

**CRIMINOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF DETECTING BRIBERY CRIMES**

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**Abstract:** This article examines the criminological aspects of detecting bribery crimes in the Republic of Uzbekistan based on factual data and scientific sources. The study analyzes the legal framework, statistical indicators, causes, and mechanisms of bribery, as well as the effectiveness of law enforcement practices. Particular attention is paid to modern methods of detection, institutional reforms, and international standards in combating corruption. The article concludes with recommendations aimed at improving the detection and prevention of bribery crimes.

**Keywords:** Bribery, corruption, criminology, detection, Uzbekistan, criminal law, anti-corruption policy, law enforcement

**Introduction**

Bribery is one of the most dangerous forms of corruption that undermines public administration, weakens trust in state institutions, and hinders socio-economic development. According to criminological studies, bribery is characterized by its latent nature, making detection particularly difficult [5].

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, bribery is criminalized under Articles 210 and 211 of the Criminal Code, which establish liability for receiving and giving bribes [6]. These provisions define bribery as the unlawful acceptance of material or non-material benefits by an official for performing or refraining from certain actions in favor of the bribe giver [6].

Statistical data confirms the relevance of this issue. For example, 177 bribery crimes were recorded in 2019, 161 in 2020, and 91 in 2021, indicating both the persistence of the problem and the partial effectiveness of anti-corruption measures [1]. Despite a decrease in registered cases, experts emphasize that bribery remains highly latent and underreported [5].

**Methodology**

The research is based on a combination of general scientific and special criminological methods. These include:

- **Comparative legal analysis** of national legislation and international standards;
- **Statistical analysis** of corruption-related crimes in Uzbekistan;
- **Systematic approach** to studying the structure and mechanisms of bribery;
- **Analysis of scientific literature** on criminology and anti-corruption policy.

The methodological basis also includes the study of institutional reforms and law enforcement practices aimed at combating bribery [4].

**Results**

The study identified several key criminological characteristics of bribery crimes in Uzbekistan:

First, bribery is closely linked to abuse of official authority and other corruption-related crimes such as fraud and embezzlement [3]. These crimes often occur in complex networks involving multiple actors.

Second, statistical data shows a dynamic trend. While the number of registered bribery crimes decreased between 2019 and 2021, broader corruption indicators reveal an increase in overall corruption-related convictions, reaching 7,354 individuals in 2024 [2]. This suggests improved detection mechanisms rather than a reduction in corruption itself.

Third, bribery is most prevalent in sectors with high administrative discretion, such as law enforcement and public services [1].

Fourth, the size of bribes varies significantly—from as little as \$50 to as much as \$200,000—indicating both petty and grand corruption [1]

### Analysis and Discussion

From a criminological perspective, the detection of bribery crimes in the Republic of Uzbekistan represents a complex and multifaceted challenge shaped by legal, institutional, socio-cultural, and technological factors. The available empirical data and analytical reports demonstrate that while the country has made measurable progress in combating corruption, bribery remains deeply embedded in administrative practices and social interactions. This section provides an in-depth analysis of the key criminological dimensions influencing the detection of bribery, supported by factual data and contemporary research findings.

One of the central criminological characteristics of bribery is its **latent (hidden) nature**, which significantly complicates detection efforts. Unlike many other crimes, bribery involves mutual consent between the bribe giver and the bribe receiver, both of whom benefit from the illegal transaction. As a result, there is minimal incentive for either party to report the crime voluntarily. This mutual concealment leads to a substantial gap between recorded and actual levels of bribery. Empirical observations confirm that official statistics reflect only a fraction of real corruption cases. For instance, while thousands of corruption-related crimes are recorded annually, experts emphasize that these figures do not fully capture the scale of the problem due to underreporting and systemic concealment [6].

The latent nature of bribery is further reinforced by **informal social norms and perceptions**. A 2024 study conducted in Uzbekistan revealed that many citizens associate corruption primarily with bribery and nepotism, yet a significant proportion of respondents do not perceive certain forms of unofficial payments or gift-giving as corruption [19]. This indicates a blurred boundary between socially accepted practices and criminal conduct. From a criminological standpoint, such normalization reduces public willingness to cooperate with law enforcement agencies and undermines detection mechanisms.

Another critical factor influencing the detection of bribery crimes is the **institutional environment and law enforcement capacity**. Uzbekistan has undertaken extensive anti-corruption reforms since 2016, including the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Agency, the adoption of national anti-corruption strategies, and the implementation of institutional monitoring mechanisms [12]. These reforms have improved the legal framework and created new tools for identifying and prosecuting corruption offenses.

However, despite these advancements, challenges remain in ensuring effective enforcement. International assessments highlight that while legal provisions exist, their implementation is not always consistent or sufficiently robust [10]. Weak institutional capacity, limited resources, and bureaucratic inefficiencies can hinder the ability of law enforcement agencies to detect complex bribery schemes. Moreover, coordination between different state bodies involved in anti-corruption efforts is sometimes insufficient, leading to fragmented investigations and reduced effectiveness.

Statistical data provides important insights into the dynamics of bribery detection. In 2024, approximately 7,354 individuals were convicted of corruption-related crimes in Uzbekistan, representing a 12.5% increase compared to the previous year. At the same time, in 2025, 5,222 corruption-related crimes were recorded, indicating a slight decrease compared to 2024. These figures suggest that while the number of detected cases fluctuates, the overall scale of corruption remains significant.

