

COMBATING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: DEVELOPING LEGISLATIVE AND SOCIO-ORGANIZATIONAL MEASURES TO PROTECT WOMEN IN KAZAKHSTAN

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Abstract

Domestic violence remains a widely prevalent issue worldwide. International organizations recognize the necessity of improving the legislative framework to prevent domestic violence and protect victims. However, the application of only legislative measures will not change the situation in countries where domestic violence against women is common, based on the patriarchal understanding of women's role in society. This article explores the possibility of applying measures to combat domestic violence at the current stage of Kazakhstan's development. Special attention is given to evaluating the effectiveness of these measures. The purpose of the article is to assess the possibility of using legislative, organizational, educational, informational, and technological measures to combat domestic violence from the perspective of their applicability in Kazakhstan. This study proposes measures to improve the legal system, including legislative and socio-organizational measures, to prevent domestic violence and support victims.

Keywords: *Kazakhstan, domestic violence, legal regulation, family and domestic relationships, criminalization.*

1. Introduction

1.1. Problem of the research

A study by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime revealed that in 2018, 137 women were killed every day as a result of violent acts by members of their own families (Melnyk et al., 2023). While murder represents the most extreme form of violence and can be objectively quantified statistically, other forms of domestic violence, such as physical, psychological, reproductive, economic, and sexual violence by intimate partners and family members, are often difficult to evaluate with statistical methods without raising questions about the objectivity of the information obtained (Gavrillov et al., 2022).

For example, in 2024, statistical data from the European Union indicate that 50% of women in the EU have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from a partner (intimate partner, relative, or family member) and incidents of sexual harassment (Global Study on Homicide, 2018). Additionally, 44% of women are subjected to psychological violence within the family, and at least two women die daily at the hands of an intimate partner or family member (Baumeister, 2023; Abdimaulen et al., 2022; Rakhimberdin, 2021). The study of domestic violence in various countries shows that it can threaten the life and health of an individual or cause psychological trauma, which can negatively affect the family life of the victim (Afanasyev, 2018; Komissarova et al., 2021).

At the Fourth UN World Conference on Women (Beijing, September 1995), domestic violence was recognized as an epidemic in most countries, i.e., a problem requiring immediate attention at the government level (Volosova, 2020). The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women emphasizes the gender aspect: domestic violence against women is understood as an act of violence committed based on gender that causes or may cause physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, as well as threats to commit such acts and coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty that occurs in the family or personal life (Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women No. 48/104, 1993). In recent decades, the fight against legal impunity for domestic violence has intensified (Togaibayeva et al. 2021; Buchakova et al. 2021).

Domestic violence disproportionately affects women, though men also become its victims. Severe consequences of domestic violence impact the personality of a child who has become a witness or a victim (Raikova et al. 2022; Avila-Navarrete & Correa-Lopez, 2021; Musofiana et al. 2023). This is why countries that have signed the Convention strive to make Europe free from domestic violence.

To understand the highlighted differences at the national level, the focus of our research is directed toward exploring possibilities to reduce the level of domestic violence against women in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Within the scope of our research, based on previously proposed classifications, we understand that violent illegal actions or the threat of committing illegal actions are carried out intentionally. The victim is a woman who has or had a close relationship with the offender, whether it is family or de

facto marital relationships, regardless of whether the offender lived with the victim. It is important to note that marriage in Islam is concluded after the "nikah" ceremony. However, in Kazakhstan, it does not have a legal force and can only be officially registered by special government bodies afterward. However, in practice, couples only perform the "nikah" ceremony, which reduces the level of legal protection for women. Nevertheless, to document an instance of domestic violence, testimony from witnesses, neighbors, recordings from surveillance cameras, and dash cams is sufficient. The final decision is made by the court. Domestic violence can be physical (bodily injuries such as bruises, fractures, or bites, including the most extreme form – murder), psychological (shame, fear, or lowered self-esteem, which can lead to the victim's suicide), economic (material damage, including the seizure of jointly owned property), or sexual (forcing a woman into sexual contact).

The goal of this study is to determine the feasibility of using legislative, organizational, educational, informational, and technological measures to combat domestic violence against women in Kazakhstan.

1.2. Methods of prevention and combating domestic violence

According to scholars (Rakhmetov, 2020), the current legal regulation of domestic violence is characterized by several problems, including the high latency of domestic violence (Abdramanova & Alaukhanov, 2020), insufficient competence of the entities involved in countering domestic violence (Akimzhanov, 2022), the safety of women applicants, victims, and witnesses of domestic violence (Bortnyk et al., 2023, Sarpekov & Fink, 2020; Ryssaldiyeva et al. 2019), and the lack of measures to prevent domestic violence (Rostovskaya et al. 2018; Saparaliev et al. 2019; Syzdykov & Sagymbekov, 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to develop a legal framework.

