

CRIMINALISTIC AND CRIMINOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF POLICE CORRUPTION IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is the analysis of the criminological and criminalistic characteristics of police corruption in the Republic of North Macedonia, regarded as a distinct form of corrupt conduct perpetrated by employees within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Through a theoretical examination, the research analyses the conceptual definition of police corruption and researches the criminalistic characteristics of the crimes committed by employees within the organizational structures of the Ministry. The criminological characteristics include research through the scope, structure and dynamics of criminal acts committed during the research period (2020–2024), alongside an exploration of the attitudes and perceptions of a part of police employees regarding the issue of corruption within their ranks. The indicators obtained from the study will be the basis for drawing conclusions and making recommendations for combatting this problem.

Design/Methods/Approach: The paper consists of several units: Definition of police corruption; Criminological characteristics of police corruption – scope, structure, and dynamics of crimes; Criminalistic characteristics of police corruption; Analysis of research conducted with employees within police structures; Conclusions and Recommendations. The research employs normative, statistical, and comparative methods, while the primary research instrument consists of a survey administered to employees within the police structures.

Findings: The results obtained from the conducted research are analysed in order to gain insights into this issue, based on which recommendations have been formulated for the prevention and suppression of police corruption in the Republic of North Macedonia.

Originality/Value: This paper is original and constitutes a theoretical analysis of the research problem, presenting the results of independently conducted empirical research for the purposes of the study. It employs scientific methods and data collection instruments for data gathering, analysis, and comparison, and introduces a research instrument, a survey of police personnel aimed at obtaining insights into the attitudes and perceptions of employees within police structures regarding corruption within their ranks.

Keywords: police corruption, police officers, criminological characteristics, criminalistic characteristics

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INTRODUCTION

Corruption is widely recognised as one of the most serious security risks worldwide. It remains a pervasive and structural problem, deeply embedded in social systems, particularly within governmental and administrative structures. Despite repeated warnings to policymakers, “it is not enough to point to the rate of corruption in underdeveloped countries, because the understanding of corruption does not always reflect the reality or severity of the current level of corruption in a country”. The issue becomes especially critical when corruption evolves into a normalised social practice, as examining public perceptions of corruption alone does not necessarily reveal the true nature or the emerging forms of corrupt behaviour (Madichie, 2005).

The employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia (RNM) include those who hold the status of authorised officials for performing professional works and police officers. They are obliged, in the performance of their duties and tasks, to protect and safeguard the lives and property of citizens, to respect the freedoms and rights of citizens and to apply only those measures and means of coercion prescribed by law or other regulations. In their work, they must adhere to the principles of legality; proportionality and fairness; management regarding the effectiveness of employees; professional ethics, impartiality, and objectivity; transparency and confidentiality; accountability; prevention of conflicts of interest; and economical use of resources (Law on Internal Affairs, Official Gazette of RNM No. 60/25). All police personnel hold the status of officials as defined in the Criminal Code of RNM, Art. 122, par. 4, p. a) (Official Gazette of RM No. 37/96...248/18).

Police corruption is a socially harmful phenomenon of serious concern, as it constitutes criminal behaviour that occurs and persists within the ranks of authorised officials performing professional duties and police officers holding official status who are expected to uphold the Constitution, laws, subordinate regulations and established principles. Such acts involve the active non-application of legal and regulatory provisions or the passive failure to enforce laws, while simultaneously fulfilling the elements of various corruption-related criminal offenses, as well as other crimes committed through the abuse of laws or “trading in influence”.

Police personnel engage in criminal activities through active acts of corruption, acquiring unlawful financial gain, either individually or as part of organized criminal groups. They also act as perpetrators of offenses where the law specifies that criminal acts are committed within the scope of official duties



(e.g., harassment in the performance of duties, sexual offenses through abuse of position, etc.). Other criminal acts that fall under police corruption include offenses in which perpetrators present themselves as police officials or officers with the intent to mislead victims and obtain unlawful financial gain, such as fraud. “Trading in influence” is a method of police corruption in which police officers, while committing criminal acts, use their official status to influence colleagues to avoid detection or to affect the process of securing or failing to secure evidence.

