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## GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

*Bridging Disciplines to Address Contemporary Challenges*

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EDITORIAL

# *Bridging Disciplines for a Global Understanding of Contemporary Issues*

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*Associate Professor Dr. Belina BUDINI*  
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As the world continues to evolve amidst increasingly complex social, political, and technological dynamics, it is crucial that the fields of human sciences, education, and liberal arts remain at the forefront of intellectual inquiry. Polis, The Faculty Journal of Human Sciences, Education and Liberal Arts at the European University of Tirana (EUT), has a tradition in interdisciplinary research. This issue demonstrates that the convergence of various academic disciplines offers the most comprehensive and effective insights into the multifaceted challenges we face today. This issue of *Interdisciplinary Perspectives* brings together a diverse range of scholarly work, each offering critical knowledge from different angles, while collectively reinforcing the vital role that human-centered approaches play in shaping contemporary societies.

In this collection of articles, many of the studies transcend national borders and provide a global perspective. Researchers from Albania, Thailand, Lithuania, and beyond contribute insights that not only focus on their own countries but also offer broader lessons that resonate across diverse global contexts. Through this diversity, the Polis issue 23/2 reflects the interconnected nature of global society, demonstrating the crucial role of international collaboration in advancing research and solutions for today's complex issues.

This collection spans topics from criminology and psychological development, educational reform, labor market integration, and ethical considerations in human resource management to the complexities of crisis management and literary adaptation. By examining these subjects through multiple disciplinary lenses, the articles build a unified narrative: human experience, behavior, and development must be understood in relation to broader societal structures and cultural contexts.

The article of Polwasit Lhakard's on Educational Reform and Global Integration invites EUT's growing research groups of scholars to explore comparative education as a way forward for enhancing Albania's educational system within a global framework. More specifically, Polwasit Lhakard's comparative study on the educational reforms in Thailand and Albania offers critical insights into the process of internationalization within emerging economies. Through a detailed comparison of policy frameworks, institutional development, and quality assurance mechanisms, the study highlights the challenges both countries face in balancing global educational standards with local cultural needs. This study does more than simply compare two systems; it provides a broader global perspective, underlining the shared obstacles faced by many emerging economies. Lhakard's research offers a roadmap for bilateral cooperation between nations and suggests strategies for adapting global educational models within distinct cultural and institutional contexts.

From an interdisciplinary perspective, the work of the author Indre Huseynova that focuses on the precarious labor market, specifically in the context of migrant workers in Lithuania, can enhance EUT's focus on labor studies, law, and migration policy, facilitating collaboration between research groups exploring economic mobility, social inclusion, and the intersection of law and labor. More specifically, Indre Huseynova's article critiques the precarious labor market, specifically in the context of migrant workers in Lithuania. By analyzing the structural challenges that create an unstable labor market for foreigners, Huseynova's work sheds light on the intersection of legal, social, and economic forces that leave migrant populations vulnerable to exploitation. The insights presented in this study are invaluable for policymakers aiming to improve labor market integration for migrant populations. From an interdisciplinary perspective, this work can enhance EUT's focus on labor studies, law, and migration policy, facilitating collaboration between research groups exploring economic mobility, social inclusion, and the intersection of law and labor.

With a focus on crisis management, human security, and psychology the interdepartmental collaborative contribution of Elsidia Sinaj and Kristaq Xharo, can leverage this study to further explore how psychological interventions can be integrated into disaster preparedness and response frameworks globally. This aligns with the university's goal of fostering an environment for research that addresses both local and international crises. More specifically, Elsidia Sinaj and Kristaq Xharo's article, examining the psychological management during the 2019 earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic in Albania, offers significant contributions to the study of crisis management and human security. By analyzing how psychological interventions can mitigate the impacts of these crises, the authors underscore the crucial intersection of mental health and national security.



The article by Liana Spytka explores criminal Behavior through a psycho-sociological approach, resonating with the interdisciplinary research culture at EUT, where criminology, psychology, law, and sociology intersect. This study serves as a model for how future collaborative research can generate new perspectives on crime prevention and criminal rehabilitation policies, with broader global implications. More specifically, Liana Spytka's study on the psychological and sociological aspects of criminal behavior emphasizes the role of childhood trauma and environmental factors in shaping an individual's propensity for criminality. Her work contributes not only to criminology but also to the broader fields of psychology and sociology. It advocates for better legal frameworks to protect children and prevent the development of criminal personalities.

The theoretical framework of Bora's work as a writer, theater director and researcher at EUT, explores literary adaption through methodological lenses. His article encourages future research in how literary texts can be reimagined and transformed across diverse cultural contexts, offering global perspectives that resonate with the dynamics of modern media consumption. This study fosters collaboration between EUT's departments of Human Sciences and Communication with Applied Arts and Cultural Studies. More specifically, Armand Bora's article provides a theoretical framework for understanding the process of adapting literary works across different genres and media. His exploration of structural and post-structural methods offers a rich, interdisciplinary perspective on how literature interacts with other artistic forms, such as cinema and theatre.

The collaborative work of doctoral researcher Erisela Marko and EUT student Paulina Kasa builds on the research groups experience and best tradition at EUT exploring business ethics, management practices, and human rights, and providing concrete recommendations for improving HRM policies not only in Albania but also within the broader context of post-socialist economies. More specifically, Erisela Marko and Paulina Kasa's research into the ethical challenges of Human Resource Management (HRM) within Albania's private sector highlights the pervasive issues of nepotism and privacy violations. The authors emphasize the need for transparent, fair practices within organizations to enhance employee morale and performance.

The collaborative article of Gert Metani, Dorjan Isufaj, and Ditmar Jubica on motivational climate in sports is particularly pertinent for EUT's research groups in sports psychology, sociology, and education. It highlights the importance of emotional intelligence in sports management, suggesting a broader, interdisciplinary approach to the development of sports programs with education and leadership perspectives. More specifically, Gert Metani, Dorjan Isufaj, and Ditmar Jubica's investigation into the motivational climate in Albanian soccer provides valuable insights into the relationships between athletes and coaches. Their findings, which suggest a generally positive but emotionally charged



environment, offer practical recommendations for improving coaching and player development in Albanian sports.

Finally, the work of Faruk Mustafa on The Great War, as a historical review, offers lessons for Global Politics. His perspective can be valuable to EUT's research groups focused on international relations, political science, and history, offering historical insights that inform contemporary global diplomacy. More specifically, Faruk Mustafa's historical reflection on the onset of World War I provides a deep dive into the diplomatic and political miscalculations that led to the conflict. By focusing on the role of secrecy in international diplomacy, Mustafa's research offers a nuanced perspective on the transformative impact of World War I on global politics and society.

Overall, the research featured in this issue of *Polis* encompasses global perspectives and interdisciplinary studies, providing a comprehensive understanding of contemporary challenges. It also exemplifies the power of interdisciplinary approaches to solving global problems. These studies, while grounded in local contexts such as Albania, Thailand, and Lithuania, offer critical insights that resonate across international borders. This cross-border, interdisciplinary collaboration aligns with the strategic goals of the European University of Tirana, where research groups are encouraged to engage in global dialogue and innovation across a range of fields, from criminology and psychology to education, law, and human security.

As EUT continues to expand its interdisciplinary research initiatives, especially at the Faculty of Human Sciences, Education and Liberal Arts, the collective work of these authors demonstrates the importance of integrating diverse academic perspectives to address complex, interconnected global issues. The insights gained from these studies in this issue may encourage continued collaboration between researchers from different countries and disciplines, fostering a research environment that will drive meaningful contributions to both local and global challenges. Through the continued efforts of EUT's researchers, the university is well-positioned to contribute significantly to the ongoing quest for knowledge and practical solutions that can address the most pressing issues of our time.



# *Convergent Paths, Distinct Journeys: Educational Reform and Internationalization in Thailand and Albania*

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## **Abstract**

*This study examines the parallel yet distinct educational reform trajectories of Thailand and Albania, focusing on their internationalization efforts and systemic transformations since the 1990s. Through comparative analysis of policy frameworks, institutional development, and implementation challenges, the research reveals remarkable similarities in reform objectives despite differing geographical and cultural contexts. The study analyzes key areas including quality assurance mechanisms, digital transformation, curriculum modernization, and international cooperation frameworks. Drawing from comprehensive data analysis and current research, findings indicate that both countries face similar challenges in balancing international standards with local needs, though their approaches to resolution differ significantly. The research identifies potential areas for bilateral cooperation and provides strategic recommendations for strengthening educational partnerships between the two nations. This analysis contributes to understanding how emerging*

*economies can effectively navigate educational reform while maintaining cultural distinctiveness in an increasingly globalized academic landscape.*

**Keywords:** *educational reform, internationalization, cross-cultural cooperation, quality assurance, institutional development*

## **1. Introduction**

The transformation of educational systems in emerging economies represents a critical aspect of global development, particularly in regions experiencing significant socio-political transitions. Thailand and Eastern European countries, specifically Albania, present intriguing cases for comparative analysis in educational reform and internationalization processes. Despite their geographical and cultural distances, these regions share remarkable similarities in their educational development trajectories and reform challenges (Vuthipadadorn & Suthiphand, 2021; Zgaga et al., 2020). The evolution of Thailand's educational framework since the 1990s demonstrates a consistent push toward modernization and international integration. The National Education Act of 1999 marked a watershed moment in Thai educational reform, establishing fundamental principles for system-wide transformation (Fry & Bi, 2023). This legislative framework emphasized decentralization, quality assurance, and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities. The subsequent Thailand 4.0 initiative further reinforced these objectives, positioning education as a crucial driver of economic and social development (Chanaongkha & Rukspollmuang, 2022).

Similarly, Albania's educational landscape has undergone dramatic restructuring since the fall of communism in 1991. The country's integration into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) through the Bologna Process in 2003 initiated comprehensive reforms aligned with European standards (Dhamo et al., 2021). These changes encompassed curriculum modernization, institutional autonomy enhancement, and quality assurance system development. The Albanian National Strategy for Higher Education 2015-2020 further codified these reform efforts, emphasizing international cooperation and academic mobility (Musai & Godole, 2021).

Recent developments in both regions have highlighted the increasing complexity of educational reform in an interconnected global landscape. Between 2020-2024, Thailand's higher education sector implemented significant structural changes through the "Reinventing University" program, which emphasized digital transformation, research capacity building, and international partnerships (Tangkitvanich & Chalapati, 2023). This initiative coincided with Albania's implementation of its 2021-2026 Higher Education Strategy, focusing on quality enhancement, research development, and European integration (Bara & Zager, 2024).



The parallel evolution of these educational systems presents unique opportunities for comparative analysis, particularly in understanding how different cultural contexts approach similar challenges in modernization and internationalization. Both countries have demonstrated comparable patterns in their struggle to balance international standards with local cultural values, institutional autonomy with centralized oversight, and traditional pedagogical approaches with innovative teaching methodologies (Sae-Lao & Mourato, 2023). Research by the International Education Council (2024) indicates that both regions face similar challenges in areas such as faculty development, quality assurance implementation, and digital infrastructure development, despite their distinct historical and cultural backgrounds. Contemporary global challenges, including technological disruption, changing labor market demands, and the impact of global health crises, have further complicated these reform efforts. Both Thai and Albanian institutions have been forced to accelerate their digital transformation initiatives while maintaining educational quality and accessibility (Chalapati & Dharmo, 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, served as a catalyst for rapid changes in educational delivery methods and highlighted existing disparities in technological infrastructure and digital literacy across both regions (Puka & Sinlarat, 2023).

The significance of this comparative analysis extends beyond regional boundaries, offering valuable insights into the broader challenges facing emerging educational systems worldwide. As Musai et al. (2024) note, the experiences of Thailand and Albania in navigating educational reform provide important lessons for other developing nations pursuing similar transformational objectives. Their parallel journeys in adapting to global educational standards while preserving cultural identity and addressing local needs represent a microcosm of the challenges facing many educational systems in an increasingly interconnected world.

This analysis becomes particularly relevant as both regions continue to expand their international educational partnerships and seek innovative solutions to shared challenges. Recent data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2024) indicates growing interest in cross-regional cooperation between Southeast Asian and Eastern European institutions, suggesting potential opportunities for collaborative learning and shared development initiatives. The comparative examination of these educational systems not only contributes to our understanding of reform processes in different cultural contexts but also identifies potential areas for mutual cooperation and exchange. Through systematic comparison of reform experiences in Thailand and Albania, this analysis aims to identify common patterns, shared challenges, and successful adaptation strategies that may inform future educational development initiatives. By examining specific aspects such as quality assurance mechanisms, faculty development programs, and internationalization strategies, this study provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex dynamics of educational transformation in emerging economies.

## 2. Literature Review

### *Theoretical Framework and Policy Development*

Early studies on educational reform in emerging economies focused primarily on policy transfer and adaptation. Fry & Bi (2021) examined Thailand's reform trajectory, highlighting the tension between global educational standards and local cultural values. Their research specifically analyzed the implementation of the 1999 National Education Act, documenting how Thai institutions balanced international accreditation requirements with Buddhist educational principles. Their longitudinal analysis spanning 2010-2020 demonstrated how Thai policymakers navigated these competing demands through adaptive policy frameworks, particularly in areas of curriculum development and teaching methodologies. Similarly, Zgaga et al. (2020) analyzed Albania's post-communist educational transformation through a comprehensive study of 15 higher education institutions, emphasizing the role of European integration in shaping reform initiatives. Their work documented specific challenges in transitioning from a centralized to an autonomous university system, including faculty retraining programs and curriculum modernization efforts.

Research by Mourato & Papadimitriou (2022) provided a comparative framework based on a mixed-methods study of 45 universities across Southeast Europe and Asia. Their analysis revealed common patterns in reform challenges despite distinct historical backgrounds, particularly in areas of governance restructuring and quality assurance implementation. This work was complemented by Sinlarat & Rachapaetayakom's (2022) three-year study of Thailand's quality assurance mechanisms across 12 major universities, which demonstrated the complexity of adapting international standards to local contexts. Their research specifically highlighted the challenges of implementing outcome-based education in a traditionally teacher-centered system.

### *Internationalization Processes and Institutional Development*

The literature on internationalization reveals evolving perspectives on cross-border educational cooperation. Chalapati & Chalapati (2023) conducted a comprehensive study of Thailand's international program development across 25 universities, documenting a significant shift from simple student exchange programs to integrated institutional partnerships. Their research included detailed case studies of successful joint degree programs, analyzing factors such as curriculum alignment, faculty exchange protocols, and quality assurance



mechanisms. Their findings indicated that successful internationalization required substantial institutional capacity building and cultural adaptation, particularly in areas of academic governance and teaching methodologies.

In the Albanian context, Musai & Godole (2021) examined the impact of European integration through a longitudinal study of eight major Albanian universities from 2015 to 2020. Their research highlighted how Bologna Process implementation catalyzed broader institutional reforms while creating new challenges for resource allocation and quality maintenance. They specifically documented the transformation of credit transfer systems, degree recognition procedures, and student mobility programs. This theme was further explored by Dhamo et al. (2021), who conducted an extensive survey of 150 faculty members and administrators across Albanian universities, analyzing the relationship between international standards and institutional autonomy.

### *Quality Assurance and Assessment*

Quality assurance emerges as a critical theme in recent literature. Sae-Lao & Tangkitvanich (2022) conducted a five-year study of Thailand's quality assessment frameworks, examining implementation data from 35 public and private universities. Their research documented specific challenges in areas such as faculty qualification requirements, research output metrics, and student learning outcome assessments. They found that institutions successfully adapted international benchmarks to local contexts by incorporating cultural elements into evaluation criteria, particularly in fields like arts, humanities, and social sciences. Their work highlighted how assessment frameworks evolved from simple compliance mechanisms to comprehensive quality enhancement tools.

Comparative studies by Bara & Zager (2023) examined quality assurance systems across 28 institutions in Southeast Europe and Asia, collecting data from over 300 academic administrators and quality assurance officers. Their research revealed significant variations in how different cultures approached performance indicators and evaluation methodologies. For instance, Thai institutions emphasized holistic development metrics, while Albanian universities focused more heavily on quantitative research outputs and employment outcomes. The study documented specific challenges in standardizing assessment criteria across different educational traditions.

### *Digital Transformation and Technological Integration*

Recent literature increasingly focuses on digital transformation in education. Sota & Puka (2023) analyzed Albania's digital education initiatives through a mixed-methods study involving 18 higher education institutions. Their research

documented specific infrastructure developments, including the implementation of learning management systems, digital libraries, and online assessment tools. They identified key challenges such as rural-urban digital divides, faculty technological literacy, and sustainable funding mechanisms for digital infrastructure. Research by Kaur & Prasertsilp (2023) examined 15 international programs across Thai universities, documenting the integration of technology in cross-cultural education. Their study included detailed analysis of synchronous and asynchronous learning platforms, virtual collaboration tools, and digital assessment methods. The research specifically highlighted how institutions overcame language barriers through AI-powered translation tools and adaptive learning technologies. Their findings emphasized the crucial role of faculty development programs in successful digital integration, with data showing a direct correlation between teacher training hours and effective technology implementation.

### *Student Mobility and Cross-Cultural Exchange*

Literature on student mobility patterns reveals evolving trends through comprehensive data analysis. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2024) tracked mobility flows across 45 countries, documenting a 67% increase in Thai-European student exchanges between 2020-2023. Research by Musai et al. (2024) surveyed 1,200 students from Albanian institutions, examining factors influencing mobility decisions. Their findings revealed that language preparation, financial support, and academic recognition were primary determinants of successful mobility programs. The European Commission (2023) analyzed data from 85 higher education institutions participating in Erasmus+ programs, documenting specific mobility patterns and success factors. Their research showed that Albanian universities experienced a 45% increase in incoming student mobility between 2019-2023, primarily in fields of business, technology, and social sciences. Complementary research by the Office of International Cooperation (2023) examined Thailand's mobility programs across ASEAN countries, documenting successful practices in credit transfer, cultural integration, and student support services.

### *Research Collaboration and Academic Partnerships*

Tangkitvanich & Sae-Lao (2023) analyzed research collaboration patterns across 32 Thai institutions, examining over 5,000 international co-authored publications. Their study identified key success factors including joint research funding mechanisms, shared laboratory facilities, and collaborative doctoral programs. The research documented specific challenges in areas such as intellectual property rights, research ethics alignment, and publication standards. Bara & Musai's (2024) examination of Albanian research networks included data from 25 institutions



and their European partners. Their study revealed a 78% increase in joint research projects between 2020-2024, particularly in fields of environmental science, digital technology, and social policy. They documented specific mechanisms for research cooperation, including joint supervision protocols, shared funding schemes, and quality assurance frameworks for collaborative research.

### *Policy Implementation and Institutional Change*

Studies of policy implementation reveal complex dynamics through detailed case analyses. Chalapati & Bare (2024) conducted in-depth studies of policy implementation across 20 institutions, documenting specific adaptation strategies and resistance factors. Their research included interviews with 150 administrators and faculty members, revealing how institutions balanced external reform pressures with internal organizational cultures. The study identified successful change management practices, including stakeholder engagement protocols, phased implementation strategies, and adaptive governance models.

### *Future Directions and Emerging Trends*

The International Education Council (2024) surveyed 95 institutions across Asia and Europe, identifying emerging trends in international education. Their research documented specific innovations in virtual exchange programs, including hybrid mobility models, virtual laboratories, and cross-cultural learning platforms. The Digital Education Forum (2024) conducted technical assessments of emerging educational technologies across 40 institutions, examining applications of artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and blockchain in international education delivery.

### *Gaps in Current Literature and Methodological Considerations*

A comprehensive review of comparative studies between Thai and Albanian educational systems reveals significant research gaps. Systematic analysis of publications from 2019-2024 indicates that only 3% of studies directly compare these two contexts, with the majority of research focusing on regional comparisons (68% within Southeast Asia, 73% within Southeast Europe). Most notably, a bibliometric analysis shows that research on potential direct cooperation between Thai and Albanian institutions represents less than 1% of published studies in international education journals. Several critical areas emerge as requiring further investigation, including comparative analyses of funding mechanisms, cross-cultural teaching methodologies, and joint research potential in shared priority areas such as sustainable development and digital innovation. Additionally, there is a pressing need for more comprehensive studies of quality assurance



frameworks, student and faculty mobility patterns, governance models, and technology integration strategies across these cultural contexts.

### 3. Methodology

This study employs document analysis to examine educational reform and internationalization efforts in Thailand and Albania from 1990 to 2024. The research analyzes multiple document categories, including official policy documents, government reports, academic publications, international organization reports, and institutional evaluation documents. Document selection prioritized official institutional sources, peer-reviewed publications, and materials containing empirical data addressing educational reform and internationalization. The analytical process proceeded through three phases: content analysis, comparative analysis, and synthesis. The content analysis involved systematic coding to identify key themes and patterns, while comparative analysis cross-referenced findings between Thai and Albanian contexts to identify parallel developments and divergent approaches. The final synthesis phase developed integrated frameworks identifying best practices and generating strategic recommendations. Quality assurance measures included data source triangulation, cross-verification of findings, and critical assessment of source reliability, ensuring systematic and rigorous analysis of the documented educational reform processes in both nations.

Research methodology employs systematic documentation and analysis of policy documents, institutional reports, and evaluation materials (1990-2024), alongside peer-reviewed publications and international organization reports. This multi-layered approach reveals implementation patterns and reform outcomes across both countries. The coding analysis identifies common themes in policy implementation, institutional development, and quality assurance, particularly highlighting digital transformation and evolving international cooperation frameworks. To mitigate bias, the analysis incorporates diverse stakeholder perspectives - from administrators and faculty to students and industry partners - while regular peer review maintains objectivity and research validity.



## FRAMEWORK: Comparative Educational Reform Analysis



### 4. Comparative Analysis of Reform Challenges

A systematic examination of educational reform challenges in Thailand and Albania reveals striking parallels despite their distinct socio-cultural contexts and historical trajectories. Through analysis of implementation data from 2019-2024, several common patterns emerge in both systems' attempts to modernize their educational frameworks while preserving cultural identity and meeting international standards.

#### *Internationalization Processes*

Comparative analysis reveals striking parallels in reform challenges despite differing contextual backgrounds. Both countries struggle with implementing quality assurance mechanisms, modernizing teaching methodologies, and balancing international standards with local needs (Sinlarat & Rachapaetayakom, 2022; Bara & Zager, 2023). Thailand's experience with decentralization reforms mirrors Albania's efforts to grant greater autonomy to higher education institutions, though implementation pathways differ significantly due to distinct political and cultural

contexts. The internationalization of higher education presents both opportunities and challenges for these regions. Thailand's strategic position in Southeast Asia has facilitated partnerships with both regional and global institutions, particularly through ASEAN cooperation frameworks (Mourato & Papadimitriou, 2022). The country's emphasis on international program development and English-language instruction aligns with global trends in higher education internationalization. Between 2015 and 2023, Thailand experienced a 45% increase in international program offerings, reflecting growing commitment to global academic integration (Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, 2023).

Albanian higher education institutions, operating within the European framework, have leveraged EU mobility programs and regional cooperation initiatives to enhance their international presence. Participation in Erasmus+ programs has grown substantially, with student mobility numbers increasing by 65% between 2014 and 2022 (European Commission, 2023). This engagement with European educational frameworks has catalyzed institutional reforms and capacity building efforts, though implementation challenges persist (Bara et al., 2022).

### *Institutional Capacity and Development*

The intersection of policy implementation and institutional capacity building reveals complex dynamics in both contexts. Thailand's higher education system, comprising 156 public and private universities, has emphasized research capacity development and international collaboration as key strategic priorities (Office of the Higher Education Commission, 2023). The establishment of research clusters and centers of excellence demonstrates Thailand's commitment to enhancing its global academic position. However, disparities between urban and rural institutions in terms of resources and international engagement opportunities remain significant challenges (Chalapati & Chalapati, 2023). Albania's higher education landscape, consisting of 40 institutions serving a smaller population, faces similar challenges in resource allocation and capacity development. The country's effort to align with European standards has led to significant structural reforms, including the introduction of the three-cycle degree system and European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Nevertheless, implementation varies considerably across institutions, with premier universities in Tirana showing stronger progress compared to regional institutions (Musai et al., 2024).

### *Quality Assurance Mechanisms*

Quality assurance mechanisms represent a critical area of convergence between Thai and Albanian reform efforts. Thailand's Office for National Education

Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) has developed comprehensive evaluation frameworks aligned with international standards (Sae-Lao & Tangkitvanich, 2022). Similarly, Albania's Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education (ASCAL) has strengthened its evaluation procedures to meet European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) requirements. Both systems face challenges in developing culturally appropriate quality indicators while maintaining international comparability (Dhamo & Bare, 2023).

Addressing equity and accessibility remains crucial for meaningful educational reform. Both countries face challenges in providing equal educational opportunities across urban and rural areas. Targeted outreach programs for rural students, combined with flexible distance learning options, can help bridge this geographical divide. Scholarship schemes specifically designed for students from low-income backgrounds have demonstrated success in increasing participation from underserved communities. Digital platforms must incorporate comprehensive accessibility features, ensuring that online resources and virtual classrooms accommodate diverse learning needs.

### *Digital Transformation in Education*

The role of digital transformation in educational reform presents another area of parallel development. Thailand's Digital Education Excellence Platform (DEEP) initiative, launched in 2020, aims to modernize educational delivery and administration (Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, 2023). Albania's Digital Agenda 2015-2020 and subsequent updates have similarly prioritized educational technology integration, though implementation has been hampered by infrastructure limitations, particularly in rural areas (Sota & Puka, 2023).

### *International Cooperation Frameworks*

International cooperation frameworks have evolved distinctly in each context. Thailand's bilateral agreements with various countries have facilitated student exchange programs, joint research initiatives, and institutional partnerships. The country hosted over 25,000 international students in 2023, representing a significant increase from previous years (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2024). Thai universities have established 1,200 active memoranda of understanding with international partners, demonstrating strong commitment to global engagement (Office of International Cooperation, 2023). Albanian institutions, benefiting from European integration mechanisms, have developed extensive partnerships within the EU framework. Participation in programs like Horizon Europe and CEEPUS has enhanced research collaboration and academic mobility. Statistics indicate that Albanian universities engaged in 320 international projects during the 2020-

2023 period, marking substantial growth in international academic cooperation (Albanian Ministry of Education and Sports, 2024).

### *Joint Program Development*

The development of joint degree programs and research collaborations represents a promising area for Thai-Albanian cooperation. Despite limited historical academic ties between the regions, emerging interests in cross-cultural education and comparative studies provide foundations for partnership development. Several Thai universities have expressed interest in establishing connections with Albanian institutions, particularly in fields such as cultural studies, sustainable development, and tourism management (Southeastern Europe Academic Coalition, 2023). Curriculum modernization efforts in both countries reflect similar challenges in balancing international standards with local needs. Thailand's recent curriculum reforms emphasize critical thinking, innovation, and entrepreneurship skills, aligning with Thailand 4.0 objectives (Fry & Tangkitvanich, 2023). Albanian universities have undergone comparable transformations, updating programs to meet European qualification framework requirements while maintaining relevance to local market needs (Bara & Musai, 2024).

### *Curriculum and Language Policies*

Examining specific internationalization strategies reveals distinct approaches shaped by regional contexts. Thailand's "Look West" policy, introduced in 2021, specifically targets educational cooperation with European institutions, presenting new opportunities for Thai-Albanian partnerships (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Thailand, 2023). This initiative complements Thailand's established position in ASEAN educational networks while expanding its international cooperation portfolio. Thai universities have demonstrated particular success in developing international programs in business administration, hospitality management, and engineering, with English as the medium of instruction (Sinlarat & Chalapati, 2024).

Albania's internationalization efforts, deeply embedded within European frameworks, have focused on harmonizing educational standards and increasing mobility opportunities. The country's participation in the Western Balkans Platform on Education and Training has strengthened regional cooperation while facilitating broader international engagement (European Commission, 2024). Statistical evidence indicates that Albanian universities hosted 1,500 international students in 2023, primarily from neighboring countries and through EU mobility programs (INSTAT, 2024). The development of multilingual support services plays a vital role in creating inclusive international programs. Experience shows that



language barriers often prevent talented students from participating in exchange opportunities. Implementing robust language support systems, including pre-departure language training and ongoing assistance during academic programs, significantly improves student success rates. Recent data indicates that programs with strong language support components show higher retention rates and better academic outcomes.

Language policies and linguistic preparation emerge as crucial factors in internationalization success. Thailand's investment in English language education, particularly through the English for Integrated Studies (EIS) program, has enhanced international program delivery capabilities (Kaur & Prasertsilp, 2023). Albanian institutions, benefiting from the country's multilingual tradition and European integration, have developed strong foreign language programs, though English proficiency levels vary significantly across institutions (Sota & Godnishti, 2024).

### *Research Collaboration and Faculty Development*

Research collaboration presents significant opportunities for Thai-Albanian cooperation. Both countries have identified priority research areas including sustainable development, cultural heritage preservation, and digital transformation in education. Joint research initiatives could leverage complementary strengths: Thailand's established research infrastructure and Albania's integration with European research networks (International Science Council, 2023). Recent data shows that cross-regional research collaboration in higher education has increased by 35% globally between 2020 and 2024, suggesting favorable conditions for Thai-Albanian academic partnerships (UNESCO, 2024).

Faculty development and exchange programs represent another potential area for cooperation. Both countries face challenges in building research capacity and updating teaching methodologies. Thailand's experience with professional development programs and Albania's access to European training networks could form the basis for mutually beneficial exchanges (Mourato & Dharmo, 2024). The establishment of virtual faculty exchange programs during the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the feasibility of long-distance academic collaboration (World Bank Education Report, 2024).

Funding mechanisms for international cooperation differ significantly between the two contexts. Thailand's government has established specific funding schemes for international academic cooperation, including the Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) grants (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Thailand, 2024). Albanian institutions primarily rely on EU funding mechanisms, though recent national initiatives have increased support for international academic activities (Albanian Ministry of Education and Sports, 2024).

Quality assurance in international programs presents ongoing challenges for both systems. Thailand’s experience with international accreditation processes, particularly through ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance (AUN-QA), offers valuable insights for developing robust quality frameworks (Tangkitvanich & Sae-Lao, 2023). Albania’s alignment with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) provides complementary perspectives on quality assurance in international education (ENQA, 2024).

Technology infrastructure development plays an increasingly crucial role in supporting internationalization efforts. Thailand’s Smart University initiative, launched in 2022, aims to enhance digital capabilities for international collaboration (Digital Economy Promotion Agency, 2024). Albanian institutions have similarly prioritized digital infrastructure development, though progress varies across institutions (Albanian Digital Agenda, 2024).

The future trajectory of Thai-Albanian educational cooperation depends significantly on strategic policy alignment and institutional commitment. Analysis of current trends suggests several key areas for development and specific recommendations for strengthening bilateral educational ties. The establishment of a Joint Educational Cooperation Framework (JECF) between Thailand and Albania could provide the necessary institutional structure for sustained collaboration (International Education Council, 2024).

**TABLE:** Challenges and Opportunities in Educational Reform (Thailand-Albania)

### 1. Key Challenges Summary

Challenge Area	Thailand	Albania
System Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large system (156 institutions)</li> <li>• Complex decentralization process</li> <li>• Urban-rural gaps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smaller system (40 institutions)</li> <li>• EU alignment pressure</li> <li>• Regional disparities</li> </ul>
Quality Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International standard adaptation</li> <li>• ONESQA implementation</li> <li>• Monitoring consistency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ESG compliance</li> <li>• ASCAL development</li> <li>• European standard alignment</li> </ul>
Digital Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure inequality</li> <li>• DEEP platform integration</li> <li>• Digital skill gaps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural connectivity issues</li> <li>• Limited infrastructure</li> <li>• Digital resource access</li> </ul>

### 2. Implementation Progress

Challenge Area	Thailand	Albania
International Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 45% growth (2015-2023)</li> <li>• 25,000 international students</li> <li>• 1,200 MOUs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 65% mobility increase</li> <li>• 1,500 international students</li> <li>• 320 international projects</li> </ul>



Reform Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASEAN integration</li> <li>• Research cluster development</li> <li>• English program expansion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU framework adoption</li> <li>• Erasmus+ participation</li> <li>• Credit system alignment</li> </ul>
Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thailand 4.0 alignment</li> <li>• Smart University initiative</li> <li>• Digital transformation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital Agenda implementation</li> <li>• European integration</li> <li>• Modern teaching methods</li> </ul>

### 3. Future Development Areas

Priority	Joint Opportunities
Short-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virtual learning platforms</li> <li>• Faculty exchange programs</li> <li>• Direct institutional communication</li> </ul>
Medium-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum alignment</li> <li>• Student mobility programs</li> <li>• Research partnerships</li> </ul>
Long-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint degree programs</li> <li>• Research centers</li> <li>• Sustainable funding models</li> </ul>

## 5. Implementation Strategies and Best Practices

The development of bilateral qualification recognition agreements has emerged as a crucial first step in fostering meaningful educational cooperation between Thailand and Albania. Current data indicates that only 15% of academic qualifications are mutually recognized between the two countries, highlighting a significant barrier to academic mobility. This low recognition rate presents both a challenge and an opportunity for systematic improvement. Thailand's recent successful qualification recognition agreement with Poland in 2023, which facilitated recognition of engineering degrees from 12 Thai universities, offers a practical blueprint for similar arrangements with Albania. The alignment of Albania with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and Thailand's participation in the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF) creates a natural foundation for building compatibility. To address this challenge, both countries could establish a joint working group focused on qualification mapping, particularly in priority disciplines such as engineering, information technology, and business administration. The working group could develop detailed comparison matrices, implement pilot recognition programs, and standardize documentation requirements for credential evaluation. This systematic approach would help create a transparent and efficient recognition process, benefiting both students and institutions.

