

Neutralising White-Collar Crime: An Analysis of Media Statements and Neutralisation Techniques in Slovenian Tycoon Trials

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The concept of techniques of neutralization of crimes has been known in criminological theory since the 1950s. It refers to various attempts to justify deviance, which perpetrators present as legitimate, although they are generally not recognized as such by society and the legal order. Although the classic five types of neutralisations were defined by Sykes and Matza with reference to juvenile delinquency, subsequent research has shown that they may be even more prevalent in privileged white-collar offenders. In this article, we analysed media statements by a group of high-profile managers who were tried for economic crimes in the so-called 'tycoon trials' that took place after the failed management takeovers of some of Slovenia's major companies during the 2008 financial crisis. The defendants were eventually found guilty of some but not all of the crimes for which they were charged. Our interest here was in how they explained or justified their actions and perceived the broader context of these affairs. We categorised their media statements under different classic techniques of neutralisation categories and added some others that fit the cases. Unlike some similar studies, our group of managers mostly denied responsibility and appealed to higher loyalties and economic necessity in combination with a condemnation of the condemners. To a considerably lesser degree they denied harm. Finally, the techniques of denial of the victim and the metaphor of the ledger were not represented.

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