions (8.3%) and the smallest number of respondents would participate in fraud under pressure from their superiors (4.8%). Based on the above, it can be concluded that the respondents would not participate in fraud, except in a situation where their lives depend on it (medical interventions). However, it is necessary to highlight here that although it is an anonymous survey, people very often give socially desirable answers, especially in situations where the subject of the survey is a sensitive topic, such as actions that are not following the law.

Table 3 shows items related to respondents' willingness to participate in various forms of fraud. The results in the table do not deviate from the results mentioned above (in the case of the previous questions, respondents chose the answer yes or no), although in the above-mentioned questions, they were supposed to indicate to what degree they agree with the items by circling the answers on a Likert scale. Specifically, the respondents show a low degree of agreement with the above items, i.e., they would not participate in corruption (AS=1.75), fraud in business (AS=1.48), money laundering (AS=1.37) and property embezzlement (AS=1.27). When elaborating the results of descriptive statistics, it should also be borne in mind that the distribution is not normal, so the arithmetic mean is not the best measure of the average, so it is necessary to look at the value of the median and the mode. The median value in the items is 1, while the most frequent ratings given by the respondents when filling out the questionnaire were 1, which confirms the previously stated position that the respondents are not prone to fraud and would not participate in fraud even in situations where it would bring them personal benefit and the realization of various personal goals.

Looking at the aforementioned research results on respondents' willingness to participate in fraud, the question arises: Is there a relationship between gender and respondents' willingness to participate in different forms of fraud, that is, are men more willing to participate in different forms of fraud than women? Regarding the questions mentioned above, as well as the fact that the research mainly includes categorical variables, the analysis will be performed using the Chi-squared test for questions with categorical variables, while for questions whose answers are given on

**Table 2***Respondents' views on willingness to participate in fraud*

Item	Yes		No		Did not answer	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Would you participate in fraud if accepting/giving a bribe would lead to faster medical intervention?	395	76.2	120	23.2	3	0.6
Would you participate in fraud if accepting/giving a bribe would get you out of a problem (e.g., a traffic violation)?	226	43.6	289	55.8	3	0.6
Would you participate in fraud if it could save your company from bankruptcy or closure?	201	38.8	315	60.8	2	0.4
Would you participate in fraud if accepting/giving a bribe would get you a job?	182	35.1	335	64.7	1	0.2
Have you ever witnessed any form of fraud? (corruption, money laundering, fraud in business operations, tax evasion, etc.)	154	29.7	363	70.1	1	0.2
Would you participate in fraud if accepting/giving a bribe would lead to a faster resolution of your obligations in state institutions (cadastre, municipal authorities, etc.)?	138	26.6	379	73.2	1	0.2
Have you ever been in a situation to commit fraud?	83	16.0	434	83.8	1	0.2
Would you participate in fraud if it would accomplish your goal?	59	11.4	459	88.6	/	/
Would you participate in fraud if accepting/giving a bribe would make it easier to pass a university exam?	50	9.7	464	89.6	4	0.8
Would you participate in fraud if it would lead to the fulfillment of your personal goals (salary bonus, promotion)?	43	8.3	474	91.5	1	0.2
Would you participate in fraud if it would lead to fulfilling your personal goals (salary bonus, promotion)?	25	4.8	491	94.8	2	0.4

Source: Authors

**Table 3***Expression of respondents' willingness to participate in various forms of fraud*

Item	N	Min	Max	AS	SD	Med.	Mod.
If corruption (accepting/receiving bribes) would fulfill my goal, I would participate in this form of fraud	515	1	5	1.75	1.126	1	1
If fraud in business would fulfill my goal, I would participate in this form of fraud	517	1	5	1.48	0.958	1	1
If money laundering would fulfill my goal, I would participate in this form of fraud	516	1	5	1.37	0.907	1	1
If alienating property would fulfill my goal, I would participate in this form of fraud	516	1	5	1.27	0.780	1	1

Notes: N - number of respondents, Min - minimum, Max - maximum, AS - arithmetic mean, SD - standard deviation, Med. - median, Mod. - mode

Source: Authors

a Likert scale (continuous variables) t-test<sup>1</sup> of independent samples will be used.

After the conducted Chi-squared test of independence (with correction of continuity according to Yates), a statistically significant correlation is found between:

- The respondents' gender and willingness to participate in some form of fraud if they would thereby fulfill their goal ( $\chi^2(1, n=518)=18.332, p=0.000$ ), but of low intensity (Kramer's contingency coefficient is 0.193);
- Gender and respondents' willingness to pay a bribe to pass the university exam more easily ( $\chi^2(1, n=514)=4.662, p=0.031$ ), but of low intensity (Kramer's contingency coefficient is 0.095);
- Gender and respondents' willingness to pay a bribe if they would solve their obligations in state institutions (cadastre, municipal authorities, etc.) faster ( $\chi^2(1, n=517)=5.601, p=0.018$ ), but of low intensity (Kramer's contingency coefficient is 0.104);
- The respondents' gender and willingness to participate in fraud at work if in that way they would reach the fulfillment of personal goals (salary bonus, promotion) ( $\chi^2(1, n=517)=10.988, p=0.001$ ), but of low intensity (Kramer's contingency coefficient is 0.146).

