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UNMASKING SHADOWS: ILLUMINATING BARRIERS AND TRANSFORMATIVE INTERVENTIONS IN HUMAN TRAFFICKING FOR SOCIAL WORK ADVANCEMENT IN ALBANIA. A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

Introduction. Human trafficking is a multifaceted and widespread problem that affects individuals across diverse demographics and intersects with other forms of oppression. This literature review delves into the prevalence of human trafficking in Albania and examines the barriers that impede efforts to prevent it, protect its victims, and prosecute its perpetrators. The review also highlights interventions that can address the underlying causes of the problem.
Aim. This study aims to provide a comprehensive review of existing interventions and challenges in the fight against human trafficking in Albania. By analysing academic studies, reports, and policy documents, the study evaluates the effectiveness and limitations of current strategies, identifies key barriers faced by stakeholders such as law enforcement, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and victim support services, and highlights gaps and areas for future research. This study was conducted as part of the GAJU 101/2022/S project and approved by the ethics committee under 008/2022.
Materials and methods. A systematic literature review was conducted using multiple databases, including ProQuest and Taylor & Francis Online, supplemented by official reports from organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the U. S. Department of State. A total of 182 studies were initially retrieved, of which 43 were ultimately included in the review following abstract screening and eligibility assessments. The Covidence software was used for data screening, and Atlas. ti facilitated co-occurrence and code document analysis to explore patterns across the literature. Studies were categorized into themes such as state attributes of Albania, human rights, interventions, refugee crises, Roma minority issues, and the development of social work in Albania.
Results and discussion. The review identified several recurring challenges in combating human trafficking in Albania. These include bureaucratic delays, corruption, limited access to healthcare and support services, poverty, and socioeconomic inequality. Key interventions, such as awareness campaigns, rehabilitation services, cross-border cooperation, and gender-sensitive assistance, are addressed in varying capacities across the literature. However, the prevalence of labor exploitation, legal challenges, and underfunding of social services remain critical obstacles. Additionally, the Roma minority and refugee populations face specific vulnerabilities that exacerbate their risks of trafficking. The analysis also underscored the need for modernizing social services, improving coordination among stakeholders, and incorporating evidence-based policymaking into anti-trafficking strategies.
Conclusions. Human trafficking in Albania remains a multidimensional issue that requires a coordinated and comprehensive response. The study reveals significant barriers, such as corruption, legal system inefficiencies, and inadequate victim support services, which hinder the effectiveness of anti-trafficking efforts. Addressing these barriers through systematic collaboration and targeted interventions is essential to developing more effective prevention, protection, and prosecution strategies. Further primary and longitudinal research, along with comparative and intersectional studies, are recommended to enhance the understanding and effectiveness of future interventions.

Keywords: **social work, Albania, human trafficking, interventions, barriers**

INTRODUCTION

In combating human trafficking, Albania stands at a critical juncture, facing a range of complex challenges that demand urgent attention and concerted action. Albania faces challenges in combating human trafficking [1], mainly focusing on sex trafficking [2, 3]. Push and pull factors contribute to child trafficking and addressing them requires comprehensive measures [4]. Efforts should also consider various forms of exploitation and their complexities [5-7].

The multifaceted nature of addressing human trafficking interventions involves a range of interconnected dimensions, each presenting its complexities and challenges. In this context, various studies shed light on critical aspects of the issue, spanning from rehabilitation and reintegration [8], anti-trafficking interventions and evaluation [9], voluntary return and reintegration [8], technology and support for survivors [10], Modern Slavery Legislation [11, 12], protection in supply chains [13], legal and institutional barriers [8], socioeconomic challenges [8], and challenges for NGOs and government support [8]. Additionally, victim identification and assistance remain crucial, with approaches like the 'social path' being highlighted for their efficacy in assisting victims [14].

The intricate interplay between democratic ideals, economic development, and corruption dynamics within a nation's political landscape often yields revealing insights into the complex challenges faced by countries in their pursuit of progress and transparency. In this context, Bërdufi and Krasniqi describe diminishing democratic aspirations and highlight the growing divide between Albania's democratic aspirations and the reality of its electoral regime [15]. The vision of liberal democracy was overshadowed by ruling minorities concentrating power, weakening democratic defence mechanisms, and intensifying authoritarian tendencies [15]. Duci et al. Investigate how corruption, economic freedom, and urbanization influence economic development in both Western Balkan and EU nations [16]. The Western Balkans have higher corruption levels and lower economic freedom and benefit more from urbanization, highlighting the need for anti-corruption efforts and effective policies [16]. Kajsiu contrasts the corruption discourse by Prime Minister Edi Rama in Albania and President Juan Manuel Santos in Colombia, explaining that they differ in attributing corruption to public or private sectors, victims, and perpetrators, shaped by ideological contexts [17]. Corruption discourse contributes to ideological constructions of the state and public/private spheres, according to Kajsiu [17].

The landscape of human rights is a multidimensional domain encompassing many crucial topics, each offering unique insights into the complexities of modern societies and their pursuit of justice, equity, and dignity. This array of human rights-related issues is exemplified by a collection of diverse studies, including politics of evidence-based policymaking in Albania [18], perpetrator involvement in human rights violations [19], return migration and human rights [20], and cultural factors in child-rearing assessment [21].

