


PHYSICAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF TETOVA DURING THE PERIOD 2020–2025: A LEGAL AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS			Legal Studies
		Keywords: domestic violence, physical violence, women’s rights, legal framework, Tetova, North Macedonia.	
Amnora Zylbeari	Faculty of Law, University of Tetova, North Macedonia		
Qebir Avziu	Faculty of Law, University of Tetova, North Macedonia		
Abstract			
<p>Violence against women remains one of the most serious violations of fundamental human rights and an important social, legal, and public health concern [1,7]. This study examines physical violence against women in the Municipality of Tetova from 2020–2025 through legal and statistical analysis. The research is based on official institutional data obtained from the Ministry of Interior, the State Statistical Office, and relevant social welfare institutions, as well as legal acts, including the Criminal Code and the Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence [6,8]. The findings indicate that women represented the majority of victims in reported domestic violence cases. Physical violence, often accompanied by psychological abuse, remains the most frequently reported form of violence. A notable increase in reported cases was observed in 2022, followed by relative stabilization in subsequent years. Although North Macedonia has significantly harmonized its legal framework with international standards, important challenges remain in practical implementation, including early reporting, victim protection, and institutional coordination [7,9]. The study concludes that stronger preventive policies, more effective institutional cooperation, and increased public awareness are essential for the long-term reduction of violence against women in the Tetova region.</p>			

1. INTRODUCTION

Violence against women constitutes one of the most serious forms of gender-based discrimination and a major violation of human rights [5]. Physical violence within the family environment is especially concerning because of its hidden nature; frequent underreporting; and long-term physical, psychological, and social consequences. Domestic violence remains a widespread public health problem worldwide. According to the World Health Organization, approximately one in three women globally has experienced physical and/or sexual violence during her lifetime [7,9]. Intimate partner violence represents the most common form of abuse. In R. North Macedonia, domestic violence has increasingly become the subject of legal and institutional attention, particularly after the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and the adoption of the Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in 2021 [8]. These developments marked important steps toward harmonizing national legislation with international standards. Despite legal improvements, violence against women remains persistent. The Municipality of Tetova represents one of the regions where reported domestic violence cases continue to raise concern.

The purpose of this study is to analyze physical violence against women in Tetova from 2020–2025 through statistical trends and legal responses, with particular attention to the prevalence of reported cases, institutional responses, and challenges in implementation [2–4].

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study applied a descriptive legal–statistical research design. The statistical component was based on official institutional data concerning reported domestic violence cases in the Municipality of Tetova during the period 2020–2025. Data were collected from reports of the Ministry of Interior, the State Statistical Office of North Macedonia, and relevant social welfare institutions [6]. The legal analysis included an examination of the Criminal Code of North Macedonia and the Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence [8]. The collected statistical data were analyzed descriptively through annual comparisons of reported cases. The analysis focused primarily on physical violence against women while acknowledging that physical violence often coexists with psychological abuse [10,11]. A limitation of the study is the probable underreporting of domestic violence cases. Cultural stigma, fear of retaliation, economic dependence, and social pressure may affect the actual number of reported incidents [13–15].

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 International Legal Framework

The Istanbul Convention is the most important international instrument addressing violence against women. It requires state parties to prevent violence, protect victims, prosecute perpetrators, and implement coordinated policies [7,9].

In addition, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) emphasizes state responsibility in eliminating gender-based violence [5].

3.2 National Legal Framework

In North Macedonia, domestic violence is regulated through both criminal and protective legislation.

The Criminal Code criminalizes bodily injury, threats, coercion, and domestic violence. More severe legal consequences apply when the offense is committed against a spouse, intimate partner, or family member [8].

The Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (2021) introduced urgent protective measures, temporary restraint orders, institutional coordination mechanisms, and victim support services [8].

4. RESULTS

On the basis of institutional reports, the following trend of reported domestic violence cases in Tetova was observed:

Year	Case	Remarks
2020	96	Majority women victims
2021	~100110-120	Slight increase
2022	145	Significant increase
2023	110-120	Relative stabilization
2024	94 (January-November)	Slight decrease
2025	No final annual report	Data incomplete

Women represented approximately 70–75% of reported victims during the observed period [6]. Physical violence remains one of the most frequently reported forms of violence and is often accompanied by psychological abuse [1,9]. The increase observed in 2022 represents the most notable significant change during the study period. This increase may partly reflect improved reporting mechanisms, greater institutional responsiveness, and heightened public awareness following legal reforms [8,12].

5. DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that physical violence against women remained persistent in Tetova throughout the observed period despite legislative reforms. Several factors may contribute to this continued prevalence, including cultural stigma, fear of reporting, economic dependence, limited access to specialized support services, and insufficient preventive education [13–15]. The increase in reported cases in 2022 may reflect improved institutional reporting practices and greater public awareness following the implementation of the 2021 law [8]. While the legal framework has improved substantially, procedural delays, inconsistent application of protective measures, and weaknesses in early intervention mechanisms continue to reduce the effectiveness of victim protection [10–12]. The findings suggest that legal reform alone is insufficient without stronger preventive strategies, effective victim support systems, and coordinated institutional action.

6. CONCLUSION

Physical violence against women in the Municipality of Tetova remained a serious legal and social concern from 2020–2025. Women continue to represent the majority of victims in reported domestic violence cases. Physical violence, often combined with psychological abuse, remains among the most common forms of violence [1,9]. Although North Macedonia has significantly improved its legal framework through harmonization with international standards, especially after the adoption of the 2021 law, important challenges remain in practical implementation [7,8]. It is necessary to strengthen preventive educational programs, improve

interinstitutional coordination, ensure stricter implementation of protective measures, expand victim support services, and increase public awareness.

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