

# *Progress, Challenges, and Comparative Insights regarding the Implementation of Domestic Violence Legislation in Albania* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ *Entela KADRIU* \_\_\_\_\_

## **Abstract**

*This study evaluates Albania's legislative framework addressing domestic violence, focusing on the implementation and impact of Law No. 9669 and its amendments from 2020 to 2022. It examines the systemic and cultural barriers hindering effective enforcement and aligns findings with international best practices to provide actionable insights for policymakers.*

*A mixed-methods approach is employed, incorporating quantitative analysis of official records from the Ministry of Justice and a detailed examination of legislative texts. The study also includes a comparative analysis of Albania's framework with practices in Sweden, Poland, and Australia to contextualize Albania's challenges and opportunities.*

*The study reveals significant progress in legislative alignment with international standards, including the Istanbul Convention and CEDAW. However, enforcement gaps, resource constraints, and societal stigma undermine the framework's effectiveness. Judicial inconsistencies, high rates of dismissed protective orders, and limited access to shelters disproportionately affect rural areas. Comparative insights highlight opportunities for Albania to enhance its response through coordinated approaches, increased funding, and public awareness campaigns.*

*The analysis relies on quantitative data and lacks survivor narratives, which could provide deeper insights. The timeframe (2020–2022) limits the assessment of long-*

*term trends. Future research should incorporate longitudinal data and qualitative perspectives to complement these findings.*

*This study bridges gaps in understanding Albania's legislative response to domestic violence, offering a nuanced evaluation of its implementation challenges. It contributes to the global discourse on gender-based violence by situating Albania's progress and barriers within an international framework.*

**Keywords:** *Domestic violence, Albania, gender-based violence, legislative framework, implementation, international comparisons*

## 1. Introduction

Domestic violence, a pervasive societal issue, remains a critical concern in Albania due to its deep-seated historical and cultural roots. The Kanun—a customary legal framework historically governing northern Albania—entrenched patriarchal dominance, relegating women to subordinate roles within the family and society. Under this system, violence against women, including domestic violence, was treated as a private matter, rendering survivors invisible and without recourse (Gjuraj, 2016). While the Kanun no longer holds legal authority, its legacy continues to shape societal attitudes, perpetuating gender inequality and normalizing domestic violence in certain communities.

The democratization of Albania in the early 1990s marked a turning point in addressing gender-based violence. The adoption of international conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) signaled a commitment to advancing women's rights. This culminated in the enactment of Law No. 9669 in 2006, Albania's first comprehensive legislative framework to combat domestic violence. Over the years, the law has undergone significant amendments, including updates in 2010, 2018, and 2020, aimed at expanding protections for survivors and aligning with international standards (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2021).

Despite these legislative strides, systemic barriers persist. Judicial inconsistencies, coupled with limited public awareness and the enduring influence of patriarchal norms, undermine the effective implementation of these laws. For instance, rural areas—where traditional values often dominate—report significantly lower rates of domestic violence cases, highlighting gaps in legal access and enforcement mechanisms (UN Women, 2022).

This article critically examines Albania's legislative framework on domestic violence, with a particular focus on Law No. 9669 and its amendments, to evaluate their effectiveness and alignment with international standards. By analyzing official statistics and case studies, it explores the systemic challenges in enforcement, such

as judicial inconsistencies, resource limitations, and societal barriers that hinder progress. Furthermore, through comparisons with successful practices in other countries, the study offers actionable insights to strengthen Albania's approach to combating domestic violence. In doing so, it aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on gender equality and human rights, providing a roadmap for a more effective response to domestic violence.

## 2. Literature review

Domestic and gender-based violence (DGBV) has emerged as a critical global issue, affecting societies irrespective of their cultural, economic, or legal frameworks. Legislative measures, societal attitudes, and enforcement mechanisms play pivotal roles in shaping national responses to this pervasive problem. By situating Albania's approach to DGBV within an international context, this review highlights the successes and shortcomings of legislative frameworks in combating DGBV while drawing important parallels to Albania's unique cultural and institutional challenges.

