Child Marriage as a Form of Sexual Exploitation in Western Balkans: The Case of Albania

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Abstract

The main purpose of this paper is to shed light on the issue of child marriage as one of the most vulnerable groups in Albania. Therefore, this study aims to examine and analyze the vulnerability of child marriage in Western Balkans, with specific reference to Albania; to provide a clarification on conceptual aspects of child marriage based on international and national legal frameworks related to the issue; and to identify some of the most prevalent forms of child marriage in Albania. Additionally, the study will be examining the public policy dimension of child marriage by pointing out the disparities that exist in the public institutions and legal framework. One last point of the study is to evaluate the gaps between the recorded and existing cases of child marriage using various sources of reporting.

To examine the said phenomenon, this paper further poses these research questions: Why is there a big gap between the actual child marriage cases and reported ones? Why are there disparities in handling child marriage issues in Albania? How do economic inequalities develop the said phenomenon?

In order to answer these research questions, this study has employed an elite survey questionnaire conducted with 452 individual elite respondents from central government, local government, NGOs, judiciary, academia, and the media. This study has combined the quantitative and qualitative research approaches through data and statistics published by various stakeholders.

The study concludes that there is a need to reinforce the existing legal framework and the responsible public institutions should be improved, in cooperation with relevant national and international organizations and collaboration with the private sector and civil society as well as all other stakeholders in order to create appropriate policies and programs and implement efficiently.

Keywords: Child Marriage, Western Balkans, Legal Framework, Institutions