Although corruption is commonly identified with bribery or the abuse of official position, there exists a significant number of other criminal offenses that can be committed through corrupt practices (i.e., offenses that inherently involve the concept of corruption, defined as the misuse of conferred authority for private purposes and gain). This implies that the commission of such offenses does not automatically constitute corruption in itself; rather, it depends on the offender’s position, the manner of execution, the motive, the resulting harm, and other relevant factors (Davitkovski et al., 2021). Police corruption is directly influenced by the status and position of employees within police structures, while the method of execution is linked to their police competencies and authorities, and the motive in the majority of cases is the acquisition of unlawful financial gain.

Corruption within the police represents the abuse of police powers and authority, ranging from routine unethical behaviour by officers to serious forms of illegal conduct through which they obtain illicit benefits or misuse their authority to conceal crimes or facilitate other criminal activities. To detect and address police corruption, a comprehensive system of legal measures and institutional controls must be established to identify, investigate, and sanction such criminal behaviour. Several factors hinder the effective control of corruption, including the reluctance of officers to report corrupt activities among their peers (commonly referred to as the “Code of Silence” or “Blue Curtain”), the unwillingness of police leadership to acknowledge the existence of corruption within their ranks, the benefits derived from typical corrupt transactions by the involved parties, and the absence of immediate victims willing to report corrupt practices (Gjurčinovska, 2022).

The study analyses criminal offenses committed by employees within all organizational structures of the police, based on cases investigated by the Department for Internal Control, Criminal Investigations and Professional Standards, which operates within the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the RNM and is responsible for overseeing the legality of the work of police officers and other personnel within the ministry’s structures. Corruption-related criminal offenses are those committed by police employees who engage in criminal conduct within the scope of their official duties. According to the Criminal Code (Official Gazette of RM No. 37/96 ... 248/18 and Official Gazette of RNM No. 188/23), these offenses are codified in Chapter 30. In addition to crimes against official duty, other crimes committed by employees of police structures and related to their police powers are also covered, or these are crimes committed through “trading in influence”.

An analysis was conducted on the scope, structure, and dynamics of criminal offenses committed by employees within police structures during the period 2020–2024, as well as an analysis of a survey examining the attitudes and perceptions of police employees regarding corrupt practices within their ranks. Based on these analyses, conclusions were drawn and recommendations were formulated for the prevention and suppression of police corruption.

POLICE CORRUPTION

Police corruption is a specific form of corruption that manifests through the abuse of police powers and authority and occurs in multiple forms. This includes the active commission of criminal offenses



with elements of corruption, as well as the failure or omission of police officers to act in situations where they are required to detect, investigate and secure evidence for crimes prosecuted *ex officio*. The problem is particularly sensitive in the context of the border police, who, through inaction, fail to control vehicles and passengers despite having the legal authority and mandate, thereby enabling the unimpeded transport of drugs, weapons or other prohibited goods, as well as the unauthorized crossing of migrants.

Additionally, unlawful actions by officials performing professional duties, particularly in the issuance of personal documents and the maintenance of police records, constitute significant concerns. Abuses in the issuance of personal documents such as providing documents with false information or under a stolen identity represent especially serious criminal behaviour, as they facilitate subsequent criminal activities. For example, issuing an identity card in someone else's name allows the perpetrator to withdraw money from the account of the person whose identity has been stolen, using their personal data without authorisation.

According to Kesić, police corruption as a criminal phenomenon can be defined from two perspectives. The narrower approach, or conventional definition, views police corruption as the abuse of police authority (powers, position) for the purpose of obtaining personal gain, typically through bribery. The broader approach defines police corruption as the abuse of police authority in general (Kesić, 2012). Later, Kesić further categorises police corruption into four groups: petty corruption (accepting small gifts); bureaucratic corruption (illegal issuance of documents); criminal corruption (extorting regular payments from criminal groups); and political corruption (disclosing confidential information to politicians) (Kesić, 2017).