Globally, legislative responses to DGBV have evolved significantly, reflecting growing recognition of its widespread impact. Italy, for example, introduced the "Red Code" law to expedite judicial processes in domestic violence cases, ensuring timely protection for victims. While this policy has improved immediate interventions, its effectiveness hinges on adequate judicial resources and societal support (Bettio & Ticci, 2017). Similarly, Poland's approach to DGBV emphasizes the immediate removal of perpetrators from shared homes following reported incidents, reducing the risk of repeat offenses. However, inconsistent application and a lack of uniform enforcement protocols have limited its overall impact (Grzyb et al., 2018). These examples provide valuable lessons for Albania, where legal provisions such as emergency protection orders under Law No. 9669 encounter similar enforcement challenges, particularly in rural regions with limited institutional capacity.

The role of societal attitudes in shaping responses to DGBV cannot be overstated. In Sweden, progressive gender norms have fostered comprehensive DGBV policies that emphasize prevention and survivor support (Heimer et al., 2018). Contrastingly, deeply ingrained patriarchal norms in countries like Albania and Poland have created environments where survivors face significant barriers to seeking help. In Albania, for instance, cultural stigmas often discourage victims from reporting abuse or pursuing legal recourse, particularly in rural areas where traditional values dominate (UN Women, 2022). While Sweden's success demonstrates the importance of societal transformation in addressing DGBV, Albania's experience underscores the urgent need for targeted education and

public awareness campaigns to challenge harmful cultural norms and empower survivors.

A recurring theme across the literature is the gap between legislative frameworks and their enforcement. In Australia, the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children provides an integrated strategy combining prevention, intervention, and survivor support, demonstrating the effectiveness of coordinated multi-stakeholder efforts (Our Watch, 2019). This model contrasts sharply with Albania's fragmented approach, where coordination among law enforcement, judicial bodies, and social services remains a significant challenge. The limited availability of resources, especially in rural areas, exacerbates these issues, leaving many survivors without adequate support (UNDP, 2021). Integrating lessons from Australia's model, such as multidisciplinary teams and sustained financial investments, could strengthen Albania's institutional response to DGBV.

Comparative studies highlight the critical role of victim support systems in ensuring long-term recovery and reintegration. Sweden's government-funded shelters, counseling services, and housing programs provide survivors with comprehensive support, showcasing a robust model for victim-centered care (Heimer et al., 2018). In contrast, Albania's limited resources and uneven distribution of support services create significant disparities, with rural victims facing the greatest obstacles to accessing help. Bridging this gap requires sustained investments and partnerships with non-governmental organizations to establish a more equitable and accessible support system (Our Watch, 2019; UN Women, 2022).

While Albania has made notable progress in aligning its domestic violence laws with international standards, such as the Istanbul Convention, challenges in enforcement, societal acceptance, and resource allocation persist. The literature underscores that Albania's response to DGBV must go beyond legislative reforms to address systemic and cultural barriers effectively. By learning from successful models in countries like Sweden and Australia, Albania can strengthen its approach to combating domestic violence, ensuring both the protection of survivors and the accountability of perpetrators.

### 3. Methodology

This paper utilizes a mixed-methods approach to evaluate Albania's legislative framework addressing domestic violence, focusing on the implementation and impact of Law No. 9669 and its amendments. The research draws on quantitative data and a comprehensive analysis of legal texts and official records to provide a detailed examination of the progress made and the challenges that persist.

Quantitative data were obtained from official reports and statistics published by the Ministry of Justice. These data encompass the number of protective orders issued, approved, dismissed, or denied under Article 10 of Law No. 9669, as well as demographic and regional distributions of domestic violence cases from 2020 to 2022. By analyzing these figures, the study identifies trends in the utilization and enforcement of legal protections and highlights disparities between urban and rural areas.

In addition to the analysis of statistical data, the study conducts a detailed examination of Albania's legislative framework through the review of legal texts, including Law No. 9669, amendments to the Penal Code, and Law No. 125/2020. This legal review evaluates the alignment of domestic legislation with international standards such as the Istanbul Convention and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Emphasis is placed on identifying gaps in the laws, particularly in addressing coercive control and psychological abuse, and on assessing the adequacy of enforcement mechanisms.