Based on the presented results of the Chi-squared test of independent samples, it was identified that there is a statistically significant difference between gender and the respondents' willingness to participate in various forms of fraud. Specifically, a more detailed analysis of the results confirmed that men are more prone to fraud than women in a situation where they would fulfill their goals, pass the university exam more easily, solve their obligations in state institutions more quickly, and if in this way they would achieve their personal goals at work. However, the influence of gender in the conducted research is of low intensity, which is confirmed by Kramer's contingency coefficient. Also, there is no statistically significant difference between gender and: respondents' willingness to pay a bribe if it would lead to employment ( $\chi^2(1, n=517)=0.002, p=1.000$ ), respondents' willingness to pay a bribe if it would lead to not paying a fine for a traffic violation ( $\chi^2(1, n=515)=0.896, p=0.344$ ), respondents' willingness to pay a bribe if it would lead to faster medical intervention ( $\chi^2(1, n=515)=0.231, p=0.631$ ), respondents' willingness to participate in fraud under pressure from their superiors at work ( $\chi^2(1, n=516)=0.638, p=0.201$ ) and respondents' willingness to participate in fraud if this would save the company from bankruptcy ( $\chi^2(1,$

$n=517)=5.601, p=0.018$ ) (similar results can be found in Hamilton & Gabriel, 2012; Agustina et al., 2019; Mack, 2016; Ramos et al., 2020; Sunday et al., 2015).

For the questions where the answers were given on a Likert scale, as mentioned earlier, the t-test of independent samples was used. The t-test of independent samples was used to answer the following questions:

- Is there a significant difference in men and women between the mean values in terms of respondents' willingness to participate in corruption if it would fulfill their goal? The t-test of independent samples indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in results for men ( $M=2.09, SD=1.346$ ) and women ( $M=1.65, SD=1.038$ );  $t(513)=3.180, p=0.002$ . The difference between means by group (mean difference = 0.437, 95% CI: 0.165 to 0.708) was small (eta squared = 0.02) (Cohen, 1988);
- Is there a significant difference in men and women between the mean values in terms of respondents' willingness to participate in money laundering if it would fulfill their goal? The t-test of independent samples indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in the results for men ( $M=1.68, SD=1.197$ ) and women ( $M=1.28, SD=0.788$ );  $t(514)=3.363, p=0.001$ . The difference between means by group (mean difference = 0.401, 95% CI: 0.165 to 0.637) was small (eta squared = 0.02) (Cohen, 1988);
- Is there a significant difference in men and women between the mean values in terms of respondents' willingness to participate in business fraud if it would fulfill their goal? The t-test of independent samples indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in the results for men ( $M=1.70, SD=1.187$ ) and women ( $M=1.42, SD=0.875$ );  $t(515)=2.323, p=0.022$ . The difference between means by group (mean difference = 0.278, 95% CI: 0.042 to 0.515) was small (eta squared = 0.01) (Cohen, 1988);
- Is there a significant difference between the mean values in terms of respondents' willingness to participate in the alienation of property if it would fulfill their goal for men and women? The t-test of independent samples indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in results for men ( $M=1.34, SD=0.896$ ) and women ( $M=1.25, SD=0.744$ );  $t(514)=0.993, p=0.322$ . The difference between means across groups (mean difference = 0.092, 95% CI: -0.091 to 0.274) was very small (eta squared = 0.002) (Cohen, 1988).

Based on the results of the t-test of independent samples, it can be seen that there is a statistically significant difference

<sup>1</sup> We start from the central limit theorem that in large samples the distribution tends to be normal, so, for the stated reason, the t-test of independent samples will be used



between men and women in terms of their willingness to participate in corruption, money laundering, and fraud in business if it would fulfill their goal, i.e., men are more prone to fraud, but the impact of gender is small. Also, there is no statistically significant difference between men and women regarding the respondents' willingness to participate in the alienation of property if it would fulfill their goal.

## Conclusion

Every fraud leaves economic consequences directly or indirectly on the economy and financial markets on a smaller or larger scale. These consequences can be noticed immediately (in the case of large financial frauds such as in the companies Enron, WorldCom, Parmalat) or much later in the case of smaller-scale frauds. Large financial frauds leave deep negative economic consequences not only on the economies and financial markets of the countries where the companies in which the frauds took place, operate, but the negative consequences in the long term also "spill over" to other countries and financial markets due to the global way of doing business of many companies.

What is considered legitimate in one culture can be regarded as corruption in another. This different understanding of the concept of corruption makes it difficult to fight it internationally. For example, what is considered a gift in Japan could be interpreted as a bribe in the US (Watson, 2003). However, what is common, regardless of country and cultural differences, is that corruption destroys individuals, the public sector, companies, and states. In most cases, the moral and material damage caused by corruption is difficult to measure, but the consequences are far-reaching. Hence, the interest in the problem of fraud and corruption has been gaining importance in recent decades in many disciplines, such as law, finance, accounting, international business, etc. Special attention in research is given to young people and their inclination and willingness to participate in fraud. Youth is usually accompanied by high self-confidence, and the desire for rapid advancement, which all leads to high enthusiasm and courage of young people to reach the set goal as soon as possible. However, young people sometimes take a path that is not based on ethical principles and moral norms; they are ready to commit fraud to reach their goals.