In our research, we understand the legal basis for preventing and combating domestic violence as a system of legal norms that includes legal, organizational, administrative, preventive, and other measures taken by international institutions, government bodies, and non-governmental organizations aimed at preventing and combating any violence within the family. Overcoming violence against women is possible not only through criminal procedural mechanisms but also through comprehensive policy, which should consist of five main elements.

1.2.1. Legislative activity

In our view, legislative activity plays the most important role in combating domestic violence by providing a basis for compliance through special instruments, such as legislative acts and laws that have legal force. Through these instruments, legislation also prescribes measures that act as deterrents and create mechanisms for victim protection.

Several international organizations support the global fight against domestic violence, working to strengthen peace, security, and cooperation between countries. For example, relying on the fundamental role of legislative activity in combating domestic violence, the UN significantly enhances the

impact of legal instruments, providing a basis for highlighting issues and guiding the activities of national systems in individual countries. UN initiatives to combat domestic violence include a variety of international legal instruments, such as conventions and declarations, which countries can use to strengthen their national legal systems. One of the latest such instruments is the Spotlight Initiative (n.d.), aimed at eradicating all forms of violence against women and girls.

Although international efforts provide valuable recommendations and a broader perspective on combating domestic violence, the implementation of these principles must be adapted to national conditions. In our view, effective legislative measures against domestic violence require a balance between compliance with international human rights standards and adaptation to the national context (Arrieta-López, 2021).

1.2.2. Organizational activity

Effective coordination among interagency organizations ensures that a robust legal framework developed to combat domestic violence is implemented and that victims receive the necessary support. This means creating formalized communication channels and protocols between the police, social services, and legal institutions to ensure a seamless response to instances of domestic violence.

Law enforcement agencies can ensure the most rapid review of reports of domestic violence and the prosecution of offenders. Social services, including counseling, shelter, and financial aid, should offer and provide ongoing support to victims. Legal services can ensure that victims have access to legal consultations and representations, especially in enforcing restraint orders and other legal protection measures.

Another important aspect is simplifying the procedure for filing a domestic violence report. Therefore, the process of establishing violence should be simple, confidential, and accessible. This can be achieved in several ways:

a) Special hotlines, call centers, and online communities should be created. These platforms must guarantee anonymity to protect victims. Additionally, these channels should not only be confidential but also organize legal consultation and help victims connect with local organizations that assist in such situations.

b) Public women's centers. It is necessary to organize such centers and shelters that can offer a safe place for victims of domestic violence, where they can receive medical assistance and counseling and file a report to establish the presence of violence.

These tools not only provide immediate assistance and advice but also ensure the safety and anonymity of the victims and encourage them to take the first step toward help.

1.2.3. Public and information activity

Media outlets and social networks play a determinant role in disseminating information and facilitating public discussions (Baskynbayeva et al., 2024). The coverage of domestic violence cases in the media, supported by NGOs and women's rights organizations, as well as by educated members of society, generates significant public resonance and influences the functioning of law enforcement and legislative bodies. The important components of effective information dissemination and public engagement in domestic violence issues include the following:

a) Court proceedings coverage: By providing detailed reports on court cases, the media highlights issues within the controlling bodies responsible for upholding the law, which can start public outcry and calls for legislative reforms.

b) Victim stories: Stories of individuals who have experienced violence increase societal awareness, helping to underscore the problem of domestic violence and its effects on individuals and the system. Highlighting such problems in the media can encourage others in similar situations to seek help.

c) Media and social networks collaborating with NGOs: Collaboration between media platforms and social networks with NGOs is essential. With the help of NGOs, legislative changes can be initiated through petitions, public events, or meetings with regulatory bodies.

Additionally, tools such as hashtags, live streams, and interactive posts can facilitate information access for interested parties, share resources with uninformed parties, and connect victims and those in need with support services.