Several scholarly works have delved into various aspects of the refugee crisis and its implications for regional dynamics and broader international relations in the context of migration and geopolitical shifts. Pastore emphasizes Yugoslavia's unique role as a major supplier of migrant workers to the Federal Republic of Germany during the Cold War, offering insight into the bilateral impact of labour agreements and changing migration patterns [22]. Milan examines the humanitarian response to the refugee influx in the Western Balkans, highlighting the resilience of grassroots solidarity initiatives and their adaptation in the face of evolving state policies and changing narratives [23]. Talani traces the trajectory of the Balkan Route and its significance, showcasing its role in EU strategic documents and security initiatives, shedding light on the evolving dynamics of the region's geopolitical importance [24]. Research also highlights the complex role of organized crime in perpetuating human trafficking in the Western Balkans [25]. Dhëmbo et al. investigate how media influences Albania's public opinion and political discourse concerning migration and asylum [26]. Dhëmbo et al. uncover changes in media coverage's framing and tone and analyse how these impact policy choices and public perspectives [26]. Zoppi and Puleri analyse the strategic significance of the Western Balkans in EU documents and summits, highlighting the region's evolving role in shaping European spatiality, border control policies, and security initiatives [27].

There also exists a narrative of the Roma minority's circumstances, drawing from a range of sources that spotlight their status, including efforts to promote their rights and social inclusion [28], the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on attitudes and biases [29], and the broader issues of inequality and exclusion [29, 28]. Further, studies on health impacts of trafficking victims emphasize the importance of addressing healthcare access, as victims often face severe physical and mental health challenges [30].

While addressing the issue of combating human trafficking, it is also crucial to describe the context of social work development in Albania. Ymeraj underscores that while social work has faced a limited tradition as an academic discipline or profession in the country, there is a substantial demand for well-trained social workers [31]. According to Ymeraj, the alignment of curricula with EU standards, prompted by the Bologna Declaration in 2005, has been a significant reform effort [31]. However, Ymeraj observes that social work in Albania remains more of

a societal safety net than a distinct academic discipline or profession, encompassing aspects like social mobilization, participation, and inclusion [31].

Moving forward, Mascagni and Bulli highlight the European Union's ongoing accession negotiations with Albania, which commenced in March 2020 [32]. As Mascagni and Bulli highlight, the respect for fundamental rights and the implementation of social policies, particularly concerning social care services and local government capacities, have been central concerns [32]. Mascagni and Bulli further explore Albania's underdeveloped nature of social care services, which was underscored in the European Commission's 2019 report [32]. Mascagni and Bulli explain that to address these challenges and align with European standards, the T@sk project, initiated from 2017 to 2020, aimed to enhance social work education and modernize social services delivery [32]. According to Mascagni and Bulli, this initiative embraced peer-to-peer exchange, transdisciplinary collaboration, and digital innovation as its guiding principles [32]. The project's objectives encompassed improving the recognition and quality of social workers while responding to the COVID-19 pandemic through online learning systems, as depicted by Mascagni and Bulli [32].

Furthermore, the pandemic underscored the pivotal role of social workers in driving social change [32]. Mascagni and Bulli describe that the T@sk project sought to foster social innovation, collaboration, and professional motivation among social work practitioners and students [32]. While the project makes strides in capacity building and knowledge sharing on a European level, Mascagni and Bulli emphasize the urgency of financial and organizational investments, particularly at local and rural levels [32]. These investments are described by Mascagni and Bulli as essential to fully harness opportunities and address challenges in Albania's dynamic social and political context, enabling social work's true potential to flourish [32].

AIM

This literature review aims to identify existing interventions and challenges in the battle against human trafficking, explicitly evaluating their effectiveness and limitations. Through an extensive analysis of literature encompassing academic studies, reports, and policy documents, the study thoroughly examines the diverse approaches and strategies utilized in combating human trafficking.

The review also aims to identify stakeholders' key challenges and barriers in combating human trafficking, including law enforcement agencies, non-governmental organizations, and victim support services. By exploring these barriers, the study aims to shed light on the structural, legal, social, and economic factors that impede the effectiveness of anti-trafficking efforts.

Furthermore, this study aims to identify gaps and areas for future research combating human trafficking. By critically analysing the existing literature, the review aims to identify research needs and opportunities for further investigation, such as innovative interventions, emerging trends, and overlooked aspects of human trafficking prevention, victim support, and perpetrator prosecution.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This chapter provides an in-depth look at the methodologies used in conducting the literature review. The investigation included using Covidence to screen abstracts and full texts and create a PRISMA flow diagram, as seen in diagram 1. A search for pertinent studies was conducted across various databases, namely ProQuest, Taylor & Francis Online – Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies, Taylor & Francis Online – Journal of Human Trafficking, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the U. S. Department of State. A total of 182 studies were initially retrieved from these databases.

A thorough review of references was performed, removing 12 duplicate references to ensure data accuracy and eliminate redundancy. The 170 remaining studies underwent abstract screening using Covidence, excluding 93 studies based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Subsequently, the 77 remaining studies were obtained in full text and assessed for eligibility. Among these, 34 studies were ruled out because they did not align with the research topic or setting. Ultimately, a total of 43 studies were included in the review.

After extracting relevant studies, Atlas.ti was utilized for further analysis. Co-occurrence analysis and code document analysis were employed to explore the relationships and patterns within the selected studies. Co-occurrence analysis facilitated the identification of common themes and concepts across the literature, while code document analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of the content and context of the studies. The studies were categorized into the following themes: State Attributes of Albania, Human Rights, Interventions, Refugee crisis, Roma minority, and Social work in Albania.

Study limitations

There is always a risk of bias when conducting a literature review, as the selection of studies and reports can be subjective. We aimed to reduce this risk by adopting a systematic approach and incorporating studies from diverse sources. It is crucial to acknowledge that the applicability of our findings may be limited to the particular context of Albania. The prevalence of barriers and interventions identified in this study may differ significantly from other countries or regions.