Defining police corruption is a significant challenge, given the wide range of behaviours and forms it can take, occurring in numerous situations and across diverse cultural contexts. From a pragmatic perspective, it is therefore preferable to adopt a broader definition that encompasses criminal acts (Newburn, 1999). According to Prenzler, the police, in terms of both organizational structure and police subculture, are highly susceptible to corruption, which manifests in numerous opportunities and challenges, generating internal deviations within police structures. Corruption within their ranks also tends to adapt and evolve over time (Prenzler, 2009).

Police corruption can manifest in several forms, including: corruption for the purpose of obtaining material gain — accepting bribes in exchange for performing lawful duties; opportunistic thefts (theft by individuals under police protection); extortion (accepting bribes in exchange for neglecting the detection and securing of evidence for a criminal offense); “fixing” situations (destroying traces or objects related to a criminal offense); the active commission of a criminal offense (a police officer committing a crime to obtain unlawful financial gain); and concealment or manipulation (destroying or planting evidence and objects related to a criminal offense, most commonly in cases of illicit drug production or trafficking) (Kralj, 2014).

The most suitable definition for this study is the one adopted by the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) in the development of the *Police Integrity Handbook* in 2012, as provided by the Interpol Expert Group on Anti-Corruption (IEGAC). According to this detailed definition of police corruption, specific manifestations and forms of the phenomenon are identified (DCAF, 2012):

- The solicitation or acceptance, whether direct or indirect, by a police officer or any employee within a police force/service, of any amount of money, valuable item, gift, service, promise, reward, or advantage — either for themselves or for any other person, group, or entity — in exchange for any action or inaction that has occurred, is occurring, or may occur in the future,



and which relates to or is connected with the performance of any police function or police-related activity.

- The offering or giving, whether direct or indirect, to a police officer or any employee within a police force/service, of any amount of money, valuable item, gift, service, promise, reward, or advantage — either for themselves or for any other person, group, or entity — in exchange for any action or inaction that has occurred, is occurring, or may occur in the future, and which relates to or is connected with the performance of any police function or police-related activity.
- Any action or inaction in the context of the dismissal or removal of a police officer or any other employee within a police force/service that may improperly result in the initiation of a criminal charge or conviction against any person, or that may improperly contribute to a situation in which a criminal charge is not filed or a person is released from criminal liability.
- The unauthorized disclosure of confidential information or police-restricted information in exchange for a reward or for any other purpose.
- Any omission in the process of dismissal or release from duty by a police officer or any other employee within a police force/service for the purpose of obtaining money, valuable items, gifts, services, promises, rewards, or advantages — either for themselves or for any other person, group, or entity.
- Any action or inaction related to corruption, as defined by the law of the member state.
- Participation as a principal perpetrator, co-perpetrator, initiator, instigator, accomplice, aider before or after the commission of a criminal offense, or as a conspirator, or in any other role in the commission or attempt to commit any offense.

Some of the formulations regarding the manifestations of police corruption have been incorporated into the criminalization of corruption-related offenses in the Macedonian Criminal Code (Official Gazette of RNM No. 248/18), particularly concerning the acceptance of bribes and the acceptance of gifts.

The very nature of the policing profession provides opportunities for involvement in corrupt practices that would otherwise be unavailable to individuals (Johnson, 2008). Police corruption represents a distinct form of corruption, occurring within police structures responsible for legal and professional duties, the issuance of personal documents to citizens, maintaining public order and safety at border crossings, and, importantly, detecting, investigating and providing evidence for criminal activity while apprehending offenders. In such cases, officers may serve criminal interests by exploiting their legal powers and authorities for illicit purposes. Police corruption places the judiciary in conflict with its presumed primary ally in the enforcement of justice. Although corrupt officers constitute a small percentage of sworn personnel, corruption remains a serious issue that must be addressed to maintain police morale and preserve public trust in law enforcement (EBSCO Research Starters, n.d., <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/law/police-corruption>).