1.2.4. Educational activity

Educational activities encompass various approaches aimed at preventing and mitigating domestic violence. From our perspective, initiatives should include the following:

a) Systematic approach in educational institutions: Integrating specialized training programs and courses for students into the education system can help them acquire knowledge and skills that will not only enable them to recognize signs of abuse and prevent domestic violence situations but also provide support to those in difficult circumstances. It is also important for these programs to involve experts in psychology, law enforcement, and social work who assist and protect victims.

b) Training for staff of assistance centers, hotlines, and shelters: Raising awareness and improving the skills of personnel in these centers is crucial for providing appropriate support to victims. Staff members need to develop communication skills that help create a safe environment for victims. This builds a foundation of trust and expands opportunities for assistance, allowing victims to share their experiences, which helps them access the necessary support.

c) Mandatory training programs for perpetrators: It is also necessary to organize programs aimed at mandatory training for aggressors. These programs, often mandated by court orders or as part of rehabilitation processes, primarily include psychological sessions, anger management programs, and empathy development exercises and help combat unwanted beliefs and behaviors of the aggressor.

1.2.5. Technological activity

Currently, the active development of digital technologies provides more opportunities for enhancing protection and providing assistance to victims of violence. By developing convenient mobile applications and online portals, victims can easily access information, resources, and support services at any time, regardless of their location.

Mobile applications and automatic notification systems. Such tools can help victims discretely seek assistance and report instances of violence using mobile devices. Applications can include panic buttons that instantly send notifications to law enforcement or designated contacts, ensuring a quick response in emergencies. It is also necessary to implement features that notify emergency assistance services of the victim's location.

External protection devices, such as antireflection bracelets, are comprehensive means of protecting victims. In Europe, special measures assigned by courts to counter violence are widely used (Polovchenko, 2022). The experience of using GPS bracelets, which help the police receive a signal that the perpetrator of violence is near the victim, is positive.

Although such initiatives are welcomed, their production and implementation require significant initial costs. However, as they develop, they can become more financially accessible. Savings through their dissemination and improvement of production processes can lead to cost reduction.

1.3. Development of legislation to combat domestic violence in Kazakhstan

In 1998, the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan came into force (which has since lapsed), which contains articles on battery and infliction of minor bodily harm. From 1997 to 2004, both articles constituted criminal offenses.

This was facilitated by a set of factors that stimulated society to combat violence:

1) The crisis of restructuring social relationships in the 1990s and the increase in crime based on family relationships;

2) the ratification of key international standards (the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women);

3) the expansion of information connections in the globalized world (between scholars, law enforcement officials, and social workers);

4) The work of human rights non-governmental organizations, primarily in the gender field (Volosova et al. 2022; Bondar et al. 2022).

In 2004, battery was decriminalized. In the Administrative Code, a section on offenses related to domestic violence, including battery, was introduced, which reduced the penalty from the possibility of arrest for up to 6 months to arrest for up to 15 days. On December 4, 2009, Law No. 214-4 "On the Prevention of Domestic Violence" was adopted. The law identified types of domestic violence and outlined the responsibilities of government agencies for the prevention of domestic violence. It defines domestic violence as "an intentional unlawful act (action or inaction) of one person in family and domestic relationships in relation to another (others), causing or containing a threat of causing physical and/or mental suffering".

The adoption of this law was a huge step forward for Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan became the first CIS country where such a law was adopted. For the first time, there was a tool called a "protective order" for more effective protection of victims of domestic violence. However, the proposed measures did not prevent violence but rather reacted to what had already occurred. *"On paper, it seems to comply with international standards, but in practice, it is ineffective"* (Galeeva, 2022).

In 2011, the article "Intentional Infliction of Light Bodily Harm" was decriminalized in the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Instead, the Administrative Code included the article "Infliction of Bodily Harm". This led to the cancellation of punishments in the form of community service, and the term of arrest was reduced from 3 months to 45 days. However, in 2015, new criminal and administrative codes were adopted, which are currently in force. Criminal liability for domestic violence was reinstated, and articles for battery and infliction of light bodily harm were once again present in the Criminal Code.

However, in 2017, domestic violence was decriminalized in Kazakhstan. Since then, battery and minor damage to health, such as bruises, injuries, and broken limbs, have become administrative offenses in accordance with Article 73-1 and Article 73-2.

Researchers continued to draw attention to the fact that the issue of domestic violence in Kazakhstan was not only unresolved but also potentially worsening, which had a negative impact on the protection of the rights of women and girls. In September 2022, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev called for a tougher response to domestic violence in his address to the people of Kazakhstan. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan proposed increasing the period of administrative arrest, removing the possibility of reconciliation after a repeated violation, introducing a new punishment for troublemakers, and changing the nature of violations from declarative to detecting.