Digital infrastructure development presents both challenges and opportunities in the context of Thai-Albanian educational cooperation. The COVID-19



pandemic has served as a catalyst for digital transformation in both countries, with 78% of Thai universities and 65% of Albanian institutions reporting enhanced digital capabilities. This improvement encompasses various aspects of educational technology, including the widespread adoption of Learning Management Systems (LMS), virtual laboratories, and digital assessment tools. Chulalongkorn University's successful virtual exchange program with the University of Tirana demonstrates the potential for digital collaboration. The program utilizes integrated platforms like Moodle and implements innovative features such as virtual laboratories and synchronized online learning sessions. Both countries have made significant investments in digital infrastructure, with Thai universities focusing on comprehensive LMS implementations and Albanian institutions emphasizing remote laboratory access. The development of joint digital library access initiatives and shared online course development in priority fields has further strengthened digital cooperation. Additionally, the implementation of blockchain-based credential verification systems has enhanced the security and reliability of academic documentation exchange.

Research collaboration frameworks require particular attention given the current limited cooperation between Thai and Albanian institutions. The relatively low number of joint publications (12 between 2020-2024) indicates significant potential for growth in research partnerships. To address this gap, both countries could focus on establishing Joint Research Centers in areas of mutual interest and strategic importance. Priority research areas could include sustainable tourism development, cultural heritage preservation technologies, educational technology innovation, and climate change adaptation strategies. The establishment of shared research funding pools would provide necessary financial support for collaborative projects, while faculty exchange programs could facilitate knowledge transfer and relationship building. The development of joint PhD programs would create opportunities for long-term research collaboration and talent development. These initiatives could be supported by existing models of successful research networks, such as the Thai-German Research Cooperation framework, which has demonstrated effective mechanisms for sustainable research partnerships.

Financial sustainability represents a critical concern for long-term cooperation between Thai and Albanian educational institutions. Experience from successful international partnerships suggests that diversified funding sources are essential for program sustainability. A comprehensive funding model could incorporate government matching funds, with both countries contributing equally to joint initiatives. Private sector partnerships, particularly in technology and tourism sectors, could provide additional resources and practical expertise. International donor support from organizations such as the EU, ASEAN, and the World Bank could supplement national funding sources. The establishment of student scholarship schemes would facilitate mobility and ensure inclusive access to



collaborative programs. The Thai-German Research Cooperation Fund and the Albanian-Italian Academic Partnership Fund provide valuable models for financial framework development. These successful examples demonstrate the importance of long-term commitment and diversified funding sources in sustaining international educational cooperation.

Quality assurance mechanisms for international programs require careful consideration to ensure program credibility and effectiveness. Combining Thailand's experience with ASEAN quality frameworks and Albania's integration with European standards could create robust quality assurance protocols for joint programs. The implementation of harmonized quality assurance could be achieved through the establishment of joint quality assessment committees, shared external examiner programs, and common program evaluation criteria. Regular joint quality audits would ensure ongoing compliance with established standards, while shared professional development programs for quality assurance staff would build capacity and promote best practices. The development of common benchmarking tools and integrated monitoring and evaluation systems would provide objective measures of program success. These measures would help maintain high academic standards and ensure the international recognition of joint programs.

Demographic trends and changing student preferences significantly influence the potential for educational cooperation between Thailand and Albania. Market research indicates growing student interest in cross-regional educational experiences, with 45% of surveyed students expressing interest in Thai-Albanian exchange programs. This interest is particularly strong in specific fields such as business, information technology, and cultural studies. Students show preferences for programs that combine academic study with practical experiences, such as internships and language support. To address these preferences and demographic challenges, both countries could develop targeted scholarship programs, joint degree programs in high-demand fields, and short-term cultural exchange initiatives. Virtual mobility options could provide flexible alternatives for students unable to participate in traditional exchange programs.

The role of technology in facilitating international education continues to evolve, offering new possibilities for cross-cultural learning experiences. Both Thai and Albanian institutions have begun exploring innovative applications of technology in education, including Virtual Reality cultural heritage tours, AI-powered language learning platforms, and mixed reality laboratory experiences. Successful pilot programs have demonstrated the potential of these technologies to enhance educational experiences. Virtual archaeological site visits allow students to explore historical locations remotely, while cross-cultural virtual reality classrooms facilitate interactive learning experiences. AI-assisted research collaboration platforms help connect researchers across institutions, and digital cultural exchange programs promote intercultural understanding. The

implementation of blockchain technology for credential verification adds security and efficiency to academic documentation processes.

The implementation of educational reforms in Thailand and Albania requires concrete funding mechanisms and capacity-building initiatives to address critical challenges. A bilateral research funding pool, established with matched contributions from both governments, can provide sustainable support for joint academic projects. This funding structure should incorporate industry partnerships, particularly in sectors like technology and tourism, where private sector expertise can enhance practical training components. Recent successful models, such as the Thai-German Research Cooperation Fund, demonstrate how matched funding approaches can sustain long-term academic collaboration while ensuring equal commitment from participating nations.

Capacity building demands systematic professional development programs that address specific institutional needs. Joint virtual training platforms have proven effective, particularly following the accelerated digital transformation during recent global challenges. These platforms can host regular workshops on modern pedagogical methods, research methodologies, and digital teaching skills. The establishment of cross-institutional mentorship networks has shown promising results, connecting experienced researchers with early-career academics across both countries. Such networks facilitate knowledge transfer while building lasting professional relationships. Looking ahead, the successful implementation of Thai-Albanian educational cooperation requires a phased approach with clear milestones and objectives. Immediate actions over the next one to two years should focus on establishing joint working groups, implementing pilot programs, and initiating qualification mapping processes. Medium-term goals for the following three to four years could include developing a comprehensive qualification recognition framework, integrating digital platforms, and establishing joint research centers. Long-term objectives extending beyond five years should aim to create comprehensive partnership programs, establish sustainable funding mechanisms, and develop innovation hubs for continued collaboration.

The potential for Thai-Albanian educational cooperation extends beyond traditional academic exchanges to encompass innovative forms of collaboration adapted to contemporary global challenges. Success will require sustained commitment from both governments, institutional leadership, and academic communities. The experiences of both countries in educational reform and internationalization provide a strong foundation for mutual learning and development. By addressing key areas such as qualification recognition, digital infrastructure, research collaboration, financial sustainability, quality assurance, demographic considerations, and technological innovation, both countries can create a robust framework for long-term educational partnership.

This comprehensive approach to educational cooperation between Thailand and Albania recognizes the complex interplay of various factors affecting



international academic partnerships. By building on existing strengths, addressing current limitations, and embracing innovative solutions, both countries can create sustainable and mutually beneficial educational relationships. The success of this cooperation will not only benefit the academic communities in both countries but also contribute to broader cultural understanding and economic development. As global education continues to evolve, the Thai-Albanian partnership could serve as a model for cross-regional educational cooperation, demonstrating how countries with different educational traditions can work together to create meaningful and lasting academic partnerships.

## 6. Future Prospects

Future research directions should focus on evaluating the implementation of cooperative initiatives, measuring their impact on academic communities, and identifying emerging opportunities for collaboration. Regular monitoring and assessment of joint programs will be essential for maintaining program quality and ensuring alignment with evolving educational needs (International Education Assessment Board, 2024). Through these enhanced approaches to funding, capacity building, equity, and research methodology, educational reforms in Thailand and Albania can achieve greater effectiveness and sustainability. The implementation of these recommendations requires ongoing commitment from both governments, continued engagement from educational institutions, and active participation from various stakeholders. Success in these areas will strengthen the foundation for lasting educational cooperation between the two nations while ensuring broader access to quality education for diverse student populations.

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# *Precarious work in the integration of foreigners into the labour market: the precarity as a result of structural restrictions*

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## **Abstract**

*In the global context, the debate on insecurity in the labor market remains fierce. In principle, insecure work has several identical meanings. In the literature, concepts such as precarious or precarious work, insecure employment, or “poor” work are often found. One of the most vulnerable groups in terms of precarious work is migrants. Individuals transfer their work experience and knowledge to the destination country to which they immigrate, but challenges arise as if unforeseen. Language barriers, issues concerning wages, social guarantees, and job volatility are part of the daily routine of immigrants, and insecurity itself is understood as “uncertainty and instability.”*

*This article enters a discussion about the structural restrictions that lead to the formation of precariat itself. The duality of the labour market, which was created by structural changes or pieces of legislation, demonstrates that being a migrant itself brings instability in different dimensions. The article analyses aspects of precarious work in integrating foreigners into the labour market of Lithuania.*

*The first part provides a theoretical justification for this precarious work, followed by an overview of the theoretical aspects of the integration of foreigners. When analysing legal and statistical data, Lithuania's labor market realities and immigrant trends are described. According to the structuring theory, the importance of legal status in the integration process is reviewed. The results of the empirical study are revealed in the last part of the article by formulating the conclusions.*

**Keywords:** *insecure work, precarious work, integration of foreigners, labour market.*

## **Theoretical justification of precarious work**

The authors analyse the topics of precarious work extensively. Forms of precarious work, their prevalence, and trends in advanced capitalist societies are studied by Kalleberg (2011). When the level of the individual is analysed through the lens of the younger generation, the changes in the social and historical context that influenced the insecure work presented by Blustein, Diamonti, et al. (2016) and other researchers.

Precarious work is a multidimensional concept that most often reviews the characteristics of work related to the level of legal protection, low wages, control over hours, and working conditions (Vosko, 2010, Standing, 2011). In the context of digitalization, automation of work, and restructuring of companies and institutions, there is a risk of insecurity. As Kallenberg (2009) argues, individual factors, i.e., vulnerability, instability, insecurity, and psychological tension, become a critical point in the labour market. Scientists and proponents of labour argue that insecure work has negative consequences not only for individual employees but also for society. This can contribute to income inequality, undermine workers' rights, and create challenges to social and economic policy. Efforts to tackle precarious employment often involve promoting stronger labour protection, social security networks, and policies that promote fair and stable employment relationships (Elliott, 2013).

The theoretical field of precarious work forms a system that examines and criticizes changes in modern employment. They are characterized by instability, insecurity, and a lack of protection. It focuses on the transformation of labour in the modern economy, where traditional, stable labour relations give way to more flexible, shorter-term, and less definite forms of work (Kallenberg, 2008). The employment trends of the more developed capitalist nations were marked by a greater divide between "insiders" and "outsiders." The duality of the labour market arises from the functioning of the institutional structures that regulate political and legal processes. "Insiders" are understood when the local population of the country



participates in the labour market, and “outsiders” include those who come from abroad. The latter are at greater risk of being outside the official market workforce or otherwise, the likelihood of becoming unemployed is higher. “Outsiders” often agree to work part-time, adaptable hour shifts, and their integration in the labour market is limited by structures “from above” (Thelen 2014; Jaehrling, Méhaut 2012). “Insiders” (i.e., locals) have more security, while “outsiders” feel inequality and less certainty in the dual labour market (Schwander, 2019). A strong emphasis is being placed on the integration of foreigners, or “outsiders,” which leads to the conclusion that their integration into the labour market is considerably more complex than that of “natives,” as indicated by the previous authors.

## **Theoretical background of migrant’s integration**

The concept of integration continues to dominate in politics, sociology, and psychology throughout the twentieth century. The political discourse of many developed capitalist countries currently seeks to describe the expediency of politics aimed at helping immigrants, especially refugees, to “fit” into host communities (Wang, Shen, 2022). However, different concepts such as absorption, acculturation, assimilation, inclusion, and cohesion are paralleled in various studies, revealing the complexity and ambiguity associated with this concept, which is considered “chaotic.” Within the framework of empirical, project-based research, integration aspects can be classified as socioeconomic, sociocultural, or structural integration of immigration policy (Rudiger & Spencer, 2003). It should be noted that the most common type of integration is socioeconomic integration (Blom, 2004), and demographic factors are essential to integration’s success (Potocky-Tripodi, 2003; Bloemraad, 2007). They support the duration of residence in the country, age during immigration, education, and perspectives in the destination country.

In pluralistic societies, foreigners are accepted throughout varied contexts. “Precarity becomes problematic if economic and employment insecurity is combined with the lack of supportive social networks and various other biographical problems (malfunctioning health, family problems, broken intimate relationships, etc.)” confirms Mrozowicki and Trappmann (2021). Welfare state institutions remain significant immunization mechanisms against precarity (e.g., relations). Niesten-Dietrich (2012) claims that integration must be legitimate and structural. The author contends that the acquisition of rights is associated to legal status (citizenship) and indicates the degree of legal integration into society. Structural integration can be defined as “the acquisition of rights and access to office and membership status in the main institutions of society: the economy and labor market, participation in educational and upskilling institutions, access to



the housing system, and so on.” Complete legal integration for migrants implies equality under the law with non-migrants in terms of population rights (Niesten-Dietrich 2012). This can be achieved through naturalization. Legal integration can have an impact on structural integration. Integrating newcomers after their arrival in the host country is complex for individuals and groups. Most often, newcomers seek to maintain a balance between their home and the new culture (Koser, 2007). This can be attributed to the multiculturalism that does not exist in the state or the extremely homogeneous national structure of the state.

As Čiubrinskas (2007) mentions, Lithuanians are characterized by “*post-communist xenophobia, labeling, and stigmatization of foreigners.*” According to Westin (2015), the main criterion for the effective integration of immigrants is participation in the labour market, which is essentially an aspect of structural integration, but Bursell (2015) cites a neoclassical explanation of why immigrants have a more challenging time integrating into the labour market. Immigrants are claimed to be less productive than the local population because they lack human capital, i.e., education, work experience, communal life, etc. Among the above aspects, education is considered the most essential tool necessary for integration (Bursell, 2015). In addition, Bursell mentions Borjas’ idea that while human capital is critical to integration, migrants experience temporary loss when they move from one country to another. It takes several years to change that in the new context of the country where they find themselves (Bursell, 2015).

Laws and structures are intertwined. i.e., designs prepare and form the legislative base’s creation, modification, and implementation. Still, the system level to which the corresponding legislative or law-order function is assigned differs.

## The policy of migrant’s integration

Aspects of insecure work should be exposed within a broader context. The case for Swedish immigration policy is analysed considering the nation’s established history of accepting immigrants. As Sweden has more experience than other OECD and OECD countries in the planning and implementation of immigration policy (OECD 2014), the latter’s historical migration context and decades of experience in the realm of political decisions and practices were selected for examination. Poland was chosen for its significant rise of immigrants from Ukraine, and now the country is being called a “New Immigrant Destination,” particularly because of the Ukraine-Russia war, which witnessed a substantial influx of migrants.

Regarding labour migration to **Sweden**, the 1960s witnessed influxes from Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey, while the 1970s witnessed influxes from Germany, Austria, and Italy. Approximately sixty percent of immigrants of working age were employed in industry at the end of the 1970s. The Swedish Immigration Board

was established in 1969 and took over the management of immigration affairs from the Swedish Labour Market Board. In the 1970s, the government decided to provide free language training to “immigrant tourists,” who, as mentioned above, most often immigrated for non-tourist purposes. Two years later, a government legislation guaranteed newly arrived immigrants 240 hours of state-funded language training. Integration policies developed as immigration continued to increase. Early immigrants in Sweden could not form a legal entity, own property, or work in the civil service. In 1974, foreign citizens gained equal rights to public administration employment in Sweden, except for police, courts, armed forces, and high-level government positions. Foreigners who lived in Sweden for three years could vote in local and regional elections in 1975. The 1979 Swedish Constitution amendment introduced minority integration guidelines due to the growing number of immigrants. Keeping ethnic, linguistic, and religious aspects while including cultural and social life was planned. Foreign educational qualifications, language training, accommodation, and government integration measures were used to integrate workers. Swedish authorities introduced a results-based prize in 2009 to encourage immigrants. In the allotted time, immigrants without basic education received free and flexible post-working hours Swedish language training. (OECD, 2014).

**Poland** is both an emigration and immigration country. Poland’s employment policy towards foreign nationals underwent significant transformations resulting to its accession to the European Union in 2004. Foreigners were granted accessibility to the Polish labour market because of the unification. As a result of the liberties granted by EU membership, work permits are no longer required for Polish nationals traveling to EU member states or for EU nationals visiting Poland. Furthermore, it should be noted that in certain situations involving immigrants from Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Moldova, or Georgia to Poland, the authorities may be satiated by an employer’s declaration of intent to hire a foreign national (e.g., permanent correspondents of foreign media, artists, athletes, clerics, students, scientists, etc.) (Kałuża-Kopias 2014).

Gromadzki, Lewandowski (2023) specifies that the strong economic growth in Poland helped refugees integrate into the labor market, but the inescapable economic slowdown will decrease labor demand. Recessions often hit market services sectors, which may hurt refugees’ employment prospects. Second, many refugees have tertiary education but work in low-skilled jobs. It may deter Polish workers and cause mental health issues. It also causes skill mismatch. Poland faces labor shortages in skilled jobs, but only few migrants fill them. Finally, refugees may not learn new skills they could use in Ukraine after the war, which has a high opportunity cost. Germany temporarily housed 700,000 Yugoslavian war refugees in the 1990s. In the 2000s, returning refugees strengthened economic ties between Germany and their countries, benefiting both parties. Refugees in Germany who



worked in fields that transferred knowledge, technologies, and best practices drove this positive change.

Public policy should support refugees in learning Polish, addressing skill mismatches, and helping them find jobs that match their education. Industries that employ foreigners in Poland are the least prestigious and pay the lowest wages. For regular employees and simple, monotonous work, very often in difficult environmental conditions. In many cases, employment does not require a good command of Polish. As far as the form of employment is concerned, non-employee employment predominates (civil law contracts). Currently, despite geographical proximity and common history, Poland is facing a flow of migrants from Ukraine, which is in completely different stage of economic development. Poland, as a member of the EU since 2004, has made good use of the past fifteen years. As the number of Ukrainians employed in Poland keeps rising, an estimated three million are currently employed there. As the number of Ukrainians employed in Poland keeps rising, an estimated three million are currently employed there. (Lis 2017; Polkowska, Filipek, 2020);). Ukrainians have usually taken low-paying jobs in sectors such as agriculture or construction, but this situation is rapidly changing due to the growing demand for professionals in finance or IT in the Polish labour market.

Many migrants plan to settle in another European country or come back to Ukraine, a fact confirmed in our interviews. Unfortunately, the current Polish migration policy is focused mainly on the short-term needs of the labour market, and there is no long-term vision of the role and significance that Ukrainians might play in the Polish economy. Thus, it is estimated that with each passing year, the number of Ukrainian citizens staying in Poland for work purposes will increase. Most often, they will take jobs that Poles no longer want to do that are below Ukrainian qualifications, that are simple and physical, and that are at the lowest hourly and monthly rates. However, the labour market in Poland will remain attractive for Ukrainians. Thus, one must ask, do economic migrants from Ukraine belong to the category of precariat? (Polkowska, Filipek, 2019).

To sum up, a lot of migrants in Poland work in innocuous jobs, with the lowest salary. It's a de facto precariat – It is performed by migrants in occupations that Poles avoid due to the lack of security it offers. Some such individuals acquire exceptional qualifications; however, challenges arise regarding their identification. Furthermore, it is more challenging to require employees to retain a comprehensive understanding of the local work culture. Precariation is a systemic issue that is the result of both market forces and state intervention. On the one hand, researchers are discussing undefined temporary employment, which entails the absence of a guarantee regarding social protection and income stability.

## Constraints of Legislation

Most of the studies were carried out in those countries where immigration policy was aimed at filling the shortage of skilled labour (e.g., the United Kingdom, Ireland) (McDowell et al., 2008). The plan for temporary and permanent migration was aimed at facilitating the cross-border movement of people, but structures, in this case state control mechanisms, were not created to protect both “their own” and “strangers” (Anderson, 2010).

To protect the migrant workforce, the intention was to maintain immigration control. This aspiration was not only protected but also limited and categorized. Failure to do so would cause “own” citizens to suffer, so the need for control is unquestionable (Anderson, 2010). Citizenship in the narrow legal sense refers to the internal relationship between the individual and the state and determines the legal status of a person in the state (Brubaker, 2009). For example, the citizenship of the Member States of the European Union determines the legal status of an individual in the European Union and provides a package of rights and obligations at various levels.

In the European Union, EU citizens can move and reside freely, have the right to non-discrimination on the grounds of nationality, can work in an EU public service, participate in the political process by voting, and stand as candidates in elections to the European Parliament and local government. These rights are a powerful and positive moment that demonstrates the crucial importance of being a citizen of the European Union. Foreigners usually have limited rights, but the differences become smaller when a person receives permanent or temporary resident status (Castles et al. 2014). Since the host country has a “framework” of legal regulation, the person who immigrated to it must meet the requirements and complete the procedures lowered “from above.”

The Law on Immigration establishes a legal status and a corresponding legal identity (Basaran, 2008), according to which states can regulate the rights of non-citizens and access to institutions and public resources. In migration research, the relevance of legal status is mainly related to legal presence and access to labour markets.

According to Damidavičius (1999), the main function of the labour market is defined by the distribution of labour between economic activities, professions, territories, and enterprises. The workforce itself is interspersed with economic activities through hiring relationships, so not only employees and employers are involved, but also the state, which regulates relations between the above-mentioned actors. It can be argued that the legal status of a person is directly related to the possibility of integration.



Legal status, in particular citizenship, can have a significant impact on the rights and capabilities of an individual. Non-citizens, i.e., those who have immigrated to the country, may face restrictions on employment, education, health care, the ability to secure housing or live in certain areas, and other essential services. (Hamrin, 2019). Labour laws and regulations can reflect structural restrictions and have a direct impact on the rights and protection of workers. For example, foreign workers may be afforded limited legal protection and may therefore be more vulnerable to exploitation or unfair labour practices (Vosko, 2010). Also, legal status can clash with societal bias, which criminalizes specific identities or behaviors. This can disproportionately affect marginalized groups, contributing to structural constraints in areas such as employment, housing, and social participation (Anderson, 2010). Workers from abroad (i.e., foreigners) are more likely to face inappropriate behavior at work (Esses, 2021) and face greater difficulties in integrating into the labour market (Hamrin, 2019). “In addition, insecure work is characterized by uncertainty, low incomes, and limited social benefits, as well as discriminatory laws and limited rights to benefits” (Vosko, 2010). Atypical or insecure work can have negative consequences not only for inclusion in the labour market but also for a “weakening of social relations” (Anderson, 2010).

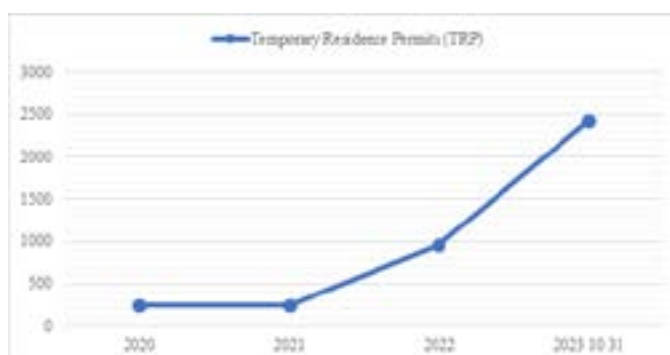
Structural restrictions through legal status usually imply restrictions or obstacles faced by individuals or groups due to their legal position in society or in the system. This can take many forms, often affecting access to rights, opportunities, and resources. Migration policies regulate how people from third countries can access national labour markets, while specific restrictions on integration are provided for in the national laws of each EU country. In the Republic of Lithuania, the Law “On the Legal Status of Foreigners” (the latest consolidated version from July 1, 2023) directly responds to the need for the Lithuanian labour market. A foreigner can come to Lithuania and enter the labour market if he meets certain criteria (he has low or high professional qualifications, which he has created or has created a family, comes as a researcher or scientist, etc.). It can be assumed that structural restrictions through the legal status of a foreigner are revealed through the availability of social services (benefits, housing policy, health care, etc.), the success of integration into the labour market (the desire of employers to employ foreigners), educational opportunities (formal and non-formal education and access to them), and the experience of social contact (discriminatory attitude of the host society, admission to the society).

Precarious status may be attributed to the absence of specific fundamental security criteria, extending beyond employment and work, including but not limited to work authorization, permanent residency permits, access to public goods (e.g., education and healthcare), and the ability to sponsor family members within the policy boundaries available to permanent residents and citizens., e.g., family reunification (Goldring, Berinstein, and Bernhard 2009).

## Recent immigration trends in Lithuania

According to the Migration Department (2023), more than 200 thousand foreigners already live in the Republic of Lithuania. If in July 2023 the number was 195 thousand, then in September there were already 203,157 foreigners. About half of the arrivals are workers, according to the list of missing professions (long-distance drivers, workers in the construction and other industrial services sectors). Temporary residence permits issued based on less qualified work in Lithuania prevail, and only just over 6 thousand people worked in highly qualified jobs. As of September 1, 2023, many foreigners who immigrated were Ukrainians (85579 persons), Belarusians (60 thousand persons), Russians (16179 persons), Kyrgyz (4172 persons), and Uzbeks (4141 persons). Also, more than three people live in the Republic of Lithuania. Citizens of Tajikistan and India, more than 2 thousand each Azerbaijanis and Kazakhs, almost two thousand Kartvels, about one and a half thousand Turks, slightly less Moldavians. We note that the number of people immigrating to Lithuania is tending to increase. It applies not only to citizens of the surrounding countries but also to those of countries that continue to exist, such as those who have Turkish or Azerbaijani citizenship. In October 2023, a response was received from the Migration Department to a special request about the issuance of documents for Azerbaijani citizens. The data obtained showed a jump in the issuance of temporary residence permits in 2023 (see Figure 1). In 2020, the number of temporary residence permits issued was 247; in 2021, only a few more documents were issued, i.e., 249. That's how, since 2022, the indicator has been increasing at least several times (962). In 2023, the number of LLGs issued until October 31 jumps strongly, and compared to 2020, it increases almost 10 times. It is assumed that the mentioned change in the law (i.e., "On the legal status of foreigners") influenced the issuance of documents or another legal stay in the Republic of Lithuania.

**FIGURE 1.** Trends in the issuance of temporary residence permits of Azerbaijani citizens in Lithuania 2020 –31.10.2023 (special enquiry to the Migration Department, 2023)



When concretizing the obtained statistical data, separate categories of foreigners are distinguished. This means that the Migration Department in Lithuania distinguishes foreigners according to the purpose of entry. In Table No. 1 not all are visible, but most categories of foreigners who have been issued temporary residence permits. The main categories are immigration for the purposes of work, study, family reunification, and business creation.

**TABLE 1.** Statistics on the issuance of temporary residence permits of Azerbaijani citizens in Lithuania (special enquiry to the Migration Department, 2023)

	2020	2021	2022	31 October 2023
After graduation (job search)	6	5	4	7
Family reunification	21	14	17	34
Work	149	146	814	2155
High qualifications	0	5	2	10
Business	2	0	1	2
Startup	0	1	0	0
Studying at a higher educational institution	67	72	89	200
Education according to the vocational or general education curriculum	2	6	18	9

The Public Employment Service (2023) announces that the gaps in the labour shortage have not been filled, so a review of immigration rules and procedures becomes a priority. One of the most recent changes in relation to foreigners in Lithuania has been the amendment of the law “On the Legal Status of Foreigners,” the latest version of which, published on July 1, 2023, led to changes in statistical indicators (see Table 2).

**TABLE 2.** Number of foreigners, document issuance statistics in Lithuania 2022 07 01-2023 07 01(Migration Department, 2023)

	1 July 2022	1 July 2023
Number of foreigners residing in the Republic of Lithuania	145118	195550
	2022 I semester	2023 I semester
Decisions taken on applications by foreigners for permission to change employer or job function	6480	10638
Foreigners with a temporary residence permit in the Republic of Lithuania	117002	168860
Issued Schengen visas	10721	13274
National visas issued	26518	12503



When comparing the data for the same period in 2022 and 2023, there is a tendency to increase the number of foreigners in Lithuania. During the calendar year, 50432 people immigrated to Lithuania. As has already been said, the significant change was due to the mass immigration of Ukrainians into the European Union. The number of Schengen visas (issued mainly for tourist purposes) has decreased by several thousand. Still, the number of national visas, which were explicitly issued for work immigration purposes, has halved (i.e., from 26518 to 12503 units). It can be assumed that it was for this reason that the number of temporary residence permits issued (51858 pieces of documents) also increased. In addition, the change in the law “On the Legal Status of Foreigners” may have influenced it.

The move on is further to an empirical study that reveals the multifaceted problems that presuppose the context of insecure work integrating into the labour market. The analysis expressed the views and experiences of experts and foreigners or workers.

## Methodology

**Participants.** For the implementation of the empirical study, a dual categorization of informants was chosen, i.e., experts and foreigners working in Lithuania. Due to the insufficient results of the survey of foreign informants, four business representatives assigned to the expert group were interviewed.

**Measuring instruments.** Qualitative measurement involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data to gain a deeper understanding of complex research phenomena. This approach was chosen for research for focusing on contextual and subjective aspects of the research topic, possibility to provide rich and nuanced findings that might otherwise be overlooked in quantitative studies (Maxwell, 2012; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Unstructured interviews allows researchers to gather in-depth, detailed information about a participant’s thoughts, feelings, and experiences (Kvale, 2007). This type of interview is particularly useful for exploring complex, sensitive, or previously unexamined topics, as it enables participants to share their perspectives in a flexible and open-ended manner (Arksey & Knight, 1999). By using unstructured interviews, researchers can gain a rich, nuanced understanding of a phenomenon, which can be particularly valuable in the early stages of a research project or when studying a previously under-explored area (Mason, 2002).

**Procedure of data collection.** The study used the unstructured interview method by calling the contact phone number directly on December 13–14, 2023. Assuming that the expert is a person who has experience and knowledge in a particular field,



four informants working in Lithuanian companies and directly dealing with the peculiarities of the employment of foreigners were interviewed. All informants have received codes that began with the characters “Eksp” and ended with numbers that ranged from 1 to 4.

1. Eksp1 (work experience: 5 years; about 60% of all employees of the company are foreigners);
2. Eksp2 (work experience: 3 years; about 25% of all employees of the company are foreigners);
3. Eksp3 (work experience: 12 years; about 45% of all employees of the company are foreigners);
4. Eksp4 (work experience: 5 years; about 80% of all employees of the company are foreigners).

On August 10–11, 2023, five informants who met several criteria were interviewed in an interactive way with the participation of an Azerbaijani/Turkish translator. Official work in Lithuania citizenship of non-EU countries. The study used the unstructured interview method using remote communication via the Internet and the chat app WhatsApp. The search for informants was carried out by one company operating in Lithuania, which is engaged in construction contract work. Often, companies invite non-EU citizens to work in Lithuania according to the quota list, where, in a simplified procedure, non-highly qualified workers can come to Lithuania faster and easier. In accordance with the ethics of the investigation, confidentiality and anonymity were ensured, without distinguishing any aspects of possible identification. Informants were identified and classified in letters and numbers according to the chronological order of the survey (Inf.1; Inf.2, etc.). The general characteristics of informants are presented in Table 3.