Police officers are also susceptible to exploiting their official position and powers for “trading in influence” and committing other criminal acts to obtain illicit financial gain. In some cases, certain behaviours, though technically minor, are normalized and accepted within the environment, allowing officers to accrue both wealth and power. This creates a climate of fear among citizens, discouraging them from reporting both minor misconduct and more serious offenses involving criminal acts.

CRIMINOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF POLICE CORRUPTION

The causes of abuse or corruption within the police are influenced by both the structural organization of police institutions and their position within society (e.g., nepotism, bureaucracy, unavoidable contact with criminal networks, the impossibility of exercising absolute control over all officers, etc.), as



well as by the specificities of police subculture (e.g., the “wall of silence”). This is further compounded by an underdeveloped level of professionalism, where police solidarity predominates. The police are characterized by a high degree of group loyalty and identification, which, while generally beneficial for effective law enforcement, can also facilitate elements of police corruption. Authorised officials performing professional duties and police officers who refrain from acting against their corrupt colleagues due to loyalty often become victims themselves and may be at risk of becoming involved in corrupt schemes (DCAF, 2012).

In the Republic of North Macedonia, in 2021, a criminal case of police corruption was detected and prosecuted, involving authorised officials performing professional duties. Specifically, ten authorised officials in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, working in positions responsible for issuing passports and other personal documents, organised, motivated and instigated by an external individual, produced and issued over 200 passports using stolen identities between 2017 and 2021. These passports were issued to individuals who had not resided in the country for an extended period or had not applied for personal documents. The forged passports contained photographs of well-known Balkan and international criminals, while personal data were stolen from Macedonian citizens. The authorised officials entered these stolen data into the computer system and issued fraudulent documents, obtaining illicit financial gain and enabling the holders to cross borders legally. Some of these individuals were internationally wanted, including the leader of the notorious Škaljari clan, Jovan Vukotić, whose mafia, together with the Kavač clan, controls drug trafficking in the Balkans. A forged passport issued through legal procedures with a stolen identity was also obtained by the leader of the Turkish mafia, Sedat Peker (<https://plusinfo.mk/skandal-mvr-izdalo-legalni-pasoshi-na-balkanski-narko-bosovi-so-ukradeni-identiteti-od-zhivi-makedonci/>, accessed 14. 09. 2025). The case was investigated under the code name “Dvojniki” (Eng. “double”, “look-alike”). A total of 11 perpetrators were reported to the Macedonian Public Prosecutor’s Office, ten of whom held the status of official employees, suspected of committing the criminal offense of “Abuse of Official Position and Authority” under Article 353, and one individual was charged with incitement under the Criminal Code (Official Gazette of RNM No. 248/18). Regarding the method of execution, 215 passports were issued under stolen Macedonian identities with photographs of the individuals requesting the passports, utilising identities of citizens living abroad. Additionally, four passports were issued illegally by using multiple personal identification numbers assigned to one individual, which had not been cancelled, in order to create new identities that were then combined with photographs of applicants to issue new fraudulent passports (<https://jorm.gov.mk/za-11-licza-povedena-postapka-za-zloupotrebi-pri-izdava%D1%9Aeto-pasoshi/>, accessed 15. 09. 2025). Following the filed indictments, criminal proceedings were opened, in which seven of the accused pleaded guilty, resulting in one suspended sentence and six prison sentences for the issuance of 215 passports to foreign nationals wanted on international warrants. Six of the convicted were the Ministry of Internal Affairs employees, found guilty of abusing their official positions and authority, while one other individual was convicted as an intermediary for incitement. Those who did not plead guilty were subsequently sentenced to prison. In total, ten Ministry of Internal Affairs employees were convicted for abusing their official positions and authority in the illegal issuance of passports to foreign nationals (<https://novamakedonija.com.mk/makedonija/hronika/>, accessed 15. 09. 2025).