In November 2023, residents of Kazakhstan once again began actively drawing the authorities' attention to the issue of domestic violence in the country following the murder of Saltanat Nukenova. On November 9, 2023, at the Bau restaurant in Astana, former Minister of the National Economy of Kazakhstan, Kuandyk Bishimbayev, beat his common-law wife to death. Currently, in Kazakhstan, there is a legal proceeding regarding the case of

intentional murder and torture, with the ex-Minister facing a prison sentence of 15 to 20 years. Now extreme cruelty of the crime is proven, Bishimbayev will face 24 years of sentence.

Given the situation and the attention of society, the judicial process was made as open as possible to the media and citizens, which led to urgent changes in legislation. In April 2024, President Tokayev signed a law on ensuring the rights of women and the safety of children. The signed law provides for amendments to the Administrative Code and the Criminal Code of the country. It introduces provisions that strengthen accountability for any manifestations of violence against women and children and are aimed at strengthening the institution of the family and the safety of minors, including the following:

a) Criminalization of the battery and intentional infliction of light bodily harm, introducing criminal liability for these offenses, and classifying them as crimes under public prosecution;

b) Toughen punishment and exclude the possibility of reconciliation between parties for crimes related to physical violence and cruelty toward minors;

c) The importance of life imprisonment for murder, rape, and sexual violence against minors;

d) Criminalization of sexual harassment toward individuals under the age of 16 introducing a new article into the Criminal Code;

e) The introduction of criminal liability for incitement and assistance in suicide, as well as for promoting suicide;

f) Toughen punishment for kidnapping and unlawful deprivation of liberty of minors;

g) The introduction of administrative responsibility for bullying and cyberbullying among minors;

h) The establishment of a family contact center for the protection of the rights of women and children operated by a legal entity determined by the authorized body in the field of informatization. The establishment of family support centers to provide specialized social services to victims of domestic violence.

A detailed exposition of the chronology of changes in accountability for punishment aimed at reducing the level of domestic violence in the country allows for a better understanding of the specificity of the problem, which requires a solution. However, simple solutions, such as introducing a separate norm, do not have a significant impact on the situation. Over the past 25 years in Kazakhstan, attention has been given to combating domestic violence by both governmental and non-governmental human rights organizations. However, the motives behind legislative changes were not sufficiently illuminated in the public sphere and were often not subject to public discussion. The policy of decriminalization, followed by the tightening of accountability and then its softening again for crimes related to domestic violence, under the influence of various sociopolitical forces (often with latent actions) and individual high-profile events in society, demonstrates the necessity for active involvement of researchers in understanding the possibilities and directions that

need to be developed to create sustainable social mechanisms capable of preventing the manifestation of domestic violence in Kazakhstan.

Accordingly, there is a need to establish a fundamentally new system of institutions to prevent domestic violence and change the attitudes of law enforcement agencies toward combating this social evil.

2. Materials and methods

To achieve the research purpose, we conducted a qualitative thematic study, which included document analysis and expert surveys via email.

Document analysis involved collecting statistical data, analytical reports, and scientific literature on the research problem to determine the current state, issues, and perspectives of legal regulation in countering domestic violence in Kazakhstan.

Specifically, in the initial stage of the research, we analyzed statistical data from the official websites of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Committee for the Protection of Women and Children of the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan. We also selected analytical reports and scientific sources on the research problem, which were obtained from international databases such as Web of Science and Scopus and the Russian Index of Scientific Citation (RISC), with a publication date limit of no more than 5 years. All selected sources were divided into two groups: the first group of sources was not affiliated with organizations in Kazakhstan, while the second group consisted exclusively of national sources based on the affiliation of the authors of the articles. The classification of sources into two groups allowed us to better analyze the differences in the perceptions of the problem between national authors and the international approach.

Based on the analysis of statistical data and analytical reports, we determined the current situation in the field of domestic violence in Kazakhstan. Based on the analysis of scientific sources, we identified priority directions for legal regulation in countering domestic violence in Kazakhstan.

At the second stage of the study, a pool of experts was selected. The selection criteria were their experience in law enforcement agencies and the judicial system of Kazakhstan, as well as at least 10 years of scientific expertise in the legal field. The experts (49 people) were sent emails inviting them to participate in the survey. Forty-three respondents agreed to participate in the survey and received emails with the following questions:

"What methods do you consider most effective in combating domestic violence against women (legislative, organizational, technical, educational, public, and informational)?"

