

Local Perspectives on Young Albanian Serious Organised Crime (SOC) Risks





**The Centre
for Seldom
Heard Voices**



**Reconnecting Albanian
Youth and Society (RAYS)**
Enabling positive life choices for youth.

Working Paper #1

Local Perspectives on Young Albanian Serious Organised Crime (SOC) Risks

Report on focus groups with young people, parents/carers and professionals working with young people from Kukës, Shkoder and Elbasan, Albania, to develop insights about local knowledge, perceptions and attitudes relating to crime risk, vulnerabilities, protection factors, support structures; and about music as a feasible engagement and intervention tool (2021 –2022)

Bournemouth - Tirana, March 2023



Editorial matters

RAYS is a UK-government funded pilot programme led by Palladium International, which supports young Albanian people who are at risk of, or already involved in, serious organized crime (SOC), to divert their life choices away from SOC towards pathways resilient to exploitation. The partners, including Bournemouth University (research), the Centre for Sustainable Criminal Justice (institutional collaborations), and the Child Rights Centre Albania, work together with young people in Albania, their communities and relevant institutions, to build equitable and constructive partnerships.

The overarching aim is to generate a better understanding of the drivers of youth engagement in SOC, boost alternative pathways, contribute to building a more inclusive society in Albania, and ultimately disrupt SOC groups' influence on young people in Albania.

The Centre for Seldom Heard Voices, Bournemouth University, brings together academics in the fields of criminology, social anthropology and other social sciences as well as social work to engage with marginalised and often stigmatised communities and to amplify often excluded or silenced voices. The research centre holds a strong track record of developing collaborative partnerships with communities and key stakeholders, and for using participatory and co-created approaches. Its aim is to apply scholarly research to real-world challenges to maximise societal impact, both at home and abroad.

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Foreword

As Director of the Centre for Seldom Heard Voices (SHV) at Bournemouth University it is my great pleasure to introduce the first Working Paper in a series that aims to capture some of the innovative work undertaken by staff at the Centre. At the heart of our research is an emphasis on co-creation with students, service users, and communities, and this is vital as we strive to create research impact which finds creative solutions to emergent challenges linked to marginalisation and social integration.

At the SHV, our research embraces creative and arts-led approaches to engage with the voices and experiences of those who are often silenced or ignored. This includes a range of approaches such as visual and performing arts, performance poetry and music elicitation. Our work is built upon collaborative and participatory approaches including with looked after children, youth in the developing world or conflict areas, rough sleepers, substance users, transgender youth and LGBT+ communities, stigmatised and threatened minorities, immigrants and trafficking victims, perpetrators and survivors of domestic violence, disabled children and adults, older people, carers, and many more. We aim to challenge taken for granted assumptions and pre-conceptions concerning societal issues, to create insights which strengthen research participants' agency and ownership of change as well as inform new policy and practice initiatives.

Collaboration with external partners is essential for creating any impact in wider society. In initiating this Working Paper series, it is our great pleasure to collaborate with Palladium International Ltd., the lead partner of RAYS, a UK government-funded pilot programme which supports young Albanian people who are at risk of, or already involved in, serious organised crime (SOC). RAYS aims to divert their life choices away from SOC towards pathways resilient to exploitation, which, in turn, involves a number of international, national and local partner organisations aiming to safeguard young people at such risk.

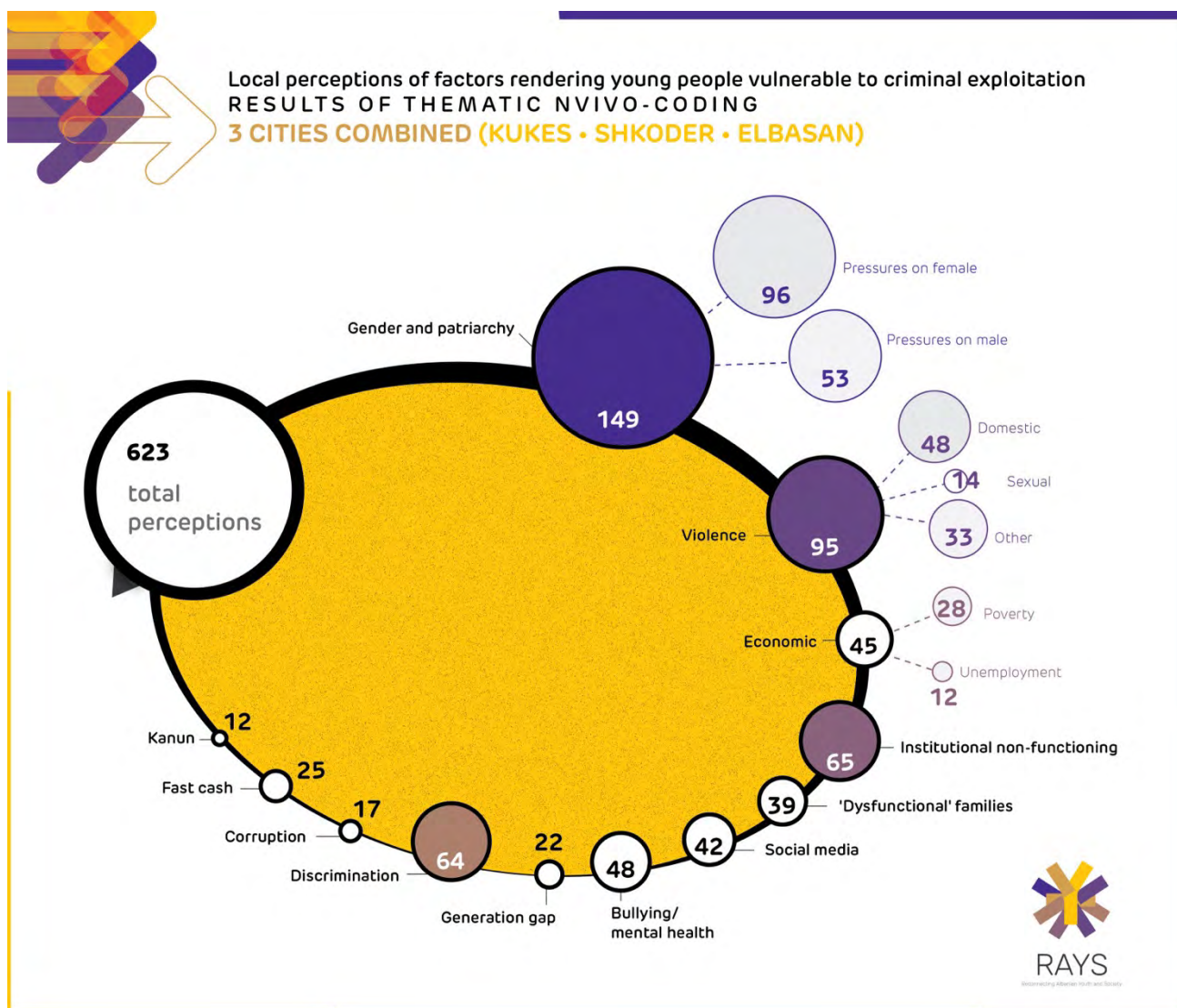
The inaugural paper in this series aptly represents a focus-group based baseline study conducted under leadership of SHV deputy director and social anthropologist Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers in Albania in 2021-2022. This informed the wider BU-research team's subsequent, participatory arts-based action research activities with young people at risk of SOC. Programmatically titled 'Local perspectives on young Albanian SOC risks', this study explored local knowledge, perceptions and attitudes relating to crime risk, vulnerabilities, protection factors, and existing support structures in selected regions. In preparing for the planned intervention activities, it also aimed to gauge local interest, experience, and willingness in engaging with arts-based, specifically music-based, co-creative approaches meant to support young people at risk of criminal exploitation, as well as those around them, towards co-creating meaningful change. The meticulous, thematic discourse analysis of the focus group discussions (FGDs) presented here, however, extends beyond a mere quantitative differentiation of local perspectives. It revealed some unexpected insights about implicit, socio-cultural factors of exclusion which, in turn, inform several concrete recommendations with which this first Working Paper concludes.

