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**From Bystanders to Agents of Change:
Examining Men's Engagement in Policy Addressing GBV in Kosovo***



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*All references to Kosovo in this paper are in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 regarding the status of the territory, institutions and the population.

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Abstract

The issue of domestic violence has been often framed as a women's issue. Despite men being the majority of perpetrators in Kosovo, the engagement of men in the process of addressing violence against women remains a largely unexplored step in ending it. This paper investigates the state policy on addressing Gender Based Violence (GBV) and evaluates the implementation of measures engaging men in that process, using a gender norm theory-based framework. The data are from two publications about gender equality and GBV from the Kosovo government, supplemented by publications from NGOs and key informant interviews with two experts from Kosovo's Women's Network and Centre for Counseling, Social Services and Research. The findings showed a presence of extensive legislation on addressing violence. Despite this, due to the informality of the executive sector and patriarchal culture, there is a lack of implementation and follow-through, with civil society organisations being the primary agents of change. The findings, analytical themes developed and the evaluation of existing measures will provide a stepping-stone to developing improved measures and implementation tactics for GBV in future research.

Keywords: Violence against women, gender-based violence, Kosovo, gender norms, NGO, CSO, men's engagement in violence-prevention.

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Abbreviations

GBV - Gender-based violence

VAW - Violence against Women

DV - Domestic Violence

IPV - intimate partner violence

KWN - Kosovo's Women's Network

SIT - Center for Counseling, Social Services and Research

CSO - Civil Society Organization

MGRS - Masculine Gender Role Stress

PPPM - Positive Psychology-Positive Masculinity

CBT - Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

GTA - Gender Transformative Approach

AGE- Agency of Gender Equality

MoJ- Ministry of Justice

KAS- Kosovo agency of Statistics

1. Introduction

In January of 2022, the Republic of Kosovo published its National Strategy for the Protection against Domestic Violence and Violence against Women 2022-2026. This extensive national guideline outlines the situation, strategic objectives, implementation and budget of the strategy towards alleviating Violence against Women (VAW) and Domestic Violence (DV)¹. In Kosovo, VAW is most common within the domestic sphere, between partners, rather than on the streets or in attacks by strangers.

Primarily, DV in Kosovo has been framed as a ‘women’s issue’, which is reflected in the programs that have so far been implemented, or rather, in the objectives of the Kosovo state in regard to DV. In the research and policy on VAW worldwide, a ‘victim-based approach’ has dominated the sphere of feminist scholars in the discussion and alleviation of DV, in part due to women’s vulnerable position in these contexts. However, in the context of Kosovo, where the norms surrounding DV are so deeply entrenched in its culture, a victim-based approach does not lead to the eradication of DV, but rather acts as a temporary solution whilst the norms and institutional systems that lead to domestic violence within the home continue.

Whilst the authors acknowledge that providing support and re-integration for victims of domestic violence is incredibly important, they wish to highlight that the institutional support for victims/survivors does not change nor diminish the cause of domestic violence, nor provide any mechanisms to alter the foundation on which domestic violence has been able to become a widespread social issue in Kosovo. Including men in the strategy for protection against DV and VAW is vital in ensuring that changes to the root of DV can be eradicated, and for the implementation of strong institutional mechanisms that protect the rights of the victim and prevent perpetrators from repeating offences. It is important to note that the judicial sector of Kosovo, which handles cases of DV and VAW, are disproportionately represented by men. This is the case for all political and civic service decision making venues (AGE, 2020). Additionally,

¹ For the purpose of this thesis, VAW and DV will be used interchangeably, due to the context of Kosovo’s issue of VAW. Violence against women in Kosovo is inherently rooted in strong patriarchal norms and a culture of violence justification in the home.

the inclusion of men and boys at educational institutions can lead to dismantling of norms before they can translate into future perpetrators and defenders of VAW. Women are in a unique position that renders them more vulnerable to situations of abuse because they cannot easily leave their homes, nor get jobs to gain economic independence from their partners or family (AGE, 2020). In the case of DV in Kosovo, the primary perpetrators of these crimes are men, and therefore when referring to the perpetrators in this paper, we will be referring to male perpetrators (Kosovo Programme for Gender Equality, 2020-2024).

1.1 Research Question

Therefore, this paper aims to investigate two questions regarding the National Strategy for the Protection against Domestic Violence and Violence against Women and Kosovo Program for Gender Equality 2020-2024;

- What measures are envisioned when it comes to engaging men in addressing GBV in Kosovo's public policy?
- To what extent are these measures implemented in practice?

Throughout our research, we have identified 3 main concepts which include men in addressing GBV; Preventative measures, Punitive measures, and Rehabilitation measures. The key institutions which deal with DV and VAW in Kosovo are the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), the Agency for Gender Equality (AGE), the judicial sector, (including police, lawyers and judges) and educational institutions such as schools and universities. Municipalities may be involved with projects at the local level. Civil society organisations, such as KWN and SIT are also key actors in the implementation of these measures identified in Kosovo's public policy.

The Ministry of Justice is responsible for the drafting of the National Strategy on Protection Against Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women 2022-2026, a comprehensive 4 year outline of Kosovo's current situation, strategic objectives, budgeting and an action plan for the

alleviation of VAW and DV. This text will be referred to throughout this paper when addressing mechanisms which engage men. This document will be supplemented with relevant documents published by the Agency for Gender Equality and Ministry of Justice, as well as Kosovo's constitutional framework.

In order to address these two research questions, we have also conducted document analysis on reports and documents from the Republic of Kosovo, CSOs and International Organisations. To gain further insight into the reality of the situation of Kosovo's implementation of these mechanisms, we have also conducted two expert interviews, with the Program Officer from KWN and the Director of SIT.

1.2 Theoretical Approach

The feminist theories that have informed our research focused on the binary division of gender and associated concepts like gender norms. Within the idea that identities and roles in society are constructed, Berger and Luckmann (1967) claim that the process of social constructionism in groups is stronger than individual one, as humans respond to pressures of fitting in and shape their ideas through interaction with others. This understanding is important for a just analysis of Kosovo as a patriarchal society with deeply entrenched gender norms. Through a feminist lens, insight is possible, on what these norms entail, how they are subjectively constructed, and what their effects are in a society where men are dominant over women in the social hierarchy (Berkowitz, D., Manohar, N. N., & Tinkler, J. E. 2010).