Scope, Structure and Dynamics of crimes committed by employees within the organisational structures of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the RNM

The data presented in the table are drawn from the Annual Reports of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which encompass the Department for Internal Control, Criminal Investigations and Professional



Standards, and pertain to reported criminal offenses committed by police officers and other employees within the organisational structures, including the administrative staff. The data cover the research period from 2020 to 2024.

Table 1: *Volume, structure and dynamics of criminal acts*

Criminal offense/ Article	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Serious bodily injury - 131	/	/	/	1	/	1
Harassment in performance of the duty -143	5	3	4	3	3	18
Endangering security - 144	/	/	/	/	1	1
Violation of the rights of an employment relationship –166	/	/	/	/	1	1
Adultery by abusing the position – 189	/	/	/	/	1	1
Killing and torturing animals - 233	/	/	/	/	1	1
Theft of electricity, heat or natural gas – 235 - a	/	/	/	/	1	1
Robbery - 237	/	/	1	/	/	1
Evasion - 239	/	/	/	1	/	1
Fraud - 247	/	/	/	/	1	1
Causing general danger - 288	/	1	1	/	4	6
Abuse of official position and authority - 353	7	10	5	3	9	34
Negligent performance of the duty - 353 - v	/	4	1	1	9	15
Duty embezzlement - 354	/	/	1	1	/	2
Fraud in the duty - 355	/	/	/	/	1	1
Taking duty advantages - 356	/	1	/	/	/	1
Accepting bribes - 357	/	1	5	4	3	13
Falsification of official document - 361	/	1	2	/	1	4
Helping to the perpetrator of the omitted criminal act - 365	/	/	/	/	1	1
False reporting of a crime 366	/	/	1	/	/	1
Special cases of falsification of documents - 379	/	/	/	./	1	1
Obstructing an official from performing an official action - 382	/	/	/	/	1	1
Removal or destruction of an official seal or document – 390	/	/	/	/	1	1
Unauthorized production, possession, brokering and trading of explosive weapons Substances - 396	/	/	/	/	1	1
Total criminal acts	12	21	21	14	41	109



Based on the data provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the RNM from the Annual Reports on the work of the Department for Internal Control, Criminal Investigations and Professional Standards for 2020 (Report, 2020), 2021 (Report, 2021), 2022 (Report, 2022), 2023 (Report, 2023), and 2024 (Report, 2024) (<https://portal.mdt.gov.mk/module-block-documents/76-document-mk.pdf>), a total of 109 criminal offenses committed by police officers and other employees within the organizational structures were identified during the 2020–2024 research period. Of these, 84 were corruption-related offenses involving elements of abuse of official duty, while 25 offenses were committed by employees in police structures and were related to “trading in influence” or other criminal acts assumed to go undetected.

In terms of the structure of offenses, the most prevalent was Abuse of official position and authority - 353, with 34 cases (31.2%), the majority of which were identified and reported in 2021. This includes the criminal case investigated under the code name “Dvojniki”, which involved the issuance of passports to foreign criminals using stolen identities. Another notable category was the offense of Harassment in the performance of the duties - 143, with 18 cases, indicating inhumane and improper behaviour by police officers exercising their authority in ways that enabled harassment. Other crimes include Negligent performance of the duty - 353-v, with 15 cases and Accepting bribes - 357 with 13 cases.

The data presented clearly indicate the presence of corruption within the police; however, they do not fully reflect the actual situation, as only a small portion of incidents are formally reported.

CRIMINALISTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF POLICE CORRUPTION

The criminalistic characteristics of corruption-related offenses determine the specificity of combating this type of crime both on a scientific-theoretical and practical level, according to the different types of criminal acts. They define the directions and fundamental theoretical premises, as well as the criminalistic methods for detecting, proving, clarifying and preventing these types of offenses (Angeleski, 2018).