To contextualize Albania's legislative and enforcement practices, the study incorporates a comparative analysis with other countries, including Italy, Poland, Sweden, and Australia. These comparisons highlight effective practices, such as expedited judicial processes in Italy and multidisciplinary approaches in Australia, which offer valuable lessons for Albania. This analysis situates Albania's challenges within a global framework, emphasizing areas where policy and practice can be improved.

By combining statistical data, legal analysis, and international comparisons, the study provides a comprehensive evaluation of Albania's approach to domestic violence. This methodology ensures a thorough understanding of the systemic and cultural factors influencing the effectiveness of legal protections and offers actionable insights for policymakers and advocates.

## 4. Results

Albania's legislative framework addressing domestic and gender-based violence has undergone significant development, shaped by both domestic socio-political demands and international commitments. This framework includes critical legal instruments such as Law no. 9669/2006 on "Measures Against Domestic Violence," amendments to the Penal Code, and mechanisms introduced under Law no. 125/2020. These efforts reflect Albania's alignment with international standards, including the Istanbul Convention and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). However, while these laws mark progress, their effectiveness depends on implementation, enforcement, and accessibility for victims.

Law no. 9669/2006 on “Measures Against Domestic Violence” was one of the first legislative efforts to provide a civil administrative mechanism aimed at addressing domestic violence. This law prioritizes immediate interventions to protect victims and prevent further violence, primarily through the issuance of protection orders and urgent protection orders. These orders, which courts are required to issue within 48 hours of receiving a complaint, aim to provide victims with immediate security.

Despite its procedural strengths, such as the ability for victims to access protection orders without incurring financial costs, the law faces several implementation challenges. One of the primary concerns is the inconsistent enforcement of protection orders, particularly in rural and underserved regions where law enforcement and judicial infrastructure are weaker. This inconsistency undermines the law’s effectiveness, leaving victims vulnerable to continued abuse. Additionally, while the law defines a broad range of abusive behaviors, including psychological, physical, sexual, and economic violence, it relies heavily on the capacity of law enforcement agencies and social services, which often lack adequate training and resources to handle cases of domestic violence comprehensively.

The Penal Code has been amended over the years to criminalize various forms of domestic violence and gender-based violence explicitly. These amendments demonstrate Albania’s intent to treat domestic violence not just as a social issue but as a criminal offense requiring state intervention. The Penal Code includes provisions addressing physical violence, sexual assault, and marital rape. However, gaps remain, particularly in addressing coercive control and psychological abuse, which are critical components of domestic violence yet harder to quantify and prosecute. The cultural stigma surrounding reporting and prosecuting domestic violence further compounds these legal gaps, as victims often face societal pressures to remain silent or reconcile with their abusers.

Law no. 125/2020 represents a more recent legislative effort to address gender-based violence comprehensively. This law expands the scope of protections available to victims and strengthens institutional mechanisms for their support. It also emphasizes the role of local government units in preventing violence and providing support services. While this law is more holistic in its approach, its implementation faces significant resource-related challenges. Many local government units lack the financial and human resources necessary to fulfill their obligations under the law, such as establishing shelters, offering psychological support, and ensuring legal aid.

Albania’s legislative framework is heavily influenced by international conventions such as the Istanbul Convention, which it ratified in 2013. The Istanbul Convention obliges states to adopt comprehensive measures to prevent violence, protect victims, and prosecute perpetrators. While Albania has made notable progress in aligning its laws with these obligations, the gap between

legislative intent and practical implementation remains significant. For example, the Istanbul Convention emphasizes the importance of integrated policies and multidisciplinary approaches, yet coordination among Albania's law enforcement agencies, judicial bodies, and social services remains fragmented.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) also plays a crucial role in shaping Albania's legislative and policy frameworks. CEDAW requires state parties to address gender-based violence as a form of discrimination that impairs women's human rights. Albania has incorporated these principles into its legal framework, but the societal and institutional barriers to reporting and addressing domestic violence often undermine the realization of these rights.