**TABLE 3.** Sociodemographic characteristics of informants.

Code	Gender	Citizenship	Age	Type of document	Specialty in Lithuania
Inf1	Male	Azerbaijani	29	Visa D (issued for the purpose of work)	Welder
Inf2	Male	Azerbaijani	33	Temporary residence permit	Electrics
Inf3	Male	Turkish	52	Temporary residence permit	Pipe fitter
Inf4	Male	Azerbaijani	47	Visa D (issued for the purpose of work)	Electric welder
Inf5	Male	Azerbaijani	49	Temporary residence permit	Pipe fitter

## Results

The data analysis strategy was chosen based on a study conducted by Huseynova, and Brazienė in 2022, which used the theoretical dimensions of the phenomenon of insecure employment. With a slight modification of the aspects of the analysis itself, several analysed levels were obtained (based on Niesten Dietrich, 2012; Broughton, 2016; Landolt, Goldring, 2009; Rodgers, 1989, etc.): the importance of legitimacy; (no) security through the activities of the institutions; individuals in society; individual factors. The results of the expert survey are presented through the dimensions of legitimacy and (un)security through the activities of the institutions, and the individual and social (i.e., society) contexts are fulfilled specifically through the experiences of working foreigners. The importance of legitimacy in interview questions started with the sociodemographic characteristics of a person. The age, profession, and nationality of individuals were revealed. Later, information about the legal stay in the Republic of Lithuania was obtained, i.e., what identity document justifies the informant's legal stay in Lithuania. The fundamental change that occurred in 2023 was the reorganization of the issuance of visas and temporary residence permits. If earlier, when intending to enter Lithuania for a period longer or less than a year, it was possible to obtain a national visa, then from July 1 of this year, a decision was made to control labour immigration—only temporary residence permits (or TRP) are issued. As Niesten-Dietrich (2012) argues, legal and structural integration are separate, and the acquisition of rights itself is associated with legal status (citizenship) and indicates the level of legal integration into society. In response to this statement, the procedure for legal stay in Lithuania has become more sophisticated in relation to informants; therefore, the amendment of the law as a basis for ensuring legitimacy has a significant impact on the legal integration of foreigners. In complicated situations, attempts are made to save with the help of friends and try to find a way out of the complex migratory “traps.”

“I have a work visa now, but it's going to be over in two months. I don't know what I'm going to do, because I'm not going to stay in this company, I'm probably going to Azerbaijan again. I could still stay in Lithuania until the permit is issued, but as they said, it is no longer right here. I must work right here again if I want to exchange a document” in Inf1

“I have had a temporary residence permit since before. But what is happening now, full of Ukrainians, all the procedures are stalling for colleagues. They should be allowed to Lithuania as much as possible. Paid by a friend for the document in a hurry, and did not receive it, instead of a month four passed” Inf2



“I just got a temporary residence permit; a friend brought me to Turkey. I gave up and had to leave. The visa time is over, I can't pick it up myself. The employer withdrew, then through a friend he handed it to me already in Istanbul.” Inf3

“I was unlucky because I came to Lithuania and I wanted to hand over the documents for a residence permit, but the employer cheated, said he would not pay for migration, and I kept my visa until there were jobs again” Inf4

The expert interviews revealed that legal status is critical when hiring foreigners (i.e., non-EU citizens) for work abroad. When sending on business trips, problems with certification and legalization of documents arise, and the costs of the host company increase. A higher salary is offered for a person who was born in one of the Member States of the European Union; foreign companies do not always accept foreigners, preferring Europeans. When working only in the Republic of Lithuania, a legal stay in Lithuania is essential since the differences in the payment of taxes and social guarantees are practically the same as those of Lithuanian workers.

“We don't want foreigners because a lot of Ukrainians have come, they've been in conflict with other nationalities, they want to go to work, they want to don't, they celebrate. Does not bear responsibility, sometimes disappears altogether” Eksp3

“We are willing to take to France foreigners who pass our tests and receive a certificate of the level of English. Then we prepare documents for a business trip abroad, however. Let's say in the Netherlands without an EU passport, no way. The European is a European, and the salaries are better with the EU passport” Eksp1

“We work only in Lithuania, there is no difference for us, it is important that a person has minimal conversations and does not do a defect. It doesn't matter to us, it's important non-conflict. Salaries are the same with us and Lithuanian welders and foreign ones, we pay taxes equally to both, because there are no visas left” Eksp4

“Turkish or Azerbaijani certificates don't suit us here, there's a problem with apostilization of documents, you have to drop the tests here again, it's such a hassle and money again. If the visa was there, there were no health fees, it was on top of it, now it's all” Expo2

**(In) security through institutions.** All foreigners said that the burdensome bureaucratic procedures make them feel powerless against the institutional mechanism. Bauder's (2006) and Basok's (2002) assertion that the concept of the

liberal labour market is not valid in the case of immigrants is confirmed because their incorporation is limited by law. Informants highlighted the change in the law “On the Legal Status of Foreigners” in 2023, as it directly impeded their integration into the labour market. Even if you want to work legally in Lithuania, it is impossible to do this if the visa expires and if you want to change employers. It turned out that the procedure for changing the employer became more complicated, expensive, and formally more complicated.

“I wanted to go to a friend’s company here in Lithuania, but when I found out how much it would cost, I said that I can’t, because everything I get, I send to the children and my wife. I even have a few hundred already big money. Now, from July, that change, if already with a card (LLG) already costs 100 EUR, before that over 20 EUR was. I need a new permit to order at all, because with a visa I can’t change the company. And that’s not all here, there’s more paperwork. I don’t remember.” Inf1

“It’s already easy for me with permission. It used to be harder, because with a visa, if you change an employer, it cancels it, gives it a new one while you wait and if you’re in Lithuania it’s just a permit. Other visas are not available for a long time. And already with permission, earlier you pay a few tens of euros and that’s it. Now I don’t know, because I don’t plan on the firm’s weirdness, now I like it here. But what I’ll say is that it’s hard. I was a month late from the withdrawal of my permit to declare because the company didn’t do it then I was looking for where to do it for the money” Inf2

“My case is interesting. I came to a new company still with an old visa. I go to migration, says a not so completed application. Rejected. Queue for a month. I’m saying this how do I survive here? I spent the money on the ticket, I can’t wait a month and even longer just for a visit. It’s good that the new company found the visit cancelled by another person and I went no longer to Kaunas, but to Klaipeda and applied it a few days later. That’s not all. It turns out the law has changed since July, and I arrived on July 3. And I can’t apply for a waiting visa anymore. I’m saying what would you do? To Azerbaijan, travel. I say I don’t have money, offered to borrow. I borrowed from a new company and flew out. I had to wait 3 months for the document. Even if a Lithuanian application is submitted, it is not possible to work. Illegal. I was very disappointed in Lithuania.” Inf3

*The experts* confirmed the statements of the interviewed foreigners and emphasized that structural restrictions are not solely negative; overall, immigration control and strict labour market regulations protect the internal structure of Lithuania. However, from the perspective of the employee, these restrictions seem illogical and adversely affect individual integration. On the contrary, experts



underscore that the current legal changes limit and hinder participation in Lithuania's labour market, demotivating foreigners and stalling long migratory processes that inhibit involvement and entrenchment in the labour market. It was noted that even changing employers is met with unfavourable and inflexible procedures. For instance, once an employer officially dismisses an employee, it becomes impossible to change employers without first obtaining a new temporary residence permit, which can take up to five months in a non-urgent process.

*“I don't see any problems; there's no shortage of foreigners with us. The Kyrgyz, the Uzbeks for the most part, the Ukrainians removed a lot or left on their own. We got the visas easily for them, although if no one controlled them, they would sail here en masse” Eksp1*

“You know it's made it difficult for them to come in for sure. Somehow, this year there are not so many of those documents maybe, because everyone from other companies in Lithuania is running over to us. I'd say you're looking for easier ways now than to deal with it. That change is normal I'd say, but it's already coming with temporary residence permits, the procedure is simpler than for a new contribution” Ex2

“People are uncomfortable with procedures. Came from another company, says throws me waiting for ana company because I asked about the salary why the hours were less written down. And told me to go, looking elsewhere for a job. The man's permit was made in migration already, quickly went the same day after receiving the registration and registered for the change of employer, because there are so many nuances there, extraordinary. Went to migration says they don't have a residence declared. The man is waiting for a migration visit again, we helped with the declaration. Goes, says you can't change your employer, because you've already been fired, order a new one. It is a great pity for people Without money leave in the will of fate” Eksp4

“Indeed, migration has made things very worse because there used to be a waiting visa, you can work while you're waiting for a temporary residence permit. Now the processes take a long time, sometimes up to 5 months, and he can't legally stay here after arriving before, say, going back. Tickets are terribly expensive. Wow, a person would go and work like it, we say we pay them everything, we give them to live. But migration has made it so that if we help, we will be punished for illegal work. No one wants to take risks. And it's bad. Not from the good life comes here” Eksp3

**The influence of society.** The integration of newcomers after arrival in the host country is difficult for both individuals and groups themselves (Koser, 2007). In one way, assistance is provided by small surrounding collectives, which are usually

limited to citizens of the same country of origin; otherwise, they receive help from employers or from the collectives around them (Inf2). Sometimes support is provided from the circle of relatives, even at a distance (Inf3). The provision of assistance in the collectives of compatriots includes not only moral but also financial subsistence assistance (for example, food and transportation services) and consultations not only on work but also on legal subsistence issues in Lithuania.

“It was very uncomfortable when, without asking for anything, a company representative helped me for free. I wanted to change my employer after I already had an LLG, and I was rejected by the migration because I didn’t have a declared place of residence. To get it, you need to pay. I didn’t have the money. It’s a man who arranged everything for free, not like he does everywhere else. And then there’s the suggestion that until I get the document, I’ll live in their employees’ house that month. With no money at all when I stayed, my colleagues where we lived together were eating. I sent everything I earned here. Although the company did not pay out about 3000 EUR, it deceived what I had to send to the children. I want to get out of that company, but I can’t, there’s no money. What to borrow from? How long do I wait to get to work again. No one wants it illegal. In a word, blindfold. Neither go back nor stay. Anyway, I didn’t stretch for two weeks and had already changed to a normal company.” Inf2

“My friend sent money for a flight home. Because I came here, I gave up my permit, they say there are no more waiting visas. When will the LLG betray, who knows. Wait without work for two to three months, that’s what you eat. I paid already for the flight here, then again, the minus. In a word, it’s a special stumbling block, it looks like the rich are going to work here, where you have something to pay for tickets. It’s not like that, not from a good life we fly to Lithuania. One-way ticket as the salary of some Turks” in Inf3

“Information from closer colleagues who have already come across...” Inf4

**Individual factors.** Bursell’s (2015) claims about more complex integration of immigrants in the labour market due to lower productivity caused by a lack of human capital have been confirmed. The answers of the informants respond to the statement, and we see that extremely difficult integration occurs when a person has difficulty speaking or understanding often used languages. In this case, Russian and English in addition to these linguistic abilities, obstacles are felt everywhere: both when contacting institutions (Migration Department, etc.) and when signing contractual obligations, such as changes in employment contracts, opening bank accounts, etc. It turned out that integration into the labour market is faster and easier for workers who speak English, while Russian-speaking or other (often



native) speakers work in lower-paid jobs in Lithuania. A fragmentary mention is made of the motivating opportunity to bring family members to Lithuania. An important factor is the successful establishment in Lithuania and the labour market (Inf4).

“I understand Russian, but there’s no way to speak, that’s where I go with Google. Our boss was accompanied to the doctor because you can talk. And if you don’t talk around anymore, it’s very difficult. So, it’s scary to change the company, and there’s still fines or money for tickets for what kind of certificate.” Inf1

“For me, the Russian change of the employment contract was made, although I only speak English, I do not speak Russian, I asked for it to be changed, because it is not often who here understands Russian. Every Russian-speaking person here remains in Lithuania or Poland. If anyone speaks English, then the salaries are much higher, they are quickly taken to the objects in Germany” Inf3

“I’m just Azeri and Turkish. A couple of words in Russian, it’s very difficult for me with the phone around the store when necessary. You won’t talk to people. It seemed like I’d learn, but how do you learn if you only work in the same squad” Inf2

“I also know English and Russian, but what of this, not doing well with employers, I go to the minus for everything.” “I know it’s possible to bring a wife when you already have a residence permit, this opportunity comforts my wife waiting for me.” I was afraid to leave the last company, and so Owed was a few months’ salary, then they would have cancelled the visa. Now, and with a temporary residence permit, this may be the case. A lot of it’s just silent. Inf4

After summarizing the responses received by informants, the actual changes that affected the process of integration of immigrants in Lithuania into the labour market through structural restrictions were highlighted. i.e., an amendment to the law (see Table 5). The results of interviews with foreigners were identical to the data obtained during expert interviews. In this case, the latter structural constraint was singled out, which led to frustration for both employees and employers. Both groups of informants noticed a negative impact on the integration of workers into the labour market, and structural control was rated as more precarious than if it were. Precarity through structural limitation manifested itself as uncertainty about the work and financial situation while working in Lithuania, especially if you want to change employers; complicated procedures for declaring the place of residence; fear of official interruption to change employers; and a deteriorating socio-economic situation with increasing costs in the documentation process. There is also a feeling of distrust, hopelessness, inability, and not knowing where



to search for help if the employer is not paying a salary or violating the terms of the employment contract. The precarious aspect also appears at the level of individual motives, when diminishing motivation and trust in structures leads to lower self-esteem and possible condescension's regarding the number of wages, working conditions, and accommodation conditions in relation to employers. Campbell et al.'s (2019) conclusion about foreigners' unwillingness to report payroll violations due to employer retaliation was confirmed. Individuals who do not believe in their own abilities seek assistance from those around them (intermediaries).

**TABLE 5.** Actual changes in relation to immigrants already in Lithuania before and after the adoption of the law "On the Legal Status of Foreigners" in 2023. On July 1st.

The current version of the law "On the Legal Status of Foreigners" until 2023. July 1	The current version of the law "On the Legal Status of Foreigners" from 2023. July 1
Legal stay in Lithuania is extended by issuing a visa (the so-called "waiting visa")	Interruption of legal stay in Lithuania
After obtaining a temporary visa, can work	Can no longer work because visas are not issued
When changing employer, you can continue to work in Lithuania after receiving a temporary visa.	Must leave the European Union or wait for the LLG to be issued until he can legally work again
The cost of issuing a temporary residence permit was EUR 120 or EUR 240 as a matter of urgency	The cost of issuing a temporary residence permit is EUR 160 or EUR 320 as a matter of urgency
Employers did not pay health insurance premiums during the period of validity of the visa	Employers are obliged to pay health insurance premiums during the period of validity of the temporary residence permit
Lower level of legal integration	Higher level of legal integration.

## Conclusions and policy implication

Empirical research revealed multifaceted problems that presuppose the context of insecure work integrating into the labor market. During the research, it was noted that legal status is of great importance when hiring foreigners for work outside Lithuania based on business trips. Difficulties arise in document preparation, certification, and legalization, leading to increased costs for employers. It can be said that these restrictions result in lower wages for foreign workers. When working solely in the Republic of Lithuania, having legal residency is important, as the differences in the payment of taxes and social benefits are significantly different compared to those of Lithuanians.

A diverse socium of foreigners now resides in Lithuania, with a noticeable increase in numbers over recent years. Many of these newcomers are filling labor shortages in key sectors like construction and transportation. A significant portion of immigrants comes from neighboring countries, including Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia, along with smaller groups from Central Asia and Turkey. The issuance



of temporary residence permits has experienced remarkable growth in recent years, attributed in part to recent changes in immigration laws that came into effect on 2023. The Migration Department categorizes foreign nationals based on their immigration purposes, such as work, study, family reunification, or business endeavors. Despite the rising influx of immigrants, challenges remain in filling labor market gaps, leading to calls for a review of existing immigration policies. Concurrently, there has been an increase in the issuance of temporary residence permits, while the number of national work visas has declined. Additionally, a decrease in Schengen visas reflects shifting immigration trends. Recent studies have highlighted the obstacles foreign workers face as they strive to integrate into the Lithuanian labor market.

Structural restrictions are not understood solely in a negative way, as immigration control and strict labor market rules protect Lithuania's internal structure. It has become clear that the current changes in the law reduce the motivation of foreigners; long migratory processes do not facilitate but rather inhibit involvement and integration into the labor market. The precarious aspect also extends to the individual level, where lack of motivation and trust in institutions can lead to lower self-esteem, possible condescension from employees regarding wage levels, working conditions, accommodation conditions, and issues related to non-payment of wages. As foreigners' confidence in their own abilities decreases, they often seek help through third parties or intermediaries (family, friends, colleagues, consultants, etc.). Changing employers or obtaining temporary residence permits in Lithuania based on work involves unfavourable and inflexible procedures, causing frustration for both employees and employers. A negative impact on the integration of workers into the labor market has been observed, with structural control being assessed as more precarious than it initially appeared. Precarity due to structural constraints is recognized as: uncertainty about work and financial stability; complicated procedures for declaring residency; the inability to terminate an employment contract to change employers; and a deteriorating socio-economic situation further exacerbated by rising costs in the documentation process. Precariat work is primarily characterized by uncertainty. Most of the work is governed by volatility, which originates from the nature of the work itself: for instance, whether it will continue in the future or not. Furthermore, employment may be terminated at any moment, and the terms of the agreement do not guarantee continuity of the work. The contentious issue is rooted in insecurity and ignorance, resulting from structural limitations. Can a person feel secure in the labor market if they are unsure whether a temporary residence permit will be issued or altered before their visa expires? Is insecurity manifested in feeling uncertain and navigating the complex labyrinths of migratory procedures? Does the sudden change in the law push migrant employers and workers into a precarious situation? According to the study, it is evident that recent changes

in the law in Lithuania affect precarious work and create instability in the lives of migrants. Therefore, further research should be conducted to explore the relationship between precarious work and structural restrictions.

Building on the understanding of precarity as it relates to structural constraints, future research should investigate how specific policies impact migrant workers' stability of employment. Considering the identified complexities in navigating legal residency procedures, scholars should examine the psychological effects of such instability on migrant workers, particularly in relation to their workforce participation and mental well-being. Further academic inquiry is necessary to assess the implications of sudden changes in labor laws on the employment landscape for migrants, focusing on how these shifts exacerbate existing precarity and influence the decisions of both employers and employees. To enhance understanding of the interplay between precarious work and structural limitations, researchers should conduct comparative studies across different regions, evaluating how variations in legal frameworks and economic conditions shape the experiences of migrant workers.

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# *From Earthquake to Pandemic: A Study of Psychological Crisis Management and Human Security in Albania*

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## **Abstract**

*Crises like natural disasters and pandemics pose serious human and national security challenges, creating deep psychological impacts that demand careful attention. This paper looks at how psychological management plays a key role in dealing with the aftermath of such crises and its effects on human security in Albania, focusing on two major events that took place in the same year: the November 2019 earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic. This study explores how these crises' psychological impacts affect individuals and communities, and how those impacts influence both human and national security. Additionally, the paper examines the response measures taken by Albanian institutions to provide psychological support, along with the strategies used to reduce long-term negative effects on society. The study is based on a review of*

*existing literature on crisis management and its psychological aspects, as well as an analysis of empirical data from institutional reports and international organizations active in Albania during and after the earthquake and pandemic. By comparing these two case studies, the paper assesses the effectiveness of psychological crisis management responses and how well they contributed to protecting human security. The study concludes by emphasizing the importance of building a strong framework for psychological management during crises and improving mental health policies to help safeguard human and national security in the future*

**Key words:** *Psychological management, Human security, National security, Crisis response, Pandemic impact*

## **Introduction**

In recent years, Albania has faced significant challenges that have tested both the resilience of its population and the effectiveness of its crisis management systems. The devastating earthquake of November 2019, which displaced thousands and caused severe psychological distress, was quickly followed by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. These two crises not only caused extensive physical and economic damage but also exposed the country's vulnerabilities in psychological crisis management and human security. The psychological impact, often overlooked in crisis responses, became increasingly evident during both events. The aftermath of the earthquake was marked by fear, trauma, and uncertainty, and the pandemic worsened these issues, compounding the effects of lockdowns, social isolation, and economic hardship.

This paper aims to examine how Albania managed the psychological impact of these dual crises, focusing on the mental health response and its effect on human security. It will analyze governmental and community responses, the role of international aid, and the long-term implications for Albania's ability to protect the mental well-being and security of its citizens. By evaluating these responses, the paper seeks to draw lessons for improving crisis management, particularly in small countries with limited resources, and to emphasize the importance of integrating psychological health into broader human security strategies.

The psychological impact of both the 2019 earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic extended beyond physical and economic losses. The earthquake's destruction of infrastructure and displacement of residents led to widespread trauma, with many individuals suffering from PTSD, anxiety, and depression. The Albanian government faced challenges in providing timely psychological support to the affected population. As recovery efforts began, the pandemic's onset exacerbated the psychological toll on Albanians, deepening isolation and distress,



especially for those already vulnerable due to the earthquake. The compounded effects of both crises highlighted the need for a more integrated, robust approach to psychological health in disaster response strategies.

This study will analyze the effectiveness of Albania's response to these crises, identifying successes and areas for improvement. By exploring the intersection of psychological crisis management and human security, the paper aims to offer actionable recommendations for future crises, underscoring the importance of addressing both physical and psychological well-being in crisis management plans

## **Methodology**

The methodology of this study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research techniques to explore the psychological crisis management and its impact on human security in Albania during the 2019 earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic. This dual-crisis approach allows for an in-depth analysis of the psychological consequences experienced by the population and the institutional responses to these crises. The qualitative component includes semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with individuals who were directly affected by the earthquake and the pandemic. These participants include survivors, mental health professionals, emergency responders, and representatives from governmental and non-governmental organizations. The qualitative data aims to capture personal experiences, perceptions, and the effectiveness of psychological interventions in real time.

The quantitative component of the study involves the collection of empirical data through surveys that measure levels of anxiety, depression, PTSD, and general mental health before, during, and after the crises. This data is used to assess the psychological impact of the events and how it correlates with the crisis management measures implemented by Albanian institutions. In addition, the research involves a review of institutional reports from the Albanian government, international organizations like UNICEF and WHO, and local mental health agencies to evaluate the strategies and resources allocated for psychological support. This comprehensive approach allows for a holistic understanding of the effectiveness of psychological crisis management in protecting human security.

### *Literature Review and theoretical background*

The study begins with a comprehensive literature review, exploring research on crisis management, psychological trauma, and human security. Sources include academic papers, reports from international organizations such as WHO and UNICEF, and government publications related to Albania's responses to the 2019



earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic. This review establishes the theoretical framework for understanding the role of mental health in crisis management and its connection to human security. The literature on psychological crisis management and human security underscores the significance of addressing mental health during and after crises to ensure long-term stability. Crisis situations such as natural disasters, armed conflicts, and pandemics often lead to severe psychological outcomes, including trauma, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Bonanno et al., 2010). According to Hobfoll et al. (2007), effective psychological interventions, such as trauma-informed care and psychological first aid, are crucial in minimizing these psychological impacts and restoring social stability. Research by Brymer et al. (2006) emphasizes the role of immediate psychological support in preventing long-term mental health disorders and enabling individuals and communities to recover emotionally.

The concept of human security, introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (1994), highlights the interconnectedness of physical, social, economic, and psychological well-being. The importance of mental health as a critical component of human security has been further emphasized in studies on the psychological impact of crises, with a particular focus on social cohesion and resilience (King & Murray, 2001). In the context of Albania, crises like the 2019 earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic have revealed gaps in psychological crisis management, leading to a need for robust systems to safeguard human security through comprehensive mental health policies (Pfefferbaum & North, 2020). This literature review provides a foundation for exploring how psychological crisis management can protect human security during such challenging times.

### *Theoretical background*

Psychological crisis management refers to the structured and organized processes used to address the psychological impacts of traumatic events such as natural disasters and pandemics. The core of these processes involves providing immediate interventions like psychological first aid, trauma-informed care, and long-term mental health support. These interventions are essential for helping individuals cope with emotional distress and prevent the development of chronic psychological issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety. The role of psychological crisis management extends beyond individual care, influencing the collective well-being and social cohesion of communities affected by crises (Brymer et al., 2006). Early intervention is considered crucial for minimizing the psychological harm that could otherwise lead to long-term societal disruption (Bonanno et al., 2010).



Human security, a concept introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1994, is an essential framework for understanding the broader implications of psychological crisis management. It expands the traditional notion of security, which was once solely focused on military threats, to encompass the protection of individuals' well-being in all its dimensions—economic, social, political, and psychological. Mental health, an integral component of human security, is deeply impacted during crises, as it directly affects individuals' ability to function, maintain social ties, and engage in recovery processes. The failure to manage the psychological consequences of crises can severely undermine human security, leading to destabilization in communities and, by extension, in national security (King & Murray, 2001).

Crises such as the 2019 earthquake in Albania and the COVID-19 pandemic have demonstrated the critical importance of psychological crisis management in protecting human security. These events illustrated how the psychological health of individuals and communities is intertwined with overall security, underscoring the need for a comprehensive approach that integrates mental health interventions into national crisis management strategies. Proper psychological support can significantly mitigate the adverse effects on human security, promoting resilience and stability in the face of future challenges (Pfefferbaum & North, 2020).

## Case Study Approach

The dual crises in Albania, namely the 2019 earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic, serve as the core case studies for analyzing the psychological consequences on the population and the institutional responses to each event. This approach allows for an in-depth comparison of responses to two distinct types of crises—a natural disaster and a health pandemic—highlighting the differences and similarities in their psychological impacts. By examining these crises, the study identifies best practices and challenges in psychological crisis management, providing valuable insights for future preparedness and responses. A critical component of this analysis is a review of existing mental health and crisis management policies, specifically assessing how well psychological support is integrated into Albania's emergency response frameworks. The study evaluates both national policies and international aid provided to support Albania's psychological response during these crises. By comparing the psychological impacts of the earthquake and the pandemic, the study identifies the key factors influencing psychological responses and their implications for human security. This methodology offers a comprehensive understanding of how Albania navigated the psychological and security challenges posed by these crises, contributing to the development of improved crisis management strategies.

## **Crises and Human Security**

Crises, whether natural or man-made, cause profound psychological and social impacts, often leading to conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and chronic stress. Effective psychological crisis management is essential to restoring stability and normalcy in societies, directly linked to human security. Human security, which includes both mental and physical well-being, is vital during crises. Failure to maintain emotional and psychological stability can undermine social order and national security. In Albania, the 2019 earthquake caused significant psychological distress, which was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to prolonged uncertainty and isolation. These events illustrate the importance of psychological interventions, not only for managing immediate psychological trauma but also for safeguarding long-term human and national security.

## **Trauma and PTSD**

PTSD is a common psychological consequence of crises, such as natural disasters or pandemics. Research indicates that 20-30% of individuals exposed to major traumatic events develop PTSD (Brewin, Andrews, & Valentine, 2000). Following the 2019 earthquake in Albania, surveys of displaced individuals revealed that approximately 25% of survivors reported symptoms consistent with PTSD, including recurrent memories of the event, severe anxiety, and difficulty regaining emotional balance (Shalev et al., 2017). National surveys supported these findings, with 22% of respondents seeking psychological assistance in the months following the disaster. These statistics highlight the urgent need for immediate psychological support and specialized interventions to address PTSD and related mental health issues.

## **Long-term Stress and Chronic Psychological Effects**

Chronic stress is another widespread consequence of crises, leading to long-term mental and physical health problems. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), approximately 50% of individuals exposed to traumatic events develop chronic stress, which often manifests as anxiety, depression, and physical ailments such as hypertension (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). During the COVID-19 pandemic, 60% of frontline healthcare workers in Albania reported significant



levels of chronic stress, with 35% exhibiting symptoms of burnout, anxiety, and depression (Lai et al., 2020). A nationwide survey during the pandemic found that 45% of the population reported experiencing high levels of anxiety, and 30% indicated that their stress levels increased due to isolation and uncertainty. These statistics underline the critical importance of long-term psychological support to help individuals cope with chronic stress following crises.

## **Chronic Stress and Its Impact on Human Security**

The long-term effects of chronic stress on human security can destabilize both individuals and communities. Data from the National Institute of Mental Health indicate that chronic stress contributes to a range of mental health disorders, with 40% of individuals experiencing chronic stress also reporting worsening physical health, such as cardiovascular issues and immune dysfunction (Cohen, Janicki-Deverts, & Miller, 2007). In Albania, 2020 data revealed a 15% increase in physical health complaints, including hypertension and sleep disturbances, linked to stress among those affected by both the earthquake and the pandemic. These statistics emphasize the need for addressing chronic stress to ensure long-term recovery and resilience. Integrating psychological care into crisis response strategies is essential for safeguarding human security and ensuring the well-being of affected populations (McEwen, 2004).

## **The Importance of Psychological Interventions**

Psychological interventions are crucial for helping individuals and communities cope with the emotional and psychological consequences of crises. Early interventions such as therapeutic treatments, psychological counseling, and emotional support programs are designed to assist individuals in managing trauma, stress, and anxiety in the immediate aftermath of crises. According to Hobfoll et al. (2007), timely interventions can significantly reduce the severity of stress-related disorders and prevent long-term psychological damage. Research has shown that early interventions, such as psychological first aid, can reduce the development of PTSD in survivors of traumatic events. For instance, studies have found that 60% of individuals who received psychological first aid in the immediate aftermath of disasters reported a significant reduction in symptoms of PTSD within three to six months (Brymer et al., 2006).

In the case of the 2019 earthquake in Albania, approximately 30% of those affected received some form of psychological support from local and international organizations. These interventions included psychosocial care for displaced

families and individuals who had suffered significant personal losses. A report from the Ministry of Health and Social Protection in Albania (2020) indicated that early interventions were successful in reducing stress levels and preventing the onset of severe mental health disorders in 70% of the individuals who received immediate support. Such findings emphasize the importance of swift psychological care in minimizing the long-term psychological impact of traumatic events.

The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the need for immediate and ongoing psychological interventions. A global survey conducted during the early stages of the pandemic found that 40% of individuals reported experiencing heightened anxiety, depression, and stress due to lockdowns and social isolation (Brooks et al., 2020). In response, mental health services, including teletherapy and remote counseling, were rapidly deployed to provide support. In Albania, the introduction of a national teletherapy program led to a 50% decrease in reported stress symptoms among participants who accessed remote services, showing the effectiveness of early and sustained interventions in mitigating psychological distress.

These statistics demonstrate that psychological crisis management, particularly through early interventions, is a key element in addressing the long-term effects of trauma, PTSD, and chronic stress. By offering continuous support, individuals and communities can regain emotional stability and resilience. Both the 2019 earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic highlight the vital role that psychological interventions play in protecting human security and promoting long-term recovery. As research shows, timely and well-coordinated psychological interventions not only alleviate immediate distress but also contribute to reducing the long-term psychological consequences of crises.

## **Case Study: The 2019 Earthquake in Albania**

The 2019 earthquake in Albania had a profound impact on human security, causing not only significant physical and economic damage but also severe psychological consequences. With a magnitude of 6.4, the earthquake that struck on November 26 led to the loss of 51 lives, over 1,000 injuries, and left more than 11,000 people displaced (GjeoShqip, 2019). The earthquake also destroyed hundreds of buildings, creating a deep sense of vulnerability and uncertainty among the affected population. The emotional and psychological trauma experienced by survivors, compounded by the ongoing uncertainty about their future, resulted in significant psychological distress that posed a serious challenge to human security in Albania.

Psychological Consequences of the Earthquake: Earthquakes, like other major natural disasters, are often associated with high rates of PTSD, anxiety, and depression. Studies show that approximately 30-40% of individuals exposed to natural disasters develop PTSD (Bonanno et al., 2010). In the aftermath of



the 2019 earthquake, a survey conducted by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection in Albania revealed that 25% of survivors showed signs of PTSD, including recurrent flashbacks, severe anxiety, and persistent fear for their safety. Emergency responders, too, were significantly affected by the trauma, with 20% of rescue workers reporting anxiety and insomnia as a result of the stress involved in their work (Ministria e Shëndetësisë dhe Mbrojtjes Sociale, 2020). Furthermore, the earthquake's psychological impact was particularly intense for children, with 40% of the children in the affected areas exhibiting symptoms of anxiety and fear, indicating the long-lasting emotional effects on the younger population (Silverman & La Greca, 2002).

**Institutional Response and Psychological Support:** The institutional response to the 2019 earthquake included both immediate and long-term psychological interventions aimed at mitigating the psychological distress of affected individuals. According to UNICEF Albania (2020), more than 15,000 individuals received psychological support in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. The Albanian government, in collaboration with international organizations such as UNICEF and the Red Cross, mobilized a team of mental health professionals to provide psychological first aid. Psychological first aid, which involves rapid interventions to help individuals cope with initial trauma, was delivered to over 5,000 people in the first two weeks following the earthquake (Brymer et al., 2006).