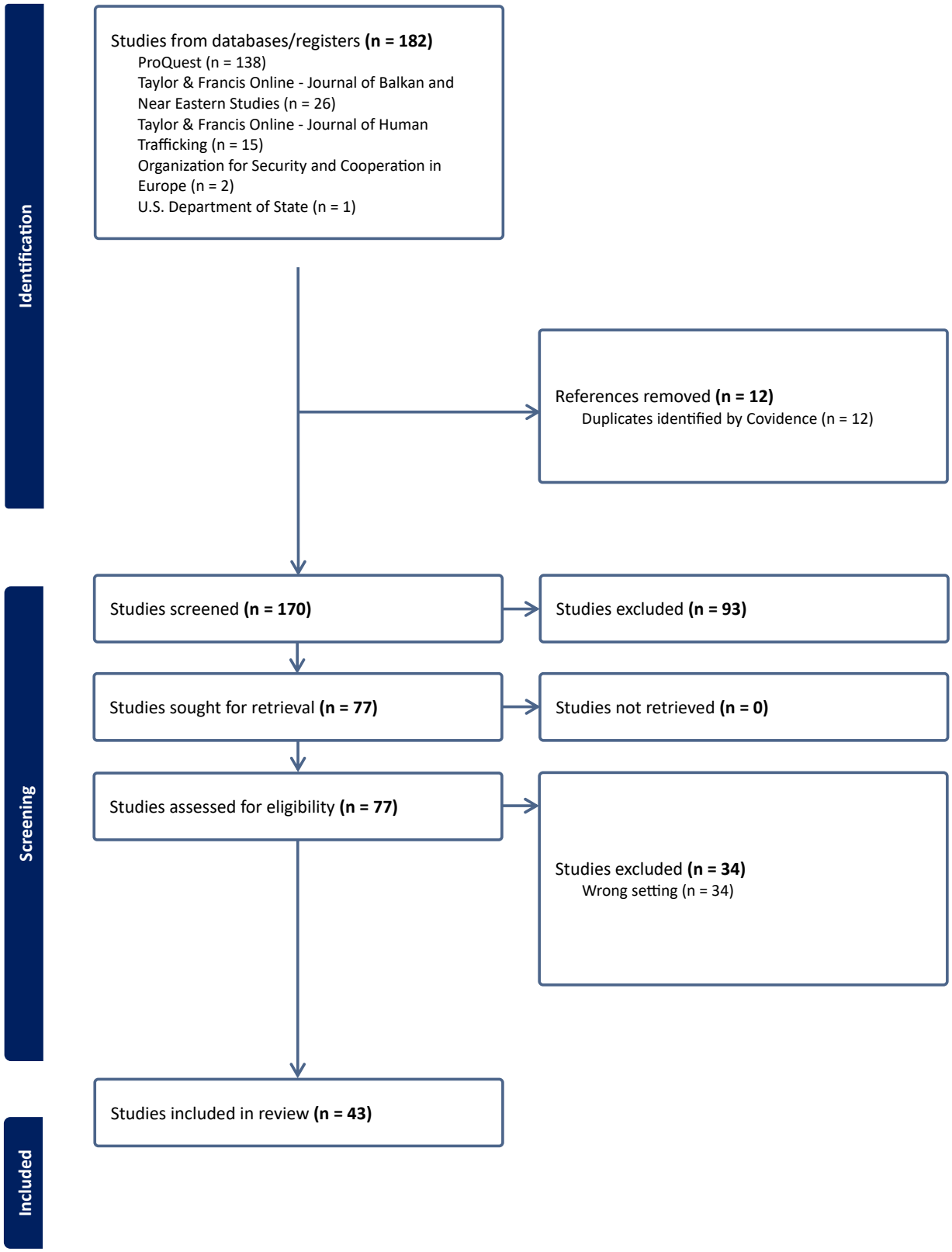

Figure 1. Relationships and patterns within the selected studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1

Topical domains related to human trafficking

Topical domains	Subtopics	Number of articles
State Attributes of Albania	Corruption; Government Control over public life; Migration; Reintegration; Socioeconomic challenges	5
Human Rights	Child Victims; Cross-Sectoral Policy Approach Missing; Evaluation; Evidence in Policymaking; Human Rights Interventions; Inclusive Perspective; International Community; Migration; Modern Slavery; Monitoring; Policies; Political Interest; Poverty; Roma Minority; Socioeconomic Challenges	4
Interventions	Awareness Campaigns; Bureaucratic Challenges; Capacity Building; Case Management; Challenges Accessing Healthcare; Challenges Accessing Support; Child Victims; Child-Specific Procedures; Confusion with Other Crimes; Corruption; Cross-Border Cooperation; Cross-Sectoral Approach; Educational Challenges; Empowering; Evaluation; Evidence in Policymaking; Family Rejection; Gender-Sensitive Assistance; Health; Identified Victims Of Human Trafficking – Worldwide; Labor Exploitation; Legal Proceedings Challenges; Limited Funding Of Social Services; Long-Term Assistance; Medical Aid; Monitoring; Needs-Based Assistance; Non-Discriminatory Treatment; Participatory Approaches; Political Interest; Poverty; Prevention by State; Procurement; Providing Smartphones to Survivors; Psychical Issues; Rehabilitation; Reintegration; Shelter; Socioeconomic Challenges; Training; Trauma-Informed Assistance; Underdevelopment; Victim-Centered Support	10
Refugee Crisis	Balkan Route; Crime; Historical Standpoint; Local Solidarity Initiatives; Media Discourse; Migration; NGOs; Policies; Restrictive Approach to Third World Nationals; Socioeconomic Challenges	5
Roma Minority	Challenges Accessing Healthcare; Educational Challenges; Housing; Employment; Exclusion; Media Discourse; Panic; Roma Minority	3
Social Work in Albania	Human Rights Interventions; Limited Funding; Modernization of Social Services; Policies; Social Inclusion; Social Mobilization; Social Participation; Social Work; Societal Safety Net; Underdevelopment	2
Human Trafficking Description	Awareness Campaigns; Biased Sex Trafficking; Challenges Accessing Healthcare; Challenges Accessing Support; Child Victims; Crime; Improving Access to Services, Care etc.; Diaspora; Domestic Violence; Educational Challenges; Employment; Forced Marriage; Health; Identified Victims of Human Trafficking – Worldwide; Identified Victims of Human Trafficking; Labor Exploitation; Legal Proceedings Challenges; Migration; Modern Slavery; NGOs; Policies; Political Interest; Poverty; Reintegration; Replacement Therapies; Roma Minority; Sex Trafficking; Shelter; Social Services – Limited Funding; Societal Safety Net; Socioeconomic Challenges; Training	11