Criminalistic characteristics are essential in the classification of specific criminal offenses, particularly in linking the *modus, tempus, instrumentum operandi* system of commission to the motives of the perpetrators and their status as authorised police officers or other employees holding official positions. All criminalistic characteristics play a crucial role in the full detection, clarification and collection of evidence for committed criminal offenses of corruption, as well as in determining the status of the perpetrator and whether the act is directly or indirectly related to their official duties and powers.

A fundamental criminalistic characteristic is the criminal situation itself, which involves answering the question: what occurred? Does the case involve unethical behaviour by an employee within the police structures, a disciplinary violation, or does it encompass the elements of a specific criminal offense? The *modus operandi* is closely tied to the official status and legal authority of the perpetrators. Therefore, it is highly important to clarify the method of commission to determine the nature of the offense whether it constitutes a corruption-related crime or another criminal act committed by a police employee using “trading in influence” or assuming that the act would remain unreported, undetected and unpunished.

In the process of clarifying criminal offenses, the status of the employee is determined according to their employment decision and the inventory of duties and tasks in order to establish which law has been violated, the manner of execution, and whether the criminal act was committed during official working hours (assigned schedule) or outside working hours, but still related to criminal activities connected with the official position. Bribery can also occur outside of working hours and premises, but its purpose remains the execution or non-execution of legally prescribed measures and actions.



The question “What happened?” encompasses a broader scope than the legal qualification of the offense. Its significance lies in determining the unlawful elements of a specific corruption-related or other criminal act, whether it was committed intentionally or negligently, which criminal actions were undertaken by the suspect and during which period, and whether there are mitigating or aggravating circumstances. It also helps establish whether the act was motivated by personal gain or involved improper conduct in the exercise of police powers (Korajlić et al., 2020).

From the perspective of the means of execution in corruption-related offenses with elements of abuse of official powers and the use of force exceeding authority or involving harassment, it is essential to determine which means were employed — whether police coercive measures or physical force causing injury. In corruption-related offenses involving unlawful acquisition of property, it is important to identify the type and amount of illicit gain, particularly in cases of bribery (type and amount of financial benefit), while in cases of abuse of official position and authority, the illicit gain obtained by the suspect police officers or by others must be determined, including type and value.

For a comprehensive clarification of the criminal situation, all circumstances must be reconstructed with evidentiary material following the system: CRIMINAL OFFENSE – EVIDENCE – PERPETRATOR – VALUE OR DAMAGE.

ANALYSIS OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH CONDUCTED THROUGH A SURVEY OF POLICE OFFICERS

For the purposes of this study and to gain insights into police corruption in the Republic of North Macedonia, research was conducted through a survey of police officers. The survey employed a pre-structured questionnaire comprising 27 questions, to which 22 police officers from various organisational units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs provided their responses.

The structure of the survey questions included a general section, addressing the respondents' level of education (primary, secondary, higher education, master's, and doctoral degrees). Among the respondents, 68.2 % held higher education degrees, 22.7 % held master's degrees, and the remaining 9.1 % had other educational qualifications. The gender distribution was evenly split at 50 % each. Regarding age, 45.5 % were between 46 and 55 years old, 36.4 % were between 36 and 45 years old, and the remaining respondents were over 18 years of age. In terms of work experience, 59.1 % had more than 20 years of service, 27.3 % had 11–20 years of experience, and 13.6 % had less than 10 years. The respondents' positions included uniformed officers, police officers in managerial roles, and officers from other organisational units. Regarding geographic distribution, 54.5 % of the respondents were police officers from Skopje, while 45.5% were from other cities across the country.