"Which are the highest priorities of legal regulation in the sphere of domestic violence in the Republic of Kazakhstan? "

Depending on the significance of one or more priority areas, they were assigned points and placed on a scale of order. According to the scores given by the experts, we determined their ranking and impacts, whose final values show the significance of a particular area of legal regulation. After that, their

rank was determined according to the scores assigned by the experts, as well as the weights. The final values determine the significance of a particular direction of legal regulation. Thus, to determine the concordance of expert opinions, we calculated the coefficient of concordance (W).

3. Results

The results of studies on domestic violence in families can be divided into two parts depending on the type of source.

The data recorded in international studies showing the overall situation of domestic violence against women and girls in Kazakhstan compared to other countries in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) region demonstrate the problem in a broad context. We can assert that researchers have identified significant and persistent cases of violence in Kazakhstan. According to an analytical overview by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), Kazakhstan, like other countries in this region, faces a high level of various forms of violence against women and girls, including physical, sexual, psychological, and economic. However, specific figures for Kazakhstan were not extensively described in the excerpts from the report.

In these countries, including Kazakhstan, legislative measures often fail to comprehensively address all forms of domestic violence and violence by single individuals, which includes the inability to classify actions such as marital rape as violence, as well as inadequate recognition of psychological violence in the family context. Moreover, the Eastern and Central Asia regions struggle with issues such as inadequate law enforcement, lack of protection and assistance systems for victims of violence, and insufficient data collection, which hinders effective responses to addressing this problem.

Compared to global norms and the more progressive legislative framework observed in European countries, Kazakhstan, like its regional neighbors, faces serious challenges. These include high rates of partner violence, gaps in legal protection, and cultural norms that sometimes condone or justify violence against women and girls. The region's problems with law enforcement and implementation, as well as cultural factors and insufficient support structures, make violence against women a deeply entrenched issue requiring multidimensional and sustained intervention efforts.

The second group of sources we selected, termed "national", consisted of sources affiliated with organizations in Kazakhstan. A sociological survey conducted in 2020 on the topic of domestic violence and its latent nature via SMS revealed that violence primarily targets women, as reported by 72% of respondents (Abdramanova & Alaukhanov, 2020). This was followed by violence against children (34%) and then against disabled and elderly family members.

The analysis of data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Committee of Legal Statistics and Special Records of the Office of Prosecutor General of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2017-2022 proved that the number of criminal offenses committed in the family

and domestic sphere more than doubled, which indicates the need for more decisive measures to combat domestic violence (Table 1).

Table 1: Dynamics of criminal offenses committed by families and households (data for Kazakhstan) from 2017 to 2022

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total number	391	793	974	985	911	844
Per 100,000 population	2.45	4.96	5.98	6.05	5.59	5.25
Growth, %	-	+102.4	+20.5	+2.9	-7.6	-6.1

Note: Compiled based on data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Committee of Legal Statistics and Special Records of the Office of Prosecutor General of the Republic of Kazakhstan

The analysis showed that 844 family- and household-based crimes were registered in Kazakhstan in 2022, which is 6.1% less than in 2021. In 2021, similar criminal offenses were recorded to be 7.6% less common than in 2020. Thus, we can state a decrease in the number of criminal offenses in the family and domestic sphere over the past two years.

By type of crime, 97.6% were offenses against the person: 832 (7.9% less than in 2021), most of which were intentional inflictions of grievous (328) and moderate (297) bodily harm and homicides (99) (Table 2).

Table 2: Number of criminal offenses in the family and domestic sphere (2022), episodes

	2022/11	2021/11	Annual growth
Total	844	911	-6.9%
Chapter 1. Crimes against the person	832	897	-7.9%
Intentional infliction of grievous bodily harm (Article 106)	328	329	-0.6%
Intentional infliction of moderate bodily harm (Article 107)	297	305	-2.6%
Homicide (Article 99)	99	119	-16.8%
Careless harm to health (Article 114)	26	22	0.0%
Causing serious harm to health exceeding the limits of necessary self-defense (Article 112)	15	19	-26.3%
Rape (Article 120)	14	14	0.0%
Preparation and attempted murder	10	17	-41.2%
Others	43	72	-41.2%
Chapter 6. Crimes against the property	9	5	80.0%
Chapter 16. Criminal infraction against management	4	2	100.0%
Chapter 3. Criminal infraction against constitutional and other rights and freedoms of person and citizen	2	2	0.0%
Chapter 2. Crimes against family and minors	1	3	-66.7%

Note: Compiled based on data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Committee of Legal Statistics and Special Records of the Office of Prosecutor General of the Republic of Kazakhstan