Future Working Papers planned in this collaborative Working Paper series will take this learning forward in presenting complementary methodological approaches probed, as well as specific participatory music-based case studies which simultaneously served as proof of concept for emerging theory developments. The former included music elicitation conducted with former Albanian offenders about their life histories and pathways (Jade Levell, now Bristol University); soundscape composition workshops aimed at encouraging a critical-sensory exploration of the environment as basis for creating counternarratives to exploitation (Panos Amelidis); and lyrics/beat-

making workshops using hip-hop as a creative youth engagement tool to co-produce alternative visions for the future (Mark Berry).

This first paper inaugurating this series offers a thoughtful account of how closely listening to local perspectives must serve as an important precursor for co-producing any creative interventions that support both personal and societal change.

Professor Lee-Ann Fenge, Director of the Centre for Seldom Heard Voices



COMBINED PROJECT RESULTS INFOGRAPHIC, ALL REGIONS

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank all of the FGD-respondents in Kukës, Shkodër and Elbasan for their time and engagement – without their efforts, patience and interest, this study would never have been possible. They impressed the lead researcher with their high level of knowledge and detailed insights regarding the issues at stake. We are further most grateful to the local RAYS facilitators and all locally collaborating institutions for enabling FGDs with their students, staff and the wider community, as well as to the professional researchers of the partner organisations who conducted some of the interviews. Special thanks goes to Stela Kosova and Idila Ibrahimimi for their meticulous work in transcribing and translating the interviews, and for remaining available for various clarifications and back-checks throughout project duration.

This research was UK government-funded and implemented as part of the wider RAYS project under the auspices of Palladium International Ltd. The research team wishes to thank Palladium International (London and Tirana teams) for involving an academic research team in this live international collaboration project, specifically for their openness towards mutual learning and continuous reflection, and for offering tremendous support throughout.

List of contributors & contributions

Mark Berry, PhD, is a Lecturer in Criminology at Bournemouth University. A general criminologist in the field of organised crime, he previously conducted ethnographic research with active offenders in the UK's illicit drug market. He also has a professional background in electronic music production. Since joining the team in 2022, Mark contributed to developing and structuring earlier versions of this FGD report and to analysing the data. He has since taken results of this study and of the team's other research forward in designing and implementing beats/lyrics-making workshops for young people in Albania.

Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, PhD, is Associated Professor in Applied Anthropology at Bournemouth University with a long track record of ethnographic research in Albania and Kosovo. Her research and teaching evolve around the critical study of international development such as relating to post-conflict and post-socialist interventions; to gender and migration studies; and to participatory action research (PAR), including participatory arts (music) based co-creation with young people. She leads the Bournemouth University research team, and conceptualised, designed, co-analysed and contextualised the FGD-research at hand.

Nan Sheppard, LL.M, graduated in both sociology & social anthropology (with honours) and law at Bournemouth University. She is an anthropologist and qualitative research analyst who conducted the NVivo coding and a detailed written analysis of the transcribed and translated FGD data generated for this study. She has also served as research assistant for the Bournemouth University led RAYS-research components at large and currently holds a position as editorial assistant for the SHV at Bournemouth University.

Klodiana Thartori, MA, served for Palladium International, Albania, as RAYS' 'objective A' lead (which included the academic research components) from 2021 to 2022 in Albania, including during the pandemic. Her professional background is in international and local development and child protection, working for organisations such as Plan International, Save the Children, *Terre des Hommes*, and others. In her role as Executive Director of the non-governmental organization Children Today in Albania, she previously advised the government on legal child protection reform. Klodiana implemented the FGD research on the ground in late 2021 and early 2022 – both as researcher herself, and as a supervisor of interviewers. She also provided critical input on earlier drafts of this report.