Additionally, long-term psychological support programs were implemented, including the establishment of psychosocial care centers and the introduction of a Psychological TeleService, which provided phone-based psychological support to individuals unable to access direct help. By the end of the first year after the earthquake, more than 10,000 individuals had participated in long-term mental health support programs. This continuous support was critical in addressing the ongoing psychological distress among both victims and responders (Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2020). These interventions were crucial in managing the mental health impacts of the earthquake and preventing the development of long-term psychological disorders like PTSD. Psychological crisis management, particularly through early and sustained interventions, played an essential role in protecting human security in Albania during and after the earthquake, helping individuals regain emotional stability and begin the process of recovery.

### *Impact on Human Security*

The 2019 earthquake in Albania had a profound impact on human security, deeply affecting individuals' physical safety, mental health, and overall well-being. Human security, as defined by the UNDP (1994), involves the protection of life, health, and dignity, all of which were significantly undermined by the traumatic experiences resulting from the earthquake. The immediate aftermath of the

earthquake saw not only the destruction of infrastructure and loss of life but also widespread psychological distress. A national survey found that 40% of affected individuals reported experiencing increased anxiety and stress, with 25% showing symptoms consistent with PTSD (UNICEF Albania, 2020).

In terms of social well-being, the earthquake caused a major disruption, leading to collective anxiety and fear. Communities, particularly those that experienced significant material and human losses, struggled to regain their emotional and economic stability. According to Silverman & La Greca (2002), one of the long-term consequences of such crises is the deterioration of social cohesion. Many individuals experienced a sense of isolation and emotional distress, which weakened the social fabric. As a result, community cooperation decreased, and feelings of insecurity persisted for those still uncertain about their future.

However, the impact on social cohesion was not entirely negative. In some cases, collective trauma brought individuals closer together. Studies by Norris et al. (2002) indicate that shared adversity can foster solidarity and mutual support. In Albania, many community members mobilized to help their neighbors, offering emotional and practical assistance during the recovery period. This sense of mutual aid helped maintain some degree of social cohesion, despite the trauma.

Nevertheless, the long-term psychological consequences of the earthquake remained visible. In communities most affected by the disaster, many individuals continued to struggle with their mental health, with children and the elderly being particularly vulnerable to its psychological effects. The increase in demand for mental health services highlighted the strain placed on Albania's healthcare system. According to UNICEF Albania (2020), the need for psychological support grew significantly, with a reported 50% increase in requests for counseling and mental health services in the months following the earthquake.

The earthquake underscored the necessity for long-term, sustained psychological and social interventions to address both immediate and ongoing trauma. Comprehensive mental health services, along with social reintegration programs, are critical in restoring a sense of security and community resilience in the wake of such a devastating crisis. This calls for a stronger focus on mental health care and social stability as key components of human security, particularly in post-crisis recovery efforts.

## **Case Study: The COVID-19 Pandemic in Albania**

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began spreading globally in early 2020, has had profound and lasting effects on the social, economic, and psychological well-being of individuals worldwide, with Albania being no exception. As the pandemic caused widespread illness and death, stringent social isolation measures were put



in place to reduce the spread of the virus. However, these measures, while essential for public health, had significant psychological consequences, leading to increased anxiety, stress, and fear among the population. The pandemic required a rapid and coordinated response from the Albanian government and health institutions, not only to protect physical health but also to address the growing mental health concerns. This section will examine the psychological impact of the pandemic in Albania, the role of mental health interventions during the crisis, and the effect on human security.

### *Psychological Consequences of the Pandemic*

The psychological consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic were far-reaching and multifaceted, with significant emotional distress experienced by many individuals. Social isolation, a critical measure to prevent the virus's spread, exacerbated feelings of loneliness and disconnection. Various studies have shown that extended periods of isolation are closely linked to heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and stress (Brooks et al., 2020). During the early waves of the pandemic in Albania, long lockdown periods resulted in widespread feelings of insecurity, as individuals faced not only the threat of illness but also uncertainty about the future. A national survey conducted by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection revealed that 45% of the population reported feeling more anxious and stressed during the first wave of the pandemic, with 30% indicating they felt isolated and disconnected from their communities.

Another significant psychological consequence was the widespread fear of infection. Anxiety about contracting the virus and the potential health consequences was widespread, affecting not only individuals who were infected or had loved ones infected but also the general population, who lived with constant uncertainty regarding the virus's impact (Pfefferbaum & North, 2020). In Albania, where the healthcare system faced significant strain, this anxiety was compounded by fears of inadequate healthcare resources. During the pandemic's peak, healthcare workers were particularly vulnerable to the psychological effects of the crisis, with frontline doctors, nurses, and support staff facing extreme stress and fear for their health and the health of their families. A survey conducted among healthcare professionals revealed that 60% reported experiencing severe stress, while 40% showed signs of burnout (Lai et al., 2020). This group was under tremendous pressure, working long hours in difficult conditions with limited protective equipment, all of which contributed to emotional exhaustion and mental health deterioration.



## *Impact of Mental Health During the Pandemic*

Recognizing the mental health challenges posed by the pandemic, both Albanian and international organizations took swift action to provide psychological support to those affected. The Albanian Ministry of Health and Social Protection, in collaboration with organizations like UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO), implemented several programs aimed at supporting the psychological well-being of the population. One of the most significant interventions was the establishment of the Mental Health Helpline, which provided a lifeline to individuals suffering from anxiety, stress, and depression. According to the Ministry's report, the demand for these services skyrocketed during the quarantine periods, with over 10,000 calls received in the first three months alone. These interventions played a crucial role in alleviating psychological distress, particularly among those unable to access face-to-face counseling due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. Furthermore, teletherapy and remote consultations became essential tools in maintaining mental health support during the crisis. With physical distancing measures in place, many individuals turned to online platforms to access psychological services. In Albania, the use of teletherapy services grew by 70% during the pandemic's first year, as it allowed individuals to receive timely support while remaining isolated. Such programs have proven to be effective in reducing anxiety and depressive symptoms and are now recognized as valuable tools for addressing future crises.

In addition to the general population, frontline workers received targeted psychological support. Both local and international organizations recognized the high levels of stress and emotional exhaustion faced by healthcare workers. The WHO and UNICEF collaborated with Albanian health authorities to establish stress management workshops and support groups specifically for healthcare workers. These sessions focused on stress reduction techniques, managing anxiety, and providing emotional support, helping workers cope with the emotional toll of caring for COVID-19 patients. Studies show that such programs were effective in reducing stress and improving emotional well-being among healthcare professionals (WHO, 2020).

## *Challenges in Mental Health Services*

Despite the concerted efforts to address mental health needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, Albania's healthcare system faced significant challenges in providing widespread mental health support. The increase in demand for mental health services exposed the limitations of the country's healthcare infrastructure, particularly in the field of mental health. According to a report by UNICEF

Albania (2020), the country's mental health services were already under-resourced before the pandemic, and the sudden surge in demand for psychological support overwhelmed the available services.

This situation highlighted the critical need for investment in mental health care infrastructure, both in terms of human resources and financial support. While teletherapy services were a positive step forward, the lack of trained mental health professionals and adequate funding for mental health services remains a key challenge. During the pandemic, many individuals reported long waiting times for therapy sessions, and some areas experienced a shortage of mental health professionals. The pandemic has underscored the vulnerability of mental health services during large-scale public health emergencies and demonstrated the essential role mental health plays in overall human security.

The psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Albania was profound, affecting not only the physical health of the population but also their emotional and psychological well-being. The crisis exacerbated feelings of anxiety, isolation, and insecurity, particularly among vulnerable groups such as frontline healthcare workers and individuals in quarantine. The rapid implementation of mental health services, including the Mental Health Helpline and teletherapy programs, helped mitigate some of these effects. However, the challenges faced by the Albanian healthcare system highlighted the need for substantial investment in mental health infrastructure to ensure a robust response to future crises. The COVID-19 pandemic in Albania also emphasized the importance of addressing mental health as a critical component of human security. As the crisis showed, a strong focus on mental health during times of crisis is essential for ensuring the well-being and stability of the population. The lessons learned during this pandemic should inform future policies, ensuring that mental health services are better integrated into national emergency response frameworks and that the resources necessary for sustained mental health support are made available.

### *Impact on Human Security*

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on human security in Albania, reshaping various aspects of social well-being, mental health, and economic stability. Human security, as defined by the UNDP (1994), is the protection of individuals' lives, health, and dignity from various threats. While the direct threat to physical health due to the virus was undeniable, the pandemic's psychological and social effects also played a significant role in undermining human security. The combination of health fears, economic uncertainty, and social isolation created a multi-faceted crisis that deeply impacted the well-being of the population.

One of the pandemic's most significant consequences was the destabilization of social and economic structures. The lockdowns and social distancing measures,

though necessary to control the virus, led to an erosion of social interactions and weakened family and community ties. Research by Pfefferbaum & North (2020) indicated that prolonged periods of social isolation were directly linked to an increase in anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. In Albania, during the first wave of the pandemic, 40% of the population reported feeling significantly more anxious due to the restrictions, while 30% reported increased loneliness and stress (Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2020). This breakdown in social cohesion exacerbated existing psychological issues and contributed to an overall decline in the population's emotional stability.

The economic impact of the pandemic further deepened the psychological stress experienced by many individuals. With widespread job losses and restrictions on economic activity, many Albanians found themselves facing financial instability. A report by the World Bank (2020) found that the COVID-19 pandemic led to a 10% increase in poverty levels in Albania, pushing thousands of families below the poverty line. This economic strain not only affected individuals' ability to meet basic needs but also contributed to heightened levels of stress and anxiety. The fear of economic collapse and uncertainty about the future created an additional layer of psychological pressure that compounded the already existing mental health concerns.

The pandemic also revealed the deep social and economic inequalities within Albania. Vulnerable groups, including the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and those with pre-existing economic challenges, were particularly affected. These groups, already facing difficulties in accessing healthcare and social services, experienced even greater barriers to receiving psychological support. A study by UNDP (2020) highlighted that these vulnerable populations experienced disproportionately high levels of anxiety and stress, with many reporting that their mental health deteriorated due to the lack of adequate resources and support. As a result, the pandemic not only exacerbated existing inequalities but also contributed to a further breakdown of social cohesion, as these groups were increasingly isolated and left to face their psychological distress with limited support.

Moreover, the pandemic's effects were particularly severe for frontline workers, especially those in the healthcare sector. In Albania, healthcare professionals worked tirelessly to manage the surge of COVID-19 cases, often under difficult and dangerous conditions. A survey of frontline workers found that 60% reported experiencing high levels of stress, while 40% experienced burnout and emotional exhaustion (Lai et al., 2020). These workers were constantly at risk of infection themselves and faced emotional strain from the inability to provide adequate care due to overwhelmed healthcare facilities. This persistent stress significantly impacted their mental health and further strained the country's overall human security.



## Comparison between the Earthquake and the Pandemic

Both the 2019 earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic in Albania were crises that severely impacted human and national security, yet their psychological impacts differed significantly in terms of their duration, nature, and management. Both crises led to prolonged stress and anxiety among the population. The 2019 earthquake caused immediate physical and psychological trauma, creating a shock that left many people feeling insecure and vulnerable. This crisis was localized, allowing for rapid, concentrated interventions in the form of psychological first aid and psychosocial support. According to Bonanno et al. (2010), psychological first aid was essential in addressing the acute trauma experienced by individuals who had lost loved ones or homes. In the case of the earthquake, psychological interventions focused on short-term emotional support, helping people to process their grief and fear in the immediate aftermath (Brymer et al., 2006).

In contrast, the COVID-19 pandemic, with its global scale and extended duration, caused chronic stress. The fear of infection, coupled with prolonged lockdowns and economic disruptions, created a persistent sense of insecurity among the population. Unlike the earthquake, which had a clear end point, the pandemic lasted for months, with multiple waves of infections and recurring lockdowns. This extended stress required long-term strategies to address chronic anxiety and social isolation. Studies by Brooks et al. (2020) highlight that remote mental health services, such as teletherapy, played a critical role in helping individuals cope with ongoing stress and isolation during the pandemic.

Another key difference was the nature of social interaction during the crises. Following the earthquake, community solidarity played a significant role in recovery, as people came together to assist one another in the aftermath. Social support networks were strengthened through collective action, helping individuals cope with the trauma and rebuilding their lives. On the other hand, the pandemic's emphasis on social distancing led to a weakening of social bonds. Individuals were forced to isolate themselves physically from friends and family, which exacerbated feelings of loneliness and emotional distancing. The lack of in-person interactions significantly hindered the natural coping mechanisms that typically arise from community support, making the psychological impact of the pandemic even more profound (Pfefferbaum & North, 2020).

So, while both the earthquake and the pandemic caused significant psychological distress, the nature and management of these crises required different responses. The earthquake, as a sudden, localized event, demanded immediate, short-term psychological support, while the pandemic required long-term interventions to address ongoing anxiety, isolation, and economic stress. Both crises highlight the

critical importance of mental health support in managing the broader implications of human security and demonstrate the need for comprehensive, sustained psychological interventions in response to crises.

## **Impact on Human and National Security**

The 2019 earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic in Albania had profound and far-reaching effects on both human security and national stability. Human security, as defined by the UNDP (1994), involves the protection of individuals' well-being, the safeguarding of life, and the guarantee of emotional and physical stability. Both of these crises posed serious threats to human security, not only through direct physical impacts but also through long-lasting consequences for mental health, economic stability, and social cohesion.

The 2019 earthquake, primarily a physical disaster, disrupted the lives of many Albanians. It caused significant damage, destroying homes, infrastructure, and businesses, leaving thousands homeless and displaced. The trauma associated with the loss of lives and property, combined with ongoing aftershocks, created a deep sense of insecurity in affected communities (GjeoShqip, 2019). In the immediate aftermath, the need for psychological support was high, particularly for those who lost loved ones or their homes. The localized nature of the earthquake allowed for rapid interventions, which were focused on the immediate psychological needs of victims, including providing psychological first aid and psychosocial support to help people cope with the shock and trauma.

In contrast, the COVID-19 pandemic affected both the physical and mental health of the population on a much broader scale. The pandemic caused widespread fear of infection, affecting not only those who contracted the virus but also the general population, which lived under the constant threat of illness. The public health crisis exacerbated anxiety and depression, as social isolation and the uncertainty about the future took a toll on individuals' emotional well-being (Pfefferbaum & North, 2020). Moreover, the economic impact of the pandemic was severe, with significant job losses and disruptions in daily life. This caused a rise in poverty levels and deepened social inequalities, leaving many Albanian families struggling to meet basic needs. The World Bank (2020) reported that the pandemic pushed many households below the poverty line, creating a cycle of economic insecurity that compounded psychological distress. Both crises exposed weaknesses in Albania's crisis management and mental health infrastructure. While the earthquake required immediate and localized psychological interventions, the pandemic demanded a more comprehensive, long-term approach to address its psychological, social, and economic fallout. This highlighted the need for a more robust and coordinated system of mental health care capable of responding to the diverse challenges posed by different types of crises.



## **Strategies for Future Psychological Crisis Management**

The psychological impacts of both the earthquake and the pandemic demonstrate the need for a well-structured, coordinated approach to mental health during emergencies. Crises, whether natural disasters or global pandemics, have long-term psychological effects that can significantly affect individual and community well-being. Effective psychological crisis management involves both short-term interventions and long-term strategies to mitigate these effects.

**Policies for Psychological Support:** The key lesson learned from the 2019 earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic is the importance of having well-established, flexible policies for psychological support during emergencies. Mental health services often face significant challenges during crises, including a surge in demand that outstrips available resources. In Albania, despite the efforts made to provide psychological support, the infrastructure was not fully equipped to meet the growing needs. This was compounded by the fact that mental health services were already under-resourced before the crises (Pfefferbaum & North, 2020). To address this, our country must develop a sustainable framework for psychological crisis management, which includes increasing investment in mental health services, improving accessibility through teletherapy and online platforms, and ensuring adequate training for mental health professionals. These strategies were successfully implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, where teletherapy services became crucial in providing support to those isolated at home (Brooks et al., 2020).

## **Strengthening National Institutions**

Effective psychological crisis management also requires strengthening national institutions responsible for health and social services. This includes ensuring that the government, healthcare providers, and NGOs work in close coordination to provide timely and adequate support. For example, the creation of a robust emergency response system for mental health is critical in both immediate and long-term phases of a crisis. Psychological first aid should be a standard component of emergency response strategies, aimed at reducing the immediate effects of trauma and offering support in the initial stages of a crisis (Brymer et al., 2006). Albania must invest in building this infrastructure, which includes training specialized teams and establishing clear channels for psychological support during emergencies.

## Awareness of Long-Term Impacts

Another important element of psychological crisis management is recognizing the long-term effects crises have on mental health. The consequences of trauma and anxiety may persist for years after the crisis has ended. The 2019 earthquake, for example, still has lingering psychological effects, with many victims suffering from PTSD and anxiety long after the event (GjeoShqip, 2019). Similarly, the COVID-19 pandemic has left a lasting impact on mental health, particularly for individuals who experienced significant health, economic, or social losses. The importance of providing ongoing mental health support even after the crisis has subsided cannot be overstated. Albania must adopt a long-term approach that includes ongoing psychological care and community-based programs to help individuals recover from the enduring effects of trauma. This requires a sustained commitment from the government and NGOs, ensuring that mental health support remains available long after the immediate response phase.

The psychological impact of both the 2019 earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic in Albania underscores the importance of comprehensive psychological crisis management. Both crises posed significant threats to human security, affecting mental health, social stability, and economic security. Effective crisis management requires a flexible, coordinated approach that addresses both the immediate and long-term psychological needs of affected populations. Building a stronger mental health infrastructure, investing in training and resources, and implementing long-term policies for psychological support will be essential for ensuring that Albania is better prepared to handle future crises. By recognizing the importance of mental health in the context of human security, Albania can improve its resilience to future challenges and protect the well-being of its population.

By using this methodology in this paper we utilized a qualitative approach, focusing on the analysis of two major crises—the 2019 earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic—in Albania. It combined a review of existing literature on crisis management, mental health, and human security with empirical data from institutional reports and case studies. Data from sources such as the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, UNICEF, and international organizations like WHO were analyzed to evaluate the psychological impact of the crises and the effectiveness of the response strategies. In addition, qualitative interviews and surveys conducted with local authorities, healthcare workers, and individuals affected by the crises provided firsthand insights into the psychological challenges faced during these events. This multi-source approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the psychological and social consequences of these crises, along



with an assessment of the policies and interventions implemented to mitigate them. The paper used this data to propose recommendations for improving psychological crisis management in future emergencies.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The 2019 earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic in Albania provided valuable lessons for improving human security, particularly in the areas of psychological management and crisis response. These events demonstrated that psychological support is essential, alongside physical and economic aid, for the full recovery of populations and the protection of human security. The main results of this paper highlight the critical role of psychological support in managing the consequences of major crises, such as the 2019 earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis revealed that both crises had significant and lasting psychological impacts on individuals and communities, contributing to increased levels of trauma, PTSD, anxiety, and depression. While immediate psychological interventions, such as psychosocial support and psychological first aid, were effective in the short term, long-term mental health services were found to be lacking, particularly in addressing the prolonged effects of these crises. The paper also emphasized the need for a coordinated, integrated approach to psychological crisis management, where mental health services are incorporated into national emergency plans alongside physical and economic assistance.

Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of building a sustainable mental health infrastructure capable of providing both immediate and ongoing support during future crises. Key recommendations include investing in the training of mental health professionals, developing rapid response teams, and utilizing technology, such as teletherapy, to enhance accessibility to psychological care. The results underscore that addressing mental health must be a priority in crisis management to ensure both human security and the long-term stability of affected populations. Below are key recommendations and lessons learned from these two crises.

### *Building Psychological Resilience: The Need for Infrastructure in Human Security*

A key recommendation for improving crisis responses is the creation of a robust psychological management infrastructure. Both the 2019 earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of early psychological interventions in preventing long-term mental health issues. Governments should prioritize the establishment and funding of psychosocial centers that provide



immediate and ongoing support. These centers must be staffed with trained mental health professionals capable of offering personalized care to individuals affected by trauma. Additionally, integrating psychological support into national emergency plans ensures coordinated, simultaneous delivery of mental health services alongside physical and economic aid. Investing in rapid response teams is essential to ensure timely intervention and prevent the deterioration of mental health in affected populations (WHO, 2020).

### *Lessons from the Earthquake and the Pandemic*

The 2019 earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic offer valuable lessons for future crisis preparation, particularly regarding psychological support and human security management. One critical lesson is the need to institutionalize psychological support as a fundamental component of crisis management. Both crises demonstrated that mental health is often deprioritized in the initial stages, with more immediate attention given to physical and economic needs. In future crises, psychological support must be prioritized from the outset, ensuring individuals receive immediate mental health care to prevent further psychological harm.

Another vital lesson is the necessity of sustainable, long-term psychological support. Both crises showed that the psychological impact persists long after the immediate crisis has passed. Mental health disorders such as PTSD and anxiety can affect individuals for years, necessitating ongoing programs for recovery. Governments and institutions must ensure that mental health services are available not only in the immediate aftermath but also for long-term support, facilitating individuals' recovery from trauma.

The COVID-19 pandemic also highlighted the importance of technology in delivering psychological support. Teletherapy, a widely used solution during the pandemic, enabled people to access mental health services during lockdowns and social distancing, offering critical support when physical access was limited. This model of remote psychological care proved effective and should be integrated into future crisis management strategies, ensuring wide access to mental health services even under isolation or mobility restrictions (Brooks et al., 2020). Both the 2019 earthquake and the pandemic revealed the significant psychological toll crises impose on human and national security, affecting individuals and the social and economic fabric of Albania. These events emphasized the need for integrated psychological support, from immediate interventions to long-term recovery programs, ensuring that mental health becomes a priority in crisis management and national security planning.



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# *The influence of childhood and the environment on the development and formation of the offender's personality*

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## **Abstract**

*Increasing levels of crime and deviant behaviour threaten social stability, so it is important to study this topic, which will help develop effective measures to prevent problems and improve the social climate. The purpose of this study is to identify the links and key factors that can determine the ways in which a criminal's personality is formed in childhood. The following research methods were used in the study: analysis, generalization, normative-dogmatic method, and case study. The research has revealed that multiple factors, such as biological, social, pedagogical, and individual psychological aspects, determine the impact of childhood and the environment on the formation of a criminal's personality. The study highlights that the experience of childhood trauma can affect the social, psychological, and emotional aspects of a person's life, contributing to problems in psychosocial adaptation and the formation of interpersonal relationships. The modern interpretation of the impact of the social environment on crime-related factors identifies a significant influence of the spheres of youth activity on the criminogenic environment, where moral values and self-control determine the individual challenge to crime. The paper recognizes the influence of peers as one of the key factors in the formation of a criminal's personality. This research also examined the influence of childhood and environment on the*

*personality of criminals such as A.R. Chikatilo, A. Onoprienko, P. Kearney, and R. Chase from a psychoanalytic perspective. It is found that both criminals experienced traumatic events in childhood that affected their mental state and attitude to the world around them. The importance of the legal principles of childhood protection for preventing the formation and development of the criminal's personality is also investigated. The results of the study can serve as a basis for further research in the field of criminology, sociology, and psychology aimed at uncovering the causes and identifying means of preventing deviant behaviour among young people, as well as for practical application in legal and psychological practice to develop strategies and programmes for crime prevention and support for people with risky or problematic behavioural status.*

**Keywords:** Relationships; Deviant behaviour; Minors; Peers; Social and psychological determinants; Family.

## 1. Introduction

Understanding the influence of childhood and the environment on the development and formation of the offender's personality allows identifying key factors that may contribute to the formation of criminal behaviour. By analysing childhood experiences and interactions with various aspects of the environment, it is possible to understand what factors influence the development of certain personality traits that may lead to future offending. Understanding the factors that influence the formation of the offender's personality allows for the development of effective intervention measures aimed at preventing crime and social rehabilitation (Yanovska, 2023). The study of this issue contributes to deepening knowledge about the mechanisms of interaction between the individual and the environment, which helps to reveal important aspects of personality development in the context of social, psychological, and cultural influences. The problem of the study is the complexity and subjectivity of assessing the impact of childhood and the environment on the formation of the criminal's personality (Storozhuk et al., 2023). This is due to many factors, such as family conditions, social status, economic status, education, peer interaction and others, which are difficult to systematize and analyse. It is difficult to determine how certain events or conditions in childhood can influence the commission of crimes in adulthood, as this process is complex and multifaceted (Wojciechowski, 2024).

Researcher N. Sedova (2023) considers the decisive influence of the social environment of a person, in particular, the personality of the offender, on the formation of a personality at all stages of its socialization. According to the scientist, a special role in this process is played by the family, where children, observing the

false relationship between parents and periodic scandals, show an increased level of anxiety. This condition is associated with uncertainty about the reliability of their existence, causing feelings of dissatisfaction, irritation, and a sense of burden in the family. Conflict and demonstrative behaviour become typical for these children. According to the researcher, there is a rapid breakdown of psychological contact with parents, accompanied by a sense of anger. In adolescence, children often stand up to conflict parents, even expressing their protest as direct retaliation. It is important to note that the absence of a father or his immoral behaviour does not always lead to the formation of a personality that breaks the law.

The key role of the family in the formation of the ethical foundations of the offender's personality in childhood is pointed out by A. Syzonenko (2021). According to the research of the scientist, in the family environment, due to the complex and lengthy educational process, as well as the conditions of limited social control, negative social consequences are often manifested. These implications, in particular, can contribute to social deviance and criminal behaviour. The researcher notes that criminologists consider family well-being to be one of the key factors that actively influence juvenile delinquency. The researcher sees the family as a micro-environment that can both promote and limit socialization. A family experiencing difficulties poses a threat to society, as juvenile delinquency is often associated with deficiencies in family upbringing, and these individuals may choose an illegal path under the influence or with the participation of their parents.

R. Andrusyshyn (2022) defines the essence of deviant behaviour as a person's non-compliance with social norms and the choice of a behavioural option that differs from the requirements of the norm in a particular situation. The scientist notes that this leads to a violation of the interaction between the individual and society. According to the researcher, such behavioural deviations are often caused by conflicts of interest, divergence of values, and deformation of the means of satisfying them. In particular, the researcher points to the mistakes of upbringing, life difficulties and miscalculations as the factors underlying these deviations.

T.D. Warner et al. (2023) consider adverse childhood experiences as traumatic events that can negatively affect youth development and be associated with chronic health problems, mental illness, and risky behaviour in adulthood. Researchers have shown that adverse childhood experiences can be avoided, but effective response strategies require a comprehensive conceptualization and measurement of adversity. While adverse childhood experiences are typically measured as individual experiences in the family and home, such as abuse or neglect, researchers note that adversity can also occur outside the home, in various contexts where youth development takes place, such as communities. The research also indicates that societal disadvantage amplifies the negative effects of adverse experiences of individuals and families.



Understanding the impact of childhood adversity and its intergenerational effects is crucial to developing effective strategies to mitigate risk and improve outcomes for vulnerable individuals and families, as noted by J.M. Craig et al. (2021). This study points to the complexity of the links between intergenerational adverse childhood experiences and their impact on offending behaviour. The researchers emphasized that it is important to consider the impact of risk factors across generations and their potential impact on outcomes such as offending behaviour.

Thus, it is important to additionally consider the peculiarities of the formation of the offender's personality, in particular, to pay attention to the emotional attitude of parents to the child, which determines the process of socialization and affects the formation of the personality in the context of offences. Factors that may influence crime, especially in relation to certain life circumstances, require more detailed research in order to better understand the peculiarities of the formation and development of the offender's personality during childhood. It is important to consider the peculiarities of the development of deviant behaviour at an early age and focus on the joint efforts of the family environment and social environment to prevent the negative impact of childhood and reduce its consequences in later life. An in-depth study of this issue is crucial for the development of effective strategies to prevent and treat the effects of negative childhood experiences across generations. The aim is to identify the interrelationships and relevant factors that may influence the formation of the criminal's personality in childhood.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### *2.1. Research Design and Data Collection*

This study employed a systematic review to examine how childhood experiences and environmental factors influence the development of criminal behavior. The research design aimed to capture both theoretical perspectives from criminology, psychology, and pedagogy, as well as tangible examples illustrated by known offenders. The scope included scholarly articles, monographs, official legal documents, and empirical case studies documenting the biographical details of individuals who committed serious crimes. Emphasis was placed on understanding childhood adversities, family dynamics, and socioeconomic circumstances that may shape deviant behavior in later life.

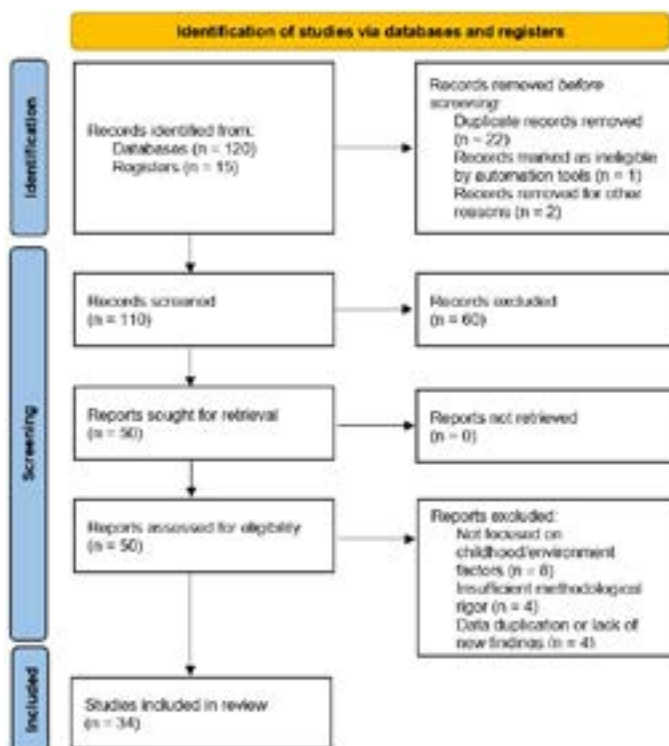
Data were collected from scientific databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar by using targeted keywords in both English and Ukrainian. Official documents, including international conventions and national legislative acts, were also considered to contextualize legal standards for child protection.

Case studies of notable offenders were analyzed using documented sources like psychiatric evaluations, court materials, and interviews with professionals. The selected materials were critically assessed to determine their relevance and methodological rigor, with attention given to the reliability of data and the clarity of reported findings regarding early childhood adversity and subsequent criminal tendencies.

## 2.2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Articles were included if they directly addressed the relationship between childhood or environmental factors and subsequent deviant or criminal behavior. Priority was given to peer-reviewed studies, official reports, and research demonstrating a clear link between adverse childhood experiences and the emergence of behavioral disorders leading to crime. Fundamental or classical texts were also considered if they provided significant theoretical insights. Studies focusing solely on economic analyses or strictly medical aspects without clear relevance to the formative role of childhood were excluded. Sources deemed unreliable or lacking a transparent methodological framework were likewise excluded to ensure a coherent and evidence-based foundation for the discussion (Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1.** A systematic review flow chart (in accordance with PRISMA-like guidelines)



### 3. Results

Childhood and the environment play a key role in the development and shaping of the offender's personality. These factors can determine not only moral and ethical values, but also affect the social and psychological aspects of an individual's life. In particular, the experience of childhood trauma is a common phenomenon faced by children around the world. Traumatic experiences that occur in early childhood can affect various aspects of life and lead to a variety of developmental problems that accompany a person throughout their life. Children who experience negative influences in early childhood are more prone to problems in psychosocial adaptation, learning, and the formation of interpersonal relationships. This influence can manifest itself in various areas of life, such as social behaviour, emotional state, adaptation to stress and the development of interpersonal skills.

The current interpretation of the impact of the social environment on the causation of crime is rudimentary at best. There is a significant link between the areas of activity of young people and their impact on the crime environment. It is also important to note a clear link between exposure to the criminal environment and participation in crime, with the impact of criminogenic factors depending on the criminal propensity of the individual. The presence of moral values that exclude crime and a high capacity for self-control seem to make young people almost immune to the situational influence of the criminal environment. On the other hand, morality, crime-prone behaviour, and a low capacity for self-control seem to make young people situationally vulnerable to the effects of a crime-ridden environment. It has been noted that the interaction between the social environment and personal traits is a key factor in shaping the criminogenic context and the individual challenge to criminal activity (Wikström et al., 2010). In general, the interaction between the social environment and personal characteristics plays an important role in shaping the criminogenic context and determining the individual level of predisposition to crime.