2. Background

2.1 Post-Conflict Kosovo

The formation of Kosovo's formally acknowledged legal system in 1999 is characterised by a high presence of international agencies (UN and NATO) and their interference in the rule of law. Kosovo's post-conflict positionality led to the encroachment of rule of law even by the UN in its search for peace-building and a functioning judiciary (Chesterman, 2005). In the aftermath of the newly formed, or rather, acknowledged statehood, Kosovo found itself in a position in which their entire judiciary and constitution was subject to establishment. The political legitimacy of Kosovo was subject to international scrutiny, and their statehood and laws were assessed by their ability to uphold international standards of human rights and ability to coincide with international norms, as outlined in the UN Interim Admission Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK 1999). These standards of maintaining the international 'status quo' continue to this day. Kosovo has, in legality, upheld all ideals under the European Union and UN surrounding GBV and VAW. They have also made development partnerships with some of the leading countries in Gender Equality, such as Sweden's SIDA, in curating their programs towards Gender Equality and against VAW.

It is also important to acknowledge the foundation for which a post-conflict background has set a socialisation towards violence and the its relation with gender norms. With war being perceived as "male", men during conflict often conflate the idea of nationhood and patriotism with manhood (Munn, 2008). The narrative of the 'national feminine' being framed as something to be desired or protected, in contrast to degraded enemy women who during war who were subjected to wide-spread sexual violence, was true for both sides of the conflict between Serbia and Kosovo (ibid, p.450). Any diversity or independence from women, even in separate from military efforts post-conflict contexts, is seen as a potential threat to the identity, which Munn (2008) explains in the Kosovar case as "a particular racial, gendered, and sexual conception of self: a white, male, heterosexual notion of masculine identity loaded with all the responsibilities and benefits that go along with the 'hegemonic male'." (p.451).

2.2 Male gender norms and violence in Kosovo

Kosovo as a patriarchal society, has strong divisions along the lines of gender, especially regarding gender norms. Men are perceived as heads of the household, with strong macho characteristics, while women tend to be relegated to household tasks and childcare, with low economic independence. Kelmendi (2020) in a study on students in Kosovo, examined the relationship between the masculine gender role stress scale (MGRS), which measures the attitude towards the inability to meet the norms and intimate partner violence. The perceived or real ineptitude of men to conform to these norms leads to an increased likelihood of them being violent in intimate relationships. This correlation is also true for the opposite side of the spectrum where men exaggerate their conformity or overcompensate through hypermasculinity (Parrot & Zeichner, 2003). Violence is a medium for maintaining their dominant position in the social hierarchy, a need which is further exacerbated in a patriarchal society which favours only the dominant individuals. Currently, 21% of Kosovars believe that it is acceptable for a man to hit his wife at certain times². Multiple studies have also concluded that a high degree of violence socialisation has contributed to the normalisation of violence within the domestic sphere (Ministry of Justice 2022). Although, both in Kosovo and globally women are the majority of the victims (KAS 2020; WHO 2021), violence that stems from toxic masculinity can affect other men as well (Jaehn et al 2020). As the problem of GBV persists, there should be a vested interest in investigating this issue with a deep understanding of the patriarchal context in which it exists.

2.3 Informality of Law

Kosovo is a newly established democracy, and with that comes the hurdle of building a capable, functioning democratic institution in which legal and civil matters can be handled according to due process as outlined in their constitution. Kosovo, like its fellow Balkan countries, has a severe issue with the informality of its laws, which has created a strong barrier to their ability to

² Kosovo Program for gender equality 2020-2024 and National Strategy on Protection against domestic violence and violence against women 2022-2026

implement institutional change (Targosz, 2016). The informality of law in Kosovo is only exacerbated by the pressures to conform to standards from the international community, especially the European Union (Targosz, 2016) in the manner in which the Republic of Kosovo is quick to adopt laws and policies, but incredibly slow to implement them in reality.

Rule of law is weak in Kosovo, due to the inherent inability to eliminate factors which contribute to the informality of legal structures, including that of corruption, weak ties to civil society, and the lack of independent structures that monitor the rule of law (Kmezić, 2020). In the context of the issue of violence against women, Kosovo adhered to its commitments under the Istanbul Convention, leading to the amendment of the Kosovo Constitution in September of 2020 (Banjska, 2021). In 2019, Kosovo made a series of additions to its constitution on laws surrounding the protection of GBV victims. These laws include acknowledging domestic violence as either psychological, physical, financial or mistreatment of one's partner. (ibid).

2.4 Role and Capacity of Civil Society

In regards to the role of civil society in Kosovo, a similar landscape arises. In 2013, Kosovo adopted the Government Strategy for Cooperation with Civil Society. Legally, Kosovo has enacted provisions by which Kosovo civil society has a role in the decision-making process, but both civil society actors and lawmakers have criticised this mechanism as being ineffective, or rather, virtually nonexistent in praxis (World Bank, 2017). Formally, CSOs are not restricted in the decision-making process, yet there is no regulation on how civil society and the government can cooperate on institutional reform, nor on the mechanisms by which this could take place. (Law No.04/L –057, MPS, 2011). The role of civil society in any democratic state is to protect the rights, wants and needs of the individual, and provide a voice to articulate these in a way that is recognised and accepted by the government and formal institutional structures. Strong CSOs in relation to the prevention and education of VAW in Kosovo include the Kosovo Women's Network and the Center for Counseling, Social Services and Research (SIT). The Kosovo Civil Society Foundation (KCSEF, 2005:142) reports that there is little cooperation between governmental agencies, both at the local and national level, and civil society organisations,

which has led to a low level of citizen representation in the decision-making process, as well as in the implementation of laws. This has led to the CSOs at the forefront of the fight against VAW having to intervene when it comes to the processes dedicated to the prevention and awareness of VAW, namely in the educational system, despite Kosovo's plans to implement VAW into curricula. This intervention comes as the primary and only resource that educational institutions have in adopting preventative measures against DV into their classrooms. Despite the resources available through these CSOs, no formal outreach has been conducted by government officials to confer on the creation of a curriculum which addresses these issues (KWN Program Coordinator, 2023).

3. Analytical Framework

Based on the review of research and literature on GBV, violence prevention, patriarchal contexts (including, but not limited to Kosovo) and gender norms, three main aspects were identified as analytical themes in addressing violence - preventive, punitive and rehabilitative measures. Within these, two approaches in gender theory were determined as most relevant for the context of Kosovo, considering the form and goal of the analysis conducted in this paper - the positive psychology-positive masculinity (PPPM) paradigm and the gender transformative approach (GTA). As this paper does not evaluate the content of punitive measures, but rather focuses more on the execution of the existing ones, theories on the nature and form of punishments were not discussed.