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Acronyms

BU	Bournemouth University
CJS	Criminal Justice System
CRCA	Child Rights Centre Albania
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
SCJS	Sustainable Criminal Justice Solution, Southampton
SHV	Research Centre for Seldom Heard Voices, BU
SOC	Serious Organised Crime
MERL	Monitoring, Research, Evaluation and Learning
ToT	Training of Trainers
RAYS	Reconnecting Albanian Youth and Society

FGDs abbreviations

Y	Youth
P	Professionals
MP	Mixed Parents
W	Women Only
K	Kukës
S	Shkoder
E	Elbasan

Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a systematic, focus-group based study of local perceptions and knowledge on young Albanians' risks of, and vulnerability to, Serious Organised Crime (SOC) exploitation as well as on locally available protection and support structures. Apart from aiming to generate better insights about local understandings of risk factors and available recourse to support for young people considered at risk in the local communities, the study aimed to elucidate local experience with, and perceptiveness towards, implementing planned participatory music-based activities as feasible engagement and intervention tools intended to strengthen young people's resilience against criminal exploitation.

The RAYS Focus Group Discussion (FGD) project was the first research activity implemented by the programme team in late 2021 and early 2022. FGDs were conducted in late 2021 and early 2022 with over 200 young people, parents/carers, and professionals working with young people in their communities, in the cities of Kukës, Shkoder and Elbasan – three municipal centres of Albanian regions that previously were associated with heightened risks of criminal exploitation (e.g. IDM 2018). The FGDs groups attracted 14 to 33 participants per group - considerably larger than originally planned.

Several studies exist already which highlight factors underpinning young Albanians' vulnerabilities. For example, UNICEF (Byrne et al., 2021) emphasised social inequality, poverty, unemployment, job insecurity, rural-urban divisions and internal displacement, a ubiquitous mistrust in government and the government's low level of engagement in social issues, as well as patriarchal familism, and ethnic discrimination (specifically affecting the Roma community) as causal factors independent of the legal protection framework in place. Others discussed social and cultural factors more specifically, such as blood feuds, honour killing, domestic violence and, more generally, conservative gender expectations exerting pressures on adolescents, both male and female, as well as 'Albanian traditions' at large (e.g. Cuninghame and Duci, 2021: 16 – 17); often in conjunction with the ways in which these factors explain irregular migration flows to the UK and trafficking risks (e.g. Allsopp et al. 2018; Asylos 2019; Holloway 2022). Finally, there are also sources which point to a socio-cultural 'normalisation of crime' in some local communities in Albania (IDM 2018), resulting from dire economic prospects in conjunction with gendered expectations for men to provide at all means (Kushi 2015).

This FGD study contributes a systematic investigation of local knowledge, perspectives and understanding of the factors causing young people's susceptibility to criminal exploitation. The studies aim was specified as 'developing an understanding of local specificities, perspectives, vulnerabilities, knowledge, and capacities, in preparation for designing meaningful, targeted participatory arts-based interventions with young people between 14 and 16 years of age¹ and at risk of criminal exploitation in pre-defined local areas known as vulnerable to SOC: the municipalities of Kukës, Shkoder and Elbasan.' The FGDs were designed to harvest perspectives directly from young people; parents/carers (in mixed and in female-only groups); and from professionals (teachers, social workers, pedagogues) working with young people in these communities. Overall, they attracted more than 200 research participants, beyond the numbers anticipated in the original research design. The findings enabled a

¹ Both Albanian and UK legislation define anyone under 18 years of age as a 'child' and, hence, subject to distinct protection rights. UK legal texts and practice professionals often use 'young person' or 'young people' interchangeably with 'child'/'children' specifically for teenagers to indicate recognition and respect for their agency, creativity, and cognitive abilities. In accordance with terminology established within the RAYS project and common in co-creative, developmental work with teenagers in, for example, educational and participatory arts-based development projects (e.g. Cooke and Soria-Donlan 2019), this report uses mostly the terms 'young person'/'young people', without, however, losing sight of the limitations and risks of this choice. This choice of terminology should not distract from young people's vulnerability to processes and structures outside their control and sometimes even comprehension, nor from safeguarding responsibilities which rest with adults, professionals, and the law.

comparative analysis of the data generated to highlight local specificities, differences, and similarities between the three regions which are presented in this report, and to generate **guiding themes** to structure specific tasks, in preparation for designing music-based activities with young people. The first of these have been implemented already (see separate reports on soundscape composition and lyrics/beat-making workshops).

The **objectives** of this project were defined as follows:

1. Identifying existing local understandings of risk factors; local perceptions of sources of security and protection; and understandings of the characteristics and situations of young people at risk of being drawn into pathways to crime in this locality.
2. Mapping locally effective and ineffective structures, practices, strategies, or programmes aimed at identifying, communicating with, and supporting marginalised and at-risk young people.
3. Identifying local knowledge and familiarity with participatory arts-based work with marginalised and at-risk young people through music.
4. Identifying communication and music preferences of young people at risk.

The **data analysis** used NVivo software to code the transcribed and translated FGDs. The codes correspond with the categories in which the data are presented in this report, including as overarching themes (with multiple sub-themes, respectively). Statements were assigned to themes relating to a) the local understanding of risk factors (obj. 1); b) institutional issues & experiences with participatory arts (obj. 2 and 3); c) 'music', encompassing 'media, music, culture, and identity' (obj. 4); d) 'family and gender roles'; and e) 'crime and social status' (the latter two themes also relating to obj. 1).

Findings

The findings offer regional, gender and age differentiated insights about local knowledge, perceptions and attitudes relating to crime risk, vulnerabilities, protection factors and support structures (research objectives 1 and 2); and about music as a feasible engagement and intervention tool (research objectives 3 and 4), with some unexpected outcomes emerging. Kukës, Shkoder and Elbasan differ significantly from each other in terms of socio-cultural perceptions and expectations, regional risk factors, and more, yet there are also commonalities. Each setting could constitute a stand-alone case study. In general, the similarities and differences encountered in the three different settings underscore the significance of tailored approaches to each region, as already implemented in ongoing RAYS activities. They highlight both shared and specific local understandings of risk and vulnerabilities of young people to become involved in criminal activities, irregular migration, and criminal exploitation, as well as of existing support structure and support potentials.