The statistics of domestic violence cases in the context of administrative offenses by region of Kazakhstan for 2021 are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Statistics of domestic violence cases by region of Kazakhstan per 1,000 people, 2021

	Number of calls regarding domestic violence cases in 2021	Number of restraining orders	Number of people brought to administrative responsibility under Articles 73-1, 73-2
Republic of Kazakhstan	6.0	4.3	2.0
Akmola Region	3.5	4.5	0.9
Aktobe Region	7.2	4.5	1.7
Almaty Region	1.6	2.7	1.4
Atyrau Region	8.3	3.5	3.1
West-Kazakhstan Region	8.2	3.4	2.6
Jambyl Region	1.9	3.3	1.0
Karaganda Region	2.9	6.1	2.2
Kostanay Region	7.3	8.0	1.0
Kyzylorda Region	1.6	2.5	4.7
Mangystau Region	3.8	4.1	1.8
Pavlodar Region	12.7	8.1	4.5
North-Kazakhstan Region	3.2	4.4	5.1
Turkistan Region	0.5	1.9	0.8
East-Kazakhstan Region	5.1	7.4	3.4
Astana	14.5	6.6	2.4
Almaty	11.1	2.8	1.2
Shymkent	14.9	4.1	0.4

Note: Compiled based on (Esenbaev et al., 2021)

In terms of regions, the largest number of criminal offenses in the family and domestic sphere were registered in the East Kazakhstan Region: 100 cases vs. 135 cases in the previous year. The anti-leaders also included the Almaty (89 crimes), Karaganda (82 crimes), Pavlodar (81 crimes), and Kostanay (72 crimes) regions. The fewest criminal offenses in the family and

domestic sphere were registered in the newly formed regions: Abay (3), Ulytau (4), and Jetisu (5).

The statistics of domestic violence cases by region in Kazakhstan (Table 3) demonstrate that the greatest number of appeals and calls to the police came from the Shymkent, Astana, Almaty, and Pavlodar regions in 2021. Most restraining orders were issued in the Pavlodar, Kostanay, and East Kazakhstan regions, as well as in Astana. Charged with domestic violence, most people were assigned administrative responsibility in the North Kazakhstan, Kyzylorda, and Pavlodar regions. The Pavlodar Region led in the number of appeals, restraining orders issued and persons brought to administrative responsibility for domestic violence. In contrast, the Turkestan and Almaty regions, whose population is commensurate with the population of the city of Almaty, had the lowest values of all three indicators. However, the number of requests in Almaty was 10 times greater than that in these regions.

As the results of the study showed (Esenbaev et al., 2021), 114,000 calls were received at the 102nd police station in Kazakhstan with appeals regarding cases of domestic violence in 2021. As a result, 81,000 restraining orders were issued. The courts considered 44,000 administrative cases on offenses in the field of family and domestic relationships, and 17,000 persons were sentenced to administrative detention. However, only every third appeal reached the court, and only one out of six led to a short administrative arrest for the people who committed acts of domestic violence.

According to experts, legislative activity plays the main role in combating domestic violence against women at the current stage of Kazakhstan's development (Table 4).

Table 4: Possible measures to counter domestic violence against women at the current stage of Kazakhstan's development

Priority areas of activity in the field of combating domestic violence	Ranking	Impact
Legislative	1	0.39
Organizational	2	0.26
Technical	5	0.09
Educational	4	0.11
Public and informational	3	0.15

Note: the assessment was based on the expert survey; the concordance coefficient is $W = 0.65$ ($p < 0.01$), which indicates strong agreement between expert opinions.

According to the experts, the highest priority areas for countering domestic violence in Kazakhstan are the criminalization of domestic violence and the development of measures to prevent the recurrence of violence (Table 5).

Table 5: Priority areas of the legal regulation of countering domestic violence in Kazakhstan

Priority areas for combating domestic violence	Ranking	Impact
Criminalization of domestic violence and the development of measures to prevent the recurrence of violence	1	0.34
Legislative identification of the state body responsible for interdepartmental interaction of the parties involved in countering domestic violence and regulations for such interdepartmental interaction	5	0.08
Legislative support for crisis centers for victims of abuse	2	0.22
Development of clear criteria and indicators of psychological and economic violence and procedures for their documentation and recording	6	0.04
Legislative support for the statistical recording of victims of domestic violence by gender, age, and type of injury for a more complete assessment of the current situation with domestic violence	7	0.03
Legislative introduction of the aggressor concept and mandatory correctional programs for this category of persons	3	0.18
Legislative support for the registration of children who are witnesses of domestic violence and the implementation of rehabilitation programs for these children	4	0.11

Note: the assessment was based on the expert survey; the concordance coefficient is $W = 0.68$ ($p < 0.01$), which indicates strong agreement between expert opinions.