The approaches discussed will inform the evaluation of the measures in point 6 (Discussion), in order to assess their ability to address the issue of violence according to academic standards. As gender norms theory is determined in this paper as the leading perspective through which analysis of violence should be carried out, the PPPM paradigm and GTA will serve as two distinctive but related frameworks, which with a recognition of the constructionist nature of gender and gender norms will produce a reliable research process in the following sections.

3.1 Positive Psychology-Positive Masculinity Paradigm

Gender norms often begin the division between the most basic concepts - emotions, and relationships being perceived as feminine and reason or intelligence as masculine (Gilligan & Richards 2018). Despite no inherent value being assigned to this division, historically the masculine ones were prioritised both in men and women (ibid).

PPPM paradigm, through an understanding of the implication behind the division, aims to highlight the positive aspects of manhood rather than weaponize them. McDermott (2018) tested various ideas of positive masculine traits in a study aiming to find new models for addressing the traditional masculine ideology paradigm. Utilising the virtue approach of positive psychology, PPPM aims to emphasise the positive examples of masculinity, holding promise in a more balanced approach to men's engagement in various inequalities (Kiselica et al 2016, p. 126).

This paradigm in the contexts of violence prevention - through education in schools, workshops with non-violent men or training with public institutions in conduct or conflict management, presents the potential to reframe the ideas on masculinity and use them for the benefit of the cause. Due to its aim of utilising the existing understanding of masculine norms, it does not require extensive theoretical knowledge from recipients and is relatively easy to comprehend.

Similarly, in rehabilitative measures, it can function as a stepping stone to uprooting the motivation behind the violence. Along its lines, the Duluth Model devised by Pence and Paymar (1993) as a framework for rehabilitation efforts of violent men, focuses on disarming the violent tendencies. Centring the power relation between victim and perpetrator, it aims to enact an emotional understanding towards women and decrease the likelihood of recidivism (ibid).

Yet as the PPPM paradigm utilises the existing gender norms and aims only to reform the perception of them, it poses the danger of reinforcing them. The issue of reinforcing gender roles may stand in the way of eradicating them altogether.

As one of the concepts functioning as a benchmark against which the analytical themes mentioned will be evaluated, it is important to acknowledge that it may not serve as a strategy that can uproot gender norms altogether. Nevertheless, it can serve as a medium to the issue of violence, and a stepping stone to solving it.

3.2 Gender Transformative Approach

The Gender Transformative Approach, coined by Gupta (2000), differs in its aim from PPPM, as it examines the nature of gender and dismantles the division between these norms altogether, transforming them instead (Dworkin et al, 2015) . Literature that describes this approach focuses on three important steps towards men's fruitful engagement - reaching and involving men in the process of addressing the issue of violence, changing behaviours and mindsets and ending violence against women altogether (Casey et al, 2018). Although this approach does not reject the positive masculinity paradigm, it aims to create an understanding of the nature of gender constructs.

In preventative efforts, this approach's premise can serve as a useful framework for curricula for both men and women and most age groups, improving mental well-being and general attitudes even in non-violent contexts (Van de Vijver, 2007; Arcand et al, 2020).

In rehabilitative efforts, it has the potential to introduce constructionism and work to break down the reasoning behind violent acts, highlighting the subjective nature of norms. This is consistent with the cognitive behavioural therapy ecological model of rehabilitation of violent men (Heise,1998). It concentrates on addressing the reason behind violent tendencies, forcing rehabilitation to be a self-reflective study of one's motivations. The central concern is the difficulty of the ideas behind this approach. As masculine norms are so closely tied to male identities, in contrast to women whose identities are defined by the ability to have children (Pleck, 1995), deconstructing them may be met with resistance or lack of understanding.

Nonetheless, in both preventative and rehabilitative measures, GTA proves to be more holistic, with an ability to adapt to different contexts and intersections of identities (Brown, 2012) or the potential to eradicate the issue of violence altogether (Casey et al, 2018). Using it as a benchmark will allow for evaluating the ability of the existing measures to address the background and possible root of the issue of violence in Kosovo, and connect the discussion with the academic findings of the field.

4. Research Design

In this section, the research design and methods will be explained with a walk-through of the sampling and data collection process. The research design for this paper is a single case study of the situation of men's engagement in addressing GBV in Kosovo. The design was informed by the recommendations from Myers and Klein (2011, pp 23) on the critical case study approach, for its ability to pierce the status quo and allow for an analysis of the underlying influences behind it (Shanks, G., & Bekmamedova, N. 2018, pp 199). The methods used for the analysis of this case study are document analysis of government and civil society publications, supplemented by expert interviews with NGO activists in this field. As this paper aims to investigate the content of the measures itself, followed by an evaluation, these methods were determined to provide the fullest picture of the situation not limited to published policy, but of the delivery as well.

4.1 Case Selection - Kosovo

The Republic of Kosovo was chosen as our case study because of its nature as a country with a culture of strong patriarchal norms and violence against women, posing as a helpful example from which scholars can learn a lot regarding how the state can influence cultures and actions surrounding the alleviation of DV. This is especially true in relation to Kosovo's status as a relatively new state, which is still gaining its footing from a post-conflict history, and can therefore be used to study countries in similar contexts as well. According to the National Strategy, 54% of women have experienced domestic violence from an intimate partner in Kosovo, and over a fifth of Kosovars believe that it is sometimes necessary to hit your wife (2022). This area of research is relevant both in the context of the development of Kosovo, as well as to the UN Sustainable Development Goals in regards to Gender Equality (UN, 2015).

4.2 Research Methods

4.2.1 Documents

Qualitative document analysis was utilised to investigate the measures proposed and/or established by the Kosovar government in the two core publications chosen for this objective - Kosovo Program For Gender Equality 2020-2024 and National Strategy On Protection Against Domestic Violence And Violence Against Women 2022-2026. Furthermore, in order to assess the quality of these findings, texts from NGOs and CSOs will be utilised as a supplementing benchmark for addressing GBV in Kosovo and will be analysed along the same analytical themes.

As Bowen (2009) states, document analysis often develops into a mixed form of content and thematic analysis, aiming for both objective extraction of the more apparent cues in the text as well as a deeper interpretation of the underlying messages or even lack thereof, which will be explored in contrast to NGO publications.

4.2.2 Interviews

Individual semi-structured interviews with experts from two NGOs in Kosovo working on women's rights and the issue of gender inequality will supplement the data gathered from publications, gaining insight into the "groundwork" done in this sector, and the presence of barriers or lack thereof (Williamson, 2018, p. 391). This form of the interview was chosen for the opportunity to learn of the experiences of the specialist in the field in order to provide a multi-perspective analysis of the issue and its solutions.