Commonalities: Respondents in all three municipalities, specifically young people and professionals, surprised the lead researcher with their high level of knowledge of the characteristics, vulnerabilities, and profiles of a young person at risk of SOC. In all municipalities, economic and institutional weaknesses, including lack of institutional coordination and distrust in the institutions, were identified as major risk factors, with perceptions of institutional corruption poorly impacting on young people in all three regions, and distrust in the police particularly evident in Shkoder and Elbasan. A need for social change was discussed in all three regions, highlighting the importance of one's environment and giving examples of individuals who were seen to have effected change in their own lives after a change in environment. The need for support of institutions to facilitate this was referenced often in the study. Regarding the concept of change, accompanying feelings expressed included disempowerment (according

to some youth-work professionals, where desired change could not be facilitated) and difficulties with coping with social change as mentioned by adult groups of parents and professionals. Both social and personal change were referenced in equal quantities throughout the study. There were, however, marked regional and generational differences in the ways these themes were discussed, as we will show below.

[R]egionally varied internal structures of social exclusion underpin often risky individual strategies of seeking alternative means of belonging.

Social status anxieties and peer pressures were risk factors referenced in all three municipalities. Discussions related to a sense of belonging also arose in all regions, implying heightened risks and vulnerabilities for those who feel they do not belong in family and community.

In a less predictable finding, domestic violence was mentioned as an outstanding risk factor concerning focus group members and was understood to underpin youth vulnerability and susceptibility to being drawn into pathways of criminal exploitation in all three municipalities, as well as a ubiquitous crime contrasting with a relatively low figure assigned to it in current official statistics on crime (appendix 3). The discrepancy between the official statistics and qualitative results of the FGDs may point to widespread silencing or under-reporting of domestic violence in the quantitative crime data, particularly notable since in the mixed

{T}he FGDs may point to widespread silencing or under-reporting of domestic violence... notable since in the mixed parents' group there are far fewer references than in the women-only and youth groups.

parents' group there were far fewer references than in the women-only and youth groups. The adult women and youth groups also spoke more freely about other forms of violence and pressures faced than the adults in the mixed group, including themes such as bullying. There was a localised understanding of violence generally throughout the FGDs, and different types were referenced for which the local understanding included both physical and psychological violence. By the same token, the prevalence of classic patriarchal forms of social organisation and associated familist values and expectations was evident in all three regions, yet there was some difference in degree and character to the classical understandings of patriarchy and the ways it was related to risks and possibilities of social change.

Patriarchal familism, evident as a strong ideal social norm in all three regions, produces stigma and shame for those falling outside the normative framework in every case.

Differences: Kukës displayed the most rigid, classic/traditional gender roles and heteronormative familism. This rendered vulnerable both young men (imbued with the provider role) and women (confined to subservient support, bound to the private space, and charged with responsibility of family 'honour'). Conversely, while the same norms were shared in the other locations more broadly, in Shkoder and Elbasan these emerged as less tied to a specific, cultural concept of 'honour' but appeared more materialistic. Peer pressures and criminal role models in these cities were highlighted with more emphasis than family and wider kinship obligations. Patriarchal familism, evident as a strong ideal social norm in all three regions, produces stigma and shame for those falling outside the normative framework. In consequence, divorced women and their children appear exposed to potentially amplified social exclusion and other risks. By the same token, mothers were the ones most assigned responsibility for their children's conduct, although girls and women were simultaneously seen as denied control, yet accountable to the men of the family.

Further differences were evident in the prioritisation of specific factors seen as underpinning vulnerability, stigma, and exclusion in the respondents' respective home regions. In Kukës, factors relating to kinship and family as a form of solidarity and support as well as related social pressures and obligations were particularly evident; ethnicity specifically mattered in Shkoder; and rural-urban internal migration – albeit present as a risk factor elsewhere, too – was particularly evident in Elbasan. In Elbasan and Shkoder, neighborhoods and schools emerged as the sites where criminal success was presented as rewarding for the materialistic indicators of high status. Adult and youth groups in Elbasan and Shkoder also spoke frequently about the need for a sense of belonging, social acceptance and the difficulties and vulnerability faced by those who do not belong to a social group. Respondents identified the impact of materialistic ideals and aspirations as well as the glorification of guns as risks arising from such social groups, pointing to their influences both online and offline. Overall, it emerged that, in terms of significance and scale, regionally varied internal structures of social exclusion underpin often risky individual strategies of seeking alternative means of belonging.

Some of these themes were discussed in ways that delineate both gender and generational divisions in perceiving risks and vulnerabilities. For example, young people in Kukës seemed more attuned to risks arising from mental health issues and bullying than the adults in this region. The music theme, in particular, generated lively debates which revealed evocative societal frictions. While there was openness towards arts and music-based activities, respondents in Kukës, specifically, also suggested fatigue with international interventions, highlighting the need for appropriate co-creative design and local ownership as well as clear communication to ensure sustainability.

A generational gap of understanding was apparent regarding attitudes to change, particularly in Elbasan and Kukës. While the concept of change was discussed in all three regions, this was commented on by the youth rather than adults in Elbasan and adults rather than youth in Kukës, while in Shkoder there was more inter-generational similarity in the frequency of references to change. In Elbasan a high level of disempowerment was identified for young people with regard to enabling any meaningful change, and the three adult groups were most vocal in Kukës regarding difficulty in coping with what they perceived as changes in society. In the three regions together, young people spoke of individual change more and adults referenced social change more. In Kukës, there were more references to social than individual change and all of the references were from adult groups. In contrast, there were more references to individual than social change in Elbasan and the references to individual change were all from young people. Similarly in Shkoder, there were also more references to individual change and the majority of these were from young people. Thus, it appeared that most young people's comments focused on personal change, and most adult comments focused on changes in society, but the relationships between these themes were quite complex. Young people in general seemed to be more likely to suggest that a person could change, but they also recognised that it might be difficult for a person to change even when they have the support from wider society and institutions. The themes of implementing encouragement, institutional support and influence, rather than punishment, were also seen in discussions surrounding prison. A majority of respondents divulged surprisingly strong convictions about the need for rehabilitation and re-education as alternatives to incarceration. Out of 16 comments only two, both from separate groups in Kukës, felt that at times, prison might be the best response to lawless behaviour.