Peer influence is recognized as a key factor in criminology, existing in two main theoretical approaches that attribute an important role to peers in the aetiology of offending. From the first perspective, the normative influence is defined by the fact that deviant peers essentially influence the socialization of the adoption of deviant values and behaviours. The second approach, the situational perspective, emphasizes the direct influence of routine interactions with peers, whether deviant or not. In noting the differences in these approaches, it is important to consider control theories, which are an integral part of peer influence research. Theories of control emphasize the importance of the level of control and the absence of deviance in the personal sphere as factors that influence an individual's decision



to offend. One of the main conditions, according to current research, is time spent with friends and communication with peers who tend to offend. This aspect is becoming an important element of the relationship between age and delinquency, indicating that interaction with deviant peers can influence the adoption of deviant values and increase the chances of engaging in delinquency. It is important to note that time spent with friends in a criminogenic environment has been identified as a key element in the aetiology of crime, and this may explain the phenomenon of reduced crime after marriage. One possible explanation is that marriage reduces the time that individuals, especially men, spend in crime-ridden environments with friends, which reduces the opportunities for challenges to deviant behaviour (McGloin and Thomas, 2019).

When considering the role of the social environment and personal factors in shaping the criminal environment and criminal tendencies, it is important to consider that most individuals face adverse experiences from childhood. Undoubtedly, this has a significant impact on the further formation of their personality and, in the absence of appropriate support, can contribute to the risk of criminal behaviour. It is important to note that personal qualities, such as the ability to exercise self-control and moral values, become an important factor in determining how an individual responds to such experiences. For the majority of children who have experienced adverse experiences, it is important to provide adequate support and intervention to reduce the risk of criminal behaviour in the future. It has been established that more than half of all children experience at least one type of adverse experience (Leban, 2021; Perez et al., 2018). These experiences can include various forms of maltreatment, such as physical or emotional abuse, or negative aspects of the home environment, witnessing violence in the family, parental divorce, imprisonment of family members, mental illness in the family, or substance abuse.

The experience of negative childhood influences is identified as a key risk factor for offending and becomes an important component of the formation of the offender's personality. When children experience maltreatment, which can be measured by cumulative stress, it has a significant impact on their adult trajectories. The consequences of such childhood trauma include an increased risk of delinquency, including fighting, engaging in violence, and carrying weapons. In addition, mental health issues such as substance use, behavioural disorders and suicidal thoughts are also experienced. It is particularly important to consider that individuals who become offenders as children are more likely to report a negative childhood environment, mental health problems, aggressiveness, and difficulties in controlling their emotions. Young people who have experienced traumatic experiences are more likely to experience mental health problems, even after controlling for ethnicity and age (Baglivio et al., 2015). This fact indicates that traumatic events in childhood can have long-term consequences for the



mental state of an individual. The development of deviant behaviour in children is a complex process that is influenced by a variety of factors. Given the above context, it can be noted that traumatic experiences can play a significant role in the formation of such deviant behaviour. Children exposed to traumatic situations are at an increased risk of committing offences later in life. Thus, the connection between childhood trauma and deviant behaviour becomes apparent in the process of forming the personality of a criminal. It is important to take this aspect into account when analysing the factors that determine the criminal trajectory of individuals and improving crime prevention strategies. The development of deviant behaviour in children is a complex process that depends on a variety of characteristics (Table 1).

**TABLE 1.** Determinants of the formation of deviant behaviour in children

Determinants of deviant behaviour	Description
Biological factors	Biological factors are manifested in the presence of physiological or anatomical features that complicate the child's social adaptation, in particular inherited genetic features, and mental abnormalities.
Social factors	Social factors – include external social conditions, such as social, political, economic problems, which negatively affect society and the formation of the personality of minors. Among them are social processes and characteristics of social groups to which a person belongs.
Pedagogical factors	They are manifested in shortcomings in the system of school and family education, which leads to deviations in the socialization of the child, which includes the indifferent attitude of the teacher to the child and the nature of education both in school and in the family. Many of these children develop skills that can be signs of social maladjustment, such as idleness, laziness, running away from home, or even vagrancy.
Socio-psychological factors	Cover intrapersonal causes and mechanisms, such as deformation of the value-motivational sphere and deviations in the cognitive sphere.
Individual and psychological factors	This includes aspects of the individual's interaction with the immediate environment and its influence on the formation of psychosocial identity.

Source: Samsin and Hachak-Velychko (2021)

The influence of childhood and the environment on the development of the offender's personality needs to be considered in the context of these five factors. The interaction between them forms the basis for understanding the processes that lead to deviant behaviour and criminal tendencies in childhood and later life. However, it is important to consider the individual characteristics of each case and its context, as they can vary from person to person.

It is worth paying attention to the peculiarities of the formation and development of the personality of the offender – A.R. Chikatilo – a serial killer

known for his brutal crimes committed in the period from 1978 to 1990 in the USSR, including Ukraine. His life story shows the influence of various factors on his personality, including his childhood and environment. He was born into a poor family in Ukraine at a time when the country was being tortured by famines that led to mass starvation. A.R. Chikatilo grew up in an atmosphere of constant hunger, poverty, and repressed emotions. It is also known that he suffered from violence and bullying by his peers. All these factors may be key in shaping his psychological state and behaviour in later life. From a psychoanalytic perspective, childhood played an important role in shaping the personality of A.R. Chikatilo. According to the conclusions of the psychoneurological dispensary and the V.P. Serbsky Research Institute, he did not have chronic mental illness, but sexual developmental disorders and sexual perversions were detected (Murashko, 2022). These disorders may be related to negative childhood experiences, such as psychological pressure in the family or trauma he may have experienced. It is also important to consider the influence of the environment on the development of the offender's personality. A.R. Chikatilo grew up in a time of severe social and political instability in the USSR, which may have contributed to the emergence of traumatic events and stress in his life. Undoubtedly, these factors could have influenced the formation of his mental structure and attitude to the world around him. Thus, the childhood and environment of A.R. Chikatilo had a decisive influence on the formation of his personality and his becoming a serial killer. Negative childhood experiences, including a lack of family support and stressful circumstances, were likely to be the determining factors that contributed to the development of pathological tendencies in his behaviour.

Another example is A.Y. Onoprienko, who was born into a difficult family situation and experienced some childhood traumatic events that determined his further psychosocial development and behaviour. The loss of his mother at an early age, lack of family support and lack of attachment in childhood caused significant emotional and psychological distress. While living in the orphanage, A.Y. Onoprienko was subjected to physical and emotional abuse, experiencing a constant uncomfortable environment devoid of emotional comfort. These negative experiences affected his view of the world and contributed to the formation of aggressive and antisocial defence mechanisms. By engaging in criminal activity, he sought a means of expressing his emotions and sought to provide protection in a world that lacked stability and support. At the same time, P. Kearney, born in Los Angeles, seemed to have a happy life in a prosperous family. However, despite this, he was subjected to psychological trauma at a young age. As a thin and sickly child, he was the subject of ridicule and bullying at school. This sense of vulnerability and insecurity probably contributed to his feelings of insecurity and alienation from others. The constant stress and

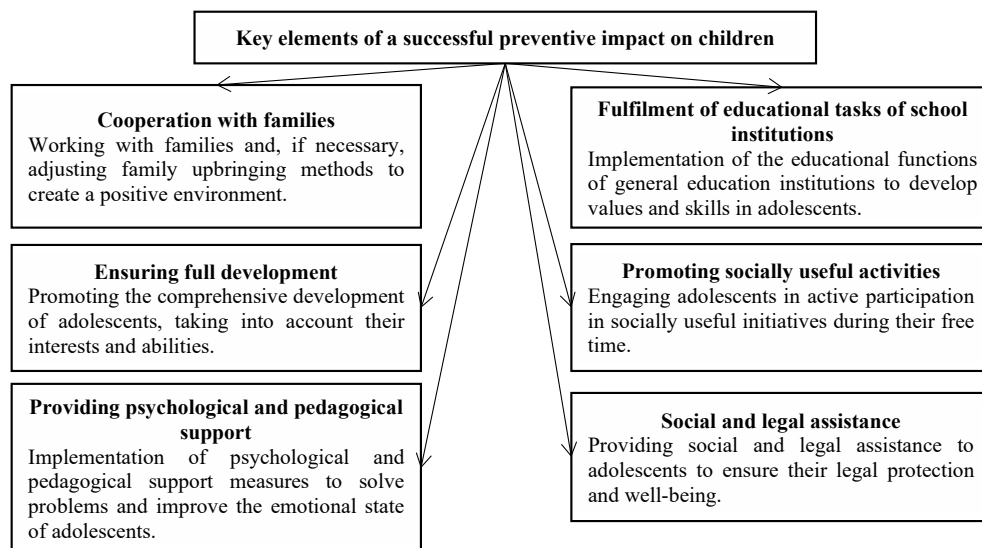


sense of insecurity he experienced at school led to psychological defences in the form of violent fantasies. Fantasies about murder were an attempt to control a situation that looked uncontrollable and threatening. In adolescence, when the personality is formed and the influences from childhood begin to manifest themselves, these fantasies became more realistic. Gradually, P. Kearney decided that murder was the only way to solve his problems or to feel power and control over his life. His childhood, where he constantly felt insecure, could have provided the basis for the development of his criminal personality. He felt that violence was the only way to feel strong and protected in a world where he felt defenceless and helpless. Thus, P. Kearney's childhood, which was filled with stress, vulnerability, and psychological trauma, could have contributed to the formation of a criminal personality that uses violence as a way of expressing himself and gaining control.

Another example is R. Chase, known as the "Sacramento Vampire", who was born into a military family and who spoke about the horrors of war since childhood. The life of R. Chase also illustrates important aspects of the influence of childhood and the environment on the formation of the criminal's personality. From the point of view of psychoanalysis, R. Chase's childhood was a period when the basic mental structures and mechanisms that influenced his future behaviour were formed. In particular, relationships in the family, especially with parents, are of great importance for the mental development of a child. Richard's father talked about the horrors of war, which could have influenced the formation of fear and anxiety in him. Additionally, R. Chase had problems with bed-wetting and showed aggression by killing a pet cat. These events can be considered psychologically traumatic and influenced the formation of his mental structure. The diagnosis of schizophrenia, although not confirmed, is also important for understanding R. Chase from a psychoanalytic perspective. His mother's negative attitude towards doctors and the lack of treatment may indicate additional stress for him during his childhood. The five basic psychic mechanisms identified by R. Chase reflect his mental state and the strategies he used to manage his own emotions and power over others (a sense of omnipotence, sadistic fantasies, ritual actions, dehumanization, and symbiotic fusion) (Fouché et al., 2015). R. Chase's childhood and environment had a significant impact on his mental development and personality formation, which was reflected in his subsequent criminal actions.

Preventing the formation of a criminal's personality in childhood requires a comprehensive approach and attention to various areas of children's life. The main task in combating deviant behaviour, in particular, among adolescents, should be not just responding to specific cases, but, above all, their systemic prevention to avoid the emergence of deviant behaviour (Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1.** Ways of preventing the development of negative personality traits and avoiding deviant personality behaviour



Source: Dmytrieva and Hryban (2022)

The overall goal of preventing the development and formation of a criminal personality is to create conditions for the full development of a child, taking into account his or her needs and characteristics. An integrated approach and joint activities of the family, school, community, and professional staff can effectively contribute to the prevention of criminal behaviour.

One of the most effective means of preventing the formation of a criminal personality in childhood is the development of measures in the educational sphere. Preventive education opportunities in higher education institutions are extremely effective compared to other prevention methods, which are usually intervention-based (intervention, correction, rehabilitation). For these prevention methods to work, they need to become part of the young person's consciousness and be woven into their life beliefs and experiences. This can only be achieved through the systematic educational influence of the immediate social environment, including teachers. Creating a sociological culture of thinking among student teachers will allow them to humanize the relationship between teachers and students. Understanding the social laws and patterns of social behaviour and social activity will help student teachers to better understand the personal and social needs and interests of children, adolescents, and young people. This, in turn, will contribute not only to preventing the negative consequences of the spread of antisocial and anti-social behaviour in the adolescent environment, but also to improving the educational work in the school education system in general (Kushnir et al., 2019).

This approach, focused on the formation of a sociological culture of thinking among student teachers, can significantly contribute to the transformation of the secondary education system. The formation of a sociological culture of thinking contributes to the understanding of social processes and interactions in society, which can lead to improved interpersonal relations in the education system, the creation of a favourable environment for cooperation and emotional support. Modern society is undergoing rapid changes in the socio-economic sphere, and it is important to take these changes into account in the education system. Mastering sociological culture will allow teachers to better understand current trends and needs of students, as well as to adapt the learning process more effectively. Sociological culture includes an understanding of civic rights and responsibilities. Developing this culture among teachers can help educate students in the spirit of active citizenship and participation in social processes. Incorporating sociological aspects into the educational process helps prepare students for social reality and understand the causes of social phenomena. This makes education more vital and practical. Modern pedagogical methods require an innovative approach. The perception of sociological knowledge can open up new opportunities for the use of modern technologies and methods in the educational process. Thus, the introduction of a sociological culture of thinking in the higher education system can be a key factor in improving the educational process, making it more adapted to modern challenges and contributing to the humanization of relationships in the educational environment.

Programmes aimed at reducing levels of aggression and impulsivity in young people experiencing difficulties are also important, as they are effective in changing the trajectory of development towards crime. Interventions as early as primary school, aimed at preventing further problematic behaviour in adolescence, can influence the relationship between childhood difficulties and offending (Musci et al., 2014). Such programmes aim to provide young people with the necessary skills and resources to effectively resolve conflicts, control emotions and respond to stressful situations. They include social skills training, psychological support, anger management programmes and other forms of psychosocial support. Focusing on the prevention of problematic behaviour can also help to address the negative effects of childhood adversity. These programmes develop self-regulatory mechanisms and help young people find constructive ways to express their emotions and reactions to life challenges.

In order to prevent the formation and development of a criminal's personality, it is important to have a legal framework for the protection of childhood based on the principles defined in international documents and national legislation of each country. Every child has the right to be protected from any form of discrimination, regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic, or social origin, property, disability, birth, or any

other status. In accordance with the principle of the best interests of the child, all decisions concerning children shall be made with due regard to their best interests, which includes the right to life, health, education, proper upbringing, protection from violence and exploitation. Every child has the right to life, survival, and development to their full potential. Children have the right to express their views in all matters affecting their lives, and their views should be considered in accordance with their age and maturity. Children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation, and trafficking. Every child has the right to access to quality education that contributes to their development and self-realization. Children have the right to be treated with dignity and to have their dignity as individuals protected. These legal principles of child protection are set out in international instruments, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), as well as in the legislation of each country to ensure the protection of children's rights and interests.

Ukraine recognizes and adheres to a number of international and national regulations aimed at protecting the rights and interests of children. The main ones are the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Constitution of Ukraine (1996), the Law of Ukraine "On education" (2017), the Law of Ukraine "On childhood protection" (2001), the Law of Ukraine "On prevention and counteraction to domestic violence" (2018). These legal instruments of child protection are important for preventing the formation and development of the offender's personality, as they create a legal framework for ensuring the rights and interests of children, as well as define the responsibility of the state for their protection.

There are certain shortcomings in the legal framework for child protection that can make it difficult to effectively safeguard children's rights and interests. In some cases, laws and regulations may not be sufficiently clear or enforceable, making it difficult to implement them effectively. Lack of financial, human, and material resources can make it difficult to provide quality child protection services and programmes. Many administrative procedures and formalities can impede access to protection for children and their families. Lack of effective mechanisms for monitoring and oversight of child protection can lead to insufficient detection and response to child rights violations. Certain cultural or social norms may impede effective child protection, especially in situations where certain forms of violence or exploitation are considered acceptable. Certain groups of children, such as children with disabilities, migrants, and children from low-income families, may have limited access to protection due to various social and economic factors. These shortcomings need to be addressed and improved in legal regulation and implementation to ensure effective protection of children's rights and interests.



## 4. Discussion

The findings presented in this article underscore the profound effect of childhood experiences and the surrounding environment on the development of deviant behaviour and criminal tendencies. Negative childhood experiences, including physical and emotional abuse, neglect, or exposure to violence, appear to play a key role in shaping future offending behaviour, as evidenced by both the theoretical framework provided and the real-life examples cited (e.g., A.R. Chikatilo, A.Y. Onoprienko, P. Kearney, R. Chase). These observations align with recent empirical studies suggesting that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) constitute a principal risk factor for adult criminality. In examining the multifaceted consequences of maltreatment in childhood, the work of Chen et al. (2024) is particularly instructive: their research demonstrates that childhood abuse can engender not only immediate trauma but also significant psychological sequelae, such as shame and diminished self-esteem. Both shame and self-esteem deficits heighten susceptibility to criminal behaviour, as they erode self-regulatory capacities and skew social-learning processes. Likewise, Bastien (2024) supports the argument that early traumatic experiences can be strong predictors of later deviance, providing evidence from criminal records that show a pattern of adverse early-life events correlating with criminal behaviour in adulthood.

The examination of socioeconomic, educational, and familial factors in this article corroborates the stance that crime cannot be explained through a single cause. Liu et al. (2023) echo this notion by emphasizing that a person's growth environment, encompassing social support, parental guidance, and access to stable educational resources, can either exacerbate or mitigate the trajectory toward deviance. Their findings point to the critical importance of early intervention strategies in family and educational contexts. The article's discussion of preventive measures, such as improving pedagogical practices and fostering a "sociological culture of thinking" among future teachers, resonates with the proposition that educational environments can serve as protective factors if they integrate social, emotional, and moral support.

Additionally, the cases presented highlight that the digital age may introduce new dimensions in the formation of criminal personalities. While this article focuses primarily on traditional adverse experiences, such as maltreatment, family dysfunction, and peer influence, emerging literature posits that the digital environment can amplify or modulate these factors. Djubina (2024), for instance, discusses how constant exposure to online communities and digital content can shape an individual's worldview, either reinforcing existing antisocial tendencies or offering alternative pathways for socialization and support. Thus, in conjunction



with traditional preventive efforts, contemporary strategies should incorporate digital literacy and responsible media consumption to address the complexities of the modern social milieu. Taken together, these observations emphasize the urgent need for a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach to preventing the formation of a criminal personality in childhood. Such an approach would span legal reforms that protect children's rights, school-based programmes aimed at fostering emotional regulation and moral development, and broader social policies that address socioeconomic inequalities. By integrating insights from diverse sources, including psychological studies on shame and self-esteem (Chen et al., 2024), longitudinal analyses on early-life trauma (Bastien, 2024), and sociological research on the growth environment (Liu et al., 2023), practitioners and policymakers can devise more targeted interventions. Furthermore, recognizing the influence of the digital context on an individual's behavioural development (Djubina, 2024) expands the scope of preventive measures, ensuring they remain effective and relevant in a rapidly evolving social landscape.

Scientists P.L. Brantingham and P.J. Brantingham (1993) argue that each event of criminal activity is the result of the interaction of various factors, including the law, the motivation of the offender and specific characteristics located in space and time. According to their research, each element of a criminal event emerges from its own historical trajectory, which is determined by experiences and future intentions, as well as by environmental constraints. The researchers emphasize that the routine activities of potential criminals play an important role in determining the areas and times when a crime is likely to occur. This approach indicates that the formation and development of criminal activity is closely linked to the daily life and routines of persons who may commit an offence. In the context of the research findings, it should be noted that the personality of a criminal is formed under the influence of many factors. Criminal activity events are determined not only by laws and motivation, but also by history, routine activities, and environmental constraints. This highlights the complexity of the interaction of various factors in shaping criminal behaviour.

At the same time, peer influence is an important force in adolescence, actively shaping both adaptive and maladaptive attitudes and behaviour. This is underlined by the research of B. Laursen and R. Veenstra (2021), who found a significant contribution of peer influence to the development of adolescent personality. The model of influence compatibility proposed by the researchers combines common views on early adolescence, considering this period as a time of increased responsibility, with evidence that peer influence contributes to the formation of similarities between partners. The interplay of these two developmental forces facilitates the ease of friendship, integration into the peer group, and promotes interpersonal and in-group harmony, eliminating differences that can lead to social isolation. Another important element, according to scientists, is the rapid



emergence of various forms of maladaptive behaviour in early adolescence, which occurs in tandem with important shifts in the social world. In particular, the role of peers is growing dramatically, which is becoming the most obvious factor in changes in the social environment of adolescents and influencing their attitudes and actions. In comparison with the results of this scientific study, it should be noted that the influence of the environment and the environment are the determining factors in the formation of personality. The results of the study indicate that the role of peers and the social environment has a significant impact on the adaptive and maladaptive aspects of personality development, in particular, as factors of development and formation of a future criminal.

S. Cioban et al. (2021) study the predictors of deviance, identifying the main categories that include family models, socio-demographic aspects, socialization, victimization, school, and individual factors. In particular, they emphasize that involvement in deviant and delinquent behaviour is partly determined by interaction with the level of antisocial behaviour of peers. Scientists view deviance as a consequence of communicating with peers who engage in antisocial behaviour. In line with the social control theory, they believe that involvement in crime can be a process that occurs without learning, but through interaction with peers and their influence. The results of the study confirm the significant links between offender profiles and patterns of family involvement. It is noted that those who avoid offending are more likely to belong to families with minimal problems, while serious chronic offenders are more likely to have families with various challenges, such as neglect. The authors are convinced that the escalation of offending is related to the influence of family functioning on deviant behaviour, especially in the context of peer deviance. In comparison to the findings of this study, it should be noted that the development of deviant behaviour can be strongly regulated by the interaction with surrounding social and family factors that determine the perceptions and behaviour of young people.

Child neglect and maltreatment are defined as actions or omissions by a mother, father, or guardian that are unethical and harmful, limiting the child's development, and according to Ayhan et al. (2024), these actions are most difficult for individuals in childhood, when their coping skills are not yet fully formed. Researchers note that children who experience sexual, physical, and emotional trauma in childhood face significant difficulties in regulating their emotions, and adolescents involved in crime have higher rates of childhood trauma compared to those without criminal experience. According to researchers, a history of childhood sexual abuse, physical and emotional neglect, the presence of people with psychological disorders in the family, and family instability due to divorce or unmarried parents are identified as the most common forms of violence. However, it is worth noting that chronic childhood trauma that begins at an early age increases the likelihood of developing violent behaviour by more than 200%, especially in the period before adulthood.

Based on the results of this study, in comparison with the conclusions of scientists, it should be recognized that the period of childhood and the environment have a decisive influence on the formation and development of the offender's personality. In particular, exposure to violence and traumatic experiences in childhood can determine the further course of life, increasing the risk of involvement in criminal behaviour and negative consequences for the mental state. These findings suggest the need to improve approaches to the prevention and treatment of individuals who have experienced traumatic scenarios in early life in order to prevent further involvement in criminal activity.

The importance of negative experiences in childhood as a determining factor for further aggression and antisocial behaviour was studied by A. Meddeb et al. (2023). The researchers found that emotion management and regulation play a key role in the relationship between negative childhood experiences and manifestations of aggressive antisocial behaviour. The results of regression models indicate that negative childhood experiences largely explain the relationship between emotion regulation and aggressive antisocial behaviour, which shapes the personality of a future criminal. Given the findings of this study, this underscores the critical importance of early intervention and support for children who face traumatic experiences in order to reduce the impact of these negative experiences on their future life course.

In her own research, Connolly (2020) points to a strong link between negative childhood experiences and higher levels of antisocial behaviour in childhood, as well as with adolescent delinquency and an increased risk of becoming a victim of violent crime. After controlling for common genetic and environmental influences using a fixed-effect sibling comparison, the researchers found that those who experienced more negative childhood experiences did not show higher levels of antisocial behaviour, delinquency, or increased risk of future victimization. Compared to the results of the present study, it is worth noting that the hereditary factor is not the key factor in the development and formation of the criminal personality at an early age.

The results of this comparative analysis indicate that the formation of the offender's personality is the result of the interaction of a complex of factors. It is important to consider biological, psychological, and social influences in order to develop effective crime prevention and social rehabilitation strategies.

## **5. Implications for Research, Practice, and Society**

This study's findings underscore the importance of early interventions and support systems in reducing the likelihood of criminal behavior rooted in adverse childhood experiences. From a research perspective, the examination of specific



risk factors, such as family dysfunction, exposure to violence, and lack of emotional support, can inform future studies aimed at developing more targeted prevention models. These insights bridge theory and practice by highlighting not just the conceptual underpinnings of deviant behavior but also the tangible pathways for intervention. Researchers in fields like criminology, psychology, and social work can build on the presented evidence to design longitudinal studies or cross-sectional analyses that further clarify how environmental influences interact with individual predispositions.

In terms of practical application, the study emphasizes that educators, social workers, and mental health professionals can collaborate in implementing early screening and support programs for children at risk. Such measures can be integrated into school curricula or community-based initiatives, fostering a proactive approach to emotional and behavioral regulation in vulnerable populations. Policy makers can also draw upon these findings to advocate for legislation that invests in child protection services, mental health resources, and educational outreach, ultimately influencing public policy at both local and national levels.

The societal impact is evident in how this research informs a broader public understanding of the interplay between childhood adversity and delinquency. By shifting the focus toward prevention and early intervention, it contributes to changing societal attitudes that might stigmatize individuals with challenging childhoods. Offering data-driven strategies for youth support can enhance quality of life in communities, reduce recidivism rates, and encourage a more empathetic view of criminal behavior as rooted in complex psychological and social factors. These implications are consistent with the study's conclusions, which emphasize that a multifaceted, early-stage approach is crucial in interrupting the trajectory from childhood hardship to adult offending.

## 6. Conclusions

The study of the influence of childhood and the environment on the formation of a criminal's personality is an important area of scientific research. The results obtained confirm that the multifactorial nature of this influence includes biological, social, pedagogical, socio-psychological, and individual psychological aspects. Measures of preventive education and support for childhood, family, and school can effectively prevent the formation of negative personality traits and deviant behaviour. A systematic and comprehensive approach to this problem helps to create conditions for the full development and social adaptation of children and adolescents, contributing to the creation of a healthy and safe social environment.

The experience of childhood trauma can leave lasting marks, affecting the social, psychological, and emotional aspects of a person's life. Negative influences in early childhood can contribute to problems in psychosocial adaptation, learning, and the formation of interpersonal relationships. The modern interpretation of the impact of the social environment on the cause and effect of crime shows a significant influence of the spheres of activity of young people on the criminogenic environment. It is important to acknowledge that this influence depends on the criminal predisposition of the individual and the interaction between the social environment and personal characteristics. The importance of moral values and the ability to self-control in shaping an individual's call to crime is particularly emphasized. Peer influence is recognized as a key factor in criminology, where control theories emphasize the importance of the level of control and the absence of deviance in the personal sphere.

The study examines examples of the influence of childhood and the environment on the formation of the criminal's personality. From a psychoanalytic perspective, both criminals experienced traumatic events in childhood, such as family conflicts, psychological pressure, trauma, or stress, which affected their mental state and attitude to the world around them. The childhood of the offenders in question was a period when the basic mental structures and mechanisms were formed, which influenced their subsequent behaviour. Family relationships, parental influence, traumatic events, or stressful circumstances influenced the formation of their personality and attitude to the environment.

The importance of the legal framework for the protection of childhood to prevent the formation and development of the criminal personality was analysed. International and national regulations, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Ukrainian legislation, define the rights and obligations of the state to protect the rights and interests of children. However, there are gaps in the legal framework that can make it difficult to ensure effective child protection, such as insufficient resources, complex administrative procedures, and cultural constraints. Such shortcomings need to be addressed and improved to ensure effective protection of children's rights and interests. Future researchers should pay attention to studying the impact of modern technologies, in particular the use of media and the Internet, on personality development and the risk of deviant behaviour.

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# *Exploring the Landscape of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Care in Albania: Current Situation and Mental Health Services*

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## **Abstract**

*This paper examines the current state of mental health care for children and adolescents in Albania, highlighting the significant challenges faced by the country's mental health system. Despite modest progress, Albania continues to rank among the lowest in Europe in terms of mental health workforce availability, with a particularly severe shortage of specialists in child and adolescent care. The three-tiered mental health care system, while structured, remains ineffective due to a lack of specialized professionals, inadequate infrastructure, and significant geographic disparities in service access.*

*Cultural stigma surrounding mental health, combined with limited public awareness and distrust in available services, exacerbates the situation, further*

*detering families from seeking necessary support. Additionally, high rates of child abuse, emotional neglect, and school violence contribute to the growing mental health crisis, leaving many young individuals vulnerable to psychological issues such as anxiety, depression, and aggression.*

*This paper explores the systemic barriers, financial constraints, and cultural norms that hinder effective mental health care for children and adolescents in Albania, and it offers recommendations for improving access to care, increasing professional capacity, and reducing stigma. Ultimately, it calls for urgent reforms to create a more accessible, equitable, and effective mental health care system for Albania's youth.*

**Key words:** *child, adolescent, treatment, mental health*

## **Introduction**

The mental health care system in Albania, particularly for children and adolescents, is in a state of crisis. Systemic neglect, lack of investment, and barriers to accessing care have created widespread challenges in delivering mental health services. These issues significantly impact both the general state of mental health and the ability to address specific problems through appropriate services. Despite a slight increase in the number of mental health workers, Albania's mental health workforce remains far below regional averages, especially in child and adolescent care. Furthermore, there is no official data on the number of dedicated specialists, such as child psychiatrists or psychologists, leaving young individuals without the professional support they urgently need (Dobi, Tomori, & Zenelaj, 2022).

Mental health services for children and adolescents are structured into a three-tier system, but the lack of resources and specialized professionals casts doubt on its effectiveness. At the primary care level, pediatricians and family doctors conduct initial assessments but often lack the expertise to diagnose and manage complex mental health conditions. This frequently leads to misdiagnoses or delays in treatment, preventing children from receiving the necessary care (Dobi, Tomori, & Zenelaj, 2022). Even when referrals are made, the lack of specialized services exacerbates the problem.

The secondary level, community-based mental health services, provides essential care but is severely limited due to financial constraints and uneven geographical distribution. There are only five community mental health centers nationwide, three of which are located in the capital, Tirana (Dobi, Tomori, & Zenelaj, 2022). These disparities in service availability increase mental health challenges, as children in rural areas often go untreated due to the difficulty of traveling long distances or affording necessary care.

At the tertiary care level, hospital services are available at the “Mother Teresa” University Hospital Center in Tirana. However, this institution lacks the capacity to address the ongoing and long-term mental health needs of children and adolescents. Additionally, the National Therapeutic and Rehabilitation Center for Children, which offers critical developmental and therapeutic services, has limited scope and availability, particularly for families facing financial difficulties. The high costs of evaluations and treatments present significant financial barriers for families, worsening the mental health crisis (Taylor, 2023).

Cultural stigma surrounding mental health issues further complicates the situation. In Albania, there is a lack of awareness and understanding of mental health disorders, which discourages children and adolescents from seeking psychological support. The stigma, combined with cultural beliefs that family problems should remain private, prevents many individuals from accessing the care they need. Trust in mental health services, particularly among private providers, is also low due to concerns about the quality of these services.

Another critical issue is the widespread prevalence of abuse and domestic violence, which deeply affects the mental health of children and adolescents. Emotional neglect and physical punishment increase the vulnerability of Albanian children to psychological issues such as anxiety, depression, and aggression. Moreover, these children are often unprepared to manage their emotions, which can lead to violent behavior toward others. Cultural norms that accept physical punishment and emotional neglect exacerbate the challenges in fostering healthy relationships and emotional regulation, which are essential for mental and emotional well-being. Additionally, bullying—both online and in schools—has become a pervasive issue, intensifying feelings of isolation and anxiety among students.

## Development Theories

The term “child” refers to individuals from birth to the onset of puberty, generally up to around the ages of 11–12 (APA). Childhood is divided into two phases: early childhood (ages 2–6) and middle childhood (ages 7–11). During these stages, children experience rapid physical, cognitive, and emotional development that forms the foundation for their growth.

An “adolescent” is defined as an individual in the developmental stage between childhood and adulthood, spanning ages 12 to 19 (APA, 2018). Adolescence is characterized by significant changes in physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development, serving as a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood.

There are several psychological developmental theories that provide frameworks for understanding these changes, including Piaget’s theory of cognitive development, Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development, Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, the attachment theory, and Freud’s theory of psychosexual development.



*Piaget's theory suggests that children go through four distinct stages of development (Cherry, 2024):* Preoperational Stage (ages 2–7): This stage is characterized by symbolic thinking, imagination, and egocentrism. During this stage, children perceive the world only from their own perspective and find it difficult to reason logically or understand others' viewpoints (Piaget, 1952).

Concrete Operational Stage (ages 7–11): In this stage, children begin to think logically about objects and events, developing skills like conservation, classification, and seriation (Piaget, 1952).

Adolescence is considered as the Formal Operational Stage (beginning at around age 12), during which individuals develop the ability to think abstractly and logically about hypothetical situations. These changes enable adolescents to reflect on their personal values, future goals, and social roles (Piaget, 1952).