The interviews were processed using a coding method that allowed for synthesising of repeating topics and phrases in the responses (Saldaña, 2015). The process was conducted through a combination of inductive and deductive methods. Based on the analytical themes established through the literature review - preventative, punitive and rehabilitative measures, codes were then developed based on a repetitive review of the transcripts - raising awareness in educational institutions and local communities, action taken by civil society, dealing with perpetrators of violence, victims of violence, lack of institutional action, existing institutional action, gender norms, GBV, ineffective institutional action, slow progress and lack of adequate resources for

victims. The codes were sorted according to the three themes for clarity of the process, with some of them appearing in more than one theme, due to the conceptual overlap (see Figure 1.)

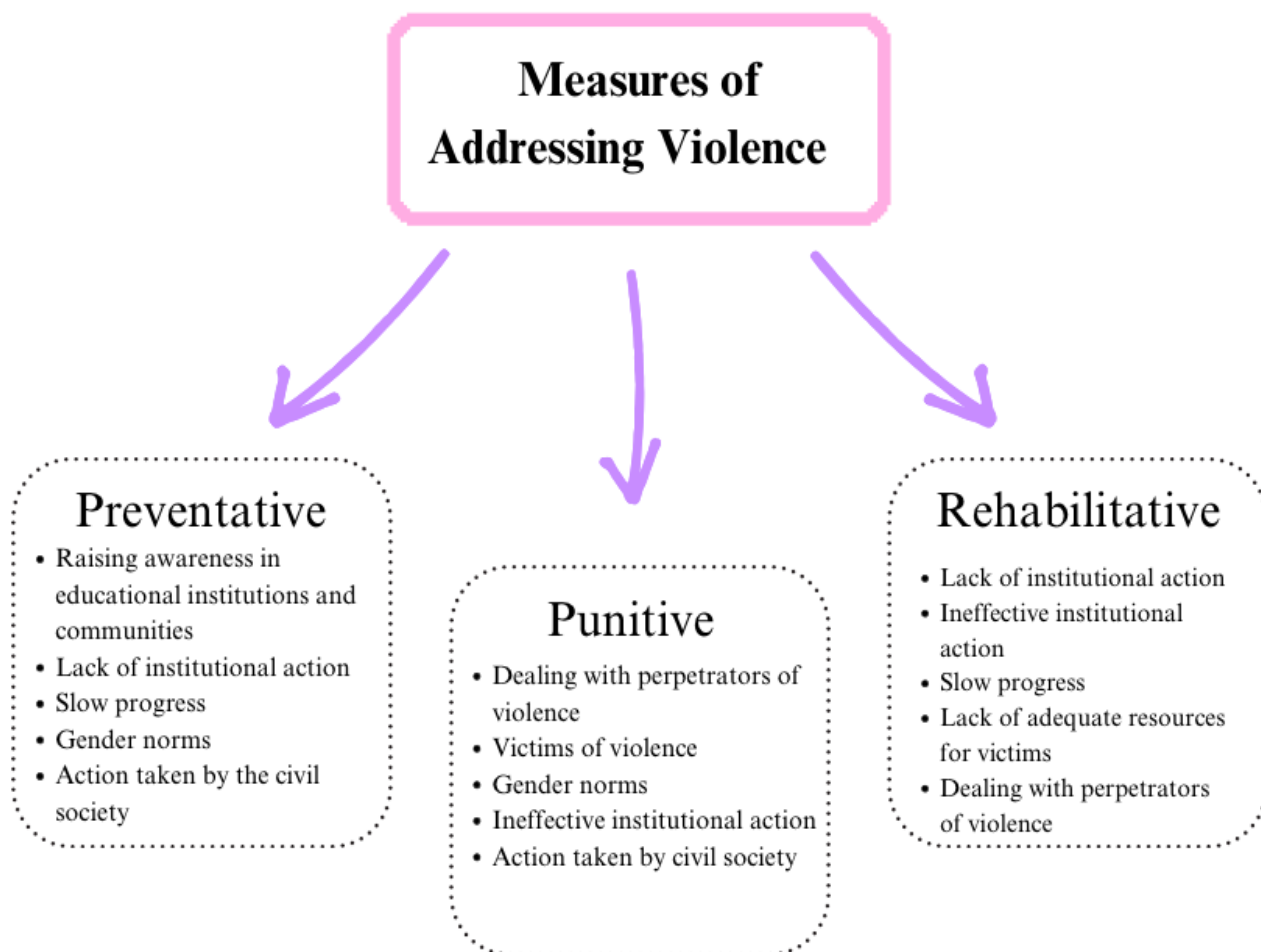


Figure 1. Analytical themes and assigned codes.

4.3 Triangulation and Data Analysis

The usage of different sources of data (governmental, NGOs, CSOs, experts) will allow for triangulation of the findings. Referring to multiple sources when analysing the same analytical themes will aim to reduce bias and increase the credibility of the findings (Mathisson, 1998).

The process of content/thematic analysis conducted both on the documents and on the transcripts of interviews will allow for a comparison of the themes, followed by an evaluation. Thus, by cross-checking the measures found in state papers with work done by the NGOs and experiences

of the NGO program coordinators' interviews, both the quality and the extent of the application will be tested in order to gauge their success against the benchmark set in the analytical framework. Due to the specific framework of three main measures developed from the literature review - preventative, punitive and rehabilitative, this research poses the potential to serve as a framework for similar future studies.

4.4 Data Collection

The textual data was collected from online resources using purposive sampling, which allowed for the selection of core texts that form the first research question (Krippendorf, 2004). The governmental texts were accessed in English through the publicly available Republic of Kosovo, Ministry of Local Government Administration website. The documents were found after researching the general topic of GBV in Kosovo by searching keywords like - *gender-based violence, violence against women, gender-based violence + government policy*. The two chosen documents were determined to be most relevant due to the recency of their time frames, their content and the frequency with which they were cited in other government and academic papers (ibid).

The NGO and CSO publications were also accessed in English through their respective publicly available websites. They were searched by keywords like - *violence against women in Kosovo, gender-based violence in Kosovo, violence perpetrators, rehabilitation, education on violence, and violence prevention*, with various combinations of these phrases.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

The primary documents used to answer our research questions are the Kosovo Program for Gender Equality 2020-2024 and the National Strategy for the Protection against Domestic Violence and Violence against Women 2022-2026. These documents are available to access online. The documents are 128 and 166 pages, respectively, and were written in English. We have also made use of relevant papers by CSOs, NGOs, scholars and international organisations. However, we acknowledge that papers which were not written in English and those that are not

publicly available for us to view may have limited the scope of documents available for us to read, which henceforth may have limited our study.