Different music preference of the adult and youth groups became evident around discussions of hip-hop. The vast majority of adult FGDs expressed stereotypical assumptions about an assumed link between hip-hop and crime, reminiscent of those seen in moralising public debates and media in the US and UK. As an apparent exception to the rule, e.g., several members of Elbasan's women's group expressed a hip-hop preference. Mostly, however, the adult groups appeared distanced from (either feeling estranged from or concerned about, blaming, or simply not understanding) young people and their worlds as embodied in their music preferences, and young people's music

and associated social media consumption online. Conversely, and most evidently in Kukës, young people saw their engagement with hip-hop as an escape route from harsh realities and a chance for creativity. Hip-hop interventions, while likely to appear particularly to young people's preferences, will need to sensitively navigate such divisions and attitudes, mindful of regional, gender, generational, class, and age differences.

Unexpected findings in the qualitative data arose from a close scrutiny of terms, metaphors, and original Albanian concepts used. In particular, the NVivo analysis revealed a repeated use of an 'open door' vs 'closed door' distinction in debates around the question whether a delinquent young person should be allowed back into the family or rejected. These debates reveal both cultural attitudes towards different types of crime as well as gender differences in this. In particular, girls seem more likely to be excluded for norm transgressions and family shame than boys, who might even be pressured into crime for their obligation to become providers for the family. This may be a potential affirmation of a normalisation of crime in certain contexts. For example, comments referenced mothers who turned a blind eye to some sources of income – however, this pertained to a critique of the values of 'other families', not one's own, in the statements collected.

[T]he NVivo analysis revealed a repeated use of an 'open door' vs 'closed door' distinction in debates around the question whether a delinquent young person should be allowed back into the family or rejected.

The frequency of references to bullying and domestic violence, particularly of a 'psychological type', also constituted an unexpected and nuanced result, which required deeper analysis of the original language used and the associated meaning within the local context. When further analysed, it appeared that in all 3 regions, most of the specific bullying references related to emotional rather than physical violence, but the negative outcomes resulting from both types were felt to be equally severe. Physical attacks were referenced by young people in Elbasan more than by any other group in any region, but this group still cited psychological bullying more than physical bullying. It was also notable that professionals infrequently mentioned bullying: it was far more discussed in youth and parent groups.

A final unexpected finding in the qualitative data affirmed the existence of 'cryptomatriarchy' within patriarchal structures of social organisation, i.e. female power, particularly that of mothers of adult sons, within the domestic context. Women-only groups in all three regions commented on the problems regarding mother-in-law's power and interference, accordingly, which, on a wider level, suggests a continuous relevance of patriarchal, extended family structures as basis for social and economic security.

Crypto-matriarchy refers to matriarchal features within classic patriarchal societies, which are not immediately obvious to outsiders. Accordingly, in extended, classic-patriarchal families, women can exert great influence and power over internal family affairs during the later stages of a life-cycle, i.e. once mothers of adult sons. This includes dominance over the younger women of the household and a voice in the 'family council'.

The following findings stand out specifically for **Kukës**:

- Adult groups most strongly referenced the need for social change in Kukës, but also cited difficulties coping with such change. They provided specific examples of young people who had changed their lives for the better upon experiencing a change in their social environment.

- Drug related offences were the most frequently referenced type of crime in this region, closely followed by references to domestic and other forms of violence both as a risk factor and a crime, depending on perspective.
- Contextual, structural factors such as poverty and a lack of work opportunities were seen as cause for youth crime in every FGD in this area, but inequality and conspicuous consumption were also seen as a driving factor for crime.
- Frustrations were voiced over the lack of appropriate infrastructure and school programs to support youth, as well as over a high level of corruption, indicating a strong lack of trust in institutions.
- The impact of bullying was discussed by adults and young people alike. The group of young people connected this to concerns over the impact of mental health issues as factors increasing vulnerability and risk.
- Discussions around music preferences suggested that hip-hop music was seen as either a cause of crime or threat by professionals and adults, but as a creative escape route from harsh realities by young people.
- Notably, family and kinship groups and values were assigned a strong yet ambivalent role as both a cause for, and source of protection from, crime. This was evident in both gendered control and pressure simultaneously. This indicates the perpetuation of strong heteronormative, patriarchal norms underpinning local forms of social organisation.
- ‘Dysfunctional’ and ‘divorced’ families were cited as a risk factor, indicative of heteronormative, patriarchal familism. The prevalence of such norms can act as a self-fulfilling prophecy in stigmatising those situated outside what is perceived as standard family and kinship ideal-types.
- Relatedly, the groups also pointed to domestic violence within families, both, as a crime and as a risk factor, with more references from young people and women only groups than the mixed parents’ group.
- The prevalence of strongly heteronormative, patriarchal gender norms and related role expectations and social pressures was prominent overall. Women and girls were associated with internal, private spaces as guardians of family honour, men as the sole income provider, sometimes regardless of source. Both women and men emerged as potential replicators of such cultural gender role expectations and social norms, but also as potential agents of discontent with the associated social and family pressures.

The sociological concept of **Conspicuous Consumption** indicates an eye-catching display of luxury items (e.g. fast cars, gold necklaces etc) to suggest economic success (disposable income and accumulated wealth), thereby heightening social prestige (Veblen 2009 [1899]). Contemporary updates of this theory suggest that such display is more likely in social groups fending off poverty assumptions and in emerging economies than among social groups with established wealth (Charles et al. 2009).

In this analysis, statements highlighting the appeal of fast cash and flashy display of wealth acquired by whatever means, communicated through role models in the neighbourhood or online,

The following findings stand out specifically for **Shkoder**, arguably revealing more ‘urban’ themes compared to the more kinship-based system of social obligations identified for Kukës, above:

- Young people here were most vocal of any region regarding the need for change, including in relation to supporting children at risk. They commented on both personal and social change, and the importance of a supportive environment for effecting individual, personal change.
- ‘Fast cash’ and significant financial gains was cited as three times as important a factor as poverty, in enticing young people into crime.
- Notably, there was an emphasis on the role of older, criminal peers as models of social status and success, and the interlinked role of neighbourhood ‘street life’.