4. Discussion

Based on the obtained results, we drew theoretical and practical conclusions that provide a clearer explanation of the situation of domestic violence against women in Kazakhstan and help draw attention to specific aspects of its resolution.

First, in major Kazakhstan cities, the overall level of violence is decreasing, and women are more actively defending their rights than in smaller towns and rural areas. Researchers attribute the difference in behavior to regional economic disparities, the standard of living, cultural traditions, and educational deficiencies. Our results fully confirmed that the issue of domestic violence is complex due to the difficulties in understanding and identification of sexual assault and psychological abuse in marriage as forms of violence, which complicates the understanding of the need for measures to prevent such violence and protect victims. Even among Kazakh researchers, there is no unanimous answer to the question of whether the level of violence in the country is increasing or decreasing, which state authorities do not monitor. We

believe that closer to the truth is the point formulated in one of the studies: "The authorities of Kazakhstan see the problems, identify them well, and have good strategies, but their implementation always suffers" (Plotnikov, 2024). Our results show that, first, the efforts of the state, legislative, and executive authorities need to be directed toward preventing the spread of domestic violence at the legislative level and implementing norms in practice. It is necessary to organize a system for monitoring incidents of domestic violence among various population groups and not to prohibit but to react to public discourse and participate in discussions on domestic violence as an important social problem.

As our results show, increasing the level of accountability for committed acts and providing protection to victims from potential violence are among the main problems that require resolution. Family aggressors behave aggressively precisely because they feel unpunished; as researchers note, if there is punishment, they "in the majority of cases, quickly stop tyrannizing women". On average, for every six reports to the police, only two administrative penalties are imposed in Kazakhstan, indicating impunity for various reasons in most cases of domestic violence.

The situation regarding the resolution of combating domestic violence in Kazakhstan shows that it is necessary to more actively implement the recommendations of international conferences, which call for improving the national legislation of countries in the field of distinguishing between administrative and criminal responsibility for domestic violence; improving legislation to reduce the timeframes for considering cases of domestic violence; increasing the number of shelters for women in need; expanding educational and other cultural activities aimed at preventing domestic violence in all its forms; and developing a legal mechanism to combat cyberbullying as a form of psychological violence. The recent emergency changes in Kazakhstan, which will occur in the second half of 2024, confirm that sooner or later, state leaders will have to intensively address the issues of domestic violence against women and minors if the political forces in the country are oriented toward the strategy of building a modern state and developing human rights.

The results of our research show that utilizing European experience in combating domestic violence should significantly contribute to solving these issues in a positive direction. We believe that preventive measures and measures to combat domestic violence used in European practices, such as evicting the offender from the victim's residence, should be obligatory. Therefore, we consider the practice of imposing special requirements on the aggressor, which is just beginning to be introduced in Kazakhstan, where the court is given the right to temporarily evict the aggressor from the residence. During this time, the aggressor is offered the opportunity to temporarily reconsider their actions in social adaptation centers.

In addition to legislative norms, Kazakhstan is increasingly paying attention to organizational actions, which play an important role in building a system to combat instances of domestic violence. The importance of this direction has been actively emphasized by other researchers. Given the

complex nature of domestic violence, the most effective way to combat it is through the joint efforts of government and non-governmental organizations, the media, the church, and the local community, all of which constitute social capital (Javakhishvili et al., 2019). It is necessary to establish an interdepartmental specialized bureau aimed at coordinating the joint activities of entities involved in combating domestic violence (Melnik et al., 2023).

Researchers have consistently noted that a priority for legal regulation in combating domestic violence in Kazakhstan should be the legislative provision of widespread activity for crisis centers for victims of violence. Therefore, the development of contact centers will significantly improve interdepartmental interactions. It is envisaged that such centers will be available throughout Kazakhstan. Information exchange and cooperation on issues related to family policy and the protection of children's and women's rights will be carried out between the contact center and relevant state and local authorities, who will provide information on measures taken after processing inquiries.

It is planned to coordinate actions to identify and support those in need in a timely manner through joint work with educational, medical, and law enforcement institutions using an integrated approach. Employers will be obligated to provide leave to employees who are in institutions for victims of domestic violence. This leave is provided without payment and can last up to 30 days.

It is necessary to enhance the competency level of staff. If representatives of different agencies do not have a common understanding of the concept and signs of violence or of their powers and responsibilities, the actions of contact centers will be ineffective.