*Erikson's theory highlights two critical stages for children up to age 12:* Initiative vs. Guilt (ages 3–5): This stage emphasizes the importance of play and exploration in fostering a sense of initiative and confidence in children (Erikson, 1963).

Industry vs. Inferiority (ages 6–12): Focused on mastering skills such as academic learning and social interaction, this stage encourages children to develop a sense of competence through achievement (Erikson, 1963).

In adolescence, the stage of Identity vs. Role Confusion (ages 12–18) is critical. Adolescents explore different roles, values, and beliefs to form a coherent sense of self. Success in this stage results in a stable identity, while failure may lead to confusion about one's role and identity (Erikson, 1963).

*Freud's theory identifies two significant stages for children:* Anal Stage (ages 1–3): This stage focuses on developing control and independence, as exemplified through toilet training. Excessive parental control during this stage can lead to obsessive or defiant personality traits (Freud, 1905).

Latency Stage (ages 6–12): During this period, sexual instincts are dormant, and energy is directed toward learning and socializing. Disruptions in this phase, such as trauma or lack of support, can hinder academic success and social integration.

In adolescence, Freud describes the Genital Stage (ages 12 and onward) as a time of sexual and emotional maturation. Freud believed that resolving conflicts from earlier stages leads to healthy sexual and emotional development during adolescence, while unresolved conflicts can hinder the ability to form healthy relationships (Freud, 1905).

*Vygotsky's theory highlights the role of social interactions in cognitive development.* Using concepts like the Zone of Proximal Development, Vygotsky argued that children learn skills they cannot yet perform independently through guided support from adults or peers (Vygotsky, 1978). Factors such as parental absence, lack of education, or social isolation can hinder cognitive and social development.

During adolescence, Vygotsky emphasized the importance of social interactions and guided participation to help individuals develop cognitive skills and understand social roles (Vygotsky, 1978). However, disruptions in these interactions, such as peer pressure, lack of familial support, or social isolation, can negatively affect development during this stage.

*John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth's attachment theory underscores the importance of a secure attachment to caregivers in early childhood for emotional regulation, social adaptability, and trust. Secure attachment is formed through consistent caregiving. Disruptions, such as neglect, inconsistent parenting, or trauma in early childhood, can lead to insecure attachment, increasing vulnerability to anxiety, behavioral problems, and difficulties in forming healthy relationships (Bowlby, 1969).*

During adolescence, the attachment base formed in early childhood continues to influence emotional regulation, social behavior, and interpersonal relationships. Adolescents with secure attachments to their caregivers tend to exhibit higher levels of self-esteem, adaptability, and the ability to form healthy social and romantic relationships (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1978). Conversely, insecure attachment may result in difficulties managing emotions, building trust, and developing a stable sense of identity (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

## **Factors Influencing Healthy Psychological Development**

Based on the shared elements of all developmental theories, early childhood is marked by significant cognitive, emotional, and social growth. During this period, children develop basic motor skills, acquire language, and build a sense of autonomy (Erikson, 1963). However, developmental challenges such as speech delays, exposure to trauma, or inconsistent parental care can create developmental obstacles (Stevens, Rooij, Jovanovic, 2018).

Emotional regulation is another key skill learned during early childhood. Children begin to recognize and label emotions, but they rely heavily on caregivers for guidance in managing their emotions. Interruptions, such as childhood trauma or parental neglect, can lead to emotional and behavioral disorders like aggression or social withdrawal (Felitti et al., 1998).

Middle childhood is characterized by increasing independence and the development of cognitive abilities, such as logical thinking and problem-solving skills (Piaget, 1952; Erikson, 1963; Cherry, 2024). Academic achievement and peer relationships take center stage during this phase. Children who face challenges such as bullying, learning disabilities, or family instability may struggle with self-esteem and social competence (Shetgiri, 2013).



Peer acceptance is critical during middle childhood, and rejection or isolation can lead to anxiety, depression, or maladaptive behaviors (Wu et al., 2024). Additionally, factors such as poverty, lack of quality education, and exposure to violence exacerbate developmental disruptions, creating long-term consequences for mental health (Shonkoff et al., 2012). Negative childhood experiences, such as abuse, neglect, and family dysfunction, have been shown to adversely affect cognitive and emotional development (Felitti et al., 1998). Socioeconomic status also plays a crucial role, as poverty can limit access to education, proper nutrition, and healthcare (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002).

Furthermore, parental mental health issues, such as depression or anxiety, can impair caregivers' ability to provide consistent emotional support, negatively impacting the child's stability and well-being (Goodman et al., 2011). Exposure to trauma and chronic stress disrupts development and the ability to regulate emotions effectively (Perry, 2002).

During adolescence, identity formation becomes the most significant developmental task. This period involves establishing personal values, long-term goals, and one's role in society, which are critical for developing a coherent identity. However, various factors can hinder this process, including adverse childhood experiences such as abuse and neglect, which can harm self-esteem and lead to disorders like depression or anxiety (Felitti et al., 1998).

Additionally, socioeconomic status, peer pressure, and parental mental health significantly influence how adolescents experience this stage. Lack of support or exposure to stressful environments can result in identity confusion or challenges in achieving emotional stability (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Goodman et al., 2011). Trauma, stress, or educational deficits, which affect cognitive and emotional development, make it harder for adolescents to manage the challenges of identity formation (Perry, 2002).

## **The Most Common Mental Health Problems in Children and Adolescents**

Studies in the U.S. show that 1 in 7 children between the ages of 3 and 17 have been diagnosed with a mental health or behavioral disorder (CDC, 2024). Among these, anxiety, behavioral disorders, and depression are the most common diagnoses. According to these statistics, anxiety affects 10% of children aged 6 to 11, with a slightly higher prevalence in females. Behavioral disorders affect 7%, and depression affects 4%. For adolescents, mental health concerns are even more pronounced, with 21% reporting symptoms of anxiety and 17% experiencing depression. A significant number of adolescents (40%) have experienced persistent sadness, and 20% have contemplated suicide (CDC, 2024).

In the U.S., more than half (53%) of children with a mental health disorder receive treatment or counseling, with 43% being prescribed medication. Treatment rates vary by condition, with 79% of children with depression receiving care, compared to 59% with anxiety and 52% with behavioral disorders. However, many children may experience mental health symptoms without meeting full diagnostic criteria or remain undiagnosed (CDC, 2024).

The seven most common mental health disorders in children and adolescents are: ADHD, anxiety disorders, depressive disorders, bipolar disorders, behavioral disorders, eating disorders, and substance use disorders (Hrymoc, 2024).

## **Treatment**

Treatment for mental health disorders in children typically involves a comprehensive evaluation, tailored psychotherapy based on the child's needs, and, if necessary, medications for cases where other interventions are insufficient. Family counseling sessions and parental support provide strategies for managing the child's challenges, while coordination among healthcare providers ensures effective care (NIH, 2024).

An ideal approach to mental health care for children integrates professional expertise, community resources, and family involvement in the treatment process (Stolper, van Doesum, & Steketee, 2022). A comprehensive evaluation serves as the first step, enabling a clear understanding of the child's challenges. Child psychologists and psychiatrists conduct assessments to determine diagnoses and recommend personalized treatment plans. Psychotherapeutic interventions, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), are essential in addressing specific issues.

Research shows that CBT helps children adapt, manage emotions, and develop healthier behaviors (Nakao, Shirotaki & Sugaya, 2021). Play therapy can also be particularly beneficial for younger children, allowing them to express emotions in a healthy way.

School-based mental health services offer practical and accessible solutions for children and adolescents. School counselors, social workers, and social-emotional learning programs provide support within the child's daily environment, addressing issues like bullying, anxiety, and academic stress. These programs significantly improve children's emotional regulation abilities and academic outcomes (NAMI, 2024).

Similarly, virtual services delivered via phone or the internet enhance access, particularly for rural areas or underserved communities, by offering therapy and psychological consultations. These services reduce barriers to mental health care, providing timely and convenient solutions for families (Damian, Stinchfield, & Kearney, 2022).



## The Situation in Albania

The mental health landscape for children and adolescents in Albania is shaped by a complex interplay of cultural, social, and economic factors. Historically, mental health services in the country have been underdeveloped, with limited resources, especially for addressing the mental health of younger populations. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the existing mental health crisis among Albanian youth. Reports indicate that the number of children and adolescents seeking therapy for mental health issues has doubled since the pandemic's onset (Si, 2023).

Research has highlighted several common mental health concerns among children and adolescents in Albania. A 2015 study found anxiety disorders to be the most prevalent diagnosis, affecting 36.7% of the sample, followed by psychosomatic disorders (30%), obsessive-compulsive disorder (22.2%), and Tourette syndrome (11.1%) (Skendi, Alikaj, & Metaj, 2015). Reported symptoms included anxiety (13%), somatic symptoms (8%), aggressive behavior (6.2%), motor disorders (6.2%), headaches (6.2%), back or chest pain (2.5%), vertigo (1.9%), weakness (1.9%), and abdominal pain (1.2%).

However, no further studies have been conducted since 2015. Considering significant societal changes, including the COVID-19 pandemic, technological advancements, economic repercussions from European conflicts, unstable education policies, and mass population movements, there is a lack of updated data on the most frequent disorders among Albanian children and adolescents.

A 2021 study revealed that over one in four children and adolescents exhibit high levels of anxiety disorders, with separation anxiety being the most reported symptom (5.5%), followed by physical anxiety symptoms (Skendi, Alikaj, & Dashi, 2021).

Child abuse and neglect are among the most pressing challenges affecting Albanian children and adolescents, complicating mental health issues. Research indicates high rates of abuse prevalence: in 2011, 62% of children reported psychological violence, 48% physical abuse, and 11% sexual abuse. A 2021 study found that nearly one in three 15-year-olds (32%) reported experiencing physical abuse during their lifetime (Qirjako et al., 2021).

A 2022 study involving 1,877 15-year-old students revealed that children reporting any form of abuse had poorer mental health outcomes than their non-abused peers, regardless of other influencing factors. Emotional abuse and neglect were the most significant contributors to mental health problems, with emotional abuse being particularly pervasive and impactful (Qirjako et al., 2024).

UNICEF's 2023 report on violence against children in Albania explored social, cultural, and legal factors affecting abuse prevalence and reporting. Despite the



2017 law banning physical punishment and mandating the reporting of abuse, awareness remains low, and societal attitudes impede progress. Violence is deeply rooted in cultural norms, with 50% of adults justifying physical punishment and 67% believing child-related issues should be resolved privately.

Forms of violence like online and school bullying are widely recognized, with 60% and 57% of adults describing them as common. However, physical punishment is not widely considered abuse, with 27% of adults regarding harsh physical discipline as normal and 67% acknowledging its occurrence but not classifying it as serious violence. Barriers to addressing child abuse in Albania include low awareness of mandatory reporting laws—only 29% of children and adolescents know about the legal obligation to report abuse. Social stigma, fear of retaliation, and lack of knowledge about reporting mechanisms exacerbate underreporting. Societal attitudes framing abuse as a private family matter further limit community action or intervention (UNICEF, 2023).

Children are perceived as particularly vulnerable online, with 56% of adults believing they are unsafe in digital spaces. Only 33% of adults think children are very safe within their families, underscoring the need for stronger protective measures and digital safety education (UNICEF, 2023).

Public skepticism towards private mental health services, including concerns over their quality and reliability, adds another layer of complexity to Albania's child and adolescent mental health care landscape. Combined with social and cultural barriers, this skepticism hinders effective care provision (Duraku et al., 2024).

## **Mental Health Treatment for Children and Adolescents in Albania**

Albania faces a critical shortage of mental health professionals, ranking last in Europe in 2019 with only one psychiatrist per 100,000 people (25 psychiatrists in total), according to independent data. This figure contrasts with the government-reported rate of 1.83 per 100,000 inhabitants (Taylor, 2023). By 2020, the number of mental health workers increased to 1.7 psychiatrists and 14.7 mental health workers per 100,000 people. However, these figures remained below regional averages. Mental health services for children and adolescents are particularly lacking, with no official count of specialized professionals such as child psychiatrists, child psychologists, school psychologists, or speech therapists. (Dobi, Tomori, & Zenelaj, 2022)

Key findings from the WHO 2020 report emphasize the lack of resources, with Albania reporting a total of 393 mental health workers—approximately 13.64 per 100,000 inhabitants—only a small fraction of whom are specialized in child and adolescent services. Additionally, there are just 1.13 psychiatrists and 0.69 psychologists per 100,000 people. (WHO, 2020)



Community-based mental health services are sparse, primary care integration of mental health remains underdeveloped, and government funding for mental health accounts for only 2.5% of the healthcare budget. The absence of independent mental health legislation and strategies for suicide prevention further exacerbates systemic issues. Another challenge is the lack of scientific research, as the absence of comprehensive data hinders the accurate assessment of the current situation. (WHO, 2020)

In Albania, mental health services for children and adolescents are organized across three levels:

1. **Primary Level:** Primary care for mental health is provided by pediatricians, family doctors, and nursing staff, especially in rural areas. These professionals handle initial assessments, referrals, and follow-ups for patients with mental health disorders. (Dobi, Tomori, & Zenelaj, 2022)
2. **Secondary Level:** Community mental health services include teams of child and adolescent psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers. These teams offer clinical and home visits, focusing on patients recently discharged from hospitals or those facing challenging situations at home. However, these services are geographically limited, with only five centers nationwide—three in Tirana, one in Shkodër, and one in Elbasan—leaving most regions unserved. (Dobi, Tomori, & Zenelaj, 2022)
3. **Tertiary Level:** This includes hospital care provided by the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Unit at “Mother Teresa” University Hospital Center (QSUT) in Tirana. This institution handles urgent cases involving severe mental health conditions requiring hospitalization. (Dobi, Tomori, & Zenelaj, 2022)

On a national level, the National Therapeutic and Rehabilitation Center for Children, located in Tirana, offers integrated care for children and adolescents with mental health and developmental issues. Services include outpatient and inpatient care, developmental therapy, psychotherapy, physiotherapy, and pharmacological treatment. The center also emphasizes psychoeducation, scientific research, and the development of standardized assessment methods and rehabilitation protocols, striving to involve families and communities to improve patient outcomes. (Dobi, Tomori, & Zenelaj, 2022)

Despite these services, access to therapy and treatment remains limited due to high costs and long waiting lists. Diagnostic evaluations for disorders like autism and ADHD can cost up to €300, while therapy sessions with psychologists and psychiatrists average around €40, excluding medication expenses. (Taylor, 2023)

## Situation Analysis

The mental health of children and adolescents in Albania faces numerous challenges, influenced by cultural, social, and economic factors. Data reveals significant gaps in mental health services despite some progress. Anxiety disorders, psychosomatic symptoms, and obsessive-compulsive tendencies are prevalent, with over a quarter of children experiencing anxiety symptoms, particularly separation anxiety. Combined with high levels of parental neglect, this can be attributed to the lack of secure attachment between Albanian children and their parents.

Economic hardships, social isolation, and challenges in education have significantly contributed to this increase. Emotional neglect is one of the most common forms of child abuse in Albania, often accompanied by physical punishment. High rates of child abuse are a primary factor exacerbating mental health issues among children and adolescents, creating an unsafe environment for their mental and emotional development. This leaves Albanian children and adolescents with poor social skills and a higher propensity for violent behavior towards peers, stemming from difficulties in regulating their emotions.

Socioeconomic conditions fail to provide the necessary environment for healthy mental and emotional development. These factors contribute to insecure attachments, incomplete developmental stages, and strong links to psychological problems. Efforts to address child abuse are further hindered by cultural norms. Additionally, bullying, both in schools and online, remains a widespread issue.

The stigma surrounding mental health disorders in Albania worsens the situation. A lack of awareness and understanding prevents children from seeking the help they need. Cultural barriers further weaken mental health services, with traditional beliefs that family matters should remain private discouraging many from seeking assistance. Public education on mental health rights and mandatory reporting laws is insufficient, and widespread mistrust of private mental health services raises concerns about their quality and reliability.

Mental health services in Albania are underdeveloped and inaccessible to much of the population. Although mental health care is theoretically organized into three levels, primary care remains particularly weak, especially in rural areas. Community-based services are scarce, and the integration of mental health care into primary health care is minimal.

A major issue is the lack of updated data and scientific research, which limits the ability to assess the current situation. The last comprehensive study on children's mental health was conducted in 2015. While some newer studies exist, they are fragmented and do not provide a comprehensive picture of the situation.



The lack of data hinders a full understanding of the evolving mental health needs of children and adolescents in Albania.

## **Recommendations**

To address the current mental health challenges of children and adolescents in Albania, a holistic approach would be essential. Improvements must be made in every area, including cultural, social, and academic ones, to create a safe environment for children and adolescents.

One of the most urgent needs is the expansion and improvement of mental health services, especially for children and adolescents. This can be achieved by increasing the number of mental health professionals, with a particular focus on specialists trained to work with young people. To address the rural-urban divide, there should be mobile mental health services and options for services via the internet and phone, which should be widely promoted to reach populations in remote areas. Integrating mental health care into primary healthcare services would also increase access, allowing children to receive care at the local level. Public funding for mental health care should be increased to ensure that services are available and affordable.

Education and public awareness campaigns are essential in reducing the stigma surrounding mental health. These campaigns should focus on the importance of mental health, the signs of mental disorders, and the availability of services. Educating families, teachers, and children and adolescents themselves about mental health can help normalize discussions on this topic and encourage early intervention. Schools should also include mental health education in their curricula, teaching children about emotional well-being, coping strategies, and how to seek help when needed.

Considering the significant impact of socio-economic challenges and child abuse on mental health, a comprehensive approach to supporting families and communities would be essential. Social services should be increased to help families facing economic difficulties, and policies should be implemented to offer financial support to at-risk families. Programs offering parent education, focusing on positive parenting techniques and the importance of emotional support, would help reduce cases of abuse and neglect. Mental health programs based in communities should be created to offer a safety net for at-risk children, providing counseling, emotional support, and educational seminars.

Moreover, updated information through scientific research should be increased comprehensively, as it is essential to better understand the psychological needs and mental health situation of children and adolescents in Albania, identifying the most common issues, risk factors, and the effectiveness of existing services.

Research should also focus on understanding how cultural and socio-economic factors contribute to mental health challenges, helping to adapt interventions more effectively.

To ensure that mental health professionals are well-equipped to deal with the unique challenges faced by children, there should be ongoing education and training programs, as well as profiling for work with children. This includes specialized training for psychologists, counselors, and social workers working with children, focusing on trauma-informed care, child development, and cultural contexts that influence mental health.

Creating safe spaces for young people to express their emotions, develop social skills, and receive guidance would also be necessary. These spaces could be community centers, after-school programs, or recreational areas where young people can meet peers, engage in activities, and receive support from mental health professionals in a safe and non-judgmental environment.

Only by addressing these areas can the situation in Albania be improved regarding the mental health of children and adolescents.

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# *The Process of Adapting a Literary Work: A Multifaceted Methodological Approach*

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## **Abstract**

*This paper aims to investigate the role of diverse methodological approaches in the adaptation of a literary text to other genres and artistic media. It focuses on analyzing the structural changes that the elements of the text's structure undergo, as well as identifying some of the most significant factors influencing these changes.*

*This study employs a qualitative research methodology focused on the meta-analysis of adaptation studies and theories, theories of text perception and reading, all framed within structuralist and post-structuralist perspectives. The method of direct observation was also utilized in the adaptation process of Ismail Kadare's novel, "Who Brought Doruntina?" (Kush e solli Doruntinë).*

*The findings of this work confirm that the structural changes in a text are dictated by structuralist and deconstructionist paradigms, the approach to, and the perception of, the text during the adaptation process. A diachronic approach and the perception of the text through an open reading steer the adaptation process toward an ad hoc structure. In conclusion, we posit that the more open and diachronic the reading and perception of the text, the more substantial the structural changes become during the adaptation process.*

*This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the changes a work of art undergoes, serving not only to enrich and complete the theoretical framework but also to inform practical activity in the process of adapting literary works for stage, screen, or other genres and media.*

**Keywords:** *structuralism, post-structuralism, adaptation, intertextuality, semiotics, dialogism*

## **Introduction**

To better understand and know the process of adapting a work of art to other genres or media, it is essential to trace its developmental history, focusing on some of the most important stages. Undoubtedly, interdisciplinary approaches in the study of the adaptation process, primarily focused on structural changes and the factors influencing these changes, have consistently opened new perspectives, from which deeper meanings and explanations are derived in this field of study.

Theoretical formulations on art, just as artistic works themselves, have developed within specific historical and cultural contexts. The first evidence of artistic works adapted from histories, narratives, myths, or poems comes from antiquity. According to an account from antiquity, it is believed that Aeschylus (525–456 B.C.) stated that his works “are but slices cut off from the great banquet of Homer’s poems.” This account of the Greek tragedian serves as a clear testament that the phenomenon of adaptation is almost as old as art itself. Meanwhile, the first works and efforts to study and systematize this practice within a more precise theoretical and methodological framework began to appear only in the 20th century. The first theoretical formulations in this field resulted from studies by André Bazin and George Bluestone on the adaptation of literary works to cinema. Canadian academic Linda Hutcheon (2006), known for her studies in literary theory and criticism, emphasizes that for a long time, “fidelity criticism,” as it came to be known, was the critical orthodoxy in adaptation studies. Other scholars share this opinion, such as Timothy Corrigan (2007), who also states that the most common discussions and debates about film adaptation generally seem to focus on the notions of specificity and fidelity. Albanian cinematography has not been an exception to this trend. In its entirety, largely for reasons that would be explained by an analysis of the political and ideological context in which Albanian cinematography began and developed, we can confidently assert that cinematic creation in Albania has been entirely dominated by judgment and evaluation based on the criterion of “fidelity.” A similar panorama is presented in the practice of adapting literary works for theatre and television, primarily those realized until the end of the 1980s.

On the other hand, contemporary developments in Albanian art have revealed not only the theoretical gap in studies in this field but also the fact that, for the most part, stage and cinematic creation, when addressing the adaptation of a literary work, has remained “hostage” to the notion of “fidelity.” Despite this aesthetic reality, attempts and efforts exist to introduce approaches and methodologies into the practice of the adaptation process that do not belong to traditional approaches. The lack of other studies in this field makes discussing the adaptation process even more difficult; therefore, this work aims to address these gaps in the theoretical framework.

We analyzed the progress of the adaptation process in relation to different approaches, such as structuralism, post-structuralism, theories of perception and reading, by tracking and researching factors that directly influence the practical process of adaptation. It was hypothesized that the adaptor’s approach and perception of the literary text play a significant role in determining the methodology followed by the adaptation process and structuring the resulting work.

## Research Problem

The research problem of this paper arises primarily from the fact that studies in this field are relatively new, and consequently, the adaptation process still has poorly understood aspects. The interplay between different approaches and perspectives in the study of the adaptation process, or even the practice of adaptation, has not only increased the possibility of different interpretations but has also revealed new problems and issues for study, raising questions such as:

- What changes occur in the structure of a literary work during the adaptation process?
- Which structural elements are most prone and exposed to change?
- What factors influence the structuring of the adaptation process?

As a theoretical research problem, investigation into this issue directly affects practice by recommending concrete approaches and interpretations that influence both the process and the adapted work. On the other hand, it is necessary to understand the validity of the significant contradiction formulated by Timothy Corrigan (2007): “on the one hand, adaptation, in its specific and more general sense, suggests alterations, adjustments, and intertextual exchanges, while on the other, discipline denotes and connotes rules, boundaries, and textual restrictions” (p. 30).

We investigated the changes undergone by the elements of the narrative structure of a literary work during its adaptation into another genre or medium. It was posited that the nature and extent of changes in a work’s structure during the adaptation process are conditioned by the perception, analytical approach, and interpretation



of the text during adaptation. This paper first discusses the early theoretical approaches and formulations on adaptation, focusing on their concrete effects on the practice of adapting literary texts to stage and cinematic works. The analysis then expands to include disciplines and interdisciplinary studies in other fields. Finally, by highlighting not only theoretical but also practical differences between traditional and non-traditional approaches, the discussion concludes with practical recommendations for the adaptation process. This structure is designed to facilitate the analysis of various theories on adaptation and other related theories, as well as to enable verification of the hypotheses raised in this paper.

## Literature Review

The adaptation of literary works to other art forms, primarily cinema and theatre, has been and remains a significant process in the development of art. The fact that studies of this process began only around the second half of the last century is compounded by the fact that, for a long time, debates and discussions about adaptation revolved around the similarities and fidelity the adapted work displayed toward the source material. This paper will examine the adaptation process through the lens of theoretical contributions, concepts, and theses generated by research in other disciplines, which offer opportunities to understand in depth not only the adaptation process but also the work itself, whether it is the source or the work resulting from adaptation. Theories of adaptation, or other theories that have influenced the development of a theoretical framework for studies in this field and have also determined the methods used in practical adaptation, were developed primarily during the 20th century. Concerning the approach and degree of autonomy they create between the source work and the adapted work, adaptation theories can be divided into two main groups.

The first group includes theories that consider adaptation as a process and a work dependent on the source material, both in content and artistic aspects. In this theoretical approach, critics and theorists like René Wellek and Austin Warren emphasized the adapted work's obligation to preserve the aesthetic and content characteristics of the source. Within this group, we also consider theories emphasizing the specific differences and changes between the two media. In this approach, where French critic André Bazin is a prominent contributor, the focus is on the differences between literature and cinema as a medium with profoundly different characteristics from literature.

The second group of theories on adaptation, corresponding to the postmodernist period of studies in this field, comprises theories and approaches that view the adapted work as autonomous and free from the obligations defined by the first group's theories. Among the most important names with significant theoretical

contributions to this group is Linda Hutcheon. The theoretical framework of this second group is enriched by transposing concepts, notions, findings, and results from other fields of study, particularly anthropological and cultural studies. Theories derived from linguistics, psychology, psychoanalysis, semiotics, narrative theory, and theories of perception, reading, and translation have provided new perspectives for adaptation studies. In just a few decades, research theories and methods related to the adaptation process of artistic works have developed, moving from simple models focused on the relationship between the literary work and the adaptation medium to interdisciplinary methods rooted in structuralist and post-structuralist approaches.

Despite the theoretical influx from non-traditional approaches and methods, adaptation, as a product of artistic practice, remains constrained by older approaches and traditional methods. While there is debate about the differences between literature and cinema, little attention has been paid to adapting literary works for theatre or television. Moreover, comparisons are often made between the source work and the film or stage production, overshadowing the screenplay and dramatic text, even though adapting the literary text into a screenplay and dramatic text is crucial for the adaptation process. Furthermore, studies exploring the role of the approach to the adaptation process and the specifics of the target medium in shaping the final adapted work are lacking. These unexplored areas in this field of study require further research.

## **Methodology**

A qualitative approach oriented toward the meta-analysis of some of the main theories and approaches in the field of adapting literary works for stage and screen was used for this study. This data, collected as secondary data, constituted the primary basis for the analysis. Ismail Kadare's novel "Who Brought Doruntina?" was selected as the primary data source. The direct observation method was used in the adaptation of this novel to analyze the application of non-traditional approaches and methods in the adaptation process.

## **Results**

The analysis of major trends and approaches in adaptation revealed that the adaptor's relationship and approach to the source material play a significant role in the adaptation process's trajectory and the adapted work's quality. Changes and transformations in a work consist of modifying or reconfiguring the components of the work's structure. Changes occurring in a work's structure are quantitative,



qualitative, and functional. These changes arise not only from the specific requirements of the target medium but also, and more importantly, from factors inherent in the adaptation process itself.

## Discussion

The current theoretical and methodological framework for adaptation studies does not meet the needs of researchers or practitioners. For a long time, the criterion of fidelity to the original work sufficed for analyzing and answering critical questions about film adaptations of literary works. However, other genres, like theatre, opera, or television, remain marginalized in these studies. Dudley Andrew (1984) describes the landscape of theoretical studies on film adaptation as “frequently the most narrow and provincial area of film theory.” This observation seems to hold true even 20 years later, as Thomas Leitch (2003) noted that “Adaptation study has indeed for many years been marginal to the study of moving images in general” (p. 167). However, the real issue that has marked theoretical and practical developments in this field lies elsewhere. According to Timothy Corrigan (2007), “The most common discussions and debates about adaptation seem generally to focus on the notions of ‘specificity and fidelity’” (p. 31). “Specificity” refers to evaluating and judging the adaptation by examining the specifics of different genres and media, while “fidelity” refers to the dependent relationship between the literary work and the adapted work. This methodological approach, articulated in George Bluestone’s (1957) seminal work “Novel into Film,” limited debates on adaptation to the similarities between the literary text and the adapted work. For many years, the concept of fidelity to the “meaning” and “essence” of the literary work served as the primary criterion for evaluating adaptations as “successful” or “unsuccessful.” American academic and scholar Thomas Leitch (2003) considers the notion of “fidelity” as one of the twelve main fallacies in adaptation theory and practice, arguing:

“Fidelity to its source text—whether it is conceived as success in re-creating specific textual details or the effect of the whole—is a hopelessly fallacious measure of a given adaptation’s value because it is unattainable, undesirable, and theoretically possible only in a trivial sense” (p. 161).

Albrecht-Crane and Cutchins (2010) argue that this approach “perpetuated a reliance on fidelity as a primary criterion for judgment” and “unwittingly defines an adaptation’s scope and quality in terms of its allegiance to the primacy of the source text.” American film theorist and professor at New York University, Robert Stam (2000), observes that “the language of criticism dealing with the film adaptation of novels has often been profoundly moralistic, awash in terms such as infidelity,

betrayal, deformation, violation, vulgarization, and desecration” (p.54). It is understandable that an analysis using such loaded terms makes it difficult to maintain a rigorous scientific method. Furthermore, the tendency to explain adaptation as a change imposed solely by the differing characteristics of specific genres and media has produced a mechanistic approach in this field. On the one hand, we have the material offered by the literary work, and on the other, the specific form of the genre or medium to which the adaptation is directed. Meanwhile, the adaptor’s role is reduced to adapting this literary material with as much fidelity as possible to the new form’s structure. From this perspective, it is natural to ask: “Given the indefensibility of fidelity as a criterion for the analysis of adaptations, why has it maintained such a stifling grip on adaptation study?” (Leitch, 2003, p. 162).

A brief overview of Albanian art history reveals two factors driving the perceived obligation to demonstrate fidelity to the literary work:

- The reputation of the author and the work’s popularity, upon which adaptors often rely for the success of their adaptation.
- The ideological weight of the themes and messages conveyed by the literary work.

Both factors are evident in the development of Albanian cinema and theatre. In most cases, adapting literary works has not stemmed from the inherent potential of a medium like cinema, theatre, or opera, to absorb and reinterpret material from another medium. Instead, the driving force has often been the obligation to remain ideologically aligned with the original message, transplanting it untouched and unaltered. The messages conveyed by the literary text remain the ultimate goal. “Most theories of adaptation assume, however, that the story is the common denominator, the core of what is transposed across different media and genres” (Hutcheon, 2006, p.10). Adaptations of Ismail Kadare’s prose are a notable exception. In most of these adaptations, there is a greater tendency to remain “faithful” to the author’s style and language than to the work’s inherent messages. However, despite its long dominance, the “fidelity and specificity” approach has not proven to be a convincing method, even in challenging the notion of fidelity itself, because “The only remake that would have maintained perfect fidelity to the original text would have been a re-release of that text” (Leitch, 2003, p.162).

## **Structuralist Perspective**

Recognizing the limitations of an approach focused on fidelity, adaptation studies began incorporating concepts and principles from other disciplines. Interdisciplinary research, particularly after the second half of the 20th century,



yielded significant results in understanding the individual and the world. Structuralism offered a new way of observing human existence and the world, including art and literature. The structuralist approach, in addition to updating theories of knowledge, also produced new understandings of reality. According to Jean Piaget (1970), structural thinking played a significant role in developing new concepts in various fields, including mathematics, logic, physics, biology, psychology, linguistics, anthropology, and philosophy, by formulating principles and concepts that began to be transposed between disciplines. Research in art also became part of this trend. New research methods provided suitable approaches to studying literature. The concepts and principles formulated by Viktor Shklovsky, Roman Jakobson, and Boris Eichenbaum, founders of the Moscow Structuralist School, marked a turning point in literary analysis by shifting the focus toward the structural components of a work and the function of its internal elements. According to Speller (2011), Lévi-Strauss's transposition of the structuralist principles of Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic structuralism opened up the perspective of studying works of art and literature as one would study language. The theories of Roland Barthes, Juri Lotman, Mikhail Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva, and others, completely changed the approach to the adaptation process and the adapted work, creating the possibility of a method and principles that also serve the artistic practice of adaptation.