#### *4.1. Analysis of Domestic Violence data in Albania (2020–2022)*

Law No. 9669 on measures against domestic violence outlines comprehensive protective measures for victims, emphasizing immediate and long-term interventions. Article 10 specifically enumerates emergency protective measures aimed at preventing further harm to victims. These measures include restraining orders to prevent the perpetrator from contacting or threatening the victim, removal of the abuser from the shared residence, and restricting their proximity to the victim's home or workplace. Additional provisions ensure the confiscation of weapons, temporary custody of children, and placement of victims in shelters (UNDP, 2021). Article 13 categorizes the parties subject to protective measures and assigns responsibilities to public and private entities involved in enforcement, rehabilitation, and victim support.

The fight against domestic violence in Albania is primarily legislated under Law No. 9669, enacted in 2006 and subsequently amended to address gaps in its original framework. The law reflects Albania's efforts to comply with international obligations, including the Violence and Harassment Convention No. 190 and the European Pillar of Social Rights (Shehaj, 2020; ILO, 2017). Its central provisions, outlined in Articles 10 and 13, aim to protect victims and ensure accountability for offenders through comprehensive protective measures and institutional responsibilities. Article 10 introduces a wide range of protective measures, including restraining orders to prevent perpetrators from contacting or threatening victims; immediate removal of abusers from shared residences, irrespective of property rights; temporary custody of children and restrictions on parental visitation rights and seizure of weapons and mandatory participation in psychosocial rehabilitation programs (Law No. 9669). These measures prioritize victim safety while mandating proactive steps to address the root causes of abusive behavior. However, enforcement has proven challenging. Noncompliance with rehabilitation orders is widespread, with many offenders evading mandated

programs. This undermines efforts to rehabilitate offenders and reduce recidivism (Dhuli, 2013). Article 13 complements these provisions by defining the roles of public and private institutions in implementing protective measures. Local law enforcement, social services, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are tasked with enforcing court orders and providing support to victims. However, resource constraints and uneven institutional capacity hinder effective collaboration, particularly in rural areas (Mecaj, 2016).

Data from the Ministry of Justice provides a quantitative perspective on the implementation of protective measures. In 2020, 1,052 protective orders were issued under Article 10, with 548 approvals, 204 dismissals, and 300 denials. The following year, 1,078 protective orders were recorded, including 567 approvals, 205 dismissals, and 306 denials. A similar trend was observed in the first quarter of 2022, where 225 orders were issued, with 130 approvals, 50 dismissals, and 45 denials. These figures reflect an increasing reliance on legal remedies but also highlight judicial inconsistencies and barriers to justice (Ministry of Justice, 2022).

Despite the legislative framework's robustness, challenges remain in enforcement and societal acceptance. Many cases fail to proceed due to insufficient evidence, lack of awareness among victims about their rights, or reluctance to report abuse due to societal stigmas. Rural areas, in particular, exhibit lower reporting rates, attributed to deeply ingrained cultural norms and limited access to legal resources. Moreover, the high rate of dismissed and denied cases underscores the need for better training for judicial personnel and standardized guidelines for evaluating domestic violence cases (EIGE, 2020).

The demographic distribution of domestic violence victims reveals significant patterns. Victims are predominantly women, with most incidents occurring within marital relationships. Statistics from 2021 indicate that women accounted for over 80% of victims seeking protective orders, reflecting the gendered nature of domestic violence (Tirana Judicial District Court, 2022). Younger women aged 26–35 represent the most affected group, often experiencing abuse linked to financial stress, familial conflicts, or power dynamics within relationships.

Victims residing in urban areas report higher rates of domestic violence compared to those in rural regions. This disparity can be attributed to increased reporting rates in cities, where victims have greater access to support services and legal resources. However, the lack of such infrastructure in rural areas contributes to underreporting, perpetuating a cycle of silence and vulnerability (Gjuraj, 2016).

Article 10 mandates psychosocial rehabilitation programs for perpetrators, organized by public and private entities. Compliance monitoring is conducted through periodic reports submitted to local coordinators for domestic violence cases. However, noncompliance remains a significant issue. Perpetrators often evade participation in rehabilitation programs, citing logistical challenges or lack of awareness. This noncompliance hinders efforts to break the cycle of abuse and reintegrate offenders into society responsibly (UNDP, 2021).