From a criminological perspective, such trends can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, an increase in convictions may indicate improved detection and enforcement mechanisms. On the other hand, it may reflect the persistence or even expansion of corruption practices. Therefore, statistical growth in detected cases should not necessarily be interpreted as a deterioration of the situation but rather as evidence of enhanced investigative capacity.

Another important aspect is the **sectoral distribution of bribery crimes**. Empirical data shows that corruption is particularly prevalent in sectors such as healthcare, education, and public administration. These sectors are characterized by high levels of interaction between

citizens and officials, discretionary decision-making, and limited transparency. Criminological theory suggests that such environments create favorable conditions for bribery, as officials have the power to influence outcomes and individuals are motivated to secure favorable decisions.

The **role of organizational and network structures** in bribery also deserves particular attention. Modern criminological research indicates that bribery often occurs within organized networks involving multiple actors, including public officials, intermediaries, and private sector representatives. These networks operate through established patterns of interaction, which reduce the risk of detection and facilitate the continuation of corrupt practices.

Detecting such networks requires advanced investigative techniques, including financial analysis, digital monitoring, and inter-agency cooperation. Traditional investigative methods, which focus on individual cases, are often insufficient to uncover complex corruption schemes. Therefore, the development of analytical tools and data-driven approaches is essential for improving detection efficiency.

In this context, the introduction of **digital technologies and e-governance systems** plays a crucial role. Uzbekistan has made significant progress in digitalizing public services, which reduces direct contact between citizens and officials and thereby limits opportunities for bribery. According to official reports, reforms aimed at increasing transparency and openness have led to the adoption of numerous regulations promoting access to public information and accountability mechanisms.

From a criminological standpoint, digitalization contributes to the **situational prevention of crime** by eliminating or reducing opportunities for illegal transactions. For example, automated systems for issuing permits or processing applications reduce the discretionary power of officials and create electronic records that can be used for auditing and investigation. However, it is important to note that technological solutions are not a panacea; they must be complemented by institutional reforms and effective oversight mechanisms.

Another significant factor affecting bribery detection is the **level of transparency and openness in public administration**. Transparency is widely recognized as a key element in preventing and detecting corruption. In Uzbekistan, efforts to improve openness have included the development of open data portals, the publication of government information, and the evaluation of public institutions based on transparency indicators.

Nevertheless, gaps in transparency remain, particularly at the local level, where oversight mechanisms are weaker and informal practices are more prevalent. Criminological analysis suggests that increasing transparency not only deters corrupt behavior but also facilitates detection by enabling public scrutiny and media involvement.

The **international dimension** of bribery detection is also relevant. Uzbekistan's position in global corruption indices provides an external assessment of its anti-corruption efforts. In the 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index, the country ranked 121st out of 180 countries with a score of 32 points. While this ranking indicates persistent challenges, it also reflects gradual improvement over the past decade.

From a criminological perspective, international indices serve as important benchmarks for evaluating the effectiveness of national anti-corruption policies. They also influence foreign investment, international cooperation, and public perception. However, such indices are based on perception rather than direct measurement, and therefore should be interpreted with caution.

A particularly important issue in the detection of bribery is the **protection of whistleblowers and reporting mechanisms**. Effective detection relies heavily on information provided by individuals who are aware of corrupt activities. However, in many cases, potential whistleblowers are reluctant to report due to fear of retaliation, lack of trust in authorities, or absence of adequate legal protection.

Research indicates that strengthening whistleblower protection systems can significantly enhance the detection of corruption. In Uzbekistan, steps have been taken to improve reporting mechanisms, including the introduction of hotlines and online platforms for submitting

complaints. However, further efforts are needed to ensure confidentiality, security, and legal protection for those who report corruption.

Cultural factors also play a crucial role in shaping bribery detection. In some contexts, practices such as gift-giving or informal payments may be perceived as socially acceptable, even when they violate legal norms. This creates a challenge for law enforcement agencies, as it complicates the distinction between legal and illegal behavior. Criminological analysis suggests that addressing such cultural factors requires not only legal measures but also public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives aimed at changing social attitudes toward corruption.

Another dimension of the problem is the **economic and structural causes of bribery**. Low salaries of public officials, lack of incentives for ethical behavior, and inadequate internal control systems can create conditions conducive to corruption. In such environments, bribery may become a means of supplementing income or achieving organizational goals.

Addressing these root causes is essential for improving detection. For example, increasing salaries, strengthening internal audit mechanisms, and promoting merit-based recruitment can reduce the incentives for engaging in corrupt behavior. At the same time, these measures can enhance the effectiveness of detection by creating a more transparent and accountable institutional environment.

The **role of the judiciary and criminal justice system** is also critical in the detection and prosecution of bribery crimes. Effective judicial processes ensure that detected cases lead to appropriate sanctions, thereby reinforcing the deterrent effect of anti-corruption measures. However, research indicates that challenges such as limited resources, inconsistent application of laws, and potential conflicts of interest can affect the effectiveness of the judicial system [3].

### Conclusion

The study demonstrates that bribery remains a serious criminological problem in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Despite significant progress in legislative reforms and institutional development, the detection of bribery crimes is still hindered by their latent nature and systemic factors.

Effective detection requires:

- strengthening institutional capacity;
- improving transparency and accountability;
- enhancing protection mechanisms for whistleblowers;
- applying modern analytical and digital tools;
- developing preventive strategies aimed at reducing corruption risks.

Only a comprehensive approach combining detection, prevention, and institutional reform can ensure sustainable progress in combating bribery crimes.

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