The purpose of this paper was to examine the willingness of young people to participate in fraud. The results of research on a sample of 518 young people aged 18 to 30 indicate that for young people, the primary motive for fraud is a financial benefit, that frauds are most prevalent in public

administration, and that there are most minor of them in education and the army. Also, the research results generally indicate that young people are not ready to participate in fraud, except in situations where their lives are in danger (medical interventions) (76.2%), i.e., 43.6% of respondents declared that if accepting/giving a bribe would get them out because of some problem (e.g., traffic violation) they would participate in fraud. In comparison, more than 30% of the respondents would participate in fraud if, in this way, they would save the company from bankruptcy and closure (38.8%), and if in this way, it would be faster and easier to get a job (35.1%). The chi-squared test and the t-test of independent samples showed that men are more prone to fraud than women. Still, this influence is minor in situations where they would fulfill their goal, pass the university exam more quickly, and solve their obligations in state institutions more quickly. If they achieved their personal goals at work in this way, i.e., men show a greater willingness to participate in corruption, money laundering, and fraud in business if it would fulfill their goal. Still, it should be emphasized that the influence of gender is small.

The conducted research has theoretical and practical implications. Bearing in mind that research in this area in developing countries is scarce, this research contributes to filling the gap in the literature by highlighting the motives, inclinations, and willingness of young people to participate in fraud while indicating the influence of gender on the propensity to commit fraud. By connecting the results of empirical research with the existing results of research in the world, certain guidelines can be derived that can help the wider social community to promote ethical principles and moral norms through education, various seminars, and social networks, which will result in strengthening the awareness of young people about the harmfulness of fraud for the entire society and future generations.

The main limitation of this research is related to the sample size and the questionnaire design. Specifically, the sample and wording of the questions limited the application of a more demanding statistical methodology. To draw general conclusions, a larger number of respondents of different ages should be included, the number of variables should be increased, and more advanced statistical techniques should be applied. It would be helpful to carry out a comparative analysis where the views of respondents belonging to different age groups, educational profiles, and territorial areas would be compared. Also, the respondents' subjectivity can be cited as a limitation. Specifically, bearing in mind that this is a sensitive issue, it is possible that the respondents gave socially desirable answers in order to better present themselves and their moral principles.

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## Ekonomski motivi in pripravljenost mladih v Srbiji za sodelovanje v goljufijah

### Izvleček

Goljufije so povezane z gospodarskimi in finančnimi pritiski, ki ljudi silijo k njihovem izvrševanju. Vsaka goljufija, ne glede na spol in starost storilcev, neizogibno pusti kratkoročen ali dolgoročen negativen pečat na gospodarstvu družbe. Številne finančne goljufije v preteklosti (Enron, WorldCom, Parmalat) so pustile globoke negativne posledice na svetovnih finančnih trgih. Takšni "finančni udarci" na finančnih trgih so povzročili finančne izgube številnih podjetij (ne le tistih, v katerih so bile storjene), odpuščanje številnih delavcev in celo stečaje podjetij. Uspešno odkrivanje in preprečevanje goljufij pomeni usklajeno in učinkovito delovanje več dejavnikov. Eden od njih je odnos ljudi do goljufij. Razumeti je treba, kaj posameznika motivira za goljufije in pod kakšnimi pogoji bi nekdo zagrešil goljufijo. Veliko sredstev in časa je bilo vložene v razumevanje motivov za goljufije odraslih, tj. zrelih ljudi. Izkušnje so pokazale, da je te ljudi veliko težje poučiti o škodljivih učinkih goljufij in jih prepričati, da goljufij ne bi počeli. Iz teh razlogov je predmet tega prispevka obravnava odnosa mlajšega prebivalstva do goljufij v Srbiji. Natančneje, članek obravnava odnos mladih, starih od 18 do 30 let, do motivov, pritiskov in priložnosti za goljufije, sodelovanje pri korupciji ali ponujanje podkupnin. Glavni cilj je nakazati nagnjenost mladih k sodelovanju pri goljufijah in preučiti, ali spol anketirancev vpliva na njihovo pripravljenost za sodelovanje pri goljufijah. Rezultati raziskave kažejo, da je po mnenju mladih glavni motiv za sodelovanje pri goljufiji finančna korist, in da bi mladi sodelovali pri goljufiji le, če bi lahko prej dobili zdravniško pomoč. Odgovori anketirancev kažejo tudi, da so goljufije najbolj razširjene v javni upravi, in da bi mladi sodelovali pri goljufiji le, če bi s tem lahko prej dobili zdravniško pomoč.

*Ključne besede:* stališča, mlajše prebivalstvo, goljufije, finančni trgi