- The young people also referenced the usefulness of constructive peer support more than in other regions, while showing critical understanding of the potential for detrimental influence.
- The young people in particular discussed mental health issues as potential factors contributing to vulnerability, highlighting the need to feel a sense of belonging and commenting on school psychologists not always being available.
- Social media (including hip-hop video consumption online) was felt by adults to deliver harmful content to young people which might put them at risk.
- Family and patriarchal role pressures were also felt to play a role in causing vulnerability and driving young people into crime, raised most prominently in relation to the theme of domestic violence. However, in comparison to Kukës where family allegiance appeared imperative, allegiances beyond the family also played an important role.
- Domestic violence and other forms of violence were cited both as crimes and as risk factors by all groups in Shkoder, showing heightened concern and awareness in this region.
- Young people in Shkoder differed in their music preferences from the other regions and the findings of a parallel, anonymous music preference survey administered among young workshop participants in the same city a few months later. Rather than listening to hip-hop, in this discussion they reported liking classical and rock music, while suggesting that hip-hop was the genre of those having problems with behaviour and delinquency. As an exception to the rule, the analysis treats this finding with caution regarding potential sample or interviewer bias.

In summary for **Elbasan**, themes surrounding social status negotiations, gendered violence and internal migration stand out as follows:

- Young people called for change often, with no comment from adults, but there was a high level of disempowerment in the youth regarding their inability to create meaningful personal change within an unsupportive environment. However, they also pointed to peer groups as potential drivers for change whilst appearing to understand the nuances and complexities inherent in personal change and how challenging this might be.
- There was overall support for initiatives to facilitate change and a belief in their efficacy, as well as references to the benefits of mental health support for young people at risk, but no knowledge about any existing psychological support structures evident from the young people's group.
- Domestic violence was most frequently cited both as a crime and a risk factor in Elbasan, and the most frequently cited in any region, with rape and sexual violence in second place. Despite being frequently referenced by all other groups, the mixed parents' group did not comment on domestic violence which may point to a silencing of the issue around adult men.
- Rural – urban internal migration is seen to have produced a new class of vulnerable urban outsiders at risk of involvement in crime, more frequently referenced than in other regions.
- Professionals and the women only parent group regarded young people's materialistic displays of wealth and success as indicative of high social status, often obtained through criminal activity or exploitation. This understanding was repeated in the expression of attitudes towards hip-hop music videos online, which were felt to perpetuate these materialistic ideals.
- The women's only group cited a preference for hip-hop - the only adult group in the study to do so.
- Gender was presented in ambivalent ways, with representations ranging from extremely conservative to relatively progressive. Women were presented as drivers of some crime, although men were associated primarily with involvement in crime. Professionals noted that women receive more freedoms than previously.
- More than in any other region, adult and youth groups discussed the need for a sense of belonging to avert risks. This was linked to the importance of mental health support.

Hip-hop emerged as a promising engagement tool for exactly those young people considered at risk. Participatory, music-based, co-creative activities have already been developed and designed based on the findings presented in this report and from recommendations arising from earlier analysis rounds and an internal draft report. Such activities included a lyrics/beat-making workshop and, as a non-verbal story-telling alternative, soundscape composition workshops with young people in Kukës and Shkoder in summer/autumn 2022. These aimed beyond simply ‘taking off the street’ young people considered at risk. Rather, they intended to provide space and support for critical, creative, transformative experiences and solution-oriented explorations, guided by tasks structured according to specific **guiding themes** based on the findings from the FGDs. Implemented along a conceptual framework developed and presented as the FAM-strategy (see Schwandner-Sievers and Fisher, forthcoming), for which these activities served as proof-of-concept, these tasks invited young people to critically explore and tell their stories in reaching out beyond the social and cultural divisions prevalent in their everyday lives, to recognise and reflect on the social norms and their impact as prevalent in their home environment, and to imagining constructive futures.

Guiding Themes

1. *Gendered identity constructions; masculinity and vulnerable masculinities; gendered forms of exclusion and effects of domestic violence.*
2. *Mattering, belonging, social status anxieties.*
3. *Other boundaries of social exclusion/inclusion (e.g. ethnic; rural-urban internal migrants; environmental; return migrants; familist prejudices and ‘social honour’ concepts).*
4. *The role of the family / generational divide.*
5. *Experiences of bullying / mental health issues*

Recommendations

When designing and implementing ongoing and future activities aimed at supporting and strengthening the resilience of young people considered at risk of criminal exploitation in the target regions:

1. For any intervention at community level, local attitudes, perspectives, knowledge and needs should always be gauged before designing activities aimed at change. In order to be meaningful with a chance of sustainability, any such activities need to be closely tailored to local needs, situation, and context.
2. The FGD-methodology and NVIVO-led, critical discourse analysis provided in this report may serve as guidance for research to generate a critical and contextualised understanding of young people’s risk, including of relevant social norms that are not always made explicit in the spoken word.

Ideally, such method should be part of a method-mix, e.g. including individual music elicitation interviews and participatory action research (PAR).