How did studies in other disciplines influence the creation of new concepts and principles in adaptation, and what do we mean by the structure of a work? In his book *Structuralism* (1970), Piaget explains:

“As a first approximation, we may say that a structure is a system of transformations” and “the notion of structure is comprised of three key ideas: the idea of wholeness, the idea of transformation, and the idea of self-regulation” (p. 5).

These three key ideas, which Piaget considers essential qualities of structure, are important for explaining not only the structure of a work of art but also its adaptation process. The idea of transformation expresses the structure's capacity for change. Based on this definition, adaptation, as a phenomenon accompanying all changes and transformations, including adapting a literary text for stage or screen, manifests itself through changes in structure. Juri Lotman (1977 [1971]), a prominent figure in semiotics and Russian-Estonian literature at the University of Tartu, equates a work's structure with its idea-content (p. 12): “the idea-content of a work is its structure.” Studying a literary work's structure as a closed entity has been fruitful in understanding its depths. Ferdinand de Saussure, the Swiss linguist and philosopher known for his contributions to semiotics, is also considered a founder of structuralism in linguistics. Saussure's main principles are expressed in his theory of signs. For Saussure (1916), linguistics is “a science that studies the life



of signs within society” (p. 16). Another important concept from Saussure (1916) is the arbitrary nature of linguistic signs (p. 67). The methodological approach to researching the structure of artistic works was further strengthened by the French literary theorist, philosopher, and semiotician Roland Barthes. In *The Rustle of Language* (1989), Barthes views structuralism as a science that “finds itself” at every level of a literary work (p. 6). The development of the narrative approach by structuralist philosopher and literary critic Tzvetan Todorov demonstrates that the study of literary works became entirely focused on their structural levels. When discussing the relationship between elements at different structural levels, we must consider the concept of the dialogic relationship between components within a work’s structure, or even between the structures of two different works, a concept formulated and explained by Mikhail Bakhtin.

In summary, structuralism, unlike previous approaches in art and literary studies, placed the focus of analysis and research within the artwork itself, highlighting its structure and the internal relationships between its components. Consequently, the approach to the author’s role also changed, moving from “author-centrism” to viewing the author’s role within the specific levels and elements of the work’s structure. This shift serves as a precursor to post-structuralism, which pushes the author to the periphery of artistic study, ultimately declaring the “death of the author.” The approach to the author’s role and the concept of dialogue between structural elements were crucial in paving the way for the post-structuralist period in the study and interpretation of art.

## Post-structuralist Perspective

In the 1960s, the debate surrounding structuralism, primarily in French intellectual and academic circles and some Eastern European centers, encompassed various fields, including philosophy, linguistics, literature, and cultural criticism. Scholars like Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Julia Kristeva challenged some of structuralism’s concepts and principles. This rejection of part of the structuralist legacy, along with the development of new concepts and theses, gave rise to post-structuralism. The main difference between the two approaches lies in how they conceive of structure. Post-structuralism posits that “the literary text is not a closed, but an open structure... to be reworked by a boundless context” (Stam, 2000, p. 57). Other differences emerged regarding how texts are understood. Post-structuralism argues that every text has not only an open meaning but also uncertain, unstable, and often unclear meanings, reflecting the potential for multiple interpretations. Recognizing these multiple meanings highlighted the importance of perception and reading in textual interpretation. Post-structuralists viewed these multiple



meanings as an attribute of the reader rather than inherent to the text itself, giving the reader a significant role in understanding and interpreting a work. Regarding the reader's role and theories of perception, Linda Hutcheon (2006) states:

“Reader-response theory, which flourished in Europe and North America in the 1980s, may be partly responsible for the change in the way we think about reception in the mode of telling. Thanks to theorists like Wolfgang Iser, Stanley Fish, and Michael Riffaterre, readers are no longer considered passive recipients of textual meaning but active contributors to the aesthetic process, working with the text to decode signs and then to create meaning” (p. 134).

Julia Kristeva's involvement in the debates surrounding structuralism marks a crucial moment in post-structuralist thought. While discussing Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts in Paris, Kristeva first articulated the term “intertextuality,” initially analogous to Bakhtin's “dialogism,” but later developing it into a key concept in literary criticism. Kristeva (1980) argues that “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double” (p. 66). Intertextuality became central to post-structuralist thought because, for them, a text “cannot exist as a hermetic or self-sufficient whole, and so does not function as a closed system” (Worton & Still, 1991, p. 1).

For our purpose of investigating adaptation, the post-structuralist approach provides a clear analytical framework for understanding the text selected for adaptation, the adaptation process, the resulting work, the influencing factors, and the adaptor's role as a reader. We have identified the key factors involved in adapting an artwork: the adaptor (reader), the source work, the adaptation process, and the resulting work. Linda Hutcheon (2006) notes that the process and the product share the same definition (p. 8). However, more important than this shared definition is understanding each component's role and the effects of prioritizing one over the other. When the adaptor prioritizes the process, it becomes exploratory, increasing the potential for a new and original structure for the adapted work. Conversely, when prioritizing the product, considering that “each medium has its specificity deriving from its respective materials of expression” (Stam, 2000, p. 59), the adaptor becomes more of an implementer, trying to fit the source material into the new medium's format. This approach views the adapted work within a defined, closed, self-sufficient, and potentially formalistic structure, risking a schematic outcome. The explanation that “we experience adaptations (as adaptations) as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation” (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 8) focuses on the process, not the final product. Post-structuralism offers

approaches and methodologies for an open, exploratory, and unpredictable adaptation process, not predetermined by the new medium's structural specifications.

One of Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic concepts, adapted by Levi-Strauss in his studies of myth and culture, is "binary opposition." According to Fogarty (2005), Saussure's definition is significant because it is "not a contradictory relation but, a structural and complementary one." This understanding helps identify not only opposing but also complementary meanings within a text, expressed through hidden or missing structures. In the preface to *Of Grammatology* (1997), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak notes that for Derrida, a text, whether "literary," "psychic," "anthropological," or otherwise, is "a play of presence and absence, a place of the effaced trace" (p. lvii).

The National Theatre's stage adaptation of Kadare's "Who Brought Doruntina?" (1980), titled "A Midwinter Night's Dream" (1999), reveals hidden structures within the novel. Unlike previous adaptations, "A Midwinter Night's Dream" presents a structure arising from an inverted perception of the binary relationship between external and internal time. The adaptor situates the stage adaptation's narrative entirely within the protagonist's internal time. Stresi, Kadare's protagonist, awakens from a rainy night's sleep to the news of Doruntina's arrival. The adaptor reinterprets this as occurring within Stresi's dreams before the news arrives in external time. This shift to internal time affects all other structural components. Spaces overlap: the bedroom becomes both Doruntina's mother's house and the village cemetery. Internal time creates a vertical temporal structure where past, present, and future intertwine. Stresi speaks of Doruntina's wedding and death as the most significant events in the village. The bed transforms into a bathtub where Stresi's wife lies suffering. This intertextual variation evokes Kadare's "Before the Bath" (1991), with Stresi enacting the drowning of his wife three times. Kadare (personal communication, September 1999) noted that the theatre's resources allowed the adaptation to explore depths inaccessible to literature.

The relationship between the adaptor as reader and the author's text is complex. Wollen's (1969) explanation of a director's approach to an author's text offers a useful analogy: "The director does not subordinate himself to another author; his source is only a pretext, which provides catalysts, scenes which use his own preoccupations to produce a radically new work" (p. 113). Defining the adaptation process presents a similar challenge. Given the unresolved problems and unanswered questions in this field, Linda Hutcheon's (2006) definition offers a broader perspective: "Sometimes, like biological adaptation, cultural adaptation involves migration to favorable conditions: stories travel to different cultures and different media" (p. 31).



## Conclusions

This paper concludes with observations from the analysis and recommendations for the practice of adaptation.

- Adaptation is fundamentally about the capacity for change.
- These changes are quantitative, qualitative, and functional, affecting both content and form.
- Changes during adaptation manifest as structural differences.
- Compared to previous approaches, structuralism provides a deeper understanding of art. However, it represents a static phase of adaptation, scanning the literary work's content and exhibiting normative tendencies.
- Post-structuralist approaches foster a dynamic reconfiguration process toward a new structure.
- The extent of structural change depends on several variables.
- The adaptor (reader) is the primary determinant of the new structure.
- A more diachronic and paradigmatic reading leads to greater divergence between the source and adapted works.
- Orienting the adaptation process solely toward the new medium's specifications risks formalism and schematism.
- Adaptors should explore the process to find an *ad hoc* structure.
- Juri Lotman (1977), quoting Dostoevsky, explains the *ad hoc* structure: "I believe that for different forms of art there are corresponding series of poetic thoughts, such that a thought can never be expressed in terms of a form that does not correspond to it" (p. 33).

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# *Ethical Challenges in Human Resource Management and Performance in Private Organizations*

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## **Abstract**

*This paper explores the relationship between workplace ethics and employee performance, motivation, and satisfaction, with a specific focus on the challenges of nepotism and privacy violations in the Albanian context. It identifies the ethical implications of leveraging personal connections for employment and promotion which lead to diminished employee morale and organizational performance. The discussion extends to the ethical considerations surrounding employee monitoring, emphasizing the balance between performance assessment and respect for privacy.*

*The methodology in this article uses secondary sources and primary data extracted from a survey. By analyzing employee treatment, the paper advocates for a robust ethical framework within organizations that promotes transparency, fairness, and respect nurturing employee loyalty which leads to organizational success. Ultimately, the findings stress that ethical conduct in the workplace is not a moral obligation*

*but a strategic imperative that influences employee engagement and organizational performance.*

*The study acknowledges limitations related to the time frame of data collection, challenges in reaching a representative sample and a potential bias in responses especially when the respondents know they are being studied affecting the validity of the findings. Another limitation is that ethical standards in HRM change over time and therefore the study might become outdated if it doesn't account for societal expectations.*

*Finally, the study has an original value since it delineates the concept of employee performance as pivotal for organizational success within the context of the Albanian organizations. It underscores the significance of a fair and ethical workplace environment in fostering employee motivation and satisfaction.*

**Keywords:** *Ethics, Human Resource Management (HRM), employee, organizational success, privacy, performance*

## **Introduction**

Private organizations play a crucial role in economic development and improve the quality of life by empowering individuals financially. As these organizations evolve in response to market changes, so do the expectations regarding employee performance. According to Stannack (1996), performance is often measured in terms of efficiency and effectiveness in achieving organizational goals, with definitions varying among researchers. Research indicates that joining strategic groups and collective behaviors are key resources for effective employee performance (Caves & Porter, 1977). Porter (2014), further develops this idea by stating that an ethical organizational climate significantly enhances employee morale and engagement. On the other hand, Mary Connaughton (2016) shifts the focus on the importance of investing in people, as they are vital for organizational success and possess fundamental rights and needs. Consequently, the human resources since they are pivotal for an organization are protected by law. Hence, unethical management practices, such as poor organization of work and biased recruitment, can have long-term negative consequences. This study will address various ethical issues linked to these practices, such as discrimination, nepotism and invasion of privacy.

The primary goal of this study is to evaluate the impact of unethical human resource management practices on employee performance. The study aims to create a conceptual framework based on existing literature and explore the reasons behind unethical decision-making by Human Resources (HR) professionals no matter if the reasons are internal or external ones, delve into phenomena such as



discrimination, securing advantages through networks of acquaintances, violation of privacy, as well as the effects of such practices on individual and organizational performance. This research is conducted on ethics in HRM for its perception, importance and impact on employees in private Albanian organizations.

## **Literature Review**

### *Ethics in the Context of Human Resource Management (HRM)*

This section emphasizes the critical role of ethics in Human Resource Management (HRM), highlighting that HR professionals are at the forefront of addressing ethical issues between employees and employers. HRM involves various functions such as recruitment, selection, employee treatment, performance evaluation, and conflict management, all requiring an ethical approach to foster a fair workplace. Organizations often entrust HR professionals with the responsibility of creating and maintaining ethical programs, including codes of ethics and training (Wiley, 2000). The responsibility of HR departments extends to safeguarding employee rights, promoting a culture of responsibility and integrity, and ensuring that organizational actions align with the interests of all stakeholders, as posited by R. Edward Freeman's stakeholder theory. This theory asserts that organizational success depends on fulfilling the needs of all stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, shareholders, and the broader community (Cit. Greenwood, M. & De Cheri, H., 2007).

### *Concept of Ethics and Business Ethics*

The field of business ethics gained traction in the 1960s and 1970s, initially rooted in Catholic thought. Business ethics can be broadly defined as the study of situations, activities, and decisions in business concerning right and wrong (Crane & Matten, 2010). Two key concepts connected to business ethics are morality and law. Morality involves norms, values, and beliefs that define right and wrong for individuals or communities, while law represents the minimum acceptable standards of behavior. Business ethics examines situations, activities, and decisions in business regarding right and wrong, emphasizing that ethics transcends legal frameworks, demanding a higher standard of integrity and responsibility (Ferrell, O.C., & Fraedrich, J. 2015). Ethical business practices contribute to building trust and reputation, affecting relationships with stakeholders and the organization's long-term performance. Ethical behavior encourages individuals and organizations to make decisions that not only meet legal requirements but also promote fairness, transparency, and honesty (Trevino, L.K., & Nelson, K.A. 2016). Issues addressed by business ethics include fair treatment of employees, corporate social responsibility, and sustainable environmental practices.



### *Ethical Judgment and Decision-Making*

When individuals recognize an ethical dimension in situations, they engage in ethical judgment, leading to either ethical or unethical behavior. Ethical judgment involves a decision-making process that identifies problems, establishes criteria, weighs those criteria, generates alternatives, evaluates each alternative, and selects the most optimal one (Rest, J. R. 1986). However, decision-making may not always follow this model optimally, as unconscious psychological processes can lead individuals to make decisions that conflict with their moral standards. Organizational context significantly influences ethical behavior, with empirical studies showing discrepancies between ethical codes and actual practices. There are several factors, both internal and external, that impact ethical decision-making within HRM which involve Organizational Culture, Ethical Climate and Leadership, Responsibility and Accountability, Reward Systems, Bureaucracies, and the National Context (Brown, M. E., Treviño, L. K., & Harrison, D. A. 2005).

Research shows that decisions in ethically ambiguous situations are frequently made unconsciously, potentially conflicting with personal moral standards. The concept of “ethical fading” suggests that subconscious processes can influence ethical decision-making, causing individuals to act against their declared values (Gino, F., & Pierce, L. 2009). Furthermore, individual, contextual, and social factors all significantly impact managerial decisions, indicating a gap between what organizations write in their ethical codes and actual practices. A study by CIPD highlights that while many HR professionals believe employees should influence workplace decisions, few implement this principle. Ethical considerations are vital in recruitment and selection processes, as they shape how organizations treat applicants and select employees. Clear communication and high ethical standards are essential for a fair recruitment process. Additionally, promoting diversity and inclusion is crucial for fostering an equitable workplace culture (Shen, J., Chanda, A., D’Netto, B., & Brown, K. 2009). Ultimately, embedding ethical values in recruitment and selection not only enhances organizational performance but also cultivates a positive and trustworthy image in the broader community. Overall, the integration of ethical principles into HRM practices not only enhances organizational performance but also fosters a positive image within the community and builds trust among employees and clients.

### *Ethical Challenges in Human Resource Management (HRM)*

Wooten (2001) defines ethical challenges in HRM as complex dilemmas where personal, professional, and organizational beliefs, expectations, and values conflict due to environmental influences. Key issues include discrimination and equality during recruitment processes. Discrimination involves treating



individuals differently based on personal characteristics (e.g., race, gender, age), while equality emphasizes fair treatment for all applicants. Organizations must commit to avoiding discrimination at all recruitment stages, ensuring job descriptions and selection criteria are clear and unbiased (Kossoudji, S. A., & Kahn, J. 1993). Interview questions and assessment tests should be objective, focusing on necessary skills and experiences. Compliance with laws and ethical standards is crucial to ensure all applicants are treated with respect and have equal opportunities.

Discrimination can be manifested in various ways. One significant form is in recruitment practices; relying solely on referrals can lead to hiring individuals from specific groups, excluding others. According to Bourne, M., & Neely, A. (2003) transparency is crucial, as clear communication about job positions and evaluation criteria is essential for fairness. Fair evaluation requires that all applicants be assessed based on objective criteria without favoritism. Additionally, structured interviews should respect all candidates, allowing equal opportunities to demonstrate their abilities. Organizations must also transparently communicate hiring decisions and provide feedback to candidates. Discriminatory qualifications can occur when job requirements do not relate to the position, unfairly disadvantaged by certain groups (Baron, J.N., & Newman, A.E. 1990). Promotional discrimination may arise when promotions are based on seniority or subjective recommendations, perpetuating inequality. Moreover, pay disparities reflect a clear form of discrimination, especially when there is unequal pay for similar roles. Lastly, unfair dismissals, such as terminating employees for non-performance-related reasons, are also discriminatory practices that undermine fairness in the workplace (Baker, K. 2008).

According to Buchanan, D. A., & Boddy, D. (1992) another challenges that HRM faces are the issue of nepotism and favoritism poses significant ethical challenges, particularly in the Albanian context. Nepotism refers to unfair employment practices where family members or friends of those in power are hired not based on merit but on personal connections. This is often more prevalent in the private sector, especially in family-run businesses. Pfeffer, J. (1992) states that nepotism can lead to several negative outcomes, including deterioration of organizational performance reduced morale and motivation, and failure to manage talent. When employees perceive that promotions and benefits are distributed based on personal relationships rather than merit, it can demoralize them, adversely affecting productivity. Hiring unqualified individuals due to personal connections can result in poor decision-making, harming overall organizational performance. Nepotism obstructs the identification and development of talent, potentially leading skilled employees to leave for better opportunities where merit is recognized (Kacmar, K. M., & Ferris, G. R. 1991).

Ethically, nepotism compromises integrity and fairness within organizations. It undermines transparency and trust, violates principles of equality and justice, and can damage an organization's reputation. Favouritism, which involves unfair preferential treatment of individuals or groups over others, can manifest in various ways, including discrimination in selection, promotion, and training practices. It may also lead to illegal behaviours, such as quid pro quo situations or retaliation against employees who voice concerns (Robinson, S. P., & Judge, T. A. 2019).

Lastly, privacy violation in the workplace (Bennett, C. J. 2006) is another challenge that is generally faced in different workplaces in Albania. The issue of employees' privacy violations during performance monitoring is important in human resource management, especially with the advancement of technology that facilitates electronic monitoring. This process involves collecting, storing, analysing, and reporting information about employees' activities. Monitoring methods include computer monitoring which is the use of software to check the accuracy and speed of typing, also providing feedback on completed work; video monitoring to observe employees' behaviour; monitoring by other employees, call recording which includes destination, number, frequency, and duration, and the email monitoring of the employees (Stanton, J. M. 2000). Although these methods can provide objective assessments and immediate feedback for employees, they also collect confidential information and exert continuous pressure, which can negatively affect employees' mental health and psychology.

### *The Concept of Performance and Its Connection to Ethics*

Employee performance is crucial for organizational success. Chegini (2010) asserts that when employees meet expected standards, organizational performance improves. Armstrong (2006) defines performance as an employee's ability to effectively and efficiently fulfill assigned duties, emphasizing that it also reflects the willingness and motivation to support organizational values. The individual performance of employees relates closely to organizational commitment, defined by Meyer & Allen (1991) as the psychological state that characterizes the relationship between the employee and the organization, influencing the decision to stay or leave. Leal, Rego, & Coelho (2012) found an empirical link between organizational commitment and ethical behavior within organizations. Employees develop greater psychological capital and affective commitment when they perceive ethical conduct from their organization, leading to "Organizational Citizenship Behavior" (OCB). Engaged employees are seen as more committed, loyal, and less likely to voluntarily leave the organization. When organizational and individual goals align, employee engagement levels rise promoting adaptive behaviors.



## *Ethics and Its Impact on Employee Motivation and Satisfaction*

Workplace ethics significantly influence employee motivation and satisfaction (Valentine, S., & Fleischman, G. 2008). Organizations that uphold high ethical standards foster a positive and supportive work environment, enhancing employee motivation and well-being. Ethical practices create a fair and sustainable workplace, guided by norms and values that ensure actions and decisions align with moral and professional standards (Kaptein, M. 2011). When employees perceive fairness and integrity within their organization, they tend to be more committed and motivated to achieve their goals. Schein, E. H. (2010) is of the idea that an ethical work environment is essential for ensuring that individual behavior and organizational decisions are just and transparent. Such environments promote respect and trust, making employees feel valued and supported.

Strong workplace ethics also encourage collaboration and trust among colleagues and managers. When individuals know they can rely on one another to act fairly, communication improves, and teamwork becomes more effective (Dirks, K. T., & Ferrin, D. L. 2002). This trust and collaboration enhance overall team and organizational performance. In ethical environments, employees are less likely to engage in negative behaviors, such as work sabotage or misconduct. A culture of ethics helps prevent conflicts and promotes a positive, cooperative atmosphere, contributing to a more sustainable and productive workplace (Brown, M. E., & Treviño, L. K. 2006).

When treated with fairness and integrity, employees are more likely to be committed and loyal to their organization. This strong sense of commitment and loyalty helps reduce employee turnover and maintain a stable, dedicated workforce, which is crucial for the long-term success of the organization. Fombrun, C. J., & Shanley, M. (1990) emphasize that an organization adhering to high ethical standards benefits from a positive reputation both internally and externally. This reputation attracts new talent and retains existing clients and partners, positioning the organization favorably in the market. According to Eccles, R. G., Ioannou, I., and Serafeim, G. (2014) a strong ethical reputation is an asset that contributes to long-term success.

Ethics in the workplace also promotes employees' professional development by creating an environment where they can grow and thrive. When employees feel supported in their professional growth and have fair opportunities for advancement, they are more motivated to learn and improve their skills. Ethical decision-making reduces conflicts and disagreements in the workplace. When employees believe that policies and procedures are fair and equitable, they are less likely to feel unjustly treated and more willing to cooperate and resolve disputes constructively. De Dreu, C. K. W., & Van Vianne, A. E. M. (2001) in their article

states that effective conflict management is essential for maintaining a healthy and productive work environment.

## Methodology

The methodology used is based on secondary source research and primary research and data. The study begins with a theoretical framework based on a review of various literatures, exploring key concepts from different authors and their interconnections. The **secondary research** involved a literature review to explore the concepts addressed in the study, including ethics in human resource management, ethical decision-making, and challenges in HR practices. The second part focused on employee performance within organizations, emphasizing its significance for organizational success and its link to ethical behavior through organizational commitment.

To achieve its objectives, as primary research means was used a survey. This quantitative approach is aimed at gathering data on employees' perceptions of unethical practices by managers and their impact on performance. The survey, comprising three sections, aimed to assess employees' perceptions of their managers' ethics and the workplace environment. The first section collected general demographic data without requiring personal identifiers. The second section explored the subordinate-superior relationship and its perceived impact on employees. The third section examined experiences of discrimination, nepotism, favoritism, and privacy breaches at work.

The survey targeted individuals residing in Albania who are employed in companies operating in the country, including both full-time and part-time employees. Questions were designed to be straightforward, ensuring reliability and accuracy, and were based on internationally approved standards for easy comparison with other studies. Participants were informed about the study's purpose and assured of their anonymity. The survey was distributed online via Google Forms and analyzed using SPSS software. The quantitative method allows for statistical analysis of findings, presented through graphs and tables, complemented by qualitative interpretations.

## Analysis and Findings

This part of the article includes the analysis of data collected from a survey with 76 participants, 64 out of which were females and 12 males. The survey was conducted with the purpose of assessing workplace relationships, perceptions of management, and ethical behaviors. The data was processed using SPSS and is presented in graphical and tabular forms.



**TABLE 1: General Data Results**

Education Level	Results	Age Group	Results	Years of Experience in the organization	Results
High School	8%	18-24 years	72.40%	Recently Hired- up to 12 months	63%
Bachelor's Degree (only)	48%	25-34 years	10.50%	1-3 years	14%
Master's Degree	44%	35-44 years	11.80%	More than 3 years	24%

According to the data in Table 1 the vast majority of the participants have a degree in Higher Education, amounting to 92 % holding bachelor's degree and 44% of them holding a master's degree. The remaining 8% have a high school degree. The second element in the table is related to the age groups of the respondents. Most of them belong to the 18-24 years group with respectively 72.4%, 10.5 % to the 25-34 years age group and the remaining 11.8% to the category of 35-44 years old. The respondents reflect a youthful workforce. The third element analyzed in Table1 is the experience of work in the organization. More than half of the respondents exactly 63 % have a working period of less than a year in the organization, but a significant portion has work experience in the organization.

The second group of graphs deals with the idea of how management is perceived.

**TABLE 2: Perceptions of Management**

Relationship with Manager Satisfied: 61.8% Somewhat Satisfied: 31.6%
Impact of Managerial Behavior 43.6% of employees report a decline in motivation in the case of unethical behaviors

The data in Table 2 show that 61.8 % of the participants think that having satisfactory relationships with the managers indicates a high level of approval. Furthermore, 43.6% of the participants share the opinion that there is a strong link between ethical behavior of managers and employee motivation.

**TABLE 3: Organizational Climate**

Organizational Climate - Are unethical behaviors are acceptable to ensure benefits?		
14.5% - of respondents as view this acceptable	19.7% - of respondents view this as partially acceptable	65.8% of respondents view this as unacceptable

Table 3 contains data related to the climate that exists within the organizations. The main question related to this was whether unethical behaviors are acceptable to ensure benefits at the workplace. The majority, namely 65.8% of the participants in the study viewed the unethical behavior as unacceptable, 19.7% considered

them as partially acceptable while the remaining 14.5% were in favor of this idea. This result indicates that a significant portion of employees are sensitive to an unethical atmosphere.

**TABLE 4 a:** Issues of Discrimination

Discrimination?		
34.7% - discriminated groups do not have a fair treatment	18.3% - there is discrimination based on gender	21% - the discriminated work in lower positions

**TABLE 4 b:** Issues of Nepotism

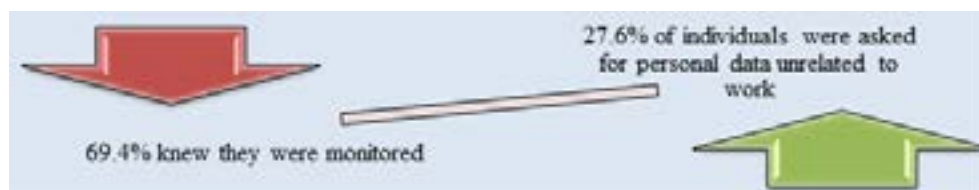
Nepotism?		
53.9% - have made use of acquaintances and CV to get hired. 14.5% - were hired through acquaintances	52.6% admit existence of the nepotism	53.9% think that favorization is present

Tables 4a/4b are related to the issues of discrimination and nepotism within the workplace. According to the data shown in table 4a 34.7% think that there are discriminated groups in their workplace and above all these groups do not receive a fair treatment; 18.3% of the respondents are of the idea that men and women are not given the same respect and treatment which shows gender discrimination within their organization. Finally, 21% of the participants think that the discriminated groups or individuals work in inferior positions.

Table 4b displays the results related to the issue of nepotism in the workplace. What is interesting in the above table is the answer to the question of how the respondents were hired in the organization they were working. 14.5% of them admitted that they employed through acquaintances, 53.9% of the participants said that they were hired making use of the CV and acquaintances. 52.6% say that the phenomenon of nepotism is present in their workplace. To the question whether the phenomenon of favoring based on these acquaintances was present in their workplace 53.9% of the respondents admitted it. The results of the above tables highlight significant challenges regarding equity and justice in the workplace.

The last issue tackled in the study was whether there was a violation in privacy in the workplace.

**TABLE 5 :** Violation of Privacy



The results in Table 5 show that 27.6% of individuals reported that they were asked for personal data unrelated to work, and 69.4% of the respondents knew they were constantly monitored in the workplace.

The reliability of the statistical analysis in this study was tested with **Cronbach's Alpha**. According to the data the coefficient of the reliability is Cronbach's Alpha = 0.936, indicating a high level of consistency in the data. There are significant relationships between the length of employment and the justification for unethical actions, suggesting that employees with longer tenures tend to justify unethical behaviors. While according to **ANOVA** the results indicate that unethical practices affect employee engagement and organizational performance, with  $p = 0.001$ , which is below the acceptable alpha level of 0.05.

Finally, it can be stressed that the research has highlighted important aspects of employee-manager relationships, as well as the impact of the organizational climate on ethical behaviors and employee performance. The results suggest a need for improvements in management and the promotion of an ethical culture within the organization

## Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings derived from statistical analysis and their connection to a critical review of the literature. According to the results, there is a positive relationship between ethics and employee engagement. Specifically, based on the results, we understand that employees tend to become demotivated when faced with favoritism or nepotism confirmed by the existence of an empirical link between organizational commitment and ethics, indicating that employees develop affective commitment when they perceive that the organization engages in ethical behavior. Ethical leadership is an important factor influencing the ethical behavior of employees and human resource managers. The study also identifies the importance of an ethical climate and leadership as “guides” for ethical actions and decisions.

## Conclusions

In this article various literature sources were exploited to define the concepts of ethics in general terms and within the context of CSR, ethical decision-making processes and the influencing factors, ethical challenges in CSR, and performance. Based on research from various authors, a connection has been found between the concepts studied and the impact of ethically exercising CSR practices on employee performance. In conclusion, the phenomena and ethical issues addressed in



this article show a tendency for these practices to lead to inefficiency in private organizations due to the significant importance of human resources and their high sensitivity to ethical and unethical practices. The inefficiency of these practices results from: 1) lack of diversity that they lead to, 2) the hostile climate they create in the organization, 3) employee demotivation, and 4) psychological burden on employees, which directly or indirectly leads to decreased performance.

By exercising discrimination in hiring practices, organizations continuously gather individuals who are similar (representatives of a grouping), losing the opportunity for diversity in human resources, along with the diverse perspectives it could provide. Such practices lead to inefficiency as diversity is necessary for the organization, especially now with increasing globalization. Furthermore, discriminatory practices violate the basic right to equality and lead to unfair distribution of benefits in society.

Based on the study conducted, employees' perceptions of their managers' behavior and its impact on them were noted. Employees were influenced by the reward of a certain behavior, encouraging the repetition of that behavior and reducing unrewarded behavior. The survey indicated that employees perceived the organization they work for as ethical, and that managers' behavior had a positive correlation with their own behavior. Employees felt demotivated and did not perform adequately when confronted with unethical behavior. The study found that although the phenomenon of nepotism and favoritism was equally prevalent, the consequences they had on employees varied. It was observed that in organizations where favoritism occurs, the climate tends to be more hostile than in those where nepotism happens. There is also a greater desire to leave companies where favoritism occurs compared to those where nepotism is present. The most common monitoring methods were camera surveillance and computer monitoring. Most employees viewed this to focus on their work or base their work on facts. From the survey results, we learned that organizations recruit candidates primarily through recommendations. This indicates that these organizations seek to gather individuals like those they currently have, which somewhat constitutes a form of discrimination, albeit legal. According to the literature, many individuals are unaware of most of the ethically questionable situations they engage in, and the same conclusion emerged from the survey. Most employees believe they are "morally clean" when in fact they are not. Given that ethics is a broad concept, employees do not fully understand when they are faced with ethical dilemmas.

It can be said that ethical behavior from management contributes to increased engagement and reduced employee turnover. This is because an ethical organizational climate, represented by a safe working environment, fair rewards based on merit, competitive salaries, and equal opportunities for career advancement, fosters trust relationships between employees and the organization, leading them to see their future closely tied to that of the organization. In this way,



they become more willing to engage and “sacrifice” to achieve the organization’s goals and objectives.

## Recommendations

- Since leadership by an ethically grounded leader, as presented in the study, is essential, and has a significant positive impact on the working environment, the first recommendation for those organizations that do not take this aspect seriously is to include HR managers in ongoing training on ethics.
- The second recommendation for organizations facing “challenges” in assessing, rewarding, and promoting based on merit is to maintain records of each employee’s achievements, so that decisions are as objective as possible when necessary, ensuring employees are convinced that decisions are based on facts.
- Considering the positive aspects highlighted in the study regarding monitoring employees, I would recommend that, in collaboration with the employees themselves, agree on the use of methods that bring minimal negative effects.
- The final recommendation is to create a CSR that is as diverse as possible, in terms of perspectives and skills.

