

GENDER AND ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGY: LEGAL ASPECTS AND CHALLENGES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

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Abstract. *This scientific article is devoted to the study of the role of women in the anti-corruption strategy and the analysis of legal aspects and challenges they face in the fight against corruption. The article discusses various aspects of the inclusion of women in anti-corruption efforts, such as their participation in decision-making, control over the implementation of anti-corruption measures, as well as their role in the detection and prevention of corruption crimes. In addition, the authors analyze the legal mechanisms and tools that support women in this field and discuss the challenges they face, such as discrimination, lack of access to resources and limitations in professional growth. The results of the study provide valuable information for the development of effective anti-corruption strategies, taking into account the gender aspect and ensuring equal opportunities and rights for women in this area.*

Keywords: *gender equality, anti-corruption efforts, equal opportunities, legal aspects.*

Currently, corruption is one of the main problems faced by many countries around the world. It has a negative impact on economic development, social justice and political stability. In light of this, more and more attention is being paid to the development of effective anti-corruption strategies. However, the issue of the role of women in the fight against corruption remains insufficiently investigated. In this scientific article, we will consider the legal aspects and challenges faced by women in their anti-corruption activities, as well as analyze the effectiveness of their participation in the fight against corruption. President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev noted, "The development strategy of the New Uzbekistan provides for building a country free from corruption. Today, this goal is becoming the unifying factor of our society" [1].

Corruption is one of the main problems faced by many countries, especially developing countries and those that have just thrown an authoritarian or totalitarian past behind them. According to the UN, corruption slows down economic development and forces governments to be less stable; in addition, the World Bank has named corruption as one of the main obstacles to economic development. Corruption is a problem that exists in all countries, therefore all countries should strengthen and improve policies, strategies, legal framework and concrete ongoing efforts to prevent and combat corruption [2].

There are four important anti-corruption conventions that many states have joined. In chronological order, these are:

- Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Officials in International Commercial Transactions (1997) [3];

- The Council of Europe Convention on Criminal Liability for Corruption (1999) and the Additional Protocol to the Convention on Criminal Liability for Corruption (2003) [4];
- Council of Europe Convention on Civil Liability for Corruption (1999) [5];
- *United Nations Convention against Corruption (2003)* [6].

Although society as a whole suffers from corruption, it is argued that its impact on different social groups is heterogeneous. In particular, it is believed that women tend to be more vulnerable to the effects of corruption than men [7].

Taking into account the fact that the issue of protecting human rights and interests is at the center of the fundamental reforms being implemented in Uzbekistan, the consistent fight against corruption, which leads to gross violations of human rights, has become one of the most important directions of state policy. By the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On the accession of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (New York, October 31, 2003)" dated July 7, 2008, Uzbekistan became a party to the UN Convention against Corruption, and in 2010 became a participant in the Istanbul Action Plan of the Anti-Corruption Network of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [8].

Corruption is a factor complicating the implementation of the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan, international human rights standards that serve to ensure human rights and freedoms. The scale of corruption has a negative impact on economic development [9], and also has a negative impact on human rights, in particular:

Firstly, corruption deprives society of important resources that it could use to meet its needs [10] in healthcare, education, infrastructure improvement and security.

Secondly, corruption has a direct negative impact on the functioning of State bodies and organizations, in particular, the justice system. It undermines the credibility of public authorities [11, 12], including depriving the courts of the opportunity to guarantee the protection of human rights. However, it is believed that corruption significantly aggravates and hinders progress in ensuring women's rights.

Key challenges women face in the Digital economy.

1. The absence of a permanent connection between an employee and an employer in non-traditional types of employment is not protected by labor legislation. In a regulatory system where legal labor is the basis for protecting workers, informal workers remain invisible to the Government.

2. Employees who face such invisibility cannot benefit from the protection of their employees, including maternity leave, social security and the statutory minimum wage. However, many workers in the digital economy do not have access to labor protection. In addition, the incorrect classification of freelance or network workers often leads to their exclusion from government initiatives aimed at helping unorganized employees [13].

3. There will be a growing need for changes in the legislation of online platforms and digital businesses to ensure rights and equality. However, since this area has not yet been fully covered [14], online entrepreneurs can be found for a long time without any help and protection.

4. It is also worth noting that, although the Uzbek authorities have launched a number of programs to assist and empower women in the process of digital change, most of these projects [15] lack the necessary regulatory components for their effectiveness.

In particular, a) they do not provide a list of accountable performers;

b) they are not supplemented with road maps;

c) they were created with the infrequent participation of larger stakeholders, including civilized society and the commercial sector.

Therefore, it is very important to consider issues related to the electronic sphere. The UN stressed the importance of solving problems related to digital technologies. The UN held its sixty-seventh session dedicated to “Innovations and technologies for gender equality”. During the meeting, ministers and government representatives noted the importance of increasing the participation of girls and women in digital technologies and innovations, as well as their participation as students and specialists in the fields of technology, science, mathematics and engineering, which is crucial for the global economy, as well as for the global transition to sustainable development.

1. As for recommendations for Uzbekistan, large IT companies should be more transparent and provide more mentoring to women in the country's workforce in order to create a channel of capable leaders "women in technology". In this regard, business communities, donors and the Government should implement:

2. Launch coaching programs that connect successful women with young professionals;
3. The introduction of a school program that will allow successful women to share their experiences with girls and boys. Using this strategy, it will be possible to provide women with role models and to form an idea in boys about the active and fair role that women play in society;
4. Create and conduct a nationwide information campaign about female role models, which highlights the achievements of women through contests, conferences, events, telegram and podcasts;
5. Through trainings, education, information exchange and networking with international partners to help Uzbek women investors;
6. To inform the leaders of the public and business sectors, as well as civil society groups about gender inequality, its consequences for society and the economy and practical ways to eliminate this gap [16].