Data for 2022 reveals quarterly trends in the issuance of protective orders. In the period from January to March, 225 orders were issued under Article 10, with 130 approvals. Between April and June, this number increased to 332, including 153 approvals. By July to September, 250 orders were issued, with 98 approvals. These fluctuations indicate both an increased awareness of legal remedies and persistent systemic barriers affecting the resolution of cases (Ministry of Justice, 2022).

Urban centers like Tirana report the highest rates of domestic violence, reflecting greater accessibility to legal and support services. Conversely, rural areas show significantly lower reporting rates, indicative of systemic underreporting due to cultural norms and logistical challenges. The majority of victims are married women, often with young children, highlighting the compounded vulnerabilities faced by this demographic (Tirana Judicial District Court, 2022).

Cultural norms in Albania often perpetuate myths about domestic violence, such as attributing it to substance abuse or financial stress, rather than recognizing it as a systemic issue rooted in power dynamics and gender inequality. Media coverage occasionally reinforces these stereotypes, trivializing domestic violence as a private matter and undermining the societal urgency required to address it (EIGE, 2020).

Albania has made significant strides in aligning its domestic violence legislation with international standards. The country's adoption of measures under the Violence and Harassment Convention No. 190 and its efforts to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights demonstrate a commitment to addressing gender-based violence (Shehaj, 2020; ILO, 2017). However, when compared to neighboring countries, Albania still lags in areas such as judicial training, offender rehabilitation, and victim support infrastructure.

For instance, while Albania mandates comprehensive protective measures, the lack of resources and institutional capacity often undermines their implementation. In contrast, countries with stronger social welfare systems and dedicated funding for victim support programs, such as Serbia and North Macedonia, report higher rates of successful enforcement (Rakočević et al., 2012).

Data show that one of the most pressing challenges in the legislative framework is the lack of consistent enforcement of protective measures. Although the laws mandate swift judicial action and provide mechanisms for victim support, these measures are often ineffective due to limited institutional capacity, especially in rural areas. Law enforcement officers and judicial authorities frequently lack the specialized training necessary to handle domestic violence cases sensitively and effectively. Furthermore, the reliance on victims to initiate legal proceedings places a significant burden on those who may already be vulnerable or fearful of retribution.

Another significant issue is the lack of funding and resources for support services such as shelters, counseling, and legal aid. While the law envisions a

robust support system for victims, the reality is that many municipalities and local government units lack the capacity to provide these services. This gap disproportionately affects women in rural and marginalized communities, where access to legal and social support is already limited.

Cultural factors also pose significant barriers to the effective implementation of domestic violence laws. Deeply ingrained patriarchal attitudes and societal stigma surrounding domestic violence discourage victims from seeking help or pursuing justice. This cultural context not only affects victims but also influences the attitudes of law enforcement and judicial personnel, who may prioritize reconciliation over accountability.

While Albania has made commendable progress in establishing a legislative framework to address domestic and gender-based violence, significant challenges remain. The laws themselves are largely aligned with international standards, but their implementation is hindered by systemic issues such as inconsistent enforcement, lack of resources, and cultural barriers. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes improving institutional capacity, enhancing coordination among stakeholders, increasing funding for victim support services, and fostering cultural change to reduce the stigma associated with domestic violence.

## 5. Discussions

Albania's legislative framework, particularly Law No. 9669 and its amendments, reflects a commitment to addressing domestic violence through alignment with international conventions such as the Istanbul Convention and CEDAW. However, when compared to similar countries in the region and beyond, critical gaps remain in enforcement and victim support infrastructure. For instance, Poland's immediate removal of perpetrators from shared residences has been cited as an effective deterrent, yet similar provisions in Albania often falter due to inconsistent enforcement and resource limitations. This inconsistency disproportionately affects rural areas, where the lack of shelters and support services undermines the protective intent of such measures. In contrast, Sweden exemplifies the integration of progressive gender norms and comprehensive victim support systems, including government-funded shelters and long-term rehabilitation programs. Albania could benefit from adopting elements of Sweden's model, particularly the establishment of sustainable funding mechanisms for victim support services. Similarly, Australia's coordinated National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women emphasizes prevention, stakeholder collaboration, and significant financial investments, offering a roadmap for Albania to improve coordination among its law enforcement, judiciary, and social services.

