Abstract
of the dissertation entitled "Issues in Improving the Methodology for Investigating Corruption-Related Criminal Offences", prepared by Erlan Boranbayevich Yezhanov for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in speciality 6D030100 – Law

Relevance of the research topic. In the course of examining the topic "Issues in Improving the Methodology for Investigating Corruption-Related Criminal Offences", we identified the emergence of two distinct trends relating to corruption-related criminal offences.

The first is an annual decline in the official statistical indicators for the registration and investigation of corruption-related criminal offences. According to the Anti-Corruption Service of the National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 1,052 criminal cases involving corruption were registered in 2025, of which 860 were referred to court. This figure decreased by 35% compared with 2024. According to the National Report submitted by the Anti-Corruption Service then in operation, 2,310 criminal cases were under investigation in 2024. Proceedings were completed in only 1,641 cases, or 71%. By category, the number of registered minor corruption-related criminal offences decreased by 21% and the number of serious offences by 13%, whereas the number of especially serious offences increased by 27%. An analysis of the dynamics of corruption-related criminal offences since 2019 shows that their registration had halved by 2025.

The second is the recent increase in manifestations of corruption in Kazakhstan's socio-political life and socio-economic sphere. In his speeches from 2019 to 2023, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan K. Tokayev repeatedly noted the widespread occurrence of corruption in the country's socio-economic, political, cultural and other spheres. In his speech of 20 May 2019, K. Tokayev stated that substantial funds allocated for economic development and the corresponding state programmes were being implemented insufficiently effectively because of corruption. He noted the widespread occurrence of corruption in social protection, drinking-water supply, road construction and business development. At that meeting, the President also drew attention to the prevalence of "everyday corruption" and instructed that it be addressed at the level of public consciousness. He emphasised that corruption was confirmed by surveys conducted by akimats and identified during meetings with the public on trips around the country. At the aforementioned meeting on 19 August 2020, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan noted that the number of corruption incidents was not declining, while the number of persons held liable for such acts had increased by 11%. In his 2021 Address to the People of Kazakhstan, he stated that excessive state intervention in the economy gives rise to corruption. In his Address of 1 September 2022, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan observed that "the architecture and construction sector is mired in bureaucracy, resulting in considerable corruption". In his Address to the People of Kazakhstan of 1 September 2023, the President noted that road-construction works were being performed late and to an inadequate standard and also drew attention to the prevalence of corruption in this area. Since 2024, corruption has been mentioned less frequently in the speeches of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan and in his Addresses to the People of Kazakhstan. In

our view, this does not mean that corruption-related criminal offences have virtually disappeared from society and the state or that the need to counter them has diminished. Between 2019 and 2023, the legal and institutional foundations of anti-corruption policy were established. In particular, with the direct involvement of the Head of State, matters concerning the liability of senior officials, the expert review of regulatory legal acts, the recovery of illegally acquired assets and, above all, the digitalisation of public services were regulated. Consequently, combating corruption became not a discrete political campaign but a permanent area of activity for state bodies. Therefore, the absence of references to corruption-related criminal offences in political rhetoric does not indicate that their number has declined. As noted above, the increase in especially serious corruption-related criminal offences points not so much to a rise in the number of offences as to the growing complexity of their forms and the aggravation of their criminal consequences.

The findings of the survey conducted as part of the study show that corruption continues unabated in Kazakhstan's political, social and public life, as well as in economic relations. According to the survey findings, 70% of respondents had encountered corruption, while 47% stated that they had been compelled to give a bribe or seek assistance from acquaintances. The offences provided for in Chapter 15 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as Articles 189, 190, 218, 218-1, 234, 249 and 452, which are classified as corruption-related criminal offences under paragraph 29 of Article 3, are characterised by a high degree of latency. It therefore cannot be asserted that the official statistics of the competent authorities fully reflect the prevalence of corruption-related criminal offences in society. Accordingly, there are grounds to believe that the actual statistical indicators for such offences are substantially higher than the figures reported.

An analysis of the practice of pre-trial investigation in criminal cases initiated on the basis of corruption allegations showed that, in 2024, 37% of cases were terminated on non-exonerating grounds and 45% on exonerating grounds. The study established that the principal reason was the inadequate investigation of criminal cases. Among the main causes are the low level of forensic support for the investigation of corruption-related criminal offences and the absence, among specialists conducting their pre-trial investigation, of a system of scientific knowledge concerning corruption-related criminal offences and the offender's personality.

An analysis of cases considered on appeal showed that 70% of appeals raised matters that had not been reflected in the testimony given by participants in the proceedings during the pre-trial investigation. Under paragraph 9 of Article 210 of the current Code of Criminal Procedure of the Republic of Kazakhstan, audio and video recording may be used during an interview by decision of the person conducting the pre-trial investigation or upon the application of a suspect, accused person, witness or victim. Thus, the interview is not audio- and video-recorded automatically, but only by decision of the person conducting the investigation or upon the application of the person being interviewed. This, in turn, is one of the factors that may lead to distortion of the interview record or the omission of information relevant to the case. There are frequent instances in which information is obtained in substantial violation of the procedural rules governing the initial interview, through physical or psychological coercion, as well as instances of

disagreement with charges brought on the basis of such evidence. In such situations, an additional or repeated interview becomes necessary pursuant to Article 211 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Republic of Kazakhstan. This extends the period of the pre-trial investigation and requires additional resources, including time and labour. As a result, public confidence in law-enforcement bodies declines. The need to improve the methodology for investigating corruption-related criminal offences by automating certain investigative actions through advances in artificial intelligence is therefore increasingly relevant.