The literature review encompassed various topical domains related to human trafficking. The following is a summary of the number of articles found in each domain and their corresponding subtopics as seen in Results Table 1:

• State Attributes of Albania (5 articles): This domain focused on corruption, government control over public life, migration, reintegration, and socioeconomic challenges in Albania.

• Human Rights (4 articles): The human rights domain covered subtopics such as child victims, cross-sectoral policy approach missing, evaluation, evidence in policymaking, human rights interventions, inclusive perspective, the international community, migration, modern slavery, monitoring, policies, political interest, poverty, Roma minority, and socioeconomic challenges.

• Interventions (10 articles): The interventions domain explored various subtopics, including awareness campaigns, bureaucratic challenges, capacity building, case management, challenges accessing healthcare and support, child victims, child-specific procedures, confusion with other crimes, corruption, cross-border cooperation, cross-sectoral approach, educational challenges, empowering, evaluation, evidence in policymaking, family rejection, gender-sensitive assistance, health, identified victims of human trafficking worldwide, labour exploitation, legal proceedings challenges, limited funding of social services, long-term assistance, medical aid, monitoring, needs-based assistance, non-discriminatory treatment, participatory approaches, political interest, poverty, prevention by the state, procurement, providing smartphones to survivors, psychical issues, rehabilitation, reintegration, shelter, socioeconomic challenges, training, trauma-informed assistance, underdevelopment, and victim-centred support.

• Refugee Crisis (5 articles): The refugee crisis domain addressed subtopics such as the Balkan Route, crime, historical standpoint, local solidarity initiatives, media discourse, migration, NGOs, policies, restrictive approaches to third-world nationals, and socioeconomic challenges.

• Roma Minority (3 articles): The Roma minority domain discussed challenges accessing healthcare, educational challenges, housing, employment, exclusion, media discourse, panic, and the Roma minority.

• Social Work in Albania (2 articles): This domain focused on human rights interventions, limited funding, modernization of social services, policies, social inclusion, social mobilization, social participation, societal safety net, and underdevelopment in the context of social work in Albania.

• Human Trafficking Description (11 articles): This domain covered subtopics including awareness campaigns, biased sex trafficking, challenges accessing healthcare and support, child victims, crime, improving access to services, care, diaspora, domestic violence, educational challenges, employment, forced marriage, health, identified victims of human trafficking worldwide, identified victims of human trafficking, labor exploitation, legal proceedings challenges, migration, modern slavery, NGOs, policies, political interest, poverty, reintegration, replacement therapies, Roma minority, sex trafficking, shelter, limited funding of social services, societal safety net, socioeconomic challenges, and training.

These results highlight the breadth and depth of the literature available on various aspects of human trafficking, providing valuable insights into the prevalence and scope of research in each topical domain.

Prevalence of Interventions in Human Trafficking Literature Reviews

This chapter examines the prevalence of various interventions within the studies used for the literature reviews on human trafficking. Examining the frequency of particular interventions allows us to understand the strategies used to tackle human trafficking and their significance in the field. In the upcoming segment, we will summarize the interventions and their corresponding frequencies denoted by «n=x.» Here, «x» signifies the number of times each intervention was referenced in the studies.

Interventions:

1. Awareness campaigns (n=3) were mentioned in three studies, highlighting their importance in raising public knowledge and understanding about human trafficking. Such movements are crucial in disseminating information, identifying potential victims, and encouraging community involvement in combating human trafficking.

2. Case management (n=1): Case management, mentioned in one study, involves a coordinated approach to assessing, planning, and implementing services for trafficking victims. This intervention ensures that victims receive comprehensive and tailored support, including medical care, legal aid, and psychosocial services.

3. Capacity building (n=1): Highlighted in a specific study, capacity building aims to enhance the knowledge, skills, and resources of individuals and organizations involved in combating human trafficking. By strengthening their capabilities, capacity building empowers stakeholders to effectively prevent, identify, and respond to trafficking cases.

4. Cross-border cooperation (n=1): Cross-border cooperation, highlighted in one study, emphasizes collaborative efforts between countries to combat human trafficking. This intervention recognizes the transnational nature of trafficking and promotes information sharing, joint investigations, and coordinated responses across borders.

5. Cross-sectoral approach (n=1): The cross-sectoral approach, mentioned in one study, underscores the importance of collaboration between multiple sectors, such as government agencies, law enforcement, social services, and NGOs. By integrating efforts and expertise from diverse sectors, this approach addresses the multifaceted aspects of human trafficking.

6. Empowering (n=1): Empowering interventions, as indicated in one study, focus on providing victims with the necessary tools, skills, and support to regain control over their lives. Through empowerment, survivors of human trafficking can develop self-sufficiency, assertiveness, and resilience.

7. Evaluation (n=3): As mentioned in three studies, evaluation involves systematically assessing interventions and programs to combat human trafficking. Stakeholders can make informed decisions for future improvements and resource allocations by evaluating their effectiveness, strengths, and weaknesses.