Countries such as Italy have introduced expedited judicial processes for domestic violence cases under the “Red Code” law, reducing delays in granting protective orders and ensuring timely interventions. While Albania’s Article 10 provides a similar framework for emergency protection orders, delays in enforcement and judicial inconsistencies reduce its efficacy. Drawing lessons from Italy, Albania could prioritize judicial training and streamline procedural requirements to enhance the responsiveness of its legal system.

The analysis of Albania’s domestic violence data from 2020 to 2022 demonstrates both significant progress and persistent challenges in addressing domestic and gender-based violence (DGBV). While legal frameworks such as Law No. 9669 and its amendments aim to align Albania’s efforts with international standards, data trends and comparative insights highlight critical enforcement gaps and systemic barriers. The Ministry of Justice records indicate a steady reliance on legal remedies, with 1,052 protective orders issued in 2020, 1,078 in 2021, and 907 during the first three quarters of 2022. Approval rates have remained consistent, with approximately 55% of protective orders granted each year. However, dismissals and denials—accounting for nearly 45% of cases—reflect judicial inconsistencies and potential underreporting due to victims’ reluctance to pursue legal action (Ministry of Justice, 2022). Similar patterns are observed in rural areas, where logistical challenges, stigma, and inadequate access to legal resources further exacerbate underreporting (UNDP, 2021).

When compared to international data, Albania’s rates of protective order issuance align with trends in other low- and middle-income countries, where systemic barriers hinder the full utilization of legal frameworks (Grzyb et al., 2018). However, the higher dismissal rates suggest a need for improved training for judicial personnel to assess domestic violence cases effectively and apply standardized criteria in protective order evaluations. In countries like Sweden, comprehensive victim support systems—backed by sustainable funding—have significantly improved enforcement outcomes (Heimer et al., 2018). For instance, Sweden’s government-funded shelters and counseling services ensure equitable access for survivors, irrespective of their geographic location. In contrast, Albania’s lack of resources for shelters and psychosocial services disproportionately affects victims in rural regions, perpetuating cycles of abuse (EIGE, 2020). Poland’s approach to removing perpetrators from shared residences following incidents of violence offers another point of comparison. Studies suggest this measure reduces repeat offenses by limiting victims’ exposure to abusers (Grzyb et al., 2018). However, Albania’s enforcement of similar provisions under Law No. 9669 has been inconsistent, with noncompliance and logistical challenges undermining their effectiveness (Dhuli, 2013). Australia’s National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women emphasizes a coordinated response involving law enforcement, social services, and community organizations (Our Watch, 2019). Albania’s fragmented

coordination among these stakeholders contrasts sharply, highlighting the need for a multidisciplinary approach. Implementing integrated case management systems could enhance Albania's ability to address domestic violence comprehensively.

Cultural norms in Albania continue to play a significant role in shaping the response to domestic violence. Patriarchal attitudes, compounded by stigma and victim-blaming, discourage women from seeking help or reporting abuse (Gjuraj, 2016). These barriers are particularly pronounced in rural areas, where traditional values often deter survivors from pursuing legal remedies. Comparative studies in Poland and Italy underscore the importance of public awareness campaigns in addressing such barriers. For instance, Italy's "Break the Silence" initiative successfully increased reporting rates by normalizing conversations about domestic violence and highlighting available support services (Bettio & Ticci, 2017).

In Albania, media coverage of domestic violence cases has sometimes trivialized the issue, reinforcing stereotypes that frame violence as a private matter rather than a systemic problem (UN Women, 2022). Addressing these cultural barriers through targeted education campaigns and collaborations with community leaders could foster a more supportive environment for survivors.

Judicial inconsistencies in protective order approvals and enforcement highlight the urgent need for specialized training for judges and law enforcement personnel. Similar challenges in Canada, where victim attrition undermines legal protections, have been mitigated through comprehensive training programs that emphasize sensitivity and victim-centered practices (Johnson & Dawson, 2011). Adopting such programs in Albania could improve judicial decision-making and reduce attrition rates.