It is proposed to hold these events annually during the celebration of the International Day of Girls in the Field of ICT and International Women's Day.

The issue of bridging the digital gender gap and expanding the presence of women in the IT sector deserves attention from the point of view of empowering a woman, fulfilling her role as a mother, specialist, public figure, improving her quality of life and ensuring social protection of society and the state. The goal of eliminating the digital gender gap is to overcome sociocultural threats and risks associated with gender stereotypes and discrimination against women, as well as threats of socio-economic stagnation due to a shortage of specialized personnel [17].

Social institutions (family, education, science, culture, public organizations) and the IT community face the task of forming the image of a woman professionally oriented in the digital economy and the IT industry by developing and implementing appropriate social, educational and mentoring programs.

These programs should be aimed at overcoming the internal stereotype that this is not a female profession; the formation of social and digital competencies necessary for girls for successful professional adaptation and identification, as well as the creation and implementation of technological projects and startups.

Understanding corruption — characterizes the respondents' explanation of the concept of corruption, its causes, as well as the attitude of the population to this phenomenon.

* A sociological study covered the Tashkent City Center for Women's Entrepreneurship.

Assessment of the level of corruption is an indicator of the degree of corruption in various spheres of public life, which is estimated by respondents in points based on their ideas about the current situation in a particular area. In our study, to measure this indicator of subjective perception of the scale of corruption, we used a 5-point scale, in which 1 point of assessment corresponded to the respondent's idea of a low level of corruption manifestations (or their complete absence) in a particular area, and 5 points — about a high (constant, widespread) level.

Corruption coverage is the proportion of women who have been in a corruption situation at least once in their lives. To measure this component, we used a closed question: "Have you or your family members had to face such a situation at least once in your life when you had to pay a bribe?" This indicator reflects only the upper layer of such a complex and multidimensional phenomenon as bribery, indicates the presence (absence) of corruption experience among women, and not only in the current socio-economic conditions, but also in a long retrospective.

The risk of corruption is the proportion of cases of women getting into a corrupt situation, regardless of its outcome for both participating parties (i.e. whether a bribe was transferred or not). This indicator can also be considered as the level of intensity of corruption pressure of the authorities on citizens. With the help of a closed question: "Please remember, have you ever faced a situation where you were forced to pay a bribe?" - you can record the fact of extortion in various sectors of public life, because the component describes one of the sides of corrupt interaction — the authorities. We also considered it necessary to provide this indicator not only for the whole array, but also for each of the public spheres (by clarifying the question asked to the respondent) in order to rank them according to the degree of corruption.

The demand for corruption is the willingness of respondents to give bribes; the proportion of cases when the average citizen gives a bribe, finding himself in a corrupt situation. The indicator can be considered as an indicator of the willingness of citizens to solve their problem with a bribe or to succumb to corrupt pressure from a civil servant or official. He describes the second side of corrupt relationships — an ordinary citizen. To determine this parameter, respondents were asked to recall whether they had to pay a bribe last year. The indicator "demand for corruption" makes it possible to assess the real scale of bribery in a specific time period, to determine the market share of corrupt services in a particular sphere of public life, for which respondents were asked a clarifying question about a specific area in which the fact of their bribery was noted.

The intensity of corruption is the average number of bribes per year per potential bribe taker. To measure the indicator, we used the following questions: "How many times did you have to pay a bribe last year?" and "When was the last time you had to pay a bribe?" This indicator allows you to measure the number of corruption clashes between citizens and government agencies, in addition, it records the practice data in a specific time period, thus giving the opportunity to track the situation in dynamics.

Research results

The first task we set ourselves was to find out how women understand the term "corruption".

The results of the survey show that most women have a certain opinion about this term. The responses received can be summarized into four main groups.

The first group includes answers containing a simplified definition of corruption and understanding it as the process of transferring a bribe by a citizen to an official, public servant or

other official. The second category consists of judgments according to which corruption is an abuse of the official (official) position of an official, a civil servant for personal, selfish purposes, as a rule, to achieve a certain material benefit. The third group is represented by responses where corruption is understood as a process of interaction between the state and business, government and citizens, expressed in the shadow regulation of the existing relationships. The fourth group contains the definition of corruption not as an objective process or social phenomenon, but as a set of causes that generate it. Here, as explanations for the existence of bribery, respondents see the fusion of power with criminal structures, the lack of an effective legislative framework, the defeat of corruption at all levels of government and local authorities.

Respondents' opinions on the causes of corruption relations can be reduced to two main groups, having an objective and subjective nature. As objective reasons for corruption, which exist due to certain socio-economic conditions and, accordingly, can be regulated by the state, respondents named low salaries of civil servants, the lack of an effective legislative framework and, as a result, impunity of officials, as well as the low standard of living of the country's population. Subjective reasons, women associate with the personal qualities of civil servants: greed and greed, as well as with the mentality of the citizens themselves, the entrenched opinion that a bribe is a normal and habitual phenomenon.

The main conclusions.

The results of our research allow us to come to the following conclusions. First of all, women are more intolerant of corruption than men. They are more critical of the overall level of bribery in our region.

Women face manifestations of corruption when dealing with public utilities and officials in the field of education. Finally, compared to men, women are significantly less likely to pay bribes, which is in good agreement with the results of studies conducted in the United States and a number of European countries.

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