8. Using evidence in policymaking (n=2): The utilization of evidence in policymaking, highlighted in two studies, emphasizes the importance of incorporating research findings and empirical data into developing and implementing anti-trafficking policies. Evidence-based approaches enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions.

9. Gender-sensitive assistance (n=1): As mentioned in one study, gender-sensitive assistance recognizes women and girls' specific vulnerabilities and needs in trafficking situations. This intervention ensures that support services are tailored to address gender-specific issues and promote the rights and well-being of female victims.

10. Human rights interventions (n=2): Human rights interventions, identified in two studies, emphasize protecting and promoting the fundamental rights of trafficking victims. These interventions address the legal, ethical, and moral dimensions of trafficking, seeking to uphold the dignity and well-being of all individuals.

11. Child-specific procedures (n=1): Child-specific procedures, mentioned in one study, focus on developing protocols and guidelines tailored to the unique needs of child trafficking victims. These procedures aim to ensure

the provision of appropriate services, legal protection, and child-friendly support throughout the intervention process.

12. Improving access to services and care (n=1): This intervention, mentioned in one study, aims to eliminate barriers that hinder victims' access to essential services, such as healthcare, counselling, and legal support. Enhancing accessibility can support victims of human trafficking, enabling their recovery and successful reintegration into society.

13. Inclusive perspective (n=1): The inclusive perspective, identified in one study, emphasizes the importance of considering the diverse needs and experiences of marginalized groups affected by human trafficking. This intervention promotes inclusive and equitable approaches that address the specific challenges faced by different populations.

14. Providing smartphones to survivors (n=1): This intervention, mentioned in one study, involves equipping survivors of human trafficking with smartphones to enhance their access to support services, emergency assistance, and communication networks. Smartphones can provide survivors with a means to connect with resources and rebuild their lives.

15. Local solidarity initiatives (n=1): As mentioned in one study, local solidarity initiatives highlight the significance of community-based efforts in addressing human trafficking. These initiatives involve collaboration and cooperation among community members, local organizations, and authorities to prevent trafficking, protect victims, and raise awareness.

16. Long-term assistance (n=1): Long-term assistance, mentioned in one study, recognizes the need for sustained support for survivors beyond immediate crisis intervention. This intervention focuses on providing ongoing services and resources that help survivors rebuild their lives and reintegrate into society effectively.

17. Medical aid (n=1): Medical help, mentioned in one study, emphasizes the importance of providing comprehensive healthcare services to trafficking victims. This intervention includes medical examinations, physical and psychological trauma treatment, and access to specialized healthcare professionals.

18. Modernization of social services (n=2): The modernization of social services, identified in two studies, entails updating and enhancing existing support systems to address the needs of trafficking victims effectively. This intervention includes improvements in case management, counselling, and the coordination of services across various sectors.

19. Monitoring (n=3): As mentioned in three studies, monitoring interventions involve systematically tracking and assessing anti-trafficking efforts. This intervention ensures the effectiveness and accountability of interventions, identifies gaps, and facilitates evidence-based decision-making.

20. Needs-based assistance (n=1): Needs-based assistance, mentioned in one study, emphasizes tailoring support services to meet the individualized needs of trafficking victims. This intervention ensures that victims receive personalized and appropriate care, addressing their vulnerabilities and challenges.

21. Non-discriminatory treatment (n=1): Non-discriminatory treatment, mentioned in one study, underscores the importance of providing equitable and unbiased support to trafficking victims, regardless of ethnicity, nationality, gender, or other social characteristics.

22. Participatory approaches (n=2): Participatory approaches, identified in two studies, involve actively engaging victims, survivors, and communities in the design and implementation of anti-trafficking interventions. This all-encompassing approach guarantees that the thoughts and viewpoints of those affected are considered and integrated into decision-making processes.

23. Prevention by state (n=1): This intervention, mentioned in one study, focuses on proactive measures taken by governments to prevent human trafficking through legislation, policies, and enforcement efforts. The state's prevention efforts aim to decrease trafficking incidents by addressing the underlying causes and risk factors.

24. Procurement (n=1): Procurement interventions mentioned in one study pertain to the efforts to address the involvement of procurement practices in human trafficking, including combating illegal supply chains and promoting responsible sourcing to prevent exploitative situations.

25. Rehabilitation (n=9): Across nine studies, rehabilitation interventions cover a spectrum of services and support offered to trafficking victims to assist in their recovery and reintegration. Rehabilitation interventions can include physical and mental health care, counselling, vocational training, education, and other forms of support to address the long-term effects of trafficking.

26. Replacement therapies (n=1): Replacement therapies, mentioned in one study, refer to alternative or substitute treatments to assist individuals involved in drug or substance abuse due to their trafficking experiences. These therapies aim to support victims in overcoming addiction and achieving recovery.

27. Shelter (n=3): The interventions mentioned in three studies involve providing safe and secure accommodations for trafficking victims. Shelters offer temporary housing, necessities, and a supportive environment where victims receive comprehensive care and assistance.

28. Social inclusion (n=1): Social inclusion interventions, mentioned in one study, focus on integrating trafficking victims into society by addressing social barriers and promoting their participation in community life, including efforts to combat stigma, discrimination, and social isolation.

29. Social mobilization (n=1): Social mobilization interventions, mentioned in one study, involve engaging communities and raising public awareness about human trafficking. Through collective action and community involvement, social mobilization efforts aim to prevent trafficking, support victims, and create a support network.

30. Social participation (n=1): Social participation interventions, mentioned in one study, emphasize the active involvement of trafficking survivors in decision-making processes and initiatives related to combating human trafficking, ensuring that their voices are heard and that their perspectives inform anti-trafficking efforts.