3. Research should be expanded to include young people as co-researchers.
4. Research findings and analysis should be used to formulate 'guiding themes' (for application through the FAM-Strategy).
5. When designing activities, ethics and safeguarding for children/young people must always be prioritised. In order to do so, researchers and facilitators should be mindful and reflective about the potential adversarial factors within the local, social, and wider context identified in mind, such as specific family and peer pressures on, and expectations of, adolescent men and women; the wide-spread problem of domestic violence; and young people's lack of control over the ambient factors which underpin their vulnerability.
6. Egalitarian and co-creative means of engagement with young people should be advanced, both in working with these directly, and in capacity-building activities such as in training of teachers, youth workers, or in other training-of-trainers (ToT). Egalitarian forms of engagement with young people mean acknowledging and supporting participants' existing knowledge, skills, and intelligence, while simultaneously offering space and opportunity for co-creative activities which may enhance their confidence, expand their cognitive horizons, and amplify their critical voice.
7. While not losing sight of wider, geopolitical factors of exclusion, internal, societal structures of exclusion should be co-creatively addressed - as an underpinning cause of heightened risks - through the art works co-created. In this, facilitate young people's critical and reflective storytelling through their art work – telling about their everyday lives and experiences with societal divisions such as those based on gender and patriarchal norms, rural-urban or return migration, ethnic differences, and more.
8. The FAM-strategy should be used to structure and design co-creative arts/music-based activities around the relevant guiding themes identified to support young people's agency as potential drivers of change based, firstly, on their critical co-exploration and generation of an improved understanding of the issues in question; and, secondly, on the development of a creative and critical voice in artistically addressing and calling out the causal factors of their disadvantage as well as venturing, artistically, to bridge societal divisions.
9. Based on the creative outputs, critical youth voice could be amplified, e.g. through their art-works, co-creatively working towards making discrimination and marginalisation experiences (such as highlighted in the guiding themes and part of young people's everyday experiences) part of wider debates in Albania. Local radio or TV, social media, or an exhibition online or offline, could provide a platform for such amplification of youth voice.
10. Needs across generations should be considered, in contrast to a focus on young people alone; consider possibilities of including the parental and grandparental generation in activities directed at bridging gaps of understanding and communication between the generations, e.g. through music-based, joined FAM-led activities, aware of their human security needs (in lieu of a sufficient social welfare system).
11. Based on the existing base-line research and guiding themes identified, expand evidence base and proof-of-concept studies using the FAM-strategy, e.g. through different arts-based and pedagogic activities with youth aimed at strengthening their resilience (e.g. in relation to online abuse).

Introduction

This report presents findings from a systematic, focus-group based study of local perceptions and knowledge on young Albanians' risks of, and vulnerability to, SOC exploitation as well as on locally available protection and support structures. Apart from aiming to generate better insights about local understandings of risk factors and available recourse to support for young people considered at risk in the local communities, the study aimed to elucidate local experience with, and perceptiveness towards, implementing planned participatory music-based activities as feasible engagement and intervention tools intended to strengthen young people's resilience against criminal exploitation. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted in late 2021 and early 2022 with young people (14 to 16 years of age), parents/carers, and professionals working with young people in their communities, in the cities of Kukës, Shkoder and Elbasan – three municipal centres of Albanian regions that have been associated with heightened risks of criminal exploitation (e.g. IDM 2018).

Both Albanian and UK legislation define anyone under 18 years of age as a 'child' and, hence, subject to distinct protection rights. UK legal texts and practice professionals often use 'young person' or 'young people' interchangeably with 'child'/'children' specifically for teenagers to indicate recognition and respect for their agency, creativity, and cognitive abilities. In accordance with terminology established within the RAYS project and common in cocreative, developmental work with teenagers in, for example, educational and participatory arts-based development projects (e.g. Cooke and Soria-Donlan 2019), this report uses mostly the terms 'young person'/'young people', without, however, losing sight of the limitations and risks of this choice. This choice of terminology should not distract from young people's vulnerability to processes and structures outside their control and sometimes even comprehension, nor from safeguarding responsibilities which rest with adults, professionals, and the law. In this report, we use the terms 'child' or children occasionally, such as when emphasising social (parent-child) relations of responsibility and dependency, and the legal rights, including safeguarding, of young people (such as in 'child protection orders').

The use of the term 'young people' in this report indicates recognition and respect for their agency, creativity, and cognitive abilities. This choice of terminology should not distract from young people's vulnerability to processes and structures outside of their control or sometimes even comprehension, nor from the safeguarding responsibilities which rest with adults, professionals, and the law.

Some recent open sources have already looked into young Albanians' risks and vulnerabilities to criminal exploitation in their home communities. For example, UNICEF (Byrne et al., 2021) conducted desk research, expert and stakeholder interviews regarding the situation of children and adolescents in Albania recently. This study noted the existence of strong, existing legislative frameworks of protection which, however, had little effect on decreasing young people's vulnerabilities. These were found to result from factors such as social inequality, poverty, unemployment, job insecurity, rural-urban divisions and internal displacement, an ubiquitous mistrust in government and the government's low level of engagement in social issues, as well as patriarchal familism, and ethnic discrimination (specifically affecting the Roma community). Similarly, UNICEF's Child Notice Albania (Cunningham and Duci, 2021), again, based on desk research and intended to provide country guidance for asylum decisions abroad, noted the lagging implementation of otherwise commendable child protection laws in Albania. This document highlights additional cultural factors driving child trafficking risks, both in and from Albania:

Significant concerns have been raised about children’s unmet best interests in relation to child (including forced) marriage. Other serious reported *[sic]* harms from traditional practices were *[sic]* through blood feud, honour killing and sex-selective abortion (favouring boys). Instances were reported where children’s treatment as witnesses to crime have harmed them. Children face risks to their lives in other areas, including through trafficking, hazardous labour and in street situations, which interlink. Being a child victim of, or witness to, domestic violence has remained commonplace, but with signs of a decrease in its frequency. Concern has grown over children’s risks through online activity, especially exposure to pornography and sexual exploitation, potentially increasing during the COVID-19 outbreak. (Cuninghame and Duci, 2021: 16 - 17).

Open-source literature addressing questions pertaining to regular or irregular migration from Albania to the UK points to both criminal exploitation risks once arrived in the UK, (e.g. BBC 2022a; Holloway 2022; Home Office 2022; Sigona et al. 2017) and at the place of origin, in Albania. A much-cited Gallup report (2018; e.g. BBC 2022b), suggests that more than 60% of Albanian adults would like to leave their home country for reasons including corruption, low salaries, poor working conditions, and a low quality of life. More recent journalist findings, based on spot interviews, identified not just economic destitution (including youth unemployment), a general distrust in institutions, and disillusion with corrupt politicians, but also blood feuds, and a lack of pride in the locality, following unresolved societal conflicts and trauma reverberating still from communist times, as relevant factors explaining both out-migration and criminal exploitation risks (e.g. Daly 2022).