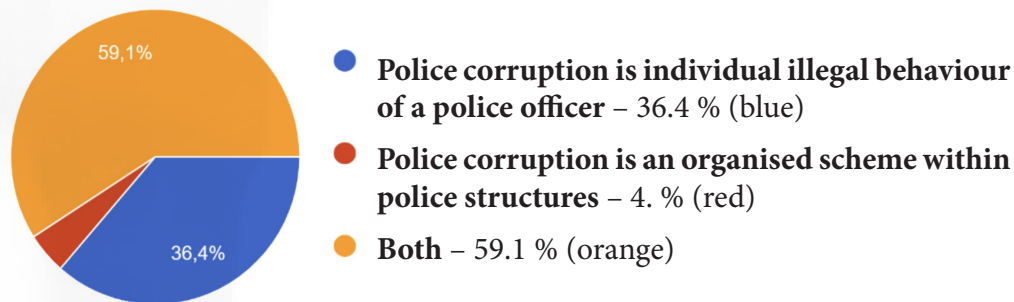
Based on the provided data, the responses of the surveyed police officers provide valuable insights into the nature and prevalence of police corruption within their ranks. Questions 7 through 27 focused on the respondents' attitudes, experiences, and reflections regarding the issue of police corruption. Regarding the question of whether police corruption is considered a major problem in the country, 81.8 % of respondents answered affirmatively, while 9.1 % believed it is not a significant problem and another 9.1 % were uncertain. Furthermore, 86.4 % of respondents reported being familiar with the concept of police corruption, 4.5 % were unaware of the phenomenon and 9.1 % remained neutral or unsure. When asked about the severity of the problem, 28.9 % considered it extremely serious, 53 % regarded it as serious and the remaining 18.1 % did not perceive it as serious or did not have a definitive opinion. Regarding solidarity among police officers and whether they had witnessed corrupt behaviour among colleagues, 81.8 % responded negatively, while 18.2 % indicated that they had observed such behaviour.



In response to the question, “Which police officers are in the most favourable position to engage in corruption?”, the answers indicated that uniformed intervention police responsible for public order and safety, as well as traffic police, were most frequently cited, each accounting for 31.8 % of responses. Additionally, 18.2 % identified ministerial assistants, while another 18.2 % considered officers from other managerial structures, administrative units and criminal investigation departments to be more susceptible. Regarding the reasons for engaging in corrupt behaviour, 45.5 % of respondents cited financial gain and access to other benefits. An equal proportion, 45.5 %, indicated low salaries and the need to supplement family income as a motivating factor. A smaller number highlighted assisting others in committing crimes or infiltrating criminal groups as contributing factors.

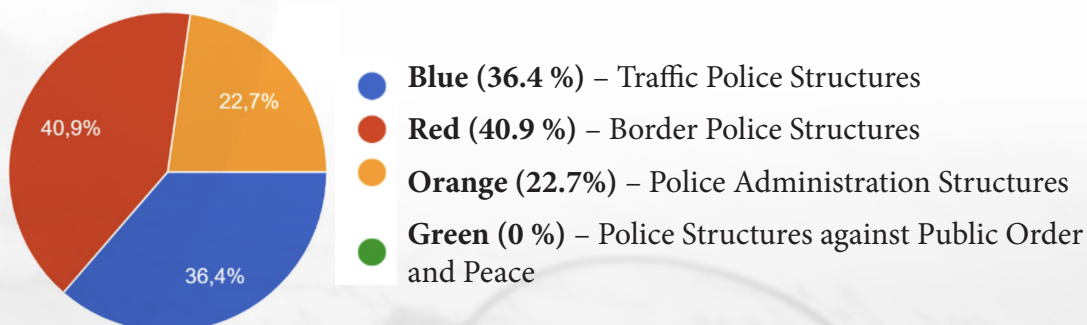
Responses to Question 13 are illustrated in Graph 1, showing that 4.5 % of respondents believed police corruption results from organised criminal groups, whereas the majority, 59.1 %, considered it a combination of individual acts and offenses committed by organised groups within the police. Meanwhile, 36.4 % perceived police corruption as primarily the result of isolated unlawful conduct by individual officers.