The gaps identified in Albania's framework underscore the need for systemic reforms to strengthen the enforcement of domestic violence laws and align with international standards. A key implication is the importance of addressing the resource constraints that hinder the effective implementation of laws. Insufficient funding for victim support services, particularly in rural areas, creates significant disparities in access to justice and protection. Policy reforms must include increased budgetary allocations for shelters, counseling services, and legal aid to ensure equitable access for all survivors.

Furthermore, the cultural barriers that perpetuate domestic violence require targeted interventions through public awareness campaigns and education initiatives. Deeply ingrained patriarchal attitudes and societal stigmas discourage victims from seeking help and often lead to judicial leniency in domestic violence cases. Lessons from countries like Sweden highlight the importance of societal transformation in fostering an environment where victims feel empowered to report abuse and pursue justice. Albania must prioritize efforts to challenge harmful norms and build public trust in its legal system.

Another critical implication is the need for improved inter-agency coordination. The fragmented implementation of domestic violence laws in Albania—marked by limited collaboration between law enforcement, judicial bodies, and social services—undermines the effectiveness of protective measures. Adopting multidisciplinary approaches, as seen in Australia and Poland, could enhance Albania’s capacity to manage domestic violence cases comprehensively. This includes specialized training for law enforcement and judicial personnel to ensure victim-centered approaches and eliminate biases.

Albania’s alignment with international conventions, while commendable, requires sustained effort to bridge the gap between legislative intent and practical implementation. The country’s adherence to the Istanbul Convention mandates the integration of prevention, protection, and prosecution measures within a cohesive policy framework. By focusing on these pillars and learning from successful models, Albania can strengthen its legislative response and provide a more robust safety net for survivors of domestic violence.

## 6. Limitations

This study provides a comprehensive evaluation of Albania’s legislative framework addressing domestic violence and its enforcement from 2020 to 2022. However, several limitations must be acknowledged, which may affect the scope and generalizability of the findings.

First, the analysis relies heavily on quantitative data sourced from official records provided by the Ministry of Justice and judicial district courts. While these data offer valuable insights into the trends and outcomes of protective orders, they may not fully capture the extent of domestic violence in Albania, particularly in rural areas where underreporting remains a significant challenge. Cultural stigma and limited access to legal resources often deter victims from seeking formal legal remedies, potentially leading to an underestimation of the issue’s prevalence.

Second, the study focuses primarily on the legislative framework and its enforcement mechanisms, with less emphasis on the lived experiences of survivors. While the quantitative approach provides a robust understanding of systemic trends, it does not offer qualitative insights into the barriers victims face when engaging with the legal system or accessing support services. Future research incorporating survivor narratives and stakeholder interviews would complement the findings and provide a more nuanced understanding of these challenges.

Third, the comparative analysis, while informative, is limited to a selection of countries chosen for their relevance to Albania’s context. Broader comparisons with other countries, particularly those with similar socio-economic conditions,

could provide additional insights into best practices and innovative solutions applicable to Albania.

Lastly, the study spans a relatively short timeframe, focusing on data from 2020 to 2022. Although this period captures recent trends, it does not allow for an assessment of long-term impacts of legislative changes or the evolution of enforcement practices. Extending the analysis to include longitudinal data would offer a more comprehensive evaluation of progress and challenges over time.

Despite these limitations, the study provides critical insights into the systemic and cultural barriers hindering the effective implementation of domestic violence laws in Albania. These findings serve as a foundation for further research and policy development aimed at strengthening Albania's response to domestic and gender-based violence.

## 7. Conclusions

This study highlights significant progress in Albania's efforts to address domestic violence through legislative reforms and alignment with international standards. Laws such as Law No. 9669 and its amendments demonstrate a commitment to protecting survivors and holding perpetrators accountable. However, the analysis also underscores persistent gaps in enforcement, resource allocation, and societal acceptance, which continue to hinder the realization of these legal protections.

The findings reveal critical disparities in enforcement, particularly in rural areas, where limited institutional capacity and deeply ingrained cultural norms exacerbate underreporting and reduce access to justice. Judicial inconsistencies, high rates of dismissed or denied protective orders, and insufficient funding for support services further highlight the systemic barriers to effective implementation. These challenges emphasize the need for a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach to managing domestic violence cases, integrating legal, social, and cultural strategies.