31. Societal safety net (n=2): The societal safety net, identified in two studies, refers to comprehensive social support systems that assist individuals vulnerable to trafficking, such as at-risk populations and marginalized groups. This safety net aims to prevent exploitation and address the underlying factors contributing to trafficking.

32. Training (n=2): Training interventions, mentioned in two studies, involve equipping various stakeholders, including law enforcement officials, service providers, and community members, with the knowledge and skills to effectively prevent, identify, and respond to human trafficking cases.

33. Trauma-informed assistance (n=1): As mentioned in one study, trauma-informed assistance recognizes the impact of trauma on trafficking victims and ensures that support services are provided sensitively. This approach considers survivors' psychological and emotional well-being throughout their recovery process.

34. Victim-centred support (n=2): Victim-centred support interventions, identified in two studies, prioritize the needs, preferences, and rights of trafficking victims throughout their journey of recovery and reintegration. By adopting this approach, interventions are customized to individual circumstances, empowering victims in their healing process.

The prevalence of interventions in the literature reviews reflects the multifaceted nature of addressing human trafficking. These interventions encompass various strategies, from awareness campaigns and case management to rehabilitation and social inclusion. By understanding the prevalence of these interventions, policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders can develop comprehensive and evidence-based approaches to combat human trafficking effectively.

Prevalence of Barriers in Human Trafficking Studies in Albania

This chapter explores the prevalence of various barriers identified in the literature reviews on human trafficking in Albania. These barriers represent challenges and obstacles that impede efforts to prevent trafficking, protect victims, and prosecute offenders. Recognizing the extent of these obstacles is essential for formulating precise interventions and policy responses to tackle the intricate issue of human trafficking in Albania.

1. Bureaucratic challenges (n=1): Bureaucratic challenges, mentioned in one study, refer to administrative hurdles and red tape that hinder the effective implementation of anti-trafficking measures. These challenges can include delays in legal processes, cumbersome procedures, and limited interagency coordination.

2. Confusion with other crimes (n=1): Confusion with other crimes, identified in one study, highlights the difficulty in distinguishing human trafficking from other related offenses. The lack of clarity and awareness among law enforcement and judicial authorities may lead to misclassification or inadequate responses to trafficking cases.

3. Corruption (n=4): Corruption, mentioned in four studies, represents a significant barrier to combating human trafficking and includes instances of bribery, collusion, or complicity among public officials, law enforcement personnel, or individuals in positions of power, which can undermine anti-trafficking efforts and facilitate the operations of traffickers.

4. Crime (n=2): Crime, identified in two studies, encompasses various criminal activities associated with human trafficking, such as organized crime networks, money laundering, and illicit networks involved in the recruitment, transportation, and exploitation of victims.

5. Cross-sectoral policy approach missing (n=1): The absence of a cross-sectoral policy approach mentioned in one study indicates a lack of comprehensive and coordinated strategies across different sectors and stakeholders. This gap can hinder effective collaboration and the development of holistic anti-trafficking responses.

6. Diaspora (n=1): The diaspora, mentioned in one study, refers to the Albanian diaspora living abroad and includes challenges related to the vulnerability of individuals within the diaspora to trafficking and difficulties in providing support and assistance to victims trafficked to or from diaspora communities.

7. Domestic violence (n=1): Domestic violence, identified in one study, highlights the link between

intimate partner violence and human trafficking. Individuals experiencing domestic violence may face an elevated risk of exploitation and trafficking, and the interconnections between these issues pose distinctive challenges for intervention and support.

8. Educational challenges (n=3): Educational challenges, mentioned in three studies, encompass barriers related to access to education, educational opportunities, and educational support for individuals vulnerable to or affected by trafficking. These challenges may arise due to socioeconomic factors, discrimination, or disruption of education caused by trafficking experiences.

9. Employment (n=3): Employment-related challenges identified in three studies on labour exploitation, precarious work conditions, lack of decent work opportunities, and vulnerability to exploitation in various sectors. These challenges contribute to the risk of trafficking and hinder efforts to address exploitation in the labour market.

10. Exclusion (n=2): Exclusion, mentioned in two studies, refers to the marginalization and social exclusion faced by specific groups or communities, which can increase their vulnerability to trafficking. This barrier is fuelled by discrimination, restricted access to resources and opportunities, and social stigmatization.

11. Family rejection (n=1): Family rejection, identified in one study, highlights the challenges faced by trafficking victims when their families refuse to provide support or accept them back into their homes. This barrier can further exacerbate survivors' vulnerability and difficulties during their recovery and reintegration process.

12. Forced marriage (n=2): Forced marriage, mentioned in two studies, refers to individuals being coerced or compelled into marriages without informed consent. Victims of forced marriage may experience various forms of exploitation and abuse, including trafficking. Addressing this barrier requires targeted interventions to protect at-risk individuals and support survivors.

13. Government control over public life (n=1): Government control over public life, identified in one study, signifies the presence of restrictions, censorship, or limitations on civil liberties and freedom of expression. Such power can hinder efforts to raise awareness, advocate for anti-trafficking measures, and engage in critical dialogue to address the issue effectively.

14. Housing (n=1): Housing-related challenges, mentioned in one study, encompass difficulties in accessing safe and adequate housing for victims of trafficking. The lack of secure housing options may leave survivors at risk of re-exploitation, homelessness, or revictimization.

15. Challenges accessing healthcare (n=4): Challenges accessing healthcare, mentioned in four studies, highlight the barriers that trafficking victims face when seeking medical assistance. These barriers include limited healthcare services, lack of awareness among healthcare professionals, language barriers, and fear of detection or retaliation.