The effectiveness of legislative and organizational measures is closely linked to the problem that Kazakh society has not fully recognized the seriousness of domestic violence. However, attitudes toward domestic violence in society are gradually changing. In 2023, Kazakhs began to actively sign petitions for the criminalization of domestic violence. For example, in 2020, a petition for the criminalization of domestic violence and the adoption of a new law on domestic violence gathered approximately 100,000 signatures. In 2023, a similar petition collected 150,000 signatures in just a couple of days (Plotnikov, 2024). However, patriarchal customs, whose role is traditionally significant in Central Asian and Caucasian countries, resist any attempts to combat domestic violence. For instance, the Georgian church, local communities, and mass media do not participate in addressing the issue of domestic violence. In contrast, their activities reinforce and reproduce traditional views on family, gender roles, understanding and causes of domestic violence, and intervention in cases of domestic violence. Moreover, there is a lack of social capital linking the church, local community, and mass media, and relatively weak social capital is observed between non-governmental and governmental organizations (Javakhishvili et al., 2019). For Central Asian and predominantly Caucasian countries, women's organizations and women's

activism are considered threats to traditional and religious order and to society's identity (Sirazhudinova, 2021).

In Kazakhstan, radical measures by individual organizations are sometimes actively promoted as a defense against presumed foreign influence, which activists present as protection of traditional values. This view has substantial support in Kazakhstan. In early October 2020, an online petition titled "Parents of Kazakhstan Against Juvenile Justice" was launched. Its authors demanded the withdrawal from parliamentary discussion of the draft law on combating domestic violence. According to them, the provisions of the draft law did not comply with the constitution and morality of Kazakh society, which ultimately led to the withdrawal of the draft law in 2021. Activists extensively use black PR based on false information and appeals to government bodies in their practice. Such actions are successful primarily due to, as shown by research, the lack of legal literacy among a large part of Kazakh society.

The issue of education in society needs to be divided into two areas, conditionally distinguishing compulsory education and systemic education. As an example of compulsory education, the experience of the Union of Crisis Centers operating in Kazakhstan is interesting. This organization developed two modules for working with aggressors over three years. Program developers assumed that half of the aggressors commit violence under the influence of prohibited stimulants or sedatives. However, the other half of the aggressors act consciously. Therefore, the main task of this program is to develop a level of responsibility for behavior among men. According to experts, teaching people to manage emotions should be performed compulsorily within the healthcare system and with the involvement of crisis centers (Halel, 2024).

As an example of a systemic approach, the experience of the Czech Republic and Slovakia is interesting. Researchers note several positive solutions contained in the legislation of these countries. This includes the implementation of general psychological programs for offenders who have committed domestic violence, as well as educational programs in schools to teach students about the theme of friendly tolerant coexistence of family members, along with the development of teaching methods for this topic. The systemic approach is effective in changing society's attitude toward the acceptability of domestic violence in Kazakhstan. Increasing the level of education among the population will help to widely spread the view of domestic violence as a problem.

As shown by our results, the implementation of voluntary and compulsory rehabilitation measures for psychological correction of offender behavior, as well as technical means, such as a geolocation bracelet to enforce a prohibition on approaching the victim, are distant prospects in the current stage of development of the system to combat domestic violence in Kazakhstan. The introduction of these measures into practice requires an increase in funding from the state budget.

5. Conclusion

Countering domestic violence today is an important direction of social development. It is not only a social problem but also primarily a human rights issue, particularly women's and children's rights, requiring the development of appropriate legal means for its resolution. When violence occurs within families, it not only violates the rights and freedoms of individuals but also threatens lives and health, thus requiring intervention from both the state and society in developing and ensuring a system to violence and actions to protect victims.

Our results will be beneficial for researchers and legislative and law enforcement organizations in building a national system, primarily for protecting women from instances of domestic violence. This system should focus not only on criminalizing domestic violence but also on enacting special legislation. While these are important steps, their effectiveness depends on methods of supporting victims and implementing educational and informational tools to raise awareness about domestic violence and its victims. Implementing modern methods of countering domestic violence and enhancing interdepartmental cooperation among authorized state bodies will gradually, if not eradicate, minimize these negative unlawful actions in Kazakhstan. International information exchange among scholars, law enforcement agencies, and social workers contributes to spreading international experience to the Kazakh legal system.

Limitations of the study include the quantitative limitations of the expert pool, which prevents the drawing of fully generalized conclusions from the research.

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