We conducted interviews with experts from SIT and KWN, whilst keeping in mind all ethical considerations in regard to interviews. Our semi-structured interviews were subject to a preliminary consent form, outlining their right to withdraw participation and the scope of the study. Our recordings of the interview and subsequent transcripts were stored on a secure drive to which only the two authors of this paper had access to. For further information on the consent form which was read to interviewees, please see the appendix (9.1 and 9.2). Whilst we had the access to experts from the field from relevant CSOs, we did not conduct any interviews with national officials from Kosovo. This was remedied by our focus on national documents in analysing the scope of men's participation in addressing DV.

5. Findings

What measures are envisioned when it comes to engaging men in addressing GBV in Kosovo's public policy?

In order to answer this, we will look at three key aspects that include the participation of men in the National Strategy on Protection of Victims of Domestic violence and Violence Against Women 2022-2026, including the constitutional framework surrounding crimes of DV, and the Kosovo Program for Gender Equality 2020-2024.

1. **Preventative measures** - Policy and institutional change surrounding educational institutions, including the education of men and boys in educational institutions, as well as educators and public agents who are to implement changes to the curriculum to include DV awareness and prevention.
2. **Punitive measures** - The efficacy of the Judicial System in implementing laws surrounding domestic violence

3. **Rehabilitation measures** - The emphasis and policy on rehabilitation of perpetrators and their reintegration into society

5.1 Preventative Measures

The ministry is aware that increasing investment in its education of society in regards to DV matters in raising trust between victims and the public institutions which handle such cases, and aims to increase this trust, and subsequent reporting, through education which emphasises that DV is not to be tolerated in society. This education is to be implemented across all levels and sectors in order to raise awareness and bridge the gap between what many assume to be ‘private’ matters with social issues that need to be discussed in mainstream society,

The National Strategy for DV and VAW have identified the need for, and pledged investment in prevention and identification of domestic violence. They recognise the link between early childhood violence socialisation, such as being subject or witness to domestic abuse within the home, and the tendency to become an adult who engages in domestic violence. Therefore, they have established in their national strategy the need for investment into staff of educational institutions to attend training in both identifying and preventing issues of domestic violence, with an emphasis on “changing behaviours, roles, attitudes, and gender stereotypes that justify violence”. This includes that necessary actors become aware that they have the legal right, and moral responsibility, to report suspected abuse in the home. As of 2022, they report that guidelines are in the drafting phase, and that the MoJ, AGE and the Ministry of Education aim to have had 60 of these education sessions for pre-university educators in 30 municipalities as of 2024.

Efforts have been made in annually training those who work with children and university students on curating a framework for curricula which includes domestic violence awareness and the tools to fight against the current norm of domestic violence justification and acceptance. However, the specific objective is to have a standardised curriculum assigned, with “specified

topics and approved modules" (2022), which include the identification of all groups that may be subject to such abuse. Additionally, it mentions raising awareness in boys and men to be allies of women and girls in the aims of fostering an intolerance of domestic violence.

Further actions are outlined in the strategy in order to achieve the objective of “changing behaviours, attitudes, roles and gender stereotypes that justify violence” that include society at large, including men and boys. The use of information sessions in order to mobilise community leaders as ‘leaders of change’, who can influence their community to stand against DV and VAW, for example, conducted in collaboration with several key actors such as the AGE, religious communities, development partners and the Ministry of Justice. One specific action the ministry aims to take is to promote the education and positive role models of boys and men as ‘agents of change’, through video campaigns performed by beloved public figures. This aims to challenge gender stereotypes and show that their idols show zero tolerance to GBV, and therefore, young men and boys should not either. These types of public campaigns are also exemplified in an aim in increased cooperation between the government, media and private sector to promote measures against domestic violence. These corporations aim to reduce the amount of sexist language used in media, increase the representation of DV in news media outlets and educate media professionals on how to sensitively and respectfully tackle DV in media.

Kosovo is also aiming to pilot a pre-marital counselling programme in 2024, which would provide family counselling to both the bride and groom, with mandatory information on rights concerning issues of inheritance, gender roles and legislation on family violence. These counselling sessions would be carried out by municipalities and civil registry offices.

5.2 Punitive Measures

The Kosovo Strategy on Protection against Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women (2022), was published by the Ministry of Justice, and written in conjunction with the UN Women office in Kosovo and partially financed by the European Union. The strategy also highlights the importance of its consideration of the Istanbul Convention, This convention was, with an

amendment, ratified in the constitution in 2020. The Istanbul Convention is the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic abuse (Council of Europe, 2011). This convention not only outlines recommendations and policies on domestic violence, violence against women, treatment and support of victims, but also the need for prosecution of perpetrators. There is, thus, a legal framework for domestic abuse and divorce cases to be handled in conjunction with the agreements of the Istanbul Convention, and the updated jurisdiction on Protection from Domestic Violence, as outlined in Law Nr. 03.L0182, which states “the protection of life and living with dignity without violence”. The Agency for Gender Equality’s 2020-2024 Program for Gender Equality also delineated the need for consolidation of Kosovo’s institutional mechanisms in response to GBV, and outlined that institutional strengthening is needed to create a sustainable efficient rule of law. In 2019, Kosovo made a series of additions to its constitution on laws surrounding the protection of GBV victims. These laws include acknowledging domestic violence as either psychological, physical, financial or mistreatment of one's partner. (AGE, 2020).

The MoJ and the AGE identified several judicial mechanisms which needed to be reinforced. Actions to improve this include designating judges and prosecutors who are characterised by a high level of competency in the areas of family law, as well as the need to train judges, prosecutors and law enforcement on newly enacted laws and definitions in Kosovo criminal code. The strategy aims for a complete review of punitive policy to be completed as of 2024, in regards to policy for efficient sanctions for perpetrators of GBV. There is no mention of how these trainings will occur, the curriculum, nor who will carry them out. Social norms that skew towards victim blaming remain present in the judiciary. Judges are permitted and encouraged to persuade women to maintain their relationship with their abuser in order to maintain the familial unit, except in cases where women and children are at risk of physical violence. Whilst there is an extensive catalogue of laws pertaining to and acknowledging domestic violence in all its forms, there remains a judiciary flaw in that the proceedings of domestic violence cases and cases of divorce are often tailored towards familial reconciliation.

In the judicial sector, ‘investigative bodies’ are authorised to deem whether a case is legitimate, although the strategy does not elaborate on who these investigating bodies are, and what training they have received.