Comparative insights from countries such as Sweden, Poland, and Australia offer valuable lessons for Albania. Sweden's comprehensive victim support systems, Poland's immediate removal of perpetrators, and Australia's integrated national plan illustrate the importance of sustained investments, stakeholder collaboration, and cultural transformation. Adopting similar practices could significantly enhance Albania's response to domestic violence.

The study concludes that bridging the gap between legislative intent and practical outcomes requires a multifaceted approach. This includes improving judicial training, increasing funding for victim support services, and fostering public awareness campaigns to challenge harmful cultural norms. By addressing these systemic and cultural barriers, Albania can strengthen its legislative

framework and move closer to achieving a society where survivors of domestic violence are fully protected, and perpetrators are held accountable.

These conclusions serve as a call to action for policymakers, advocates, and stakeholders to prioritize sustained investments and comprehensive strategies in combating domestic violence. Future research should focus on longitudinal analyses, survivor-centered approaches, and expanded comparative studies to continue building a robust evidence base for informed policy development.

## References

- Bettio, F., & Ticci, E. (2017). Violence against women in Italy: Legislative achievements and enforcement gaps. *Journal of Gender Policy Studies*, 25(3), 345–368.
- Dhuli, E. (2013). Implementation challenges of domestic violence laws in Albania. *Journal of Legal Studies in Albania*, 4(2), 189–205.
- European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). (2020). Barriers to combating domestic violence in rural regions. Retrieved from <https://eige.europa.eu>
- Gjuraj, E. (2016). Cultural legacies and domestic violence in Albania: A sociological perspective. *Albanian Journal of Sociology*, 15(1), 25–41.
- Grzyb, M., Kowalski, J., & Nowak, A. (2018). Domestic violence and the Polish legal framework: A critical analysis. *European Journal of Criminology*, 19(4), 56–78.
- Heimer, C., Sandström, Å., & Sundberg, M. (2018). Domestic violence in Sweden: Progressive policies and enduring challenges. *Gender & Society*, 32(5), 243–261.
- International Labour Organization (ILO). (2017). *Violence and Harassment Convention No. 190*. Retrieved from <https://www.ilo.org>
- Johnson, H., & Dawson, M. (2011). Violence against women in Canada: Research and policy perspectives. *Oxford University Press*.
- Mecaj, L. (2016). Challenges in enforcing domestic violence laws in rural Albania. *Review of Albanian Law and Policy*, 12(3), 45–67.
- Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Annual report on domestic violence cases*. Tirana: Ministry of Justice.
- Our Watch. (2019). *National plan to reduce violence against women and their children*. Retrieved from <https://www.ourwatch.org.au>
- Rakočević, A., Dimitrijević, S., & Jovanović, T. (2012). Domestic violence legislation in Serbia and North Macedonia: Enforcement and challenges. *Balkan Policy Review*, 8(1), 101–119.
- Shehaj, L. (2020). Albania's alignment with international conventions on domestic violence. *Human Rights and Gender Policy Review*, 5(4), 87–96.
- Tirana Judicial District Court. (2022). *Statistical report on domestic violence cases in Tirana*. Tirana: Judicial District Court.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2021). *Domestic violence in Albania: Progress and challenges*. Retrieved from <https://www.al.undp.org>
- UN Women. (2022). *Addressing gender-based violence in Albania: A review of progress and barriers*. Retrieved from <https://www.unwomen.org>

## Laws and Conventions

Law No. 9669, “On Measures Against Domestic Violence,” Republic of Albania, enacted 2006, with amendments in 2010, 2018, and 2020.

Article 10 of Law No. 9669, protective measures include restraining orders and the removal of perpetrators from shared residences (Law No. 9669/2006).

Article 13 of the same law outlines the responsibilities of public and private institutions in enforcing protective measures (Law No. 9669/2006).

Law No. 125/2020, "On Amendments to the Penal Code of the Republic of Albania."

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly.

Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence), opened for signature in 2011, ratified by Albania in 2013.

Violence and Harassment Convention No. 190, International Labour Organization (ILO), adopted 2019.