The relevance of the research topic is determined by the need to develop a modern methodology for investigating criminal cases involving corruption, based on a scientifically substantiated core concept that enables all the circumstances of an offence to be established objectively, comprehensively and fully, while preventing violations of the rights and legitimate interests of the victim, witness and suspect or accused person during the investigation.

The dissertation examines the **degree to which the topic has been developed** and analyses the principal distinctions between the selected research topic and earlier studies by Kazakhstani scholars O. B. Khussainov, R. M. Abdrashev and Ch. D. Kenzhetayev, as well as by foreign scholars. Virtually all previous studies were conducted on the basis of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 13 December 1997, which is no longer in force.

The object of the dissertation research is the legal relations arising in the course of investigating corruption-related criminal offences.

The subject matter of the dissertation research comprises the body of criminal-law, criminal-procedure and other legal norms governing social relations arising in connection with the prevention of corruption and the investigation of these offences, as well as establishing criminal liability; the activities of bodies involved in detecting and investigating offences in this category; and the scientific and theoretical propositions developed to date on the research topic.

Aim and objectives of the research. The aim of the research is to develop comprehensive, scientifically and practically substantiated recommendations for improving the methodology for investigating corruption-related criminal offences, based on an analysis of investigative practice and current legislation.

To achieve this aim, the dissertation sets the following **objectives**: (a) to examine the criminal-law characteristics of corruption-related criminal offences; (b) to investigate their forensic characteristics; (c) to determine the personality profile of an offender who commits corruption-related criminal offences; (d) to study the modus operandi of corruption-related criminal offences as an important element of their forensic characteristics; (e) to identify the hypotheses and plans formulated in the investigation of corruption; (f) to analyse typical situations arising in the investigation of corruption-related criminal offences; and (g) to examine specific investigative actions in corruption-related criminal cases and the practical issues associated with their conduct.

Methodological framework of the dissertation research. The dissertation employed the dialectical method as a general method of scientific inquiry, legal analysis and synthesis as general scientific methods, and specific sociological and statistical methods as specialised scientific methods.

Regulatory framework of the dissertation research. The regulatory framework of the research comprised conventions ratified by the Republic of Kazakhstan, international treaties, bilateral agreements between the Republic of Kazakhstan and other states on legal assistance, the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan adopted on 15 March 2025, the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and laws and other legal acts insofar as they regulate relations connected with the subject matter of this dissertation.

The empirical basis of the dissertation research comprised 217 criminal cases studied using materials from the database of judicial acts on the website of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan, a survey of investigators handling corruption-related criminal cases (20 participants), and a public survey (1,000 participants) designed and conducted to identify current trends in the prevalence of corruption-related criminal offences in socio-political life and socio-economic relations.

The scientific novelty of the dissertation lies in the fact that the current state of the methodology for investigating corruption-related criminal offences has, for the first time, been comprehensively examined at the dissertation level. The comprehensive study of the practical application of this methodology identified the principal regularities in the forensic characteristics of these offences that are of practical and theoretical significance, clarified the specific features of identifying indicators of corruption-related criminal offences, determined typical investigative situations and directions, and produced practical recommendations for conducting the most important investigative actions. The analysis of practice made it possible to identify existing practical problems and underutilised resources, assess the effectiveness of current forensic techniques, methods and means of detecting and investigating these offences, and develop tactical, scientific and methodological recommendations for addressing specific tasks in the investigation of corruption-related criminal offences.

The principal scientific findings and conclusions of the dissertation submitted for defence are as follows:

1. It has been scientifically demonstrated for the first time that persons investigating corruption-related criminal offences are not provided with a scientifically substantiated and practically tested methodology.

2. A practice-oriented methodological model consisting of four principal components that determine the methodological effectiveness of investigations into corruption-related criminal offences has been substantiated.

3. The grounds for commencing a pre-trial investigation into corruption-related criminal offences have been analysed and identified.

4. A programme for investigating corruption-related criminal offences has been developed (Appendix 1).

5. It has been demonstrated that the effectiveness of an investigation depends on a set of necessary and sufficient tactical techniques and methods for detecting and investigating corruption-related criminal offences.

6. The need to introduce artificial intelligence technologies into the information and analytical activities of law-enforcement bodies in order to improve the effectiveness of investigations into corruption-related criminal offences has been substantiated.

7. It is proposed that an intelligent device be developed to provide automatic real-time recording of interviews in corruption-related criminal cases.

Theoretical significance of the dissertation research. The theoretical significance of the research lies in the further development of forensic science, including forensic investigation methodology, through the author's comprehensive examination of problematic issues relating to the improvement of the methodology for investigating corruption-related criminal offences.

The practical significance of the dissertation research is determined by its focus on improving the detection and investigation of corruption-related criminal offences through the extensive use of the capabilities of forensic science.

Approbation of the dissertation research findings. The dissertation was completed and discussed at the Department of Legal Disciplines of Zhetysu University named after I. Zhansugurov. The principal findings of the dissertation research and its scholarly proposals are reflected in five academic articles. Of these, three articles were published in scholarly journals recommended by the authorised body, one article in a journal indexed in the Scopus database, and one article in the proceedings of a scientific and practical conference and other publications.

The structure and scope of the dissertation research made it possible to address the aim and objectives of the research and its theoretical and practical aspects. The dissertation consists of an introduction, three sections containing its main body, a conclusion, a list of references and appendices.