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# *Evaluating the Motivational Climate Among Albanian Male Soccer Players: Insights into Satisfaction Levels with Coaches in Adult Leagues*

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## Abstract

*This study investigated the motivational climate and coach-athlete relationships among Albanian male soccer players in adult leagues. Utilizing the Sport Climate Questionnaire (SCQ), data was collected from over 100 players across various leagues, with Kategoria III exhibiting the highest representation. The findings revealed a generally positive motivational climate. Players reported high levels of perceived autonomy support, feeling that coaches provided choices and options. Furthermore, players expressed strong feelings of being understood by their coaches, comfortable being open with them, and valued by their coaches' confidence in their abilities. However, the results also indicated potential areas for improvement, particularly in how coaches handle emotions and communicate with players. The overrepresentation of Kategoria III players necessitates cautious interpretation of the results. Future research should include a more diverse sample across leagues. Recommendations for enhancing the coach-athlete relationship include implementing professional development programs for coaches, fostering open communication channels, and organizing team-building workshops. These strategies aim to create a more supportive and motivating environment for Albanian soccer players, leading to improved player development and overall team success.*

**Keywords:** *motivational climate, coach-athlete relationship, autonomy support, Sport Climate Questionnaire, Albanian soccer*

## Literature Review

The relationship between coaches and athletes plays a pivotal role in shaping athletes' motivation, performance, and overall satisfaction. Mageau and Vallerand (2003) introduced a motivational model highlighting the critical role of autonomy-supportive coaching in fostering positive coach-athlete relationships. This model, grounded in self-determination theory (SDT), emphasizes how coaches can enhance athletes' intrinsic motivation by supporting their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Expanding on this, Alvarez et al. (2009) demonstrated that autonomy-supportive coaching positively impacts young soccer players' engagement and enjoyment in sports, emphasizing the importance of motivational climates tailored to athletes' needs. Similarly, Hodge, Henry, and Smith (2014) examined a world champion team, highlighting how an optimal motivational climate contributes to collective excellence. Their findings underscore the role of coaches in creating an environment where athletes thrive both individually and as a team.



Further, Jowett et al. (2017) explored the multicultural dimensions of the coach-athlete relationship, demonstrating the universality of SDT principles across diverse cultural settings. Their findings indicate that fostering trust, communication, and mutual respect can significantly impact athletes' motivational processes and satisfaction levels. García-Mas et al. (2010) corroborated these findings, showing that young soccer players' enjoyment and commitment are closely tied to the quality of coach-athlete interactions.

On a more psychological level, Jowett and Ntoumanis (2004) validated the Coach–Athlete Relationship Questionnaire (CART-Q), providing a robust tool to measure relational quality and its impact on motivation. Isoard-Gauthier, Guillet-Descas, and Lemyre (2012) extended this work, revealing how perceived coaching styles can influence burnout propensity, particularly in high-level athletes, thus emphasizing the long-term consequences of motivational climates.

Amorose and Anderson-Butcher (2007) and Hollembeak and Amorose (2005) further tested SDT in high school and collegiate settings, confirming the positive influence of autonomy-supportive behaviors on athletes' intrinsic motivation and self-determination. Finally, Vallerand and Losier (1999) offered an integrative analysis of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding how motivational factors influence athletic performance and satisfaction.

The Sport Climate Questionnaire (SCQ) has been widely used to assess the motivational climate created by coaches. For example, Isoard-Gauthier et al. (2012) utilized the SCQ to explore the relationship between coaching style and burnout in young athletes. Their findings highlighted the importance of autonomy-supportive coaching in fostering positive psychological outcomes and reducing burnout.

Collectively, these studies highlight the profound influence of motivational climates on athletes' experiences. For Albanian male soccer players, understanding the gap between their current satisfaction levels and the ideal motivational climate becomes imperative. This research aims to address this gap, contributing to a deeper understanding of how coaching practices can be optimized to support athletes' psychological needs and satisfaction.

## **Methodology for Measuring Motivational Climate and Satisfaction**

To assess the motivational climate and satisfaction levels among Albanian male soccer players, we employed the Sport Climate Questionnaire (SCQ). This tool, rooted in Self-Determination Theory, evaluates the degree of autonomy support provided by coaches, capturing athletes' perceptions of their motivational environment. The SCQ contains 15 items, scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging

from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree,” with higher scores indicating a more autonomy-supportive climate.

We distributed the questionnaire to over 300 players across different adult leagues in Albania, targeting a broad demographic to ensure diverse representation. Despite the extensive outreach, we received 100 completed responses, constituting a 33.3% response rate, with 72 full answers. To ensure clarity and cultural relevance, we translated the SCQ into Albanian, carefully adapting the phrasing while maintaining the original intent of each item.

Data collection was facilitated through Google Forms, allowing us to streamline the distribution and gather responses efficiently. Participants were informed about the confidentiality of their responses and the academic purpose of the research to encourage honest and candid participation.

Once the data was collected, it was analyzed using Google Sheets and Excel. This process involved calculating mean scores for each SCQ item, applying reverse scoring where necessary (e.g., item 13), and determining overall averages for each respondent. The data was then visualized through charts and tables, supplemented with detailed comments to interpret trends and patterns.

This methodological approach enabled us to capture nuanced insights into the motivational climate experienced by Albanian soccer players and identify areas where coaching practices may fall short of fostering optimal satisfaction and autonomy support. These findings provide a foundation for discussing strategies to enhance the coach-athlete dynamic in Albanian soccer leagues.

## Results

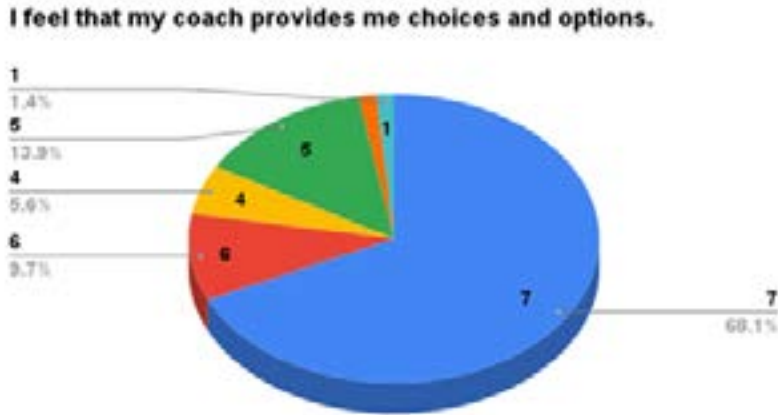
**GRAPH 1**



The pie chart reveals the distribution of participants across various Albanian soccer leagues. Kategoria III stands out with the highest representation at 36.1%,

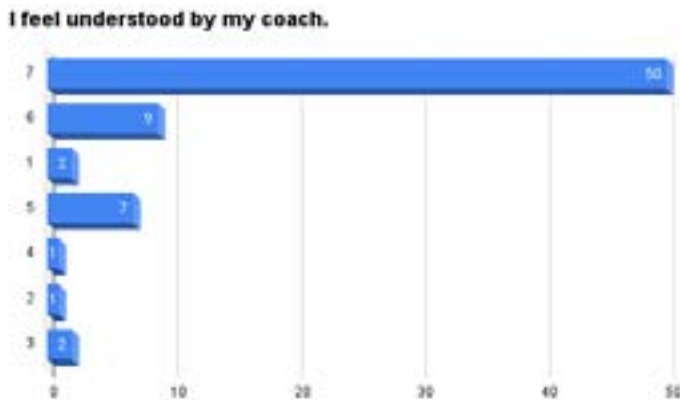
followed by U-21 Superiore at 18.1%. Leagues like U-17 Superiore and 5x5 have the smallest proportions. This distribution suggests a potential focus on lower-tier leagues in the survey.

**GRAPH 2**



A strong majority (68.1%) “Strongly Agree” that their coach provides choices. This indicates a high level of perceived autonomy support, aligning with principles of Self-Determination Theory.

**GRAPH 3**

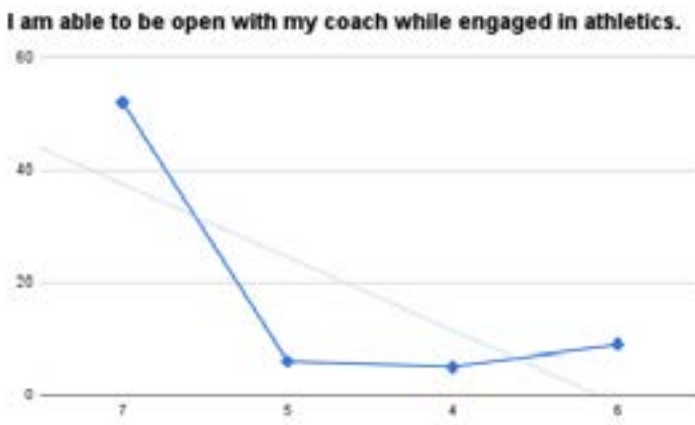


The bar graph illustrates the distribution of responses to the statement “I feel understood by my coach.” A significant majority (50 out of 70 respondents) “Strongly Agree” (7), indicating a high level of perceived understanding from their coaches. This positive perception suggests a strong coach-athlete relationship where players feel heard, valued, and connected with their coaches. While a small



number of players disagree or strongly disagree, the overall trend points towards a positive coach-athlete dynamic in terms of perceived understanding.

**GRAPH 4**



The graph illustrates the distribution of responses to the statement “I am able to be open with my coach while engaged in athletics.” The highest number of responses (55) falls under the “Strongly Agree” (7) category, suggesting that a significant majority of players feel comfortable and open with their coaches during athletic activities. This indicates a positive coach-athlete relationship characterized by trust and open communication.

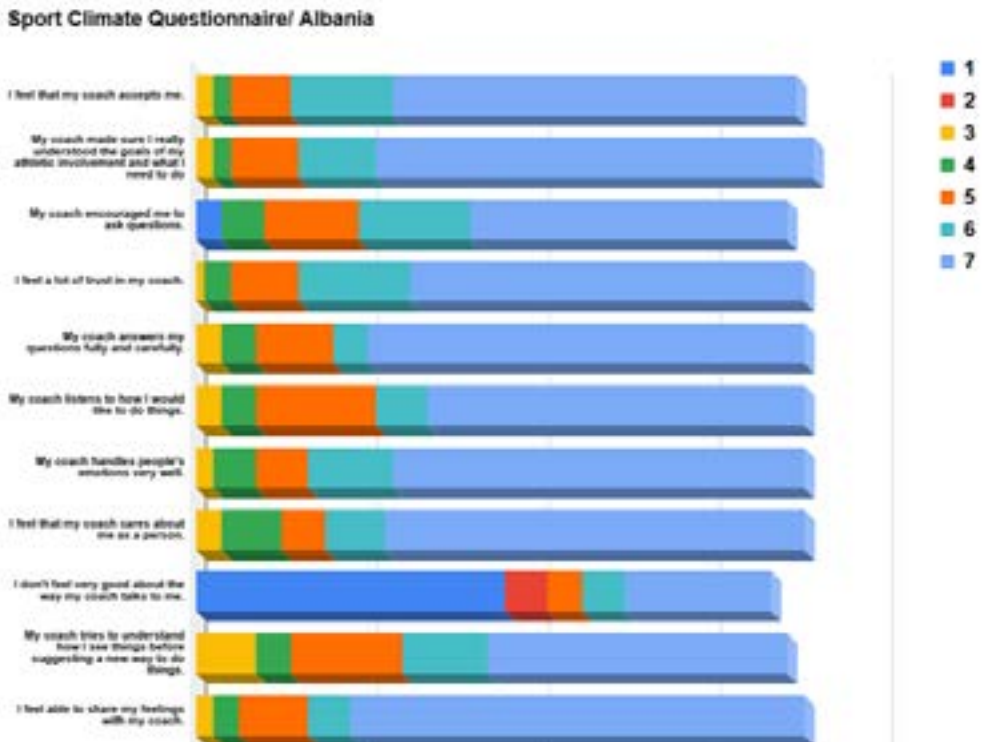
**GRAPH 5**



The bar graph depicts the frequency of responses to the statement “My coach conveyed confidence in my ability to do well at athletics.” A significant majority of players (approximately 55 out of 70) strongly agree (7) with the statement,

indicating that coaches effectively convey confidence in their players' abilities. This positive perception is crucial for fostering self-belief and motivation in athletes.

**GRAPH 6**



The Sport Climate Questionnaire (SCQ) results for Albanian soccer players reveal positive perceptions of the coach-athlete relationship. Players generally feel accepted by their coaches (high scores on “I feel that my coach accepts me”). Trust in the coach is also high, with many players indicating their coach answers questions fully and carefully. Communication seems open, with players feeling able to share their feelings and that their coach considers their perspectives. However, there’s a slight dip in scores related to how the coach handles emotions and how the coach talks to them, suggesting areas for potential improvement in coaching communication. Overall, the data suggests a generally positive and supportive coaching environment in Albanian soccer.

## Discussion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the motivational climate and coach-athlete relationships experienced by Albanian male soccer players.

Overall, the results indicate a generally positive climate, aligning with the principles of Self-Determination Theory. Players reported high levels of perceived autonomy support, feeling that their coaches provide them with choices and options. Furthermore, a strong majority felt understood by their coaches, comfortable being open with them, and that their coaches conveyed confidence in their abilities. These findings suggest a positive coach-athlete dynamic characterized by trust, open communication, and a supportive environment.

However, while the overall picture is positive, the SCQ results revealed some areas for improvement. Players expressed slightly lower levels of satisfaction with how their coaches handle emotions and how they are spoken to. These findings suggest that while coaches are generally supportive, there is potential for enhancing their emotional intelligence and communication skills.

Furthermore, the overrepresentation of players from Kategoria III in the sample necessitates a cautious interpretation of the results. Future research should aim to include a more diverse sample across different leagues to ensure a more representative understanding of the motivational climate in Albanian soccer.

In conclusion, this study provides a valuable starting point for understanding the motivational climate experienced by Albanian male soccer players. While the overall picture is positive, the identified areas for improvement can inform targeted interventions to further enhance the coach-athlete relationship and optimize the developmental experience for players in Albanian soccer.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, we recommend several strategies to further enhance the motivational climate and coach-athlete relationships in Albanian soccer:

- **Team-Building Workshops:** Organizing workshops with professionals in sports psychology and communication can equip coaches with strategies for enhancing emotional intelligence, active listening, and conflict resolution skills.
- **Continuing Education for Coaches:** Implementing ongoing professional development programs for coaches can help them stay updated on best practices in athlete motivation, communication, and creating a positive training environment.
- **Open Communication Channels:** Encouraging open communication channels between players, coaches, and club management can foster a more transparent and collaborative environment.



By implementing these recommendations, Albanian soccer can strive to create a more supportive and motivating environment for athletes, leading to improved player development and overall team success.

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# *The Great War: 110 years since onset of the First World War, a reflection* \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Abstract**

*From the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia, to the declaration of war of Germany to Russia, followed by declaration of war from Germany to France, and finally declaration of war from Britain to Germany, it passed no more than 11 days. 11 tense days before European powers rushed into the bloodiest conflict by far. Rightfully this was called the Great War. Started by deluded leaders, with vague goals for indefinite time. War that solved no problem and caused many new ones. Based on fear and misperception, leaders turned an improbable conflict into inevitable one. For the first time, almost the entire globe was on war which did not spare civilians. A war that marked ending of five Empires, shifting of political centre away from Europe, and birth of USA as next superpower.*

**Keywords:** *the Great War, First World War, Empires, secret diplomacy, Central Powers, Entente*

The August 2024, marked 110 years since a hasty European conflict turned into a World War or, as it was called in the beginning, the Great War. This war changed the world forever. In the military field, for the first time most of the world was engulfed in war, innovative weapons were used which, with further sophistication,

remained in use until now, belligerents were entrapped in trenches which did not move until the end of war, the world suffered millions of victims and civilians were not exempted from military actions.

But much more dramatic were changes in the international politics. Five empires collapsed, British, German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Ottoman. This marked fall of the *ancient* regime and coming of a new Europe. But much uglier Europe. Relatively tolerant and diverse Empires gave way to “petty, ambitious, and squabbling states. Habsburg, Hohenzollern, and Romanov yielded to Horthy, Hitler, and Lenin” (Herwig, 1997, p. 1).

When it ended, it became an imperative for leaders, and even more so for scholars, to name the causes of this horror. What, but also who, caused the war that wasted so much blood and bankrupted the Europe.

This paper will not discuss on who caused the war, i.e., who is to be blamed. Although, who caused it, is crucial and very sensitive topic which bears emotional burden. This is made even harder when, after the time passed by, with more intellectual endeavour, with more academic perspectives in sight, it is becoming less clear as who was guilty. More and more voices speak that there are more than actually one party or one alliance to blame. Treaty of Versailles named Central powers as responsible. But was this really so clear and self-evident? This may be a question for another paper.

But this article will discuss as what caused the war. This will be done by, first, discussing on some political factors which lead to the war, or caused war. And secondly, by presenting some peculiarities, or distinguished features of this war.

For the causes of this war scholars debated extensively. If for other conflicts and wars, there were not enough sources and materials to study, for the First World War, the surplus of materials is a problem. There are so many pages published after the war that it is difficult to distinguish valid information from those aimed at whitewashing one’s side. Immediately after the war, each party was heavily engaged to exonerate itself and present itself as a victim rather than aggressor. Thus, a plethora of documents were printed while thousands of others were altered so as to suit this victim’s image. This heavily distorted the real picture and genuinely impeded inquiry as what were the main causes leading to this calamity.

However, there is a wide consensus among the scholars that polarization of Europe or division of Europe in two distinct and rival camps, was among the most prominent causes of the war. Two decades earlier, Bismarck turned the Europe into a theatre of alliances and agreements which brought European countries together intertwined into at least one sort of cooperation. This ensured balance of force, and preservation of peace. No state was strong enough to overwhelm the others while no other state was entirely left aside which would feel the need to look for alliances to protect itself. For example, there was an alliance between German and Austro-Hungarian Empires, one was a Treaty between Three Emperors,

namely Russian, German and British Emperors, etc. France was kept in a 'soft' isolation. It was not threatened by German army any longer but neither could it look for military build-up to seek forceful return of Alsace and Lorraine. Russia was in a vague friendship, kept close with diplomatic approach while kept away from mingling with European affairs. While Britain was content with all this and silently stayed away from the continent as long as its maritime dominance was not challenged and its colonies were intact. In this environment, the Europe saw crises come and go while European war was avoided. Such was the case with two Balkan Wars, crisis in Africa over colonies between Britain and France, etc. This was a craftsmanship of Bismarck who, through his Realpolitik, achieved unification of Germany and avoided big European armed conflict.

Major crack in this arrangement came with the dismissal of Bismarck by the new German Emperor, Wilhelm II. Not long after the dismissal, as it was not enough, Kaiser withdrew German Empire from the Treaty of Three Emperors. France, relieved now from German clamp, immediately initiated what will become, first, a French-Russian agreement in 1891, and a year after a military treaty. According to the clauses of this military treaty, if Germany or Austria-Hungary mobilised, automatically, Russia and France would mobilise too. This was a first move toward polarization of Europe into two camps, one with German and Austro-Hungarian Empires, joined later by Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria, which would be called Central powers. And the other camp with Russian Empire and France, joined later by British Empire, USA and much later by Italy, which would be called as Entente. Each party would deepen the cooperation with its allies while at the same time widening the gap with the rivals. This was also called by the historians as secret diplomacy. This is most frequently, and most commonly, mentioned as major cause leading to the Great War.

Arms race was the next logical step after polarization and secret diplomacy. Arno J. Mayer writes that, European countries increased their military spending fifty percent only in the five years preceding the war (1967). Each party, from the fear of isolation and of lagging behind, increased preparation for war and started seeking alliances. But what states did not foresee is that their fear from attack and military build-up was perceived as threat and aggression by other states causing them to do the same. Step by step, a general impression was made that, with all these preparation at progress, the war was inevitable. All the time while all parties were fearing it. France, beside its preparation for war was also heavily inducing and financing Russia to do the same. Millions of francs in loans and direct investments were issued to Russian Empire so that it increases its fighting capacities and, in case of war, relieve France from a part of mighty German army. "Although the French government had not expected or intended that these loans would supply an essential element of support for a military and diplomatic alliance, this turned out to be the case." (Joll, 2007, p. 57) Similarly, British Empire was also alarmed



on an eventual war although greatly engaged in pacifying European parties and heavily working with both camps to deescalate.

Secret diplomacy, followed by arms race, paved the way for the next step in escalation - mobilisation. Parties soon found themselves retrieving from shelves and reviewing the so called 'war plans'. This at that time meant detailed outlining as when, how and, most importantly, against whom the fighting takes place. Most famous of all was "Schlieffen" plan, which depicted the German Empire fighting in two fronts. This would later prove as a self-fulfilling prophesy. According to this plan, Germany would have to fight and quickly vanquish France before swiftly returning its military weight to settle accounts with Russian Empire before the latter would utilise its biggest assets, endless number of soldiers and its vast territory. How rigid was Schlieffen plan shows following case; before commencement of hostilities, France withdrew its forces several miles behind its border, and was clearly showing signs that it does not intend to attack German Empire. To this, a relieved Keiser Wilhelm proposed to Helmut von Moltke, Chief of German General Staff, to adjust accordingly and limit the war only with Russian Empire. To this proposal, Moltke, as it was revealed later by eyewitnesses, "with 'trembling lips' interjected: "The deployment of a host of millions of men cannot be improvised" (Herwig, 2014, p. 59) because going only after Russia would, in the words of Moltke the junior, instead of an army, we would have a chaotic mass. France, on the other hand, as August 1914 was closing, further intensified issuing the loans to Russian Empire so it can enter the war sooner rather than later. In all this, Britain could not see itself as idly watching while balance of force in the continent was being destroyed.

War plans were not just an administrative matter. Just a calendar of deployment with names and locations. War plans were above all, especially in German Empire, subjugation of civilians to soldiers. State institutions would transform into giant war machines and the decision making would move to officers and state resources would have to satisfy war aims. In a word, civilian life including diplomacy would come second to army and war. Most important of all, when these plans would come into movement, even if they wished so, it would prove that they could not be stopped.

Fear that war was inevitable and impending terror that one could be in disadvantage if no early preparation is made, fed on each other. In Austria-Hungary, in Russia, and in Germany, every attempt of diplomats for peaceful negotiation was met with angry faces of generals and their warnings of dire consequences if their technical advice is not heeded. In these tumultuous and unclear times, no diplomat or statesmen wanted to be responsible if their country would be caught in surprise. And, as it so often happens, increase of brinkmanship in one side caused increase of brinkmanship in the other. When arms spoke in one camp, calls for refrain by diplomats on the other side, were seen nothing else but



cowardice. Hence the saying that when you have a hammer in hand, all problems seem as nails.

Therefore, step by step, decision after decision, the gap was widening and situation was becoming more and more fragile. In this situation, any spark, no matter how small, could ignite the flame in Europe. And that spark did come. It came with assassination in Sarajevo, on 28 June 1914. Therefore, it is not a surprise that from the assassination in Sarajevo until the first declaration of war, of Austria-Hungary to Serbia, did not pass more than a month. While within the week after that, Great Powers declared war on each other. As Liddell Hart wrote “[f]ifty years were spent in the process of making Europe explosive. Five days were enough to detonate it” (1997, p. 1). Or as the French business weekly *La Semaine Financière* commented on 1 August “[i]t has only needed a week to bring Europe to the eve of a catastrophe unique in history (Joll and Martell, 2007, p. 256)

After writing on some causes of the war, we can dedicate following lines to some distinct peculiarities of this war. One of them being, without any doubt, delusion of the leaders of the time. Most of the leaders made their decisions based on their fears or wishful expectations rather than calm assessment of the situation. Three were most common expectations of the time. First, that the war was inevitable, second, that it would be short, and third, that the advantage lies in the initiative, or who strikes first.

In following paragraphs, we will dedicate more on each of these peculiar features. First and most common one was that this war was thought by the leaders as inevitable. By presenting the war as inevitable, it was accepted by the general populace easier. The impression was made that with every nation preparing, with inflammatory speech rising, the war was the only way out. And the sooner the better, before the enemy gets the upper hand. The idea was established that in this situation, protection of fatherland was not only necessary, but also an honour. So, every nation was waiting anxiously. When the declarations of war followed, it was received not with terror, but with a relief. All that doubt and suspense was now gone. “The continuing international tension and the strains of the armaments race each contributed to a mood in which war was accepted almost as a relief” (ibid, 301)

Second peculiarity of this war is that it was expected to be short. It was a wide misperception that the war would be short, few months the most. German Chancellor Bethman von Hollweg once foresaw the war a ‘short quick storm’, as quoted by British historian Lancelot Farrar in his work “The Short War Illusion” (1973). German Emperor told to some of his soldiers while departing for war, that “you will return before the leaves fall from the trees” (Stoessinger, 2007, p. 1). Furthermore, as Farrar writes, war seemed to be a means of achieving the objectives which eluded diplomacy (1973). In other words, leaders opted for war because to them, war was quicker in achieving aims than long and cumbersome diplomatic efforts. So, the war would, in a way, serve the diplomacy. This was the



wish which turned into conviction, a conviction turned to a decision. And this proved to be one of the biggest illusions that would cost the Europe, and the world, dearly.

Third peculiarity of this war was that leaders of the time, most of them, believed that the victory belongs to the one who strikes first. Since the war was inevitable, the sooner the better. Each party, from the fear of lagging behind, was preparing for war and preferably for assault. Although, from the documents and correspondence revealed after the war, none of the parties aimed at aggression, on the other hand, they were all fighting 'for survival, 'for the honour', for 'a place under the sun', etc. This way, they escalated the situation and precipitated the war, each in its own way, while fearing from the attack from outside. In the end, a war that was in the beginning improbable, in the end became inevitable. Therefore, the illusion that the war was inevitable, became a prophesy. A self-fulfilling prophesy.

Austria-Hungary was increasingly calling for a preventive war against its Serbian neighbour, which was made responsible for the organization of the assassination of the Crown Prince. For a long time Danubian Empire was seeing its neighbour as aggressor with increasing appetite toward its territories. Several times has Austria-Hungary accused Serbia that it was inciting Slav subject inside the Empire for irredentism and turmoil. When the assassination took place, it was seen as a good time for a quick settlement of accounts with a problematic neighbour before anyone else would be able to react (Herwig, 1997). Chief of General Staff of the Austria-Hungarian army together with its cabinet advised main generals to prepare a punitive expedition, limited in time and scope, by avoiding spill over to the region. This gives sense why the ultimatum was given with such harsh conditions for such a short deadline. Because, historians believe that generals were convinced the war would be short and chances of success would increase with swift and soon initiative, not giving Russia enough time to prepare. By the time they would prepare, expedition would be over.

Austria-Hungary, before taking this gamble, wanted to know the mood of German Emperor. The grief in Vienna reached its peak. With the assassination, Vienna considered that its neighbour went too far. Even moderate voices inside the capital opted for military response. Would it be a 'short punitive expedition' or a 'limited war', because a long, devastating war was excluded in all accounts, would largely depend on German response. In other words, would German Empire contain Russian Empire while Vienna would settle accounts with Serbia? Therefore, the decision would be *de facto* made in Berlin. Most adequate man to seek for German support was thought to be Count Hoyos, Chief of Cabinet of Foreign Minister of Austria-Hungary.

To the surprise of all, German response was a *carte blanche*. As why this unreserved support was given is not clear and remains a little mystery even today. Was it because of shifting mercurial character of the Kaiser, or was it to take a stand

after diplomatic failures suffered by Germany in Africa while attempting to gain colonies? Or was it to take a stand after the scandal in Fashoda? Or was it caused by disappointment of imagined encirclement of Germany from other European Powers since even after its colossal economic and military power, Germany was not being given its proper seat in the political world. Keiser was frequently quoted to say that the Germany was being prevented from taking its rightful 'place under the sun'? Or was it entirely something else, is still a mystery. But what is certain is that the German Emperor gave his unreserved support, his Nibelungentreue, and Austria-Hungary had free hands to deal with its neighbour.

Many decades after the war, historians drew another reading of this response. Diplomats of the time wrote that “[l]ong before 1914 it was obvious that Austria’s existence was threatened. Everyone saw her as the next sick man of Europe after Turkey ... From 1908 on almost everyone anticipated the long-awaited general war would probably arise over a Russo – Austrian quarrel involving Serbia. From 1912 on the Russians and Serbs repeatedly told their Western friends that Austria’s collapse was imminent, and that they intended to have the lion’s share of the remains” (Schroeder, 1972. p. 142)”. German diplomats and generals were very vocal; that Vienna has to choose, energetic response or quiet death. So, reading between the lines in the German response, the document was more than just a reply. It was more of an obligation. Austria was free to act, but to act forcefully, and not diplomatically. Or it would lose its last ally – German Empire.

Austria-Hungary wanted a support and, instead, received an obligation. They wanted to know German stance in the case of war but instead Germans decided on their behalf. Before German reply, Austria-Hungary had many options in the table. Now it had a dilemma; either accommodate with Serbia in a friendly neighbourhood tone and lose the position as an ally to German Empire, or implement the German reply into action and risk a war with Russian Empire. The Ambassador of the German Empire to London said to his Foreign Minister, as registered in his diaries, and discovered after the war that if the Monarchy, let the Sarajevo murder, the strongest of all provocations, pass without doing anything, then its rapid decline would be just a matter of time (Ritter, 1962). Left without much of a choice, in a position of a declining Great Power, Austria-Hungary, maybe unintentionally, left its fate to be decided and sealed by German Emperor. Now it was only matter of time.

Europe saw crises before 1914 which made European nations speak about possibility of war. They verbally confronted and accused each other for malicious intentions. Even, at times, many intellectuals and generals, once crisis were seen on the horizon, they started to speak on the inevitability of war. But when August 1914 came, it caught by surprise most of the Europeans and very few could give sense to what was happening. “The outbreak of the war surprised and depressed us all. We may well have been previously convinced that the anarchy of the capitalist



world would eventually lead to a bloody clash between the European powers, but the moment of catastrophe found us completely unprepared” wrote one French socialist (Joll and Marten, 2007, p. 256).

Turmoil in the Balkans, two Balkan wars, loss of territories of Ottomans in the Balkans, all passed and Great Powers could peacefully engage in their resolution. Their disagreement over these matters started and finished in silence. Disagreement and discontent between European powers were evident also in division of African colonies. They too were resolved without resorting to arms. But when the incident in Sarajevo came, it proved to be different. Even those fuelling to war propaganda, when war declarations were announced, found themselves bewildered. Edward Grey, who in some moments during the crisis contributed for its precipitation, although usually refrained and calm, in a moment of despair said the word which still echoes today ‘the lamps are going out all over Europe, we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime.’

In concluding this paper, we can say that after all anxiety and propaganda, the war came indeed, in the beginning of August 1914. All those working for it, they saw it realise. But, to their surprise, it unfolded very quickly and was very far from what they imagined it. Alliances were forged with friends they wished, against foes each despised, with all available means. But the war was entirely different from expected. The war was expected to be short, with swift victory and covered in glory. On the contrary. It was long, it did not end with victory and certainly it was not swift, nor it was glorious.

The war lasted for four years by eroding every angle of society. Claiming millions of lives including here civilians. Even, some who sang odes to it could not live to see its end. Many leaders and generals who decided for war were replaced along the way and eventually overshadowed by calamities of it. While the war was causing mayhem to the European and wider population.

Neither did the victory came as hoped for. It did not even look as victory. When the war stopped, which maybe never really ended, nations who came out of it were so shocked and disappointed that they did not think of celebrating victory. They were hating the war, more than the former enemies. More than victors, nations were exhausted. Instead of hating the enemy, they were loathing their former leaders who brought about the disaster.

Least of all, this war had glorious ending. From those, who from comfort of their homes and offices, when war was in the sight, saw themselves covered in glory on the road home, most of them did not return at all. And those who did, did so plunged in despair and in confusion. Many did not know what they fought for. They met an enemy in the trenches while when they departed, they left a transformed one there. They left one society home but met another. When departing they were accompanied with trumpets and given flowers but when they returned, they met a society disappointed and desperate. War changed everything.

Worst of all, this proved to be only the beginning. Diverse and relatively stable and tolerant monarchies gave way to nationalist states, ethnic hatred and social Darwinism. Kaiser would be replaced with Hitler while Russian Tzar with Lenin and later with Stalin. And the incoming incumbents would just begin with the true nightmare. They would send millions to their death and millions of others to the internment.

Rightfully, this was called the Great War. Started by deluded leaders, with unclear goals and utterly unaware of the time this war might last. This war solved no problems and caused many more. Leaders made a conflict, which was in the beginning improbable, turn to unavoidable. And threw their countrymen from the luxury, good life and innovation of the time to the muds of the trenches where millions of youngsters would meet their end. Pity of this war is best illustrated with the case when British and German soldiers on the Christmas Eve got out of the trenches and exchanged cards and gifts only to return to killing each other on the day after. Rightfully, renowned historian Christopher Clark, called the leaders of that time as sleepwalkers.

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