5.3 Rehabilitative Measures

Kosovo is in a quite unique position with a relatively newly established government, tumultuous past and a close eye on its conduct from the international community. As previously explored, the laws regulating addressing violence are up to a high standard, similarly, although not defectless, the official programs and strategies also give an idea of a well thought out approach to violence prevention and alleviation. Men's engagement in those processes, despite being deemed a crucial step by previous findings in this area, has received relatively low attention with only one NGO in Kosovo focusing on working with men, in rehabilitation and reintegration of perpetrators, as well as education on prevention (SIT, 2020).

In 2012 and 2013, legal sub-acts Nr. 02/2013 and Nr.-12/2012 were added to the Kosovo Law on Domestic Violence. These two acts were to outline the use of correctional and rehabilitation services to perpetrators of domestic violence. Act Nr. 02/2013 outlined the methods of treatment, including mandatory alcohol and drug rehabilitation. Act 12/2012 determined the location and methods of psychosocial treatment for perpetrators of domestic violence (MoJ, 2015). The Strategy on Protection against DV and VAW identify 'Correctional Services' as a current institutional mechanism which includes working with perpetrators of violence during incarceration. These services would work with perpetrators towards "transforming norms and gender relations", as well as to provide support for addiction and anger management services (MoJ, 2022). These correctional services also include monitoring perpetrators and supporting them in rehabilitation in cases of suspended sentencing.

However, despite these laws and the fact that correctional services are identified as a current institutional mechanism, the strategy goes on to state that the establishment of psycho-social treatment for perpetrators of violence is an action plan which they wish to implement in 2022-2023, and that the implementation of such programs are aimed to be implemented in 2024. In Action I.4.8, the MoJ identify that "treatment and re-socialisation of violent perpetrators while serving a sentence" is ongoing, but the MoJ do not specify or identify the difference in these programs to psycho-social programs, which were outlined in Act 12/2012 of the Kosovo Law on

Domestic Violence. Therefore, it is difficult to be clear on what mechanisms the state is being said to currently use, as there is no clarification on the differences between these two treatments.

6. Discussion

This section will be answering the second research question -

To what extent are these measures implemented in practice?

by connecting the findings with academic discussion and theory on the topic. Using the information from section above and data from expert interviews, evaluation of the extent of implementation measures will determine the success or lack thereof, as well as gaps and avenues for future research.

Previous research regarding policy on GBV in Kosovo determined a limited success of the past strategies³, with only 27% of full implementation and 52% of partial one (Banjska, E. 2021) . The shortcomings of preceding programs show a need for continued research into the cause of the prevalence of violence in Kosovo.

6.1 Implementation of Preventative Measures

Despite recognitions and commitments to implementing a standardised curriculum into schools on the matter of DV, the reality of the situation is far more bleak. Although the programme's planned start launched a year and a half ago, the Ministry of Education has made no strides in the establishment of such a curriculum, despite having resources such as the SIT and KWN at its disposal. Evaluation of previous years' governmental pledges by Kosovo's Women's Network determined that despite the existence of a methodological guide for schools and textbooks, no

³ National Strategy of the Republic of Kosovo on Protection from Domestic Violence and Action Plan 2016-2020

formal process of implementation was registered, nor efforts to evaluate existing school resources (Banjska et al 2021). During the interview, the Program Coordinator from KWN stated that as most efforts towards education are conducted by CSOs, they do so according to their own framework.

Furthermore, the strategy ⁴ addresses only in passing, what both experts name as an obstacle towards comprehensive violence prevention - gender norms. Scholarship on GBV and DV is in consensus over patriarchal gender norms and the normalisation of violence playing a significant part in the pervasiveness of the issue (Kelmendi 2020; Baumgartner & Kelmendi 2020; Hearn 1996). KWN's program coordinator noted how the norms become entrenched the older the children get, noting stubborn attitudes in teenage boys -

“When we talk about it [gender equality] with children that are in high school, they mostly tend to say ‘ those are our norms, we should stick to it, this is the job of a woman; women are requiring a lot of their rights, and this cannot be done here in Kosovo.’ It means that the children in high school are mostly in line with the thoughts of their fathers or their grandfathers [...]”

SIT founder highlighted in the interview how even young boys absorb stereotypes through their surroundings -

“ One of the boys mentioned the difference between the treatment his sister received and he received. He was allowed to stay out late into the night, while she had to come home early, despite being bullied for it. So through action, they learn of stereotypes between genders.”

In the absence of an early introduction to gender inequality and the nature of norms regarding gender roles, the youth grows to accept the different standards women and men are held to, with men perceived as strong and dominant, often leading to a sense of ownership over them, creating an avenue for justification of GBV. Deeply entrenched gender norms are more challenging to reform by the time the students are in high school, making it more difficult to voluntarily engage adult men in these discussions.

⁴ Kosovo Program for gender equality 2020-2024 and National Strategy on Protection against domestic violence and violence against women 2022-2026

The founder of SIT explained this as one of the motivations for the organizations joint program⁵ - Young Men Initiative which addresses topics of gender equality, emotional well-being, conflict resolution and violence (YMI 2023 1a). The organisation also oversees other initiatives like Program Y+ which focuses on the education of public employees, staff and social workers (YMI, 2023 1b) or Counseling for Prevention (C4P) which aims to raise awareness about the importance of men's engagement in ending GBV.

Similar preventative measures are extended towards institutions dealing with both victims and perpetrators to ensure an informed conduct. Efforts have produced other campaigns working in various districts of Kosovo with both men and women, raising awareness about the importance of reporting and lack of willingness to tolerate VAW (KWN, 2020). Women's rights CSOs in Kosovo have a long history of advocating for increased gender-sensitive and awareness raising measures, both with the government and international organisations, with successes like yearly workshops with Kosovo's Security Force, despite their limited longevity (Behrami et al 2022, pp 64).

Despite the formal recognition as actors who have the ability to cooperate with institutions on reform and policy, CSOs are still limited in their reach to public institutions. Cooperation exists, only marginally, at the local level, in which CSOs, such as the KWN and SIT, are permitted to host workshops for schools.

In an interview with SIT Founder and CEO, the answer to solving the problem of violence in Kosovo was identified in a multifaceted approach and increased commitment from institutions and men in society. Despite the increase in the standard of laws in recent years, institutional ineffectiveness and patriarchal context were perceived to be the biggest obstacles to creating significant change.

⁵ Collaboration between CARE, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MOTT, Oak Foundation, Austrian Development Cooperation, Government of Switzerland

6.2 Implementation of Punitive Measures

The socio-legal bind between norms and the new laws continues to be a barrier to the development of a victim-friendly legal system, whereby victims feel safe to come forward with their abuse. In a recent report on the rule of law, citizens expressed low trust in the reliability of prosecution of indictments of domestic or gender based violence (Group for Legal and Political Studies, 2023). Judges tend to approach cases without putting their own inherent biases aside; they are satisfied and confident with their pursuit of familial reconciliation, or in their normalisation of violence towards women in the home (Némec, 2022).