For more specific questions, we present the structure of the answers graphically. Namely, for the question: *What do you think: is police corruption an individual behaviour of a police officer or is it part of an organised scheme within police structures?*



Graph 1

To the question: *In your opinion, where are the organised schemes of police corruption most prevalent?*



Graph 2

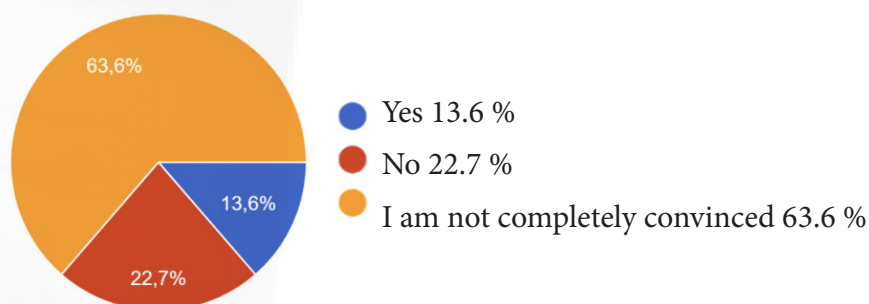
When asked whether they had witnessed corrupt behaviour, only 22.7 % of respondents confirmed having done so, while the remainder either denied it or declined to answer. Regarding the types of corrupt practices observed, respondents indicated that corruption is not limited to abuse of official duty (27.3 %) or accepting bribes (27.3 %), but also includes other criminal offenses committed by police officers (45.4 %).

Regarding the question on the manifestations of corruption specific criminal offenses 27.3% of respondents each identified “accepting bribes” and “abuse of official duty and authority”, while 40.9 %



considered that other criminal offenses are also involved. When asked whether they had ever been offered a bribe, 86.4 % responded negatively. Meanwhile, 90.9 % of respondents believed that police corruption primarily involves soliciting bribes, whereas 9.1 % indicated it involves soliciting services, reflecting the property-motivated nature of the perpetrators, although the provision of services can also have a material dimension. A total of 86.4 % of respondents consider police corruption to be a serious problem that requires prevention. They identified low salaries, insufficient institutional oversight, impunity, and unethical behaviour as the primary factors contributing to police corruption.

To the Question: *According to you, do the police have an established system for combating corruption within their own ranks – police corruption?*



Graph 3

The final set of questions addressed the prevention of police corruption. According to the respondents, effective measures include frequent inspections (59.1%), media campaigns promoting “Report Corruption” (54.5 %), anonymous reporting mechanisms (63.6 %), preventive repression through the successful prosecution of each case (68.2 %) and the efficiency of the established system for combating police corruption within the Ministry of Internal Affairs (36.4%). The majority of respondents believe that education and training of police officers represent a fundamental prerequisite for combating police corruption. Regarding sanctions, 63.6 % consider immediate suspension from duty necessary, while the remainder believe that, in addition to suspension, criminal charges should be filed for offenses in accordance with the law.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the theoretical examination of definitions, manifestations and forms of police corruption, it can be concluded that:

- Police corruption is a distinct form of corruption that manifests in multiple forms and expressions and is always closely linked to the status and professional position of employees within police structures.
- Police officers are structured as authorised officials performing professional duties and as uniformed police officers.
- From Macedonian practice, a serious case of police corruption involves an organised criminal scheme for issuing forged passports to international criminals. In this scheme, over 200 passports were produced through legal procedures using identity theft or misuse of personal identification numbers. For the committed crimes, 10 individuals from the Macedonian police were investigated, charged and convicted for “Abuse of Official Position and Authority”, and one person outside the police structures was charged for instigation.

- According to the analysis of reported criminal offenses during the studied period, most cases involve corruption-related crimes with elements of abuse of official duty. However, there are also reports of other criminal offenses in which “trading in influence” was used, or police solidarity was leveraged during the commission of the acts.
- From the survey conducted among police officers, it is evident that they are aware of what constitutes police corruption. However, when asked whether they have personally been offered a bribe, most responses were negative. As for preventing police corruption, the respondents emphasised the importance of increased education and training for officers on handling corrupt practices. They also highlighted the need for more serious sanctions for offenders, beyond mere termination of employment, including the initiation of criminal proceedings.

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