16. Challenges accessing support (n=3): Challenges accessing support refer to the difficulties that trafficking victims encounter in accessing comprehensive and tailored support services. These challenges may include limited availability of specialized help, the need for more awareness about available services, and fear of retribution or disclosure.

17. Labor exploitation (n=5): Labor exploitation, mentioned in five studies, represents the prevalence of forced labour, debt bondage, and exploitative working conditions in various industries. Victims of labour exploitation face significant barriers in seeking redress, accessing justice, and breaking free from exploitative situations.

18. Legal proceedings challenges (n=4): Legal proceedings challenges encompass the obstacles faced by trafficking victims during legal processes. These challenges include a lack of legal representation, lengthy court procedures, limited victim support within the justice system, and fear of retribution or retaliation.

19. Panic (n=2): Panic, identified in two studies, refers to public or societal reactions characterized by fear, anxiety, and sensationalism when discussing or addressing the issue of human trafficking. This panic can lead to misconceptions, misinformation, and ineffective responses that hinder efforts to combat trafficking and support survivors.

20. Political interest (n=2): Political interest, mentioned in two studies, refers to the level of attention, commitment, and prioritization given to human trafficking by political actors and decision-makers. The presence or absence of political interest can significantly impact resource allocation, policy development, and implementation of anti-trafficking measures.

21. Poverty (n=4): As mentioned in four studies, poverty represents the socioeconomic condition that increases individuals' vulnerability to trafficking. The link between poverty and trafficking highlights the importance of addressing underlying economic inequalities and providing alternative livelihood opportunities to prevent exploitation.

22. Psychical issues (n=4): Psychical issues, identified in four studies, encompass the psychological and emotional consequences experienced by trafficking

victims. Trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and other mental health challenges fall under these issues, requiring specialized support and interventions.

23. Sex trafficking (n=3): Sex trafficking, mentioned in three studies, refers to the exploitation of individuals through forced prostitution, sexual slavery, or other forms of sexual exploitation. The prevalence of sex trafficking underscores the need for targeted interventions to address victims' specific vulnerabilities and needs in the context of commercial sexual exploitation.

24. Social services – limited funding (n=6): Limitations for social services, identified in six studies, highlight the financial constraints and resource gaps in providing comprehensive support services to trafficking victims. There needs to be more funding to ensure the availability and quality of services such as shelter, healthcare, counselling, legal assistance, and vocational support, thereby hindering survivors' adequate support and recovery.

25. Socioeconomic challenges (n=8): As mentioned in eight studies, they encompass a range of barriers arising from economic and social factors. These challenges include limited access to education, unemployment, poverty, discrimination, social exclusion, and unequal opportunities, all of which contribute to the vulnerability of individuals to trafficking and hinder efforts for prevention and support.

26. Underdevelopment (n=2): Underdevelopment, identified in two studies, refers to inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and economic disparities in specific regions or communities. Underdevelopment can create an environment conducive to trafficking by exacerbating vulnerabilities and reducing opportunities for social and economic advancement.

The prevalence of various barriers identified in the literature reviews the complexity of addressing human trafficking in Albania. Bureaucratic challenges, corruption, limited access to healthcare and support services, socioeconomic inequalities, and gaps in the legal system are significant obstacles to effective prevention, victim protection, and prosecution of traffickers. Understanding the prevalence of these barriers is crucial for formulating targeted strategies and interventions to address the underlying causes, enhance coordination among stakeholders, and provide comprehensive support to survivors. Efforts to combat human trafficking in Albania must address these barriers systematically and collaboratively to create a safer and more resilient society for all.

CONCLUSIONS

As we conclude this report, it becomes evident that human trafficking is an intricate and diverse problem demanding a thorough and cooperative approach in response. This literature review has identified various barriers that hinder the effective prevention, victim protection, and prosecution of traffickers in Albania. These barriers include bureaucratic challenges, corruption, limited access to healthcare and support services, socioeconomic inequalities, and gaps in the legal system. Bureaucratic challenges are significant obstacles to effective prevention, victim protection, and prosecution of traffickers. The lack of coordination among different government agencies often delays investigations and prosecutions. Corruption is another significant barrier that undermines efforts to combat human trafficking. It can take on diverse forms, spanning from bribes extended to officials to overlook trafficking activities to the exploitation of victims by law enforcement officers. Limited access to healthcare and support services is another significant barrier that hinders efforts to combat human trafficking. Exploitation frequently results in victims experiencing both physical injuries and mental health challenges. However, they may not receive adequate medical care or counselling due to financial constraints or lack of availability. Socioeconomic inequalities also contribute significantly to the prevalence of human trafficking in Albania. Poverty and unemployment make individuals more vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers who promise them better opportunities abroad.

Moreover, deficiencies in the legal system pose challenges for law enforcement agencies in conducting effective investigations and prosecutions against traffickers. Targeted strategies and interventions must be formulated to address these barriers systematically and collaboratively. Recognizing how prevalent these barriers are is crucial for crafting specific interventions and policy responses to tackle the intricate issue of human trafficking in Albania. Efforts must be made towards enhancing stakeholder coordination while providing comprehensive support for survivors. In this endeavour, social workers can play a vital role by implementing transformative interventions that empower survivors to reconstruct their lives and prevent future victimization. Such interventions encompass counselling services for survivors and training and education programs to equip them with new skills and facilitate employment. In the face of the obstacles presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Albanian government has demonstrated a growing dedication to combating human trafficking. However, much work must be done to meet the minimum standards required to eliminate trafficking. A safer and more resilient society can be created by addressing these barriers collaboratively and comprehensively.