In cases of divorce where custodial issues are at play, judges are often in favour of allocating full custody to the father, as, due to Kosovo's high unemployment rates of women (AGE,2020) along with its low rates of property ownership as a result of previous laws pertaining to male inheritance of familial property, women are often far less able to financially support their children than their male counterparts (AGE, 2020) . This is true even in cases where a man is found guilty of physical abuse, despite previously stated clauses which stipulate that this is in remiss of the law. This issue demonstrates the cyclical nature of women's oppression in Kosovo; women are not able to provide for their families as they are expected to take on the role of homemaker, leaving them extremely vulnerable in cases of abuse or divorce. It is clear that a formation of laws has not been enough to eradicate deep existing patriarchal and violence-socialised norms. When speaking to the program officer at the KWN, we found that high levels of corruption or familial ties also creates a barrier in accessing justice. Since Kosovo has a relatively small population, and due to institutional mechanisms preventing conflicts of interest not being in place, judiciary procedures can be marked by inefficient and undemocratic trials in such cases.

The consolidation of laws surrounding domestic violence in Kosovo is high. Pressures from the international community have led to extensive reforms in the Kosovo constitution, yet there remains a discrepancy between the laws and the implementation. This informality of law does not just pertain to domestic violence; laws surrounding the inclusion of CSOs at the decision-making process are also superficial, despite the clear need for their inclusion in lieu of

resources available at governmental levels. KWN's program officer highlighted how efforts of the civil society in Kosovo are often nullified by the lack of action from institutions when it came to fair trials, jail sentences or correct treatment of victims. The institutional inertia was detected even by the perpetrators themselves, having experienced short jail time and lack of accountability towards attending counselling or similar programs.

In an interview with the Program Officer from the Kosovo Women's Network, information surrounding the reality of the execution of the law was highlighted.

"They [Kosovo's government] just approve a lot of laws, and we are really good on paper. When we look at all the laws in Kosovo, we are really in line with the Istanbul convention, and other conventions for protecting human rights, but when it comes to implementation, we really lack it."

Additionally, many lawyers, who studied under the previous jurisdiction prior to 2019's constitutional amendments regarding GBV, are less certain how to proceed under these new laws during trials. To decrease this issue, the Kosovo Bar Association (KBA) now provides training in order for lawyers to increase the competence with which they represent victims of DV. The Council of Europe (2021) has identified that a strong barrier to the changes in social norms carried out by judges and lawyers is due to the fact that training regarding such issues is at the will of the judge or lawyer. There is no incentive to attend such training, which means that attendance is low. It is important to stress here that women are severely underrepresented in the Kosovo justice system, which is why this is being highlighted as a key factor in the inclusion of men in the processes of alleviating GBV. Only in cases where judiciary actors are reported as ineffective are they mandated to attend training, and due to corruption and inefficient reporting systems, this is rare (Oddone, 2021). Nonetheless, the KWN found that with specific training in regards to cases of DV, prosecutor knowledge improved from 2017, which suggests that professional training can be an effective measure for the implementation of punitive measures (KWN, 2021). Similarly, improvements in knowledge surrounding GBV laws and good-law practices were seen in judges, however the improvements were less than of those by lawyers.

6.3 Implementation of Rehabilitative Measures

As examined in section 5.3 Kosovo's legislation outlines the requirements for the mandatory rehabilitative measures for perpetrators. Despite these mandates being in place since 2012 and 2013, there has been limited implementation recorded. Council of Europe review of the existing rehabilitation opportunities both mandatory and voluntary has determined the availability of such programmes as inadequate, with the participation level remaining small and a lack of attendance reinforcement for perpetrators on probation (Oddone 2021). Borderline lack of referrals to mandatory rehabilitation or opportunity for voluntary ones, combined with sentences of short prison time and low fines, contributes greatly to the problem of recidivism. In an interview with the KWN Program Coordinator, they explain how the lenient punishments re-traumatize and endanger victims, leading even to cases of femicide. Furthermore, other victims hear about the outcomes of reporting and are less likely to go to police as result.

Additionally, Kosovo struggles with the repeated emphasis on perpetrator drug and alcohol abuse, when this has been repeatedly confirmed not to be the underlying issue when it comes to Kosovo's domestic violence problem. Instead of acknowledging the underlying issues that motivate GBV and patterns of domestic violence or the socialisation of domestic violence as a "private" matter, Kosovo continues to put drugs and alcohol at the centre of the issue (OSCE/UNFPA, 2018). Rehabilitative processes are thus much more specific in cases of substance abuse within the Administrative Instructions⁶, prompting more serious measures taken in these cases, despite recommendations from experts to extend them to all perpetrators (Oddone 2021). This diversion of attention towards substance abuse and away from social norms is harmful in that it validates institutions and programmes in continuously choosing to focus on medical issues rather than social ones, which may indeed sound easier to tackle than uprooting an entire system of patriarchal violence. However, this facade of blaming alcohol and drugs rather than the fundamental issue, which largely lies within the norms and patriarchal culture, leads to ineffectiveness at the institutional level.

⁶ n.12/2012; n. 02/2013

Similarly to preventative measures, the gaps in the system are filled by CSO and NGO initiatives. Public policies of previous years have shown staggeringly little improvement in the correctional sector (Banjska et al, 2021 p. 103-105). CSOs remain as the fundamental providers of services and programs in this sector despite limited institutional support and low funding opportunities (Center Of Women's Rights 2019, p.69). SIT Founder mentioned in the interview, how correctional officers are forced to refer the perpetrators to programs by NGOs due to lack of capacity.

In recent years two main programs for counselling for perpetrators emerged. *Shtëpia e Sigurtë* [Safe House] shelter with support from KWN began offering psycho-social sessions for perpetrators and victims, on a voluntary basis or on referral from probation services. The sessions aimed to decrease the risk of recidivism and raise awareness on the nature of GBV (KWN, 2023). A similar initiative directed at rehabilitation of perpetrators is Counselling for Prevention (C4P) by SIT in collaboration with UNFPA. The programme's services are available both for individuals accessing it voluntarily, and on a referral from courts. The Founder of SIT mentioned that the current administrative efforts are focused on working with stakeholders and advocating for stricter requirements for mandatory rehabilitation and reintegration.