Perspectives of further studies

- Primary research: While our literature review provides valuable insights into the issue of human

trafficking in Albania, there is a need for more primary research to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the issue. Future studies should consider conducting interviews with stakeholders involved in combating human trafficking in Albania, including law enforcement officials, social workers, and survivors.

• Longitudinal studies: Human trafficking is a complex and evolving issue that requires ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Subsequent research endeavour's should contemplate the implementation of longitudinal studies to monitor shifts in the prevalence of human trafficking over time and assess the effectiveness of interventions.

• Comparative studies: Although our literature review centres on human trafficking in Albania, comparative studies with other countries or regions can offer valuable insights into the similarities and differences in prevalence rates, barriers, and interventions.

• Intersectionality: Human trafficking affects individuals from diverse backgrounds and intersects with other forms of oppression, such as gender-based violence, racism, and poverty. Subsequent research endeavours should delve into the intersectionality of these issues to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of how they contribute to the prevalence of human trafficking.

• Innovative interventions: Future research should explore interventions that address the complex issues underlying human trafficking in Albania. These interventions may include community-based approaches that empower survivors and prevent future victimization or technology-based solutions that enhance stakeholder coordination. By focusing on these areas, future research can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of human trafficking in Albania while identifying targeted interventions that can significantly impact this complex issue.

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COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL REQUIREMENTS

All personal information gathered during this study was processed in compliance with the European Parliament and Council's Regulation EU 2016/679 of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons concerning the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (General Data Protection Regulation, GDPR). The research was conducted as part of the GAJU 101/2022/S project, approved by the Ethics Committee No. 008/2022. The study used the basic bioethical norms of the Helsinki Declaration of the World Medical Association on Ethical Principles (amended in 2008), the General Declaration on Bioethics Convention on the Rights of Man, and Biomedicine (1997).

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Резюме

РОЗКРИТТЯ ТАЄМНИЦЬ: ВИСВІТЛЕННЯ БАР'ЄРІВ ТА ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЙНИХ ВТРУЧАНЬ У СФЕРІ ТОРГІВЛІ ЛЮДЬМИ ДЛЯ РОЗВИТКУ СОЦІАЛЬНОЇ РОБОТИ В АЛБАНІЇ. ОГЛЯД ЛІТЕРАТУРИ

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Вступ. Торгівля людьми є багатогранною і широко розповсюдженою проблемою, яка зачіпає людей різних демографічних груп і перетинається з іншими формами гноблення. У цьому огляді літератури розглядається поширеність торгівлі людьми в Албанії та бар'єри, які перешкоджають зусиллям із запобігання торгівлі людьми, захисту її жертв і переслідуванню злочинців. В огляді також висвітлюються заходи, які можуть усунути основні причини цієї проблеми.

Мета. Це дослідження має на меті надати комплексний огляд існуючих інтервенцій та викликів у боротьбі з торгівлею людьми в Албанії. Шляхом аналізу академічних досліджень, звітів та політичних документів, дослідження оцінює ефективність та обмеження поточних стратегій, визначає ключові бар'єри, з якими стикаються зацікавлені сторони, такі як правоохоронні органи, неурядові організації (НУО) та служби підтримки жертв, а також висвітлює прогалини та напрямки для майбутніх досліджень. Це дослідження було проведено в рамках проєкту GAJU 101/2022/S та схвалено етичним комітетом під номером 008/2022.

Матеріали та методи. Систематичний огляд літератури був проведений з використанням декількох баз даних, включаючи ProQuest і Taylor & Francis Online, доповнених офіційними звітами таких організацій, як Організація з безпеки і співробітництва в Європі та Державний департамент США. Спочатку було знайдено 182 дослідження, з яких 43 були включені в огляд після реферативного скринінгу та оцінки відповідності критеріям включення. Для скринінгу даних було використано програмне забезпечення Covidence, а Atlas. ti полегшило аналіз повторюваності та кодових документів для вивчення закономірностей в літературі. Дослідження були класифіковані за такими темами, як державні атрибути Албанії, права людини, інтервенції, криза біженців, проблеми ромської меншини та розвиток соціальної роботи в Албанії.

Результати. Огляд виявив кілька постійних проблем у боротьбі з торгівлею людьми в Албанії. До них відносяться бюрократичні затримки, корупція, обмежений доступ до послуг охорони здоров'я та підтримки, бідність і соціально-економічна нерівність. Ключові заходи, такі як інформаційні кампанії, реабілітаційні послуги, транскордонне співробітництво та допомога з урахуванням гендерних аспектів, розглядаються в літературі з різною мірою ефективності. Однак поширеність трудової експлуатації, правові проблеми та недостатнє фінансування соціальних послуг залишаються критично важливими перешкодами. Крім того, ромська меншина та біженці стикаються з особливою вразливістю, що посилює їхні ризики стати жертвами торгівлі людьми. Аналіз також підкреслив необхідність модернізації соціальних послуг, покращення координації між зацікавленими сторонами та включення до стратегій протидії торгівлі людьми політики, заснованої на фактичних даних.

Висновки: Торгівля людьми в Албанії залишається багатовимірною проблемою, яка потребує скоординованої та комплексної відповіді. Дослідження виявило значні бар'єри, такі як корупція, неефективність правової системи та неадекватність послуг з підтримки постраждалих, які перешкоджають ефективності зусиль з протидії торгівлі людьми. Подолання цих бар'єрів шляхом систематичної співпраці та цілеспрямованих втручань має важливе значення для розробки більш ефективних стратегій запобігання, захисту та переслідування. Подальші первинні та лонгітюдні дослідження, а також порівняльні та перехресні дослідження рекомендуються для поглиблення розуміння та підвищення ефективності майбутніх втручань.

Ключові слова: **соціальна робота, Албанія, торгівля людьми, інтервенції, бар'єри**

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