The issue of lack of institutional efforts for execution of rehabilitation and reintegration, poses the danger of nullifying the preventive and punitive efforts by both CSOs and the government. Although the problem of substance abuse or addiction as a rationale for violence should not be overlooked, consideration of research findings on motivation for GBV, like traditional gender norms, is critical in the patriarchal context of Kosovo if the goal of eradication of GBV is to be achieved. Proper rehabilitation efforts have the potential to address many factors contributing to the issue and greatly reduce the negative impact they have on women.

7. Conclusion

Prevalence of GBV, combined with scholarship on the link between masculine gender norms and VAW, was the primary motivation to research men's engagement in addressing the issue in Kosovo. As GBV remains a significant obstacle to achieving gender equality, both in developing and developed countries, posing a significant risk for women both in public and domestic spheres, research and evaluation of institutional approaches to the problem will allow for continued improvements of possible solutions.

Recommendations from development organisations about increased engagement of men based on existing research on the benefit of men's participation both in prevention and ending violence (Bouta & Frerks, 2005; Casey et al 2018; Flood, 2019) merit continued effort to understand different contexts and problems associated. Kosovo's profile as a post-conflict emerging state, under intense scrutiny of international organisations prompted the research questions;

What measures are envisioned when it comes to engaging men in addressing GBV in Kosovo's public policy?

To what extent are these measures implemented in practice?

Using a mixed method approach of document analysis and expert interviews, this paper identified the extensive laws present in Kosovo legal framework that, in line with the international standard, envisioned a range of strict policies and actions to be taken in response to GBV. Based on previous studies of the efficacy of such policies, the analysis was conducted in consideration of 3 key aspects; preventative, punitive and rehabilitative measures towards addressing GBV. The general findings demonstrated that despite a solid legal basis, the policies and/or action plans were not fully realised, maintaining an informal and inefficient institutional structures; men's engagement was not sufficiently included in a form that took into consideration the role men play in reinforcing gender norms which normalise violence.

The preventative measures were found to have outlined an aim to educate a wide range of groups and community leaders working with children, including, but not limited to awareness raising media campaigns and workshops. For educational institutions, there is the prospect of a draft of a

comprehensive curriculum which includes topics of gender equality and GBV. The extensive review of the progress in implementing these measures, determined a lack of follow-through on Kosovo's commitments. Similarly to preceding years, in lieu of progress on the improved approaches and laws, CSOs from Kosovo have been the primary drivers of change, having started multiple initiatives targeting both men's and boys' engagement, as well as mixed-gender prevention measures.

Punitive measures were found to adhere to international standards regarding prosecuting perpetrators of GBV. Nevertheless, the pervasive normalisation of violence and personal bias of the judges contributed to the legal cases being marred by attempts to reconcile the victims with perpetrators on the account of preserving familial integrity, as well as through the justification of violence as a form of conflict resolution (Nêmec, 2022).

The rehabilitative measures, based on the rates of prosecution, continued to have insubstantial progress despite similar strategies on addressing violence from previous years (Banjska et al, 2021). The services overwhelmingly focused on substance abuse, with little to no mention of other reasons behind GBV. As with preventative efforts, CSOs exhibited larger accomplishments in this mechanism than governmental institutions, having lobbied for improvements in the execution of institutionalised plans for rehabilitation and reintegration, as well as leading independent programs that offered voluntary counselling which supplemented mandatory court-ordered ones (SIT, 2023).

The publications by the government of Kosovo show great effort in attempts to address the prevalent issue of violence. In reality, Kosovo has been unable to maintain these commitments, despite implementing a legal framework which insinuates that measures have been taken to uphold them. These constitutional changes appear by all counts as a method of appeasing the international community, whilst retaining the same processes, with insufficient consideration of wider academic school of thought on roots and solutions to GBV. The hard work of CSOs and the ambitions of the government show potential for exploring alternative paths for addressing and eradicating GBV. The monitoring and evaluations will allow for significant contributions to the academic study on ability to engage men in these processes, as well as giving potential for research into formalisation of gender norms as a framework in addressing GBV. Due to the

potential for various avenues for future research, the solution to the problem of violence against women in Kosovo will remain a key finding in addressing the issue worldwide.

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9. Appendix

9.1 Consent form for interviews

- Do you voluntarily agree to participate in this interview as a part of research study on gender-based violence in Kosovo for a Bachelor's Thesis in Development Studies at Lund University?
- Let it be noted that, you can withdraw your consent any time during the interview or refuse to answer questions throughout. You can also withdraw your consent through an email anytime within the next two weeks, in case of which your data will be deleted.
- The purpose of our research is to investigate the extent to which men are involved in the process of addressing issues of violence against women, as well as the obstacles faced in the inclusion of men. This interview has the purpose of gathering data on experts' experience in working on the ground with this issue and related-ones.
- The interview will take form of a semi-structured conversation led by questions we have prepared
- Do you agree to the interview being audio-recorded?
- Do you agree to your information being listed as a [the interviewee's position in the organisation]?
- The interview recordings will be retained on secure drives accessed only by Leyla Ilter and Maja Grzesiuk, and will be deleted by September 2023.
- The transcripts of interviews will be retained on secured drives accessed only by Leyla Ilter and Maja Grzesiuk and will be deleted by September 2024. At any point during those periods you can email us and gain access to the data.
- Let it be noted that extracts from the interview may be quoted in "Bachelor's thesis in Development Studies on men's participation in addressing violence against women"

9.2 Interview Guide

1. The Kosovo legal sub-acts on the law on Domestic Violence added, in 2012 and 2013, the mandatory use of correctional and rehabilitation services towards perpetrators of domestic violence, both during and post incarceration.. However, the Council of Europe in 2017 reported that in actuality, these programmes are not being carried out. Do you have insight on why this is, and if there has been improvement in the field?
2. Despite there being several laws in place, there seems to be a disconnect between the laws in place and the observation of them in practicality. Do you have knowledge on why this is the case? And: why do you think these laws were put into place in the first place, if we have seen years of weak execution.
3. Despite the legal framework for domestic abuse and divorce cases to be handled in conjunction with the agreements of the Istanbul Convention, and the updated jurisdiction on Protection from Domestic Violence, as outlined in Law Nr. 03.L0182, there remains social norms that skew towards victim blaming. Judges are permitted and encouraged to persuade women to maintain the familial unit. Do you know why this system remains?
4. Are the goals towards identifying and raising awareness of GBV in educational systems being achieved through the current system? If not, what are the barriers for this?
5. In what ways do you think the context of Kosovo creates a specific environment for the difficulties in addressing this issue?

6. Given your experience managing various projects on women's rights in Kosovo, do you think there is a gap in this field that should aim to include men's participation more?