Various studies conducted with and about young Albanian migrants and asylum seekers in the UK point to the possibility that, in conjunction with the lack of opportunities at home, specific social and cultural factors might determine both risks and aspirations of young Albanians ending up in exploitative situations, both in Albania and in the UK (e.g. Allsopp et al. 2018; Asylos 2019; Holloway 2022). These studies also support the relevance of social and cultural risk factors including conservative gender expectations and the resulting pressures affecting both young men and young women in different ways; wider family strategies and considerations, often including both educational and economic hopes; as well as blood feud risks and related phenomena commonly associated with ‘Albanian traditions’. Allsopp et al. (2018), however, point to limitations of findings based on asylum seekers’ narratives when collected in the UK: it is methodologically difficult to distinguish between subjective recollections of experiences within the local home context and social environment, on the one hand, and a presentation of Self in often internalised, self-essentialising narratives which correspond to, and affirm, external stereotypes and assertions of ‘Albanian culture’ such as ubiquitously found in UK media and court rooms (cf. Schwandner-Sievers 2006, 2008).

Finally, two studies found suggest the cultural normalisation of crime as an aspirational pathway in disadvantaged local Albanian communities or even in Albanian society at large (IDM 2018; Kushi 2015). They suggest that such

Studies which highlight a cultural normalisation of crime point to the lack of alternative opportunities and patriarchal and hegemonic masculinity norms as illustrated in the saying “*Burgu është për burra*” (jail is for men) (Kushi 2015, para. 26)

normalisation of crime links to a lack of opportunities and reliable institutions in situations of social, economic and geographical marginalisation – incidentally, often including involuntary returnees from abroad (IDM 2018), because patriarchal and hegemonic masculinity norms and expectations flourish and prevail in just such economic contexts. These norms and expectations, accordingly, exert pressures on young men to serve as provider and to generate an income whatever the means. To illustrate such links, Kushi (2015, para. 26) cites ‘*Burgu është për burra* (jail is for men) [as] a long-used Albanian expression, [which is] also not far from the truth

today when male relatives or husbands wind up behind bars with little family commotion or shock.’ Rather than merely using culture as an explanation (and thus potentially entering the realm of stereotypes; cf. Kuper 2001: xi), Kushi (2015, para. 28) points to the ways in which such normalisation of crime arises from a ‘chaotic economic context, steeped in political corruption’ which ‘further shapes cultural expectations.’ This context ‘normalizes and justifies the notion that Albanian men should break laws and risk imprisonment so as to increase the status and wealth of their families.’ She further elaborates (para. 29):

Worst of all, such behaviour is rarely stigmatized, nor punished within [these] families. Males receive a free pass on illegal transgressions within their personal relations. At the same time, women are held up to impossible standards on social decorum and proper behaviour – culminating in a long list of often harmless activities that would eternally rain *turp* or ‘shame’ upon the family name. Hegemonic masculinity allows aggression and such transgressions on behalf of the man and sometimes even constructs their glorification.

Kushi (2015, para. 30) concludes that

[F]amilies and society aren’t doing the men any favours in accepting or failing to discourage illegal and violent behaviour. If men see illegal routes as more profitable, probable, and not rife with social stigma and punishments – they will aim for them, sacrificing educational investments and professional career paths along the way. They may also waste years of potentially productive years behind bars.

Many of these findings, Kushi (2015, para 33) admits, relied on anecdotal, albeit repeated, observations. Yet the mere possibility of a cultural normalisation of young men entering criminal pathways from specific regions in Albania identified in IDM (2018) raises challenging questions for any research project conducted within a wider, developmental framework aimed at supporting young people at risk and strengthening their resilience against exploitation while understanding the nature of adversity which they encounter in their home context. Overall, the open sources perused suggests that there appears to be a dearth of methodologically robust and systematically collected evidence about local, including the young people’s own, attitudes and perspectives on the causal factors putting them at risk of criminal exploitation within their home communities. Yet, no intervention aimed at change can expect to succeed without taking the knowledge and perspectives of those affected, by the situation in question, into account.

Data collection was based on primary research: listening to young people themselves, local parents (or other carers), community leaders, and youth work professionals in the target regions. FGDs were conducted in three selected regions of Albania, previously identified as hot spots for young Albanians’ vulnerability to criminal exploitation (IDM 2018). The findings to be presented partly support and complement, partly contradict, and overall expand, above assembled findings about young Albanians’ risk factors for criminal exploitation as suggested in the open sources available. Most importantly, they provide detailed and differentiated insights about locally specific situations, risks, aspirations, and support needs at micro-level. The findings of this study presented here have already informed the design and implementation of co-creative, arts-based participatory activities with young people as part of the RAYS project.

As with all research methods, there are also **limitations** with FGDs (Roller and Lavrakas, 2015: 112-13), which any analysis needs to take into account (for details, see methodology section below). Yet it was part of a wider method mix (see figure 1 below) which served to contextualise its findings. This included, firstly, music elicitation interviews with former Albanian offenders in Albanian prisons and the community sharing their live stories first-hand (details in forthcoming Working Paper by Levell; and Levell and Schwandner-Sievers, forthcoming).

Secondly, it included a literature review and survey on young Albanian music preferences, exploring the perspectives, practices, and debates, specifically around hip-hop in wider Albanian society. Together, these research components, including the FGDs, affirmed the relevance of hegemonic masculinity norms and expectations in heightening risks as indicated by Kushi (2015) earlier, while simultaneously providing more nuanced insights and evidence. The FGDs and hip-hop research, in particular, provided original evidence on patterns and discourses of social exclusion in Albania in regard to heightened risks, which – together with the music elicitation findings about shared patterns of vulnerability evident from individual life histories - formed the basis of developing ‘guiding themes’ for co-creative, participatory arts-based activities with young people at risk.

These earlier academic research endeavours, conducted from late 2021 onwards, culminated in participatory action research (PAR) including music-based activities, which subsequently took place in summer 2022. PAR activities included soundscape composition, and lyrics/beat-making workshops (for detailed reports, see forthcoming Working Papers by Schwandner-Sievers et al.; and Berry). As co-creative activities, also these research components provided complementary, affirmative, and reflective-ethnographic insights from working with young, local people in Kukës and Shkoder considered at risk. They engaged the young people involved as explorers of their environment and narrators of their own stories through specific task-guided, sensory (soundscape composition) and verbal (lyrics) methods designed along the ‘guiding themes’ identified.

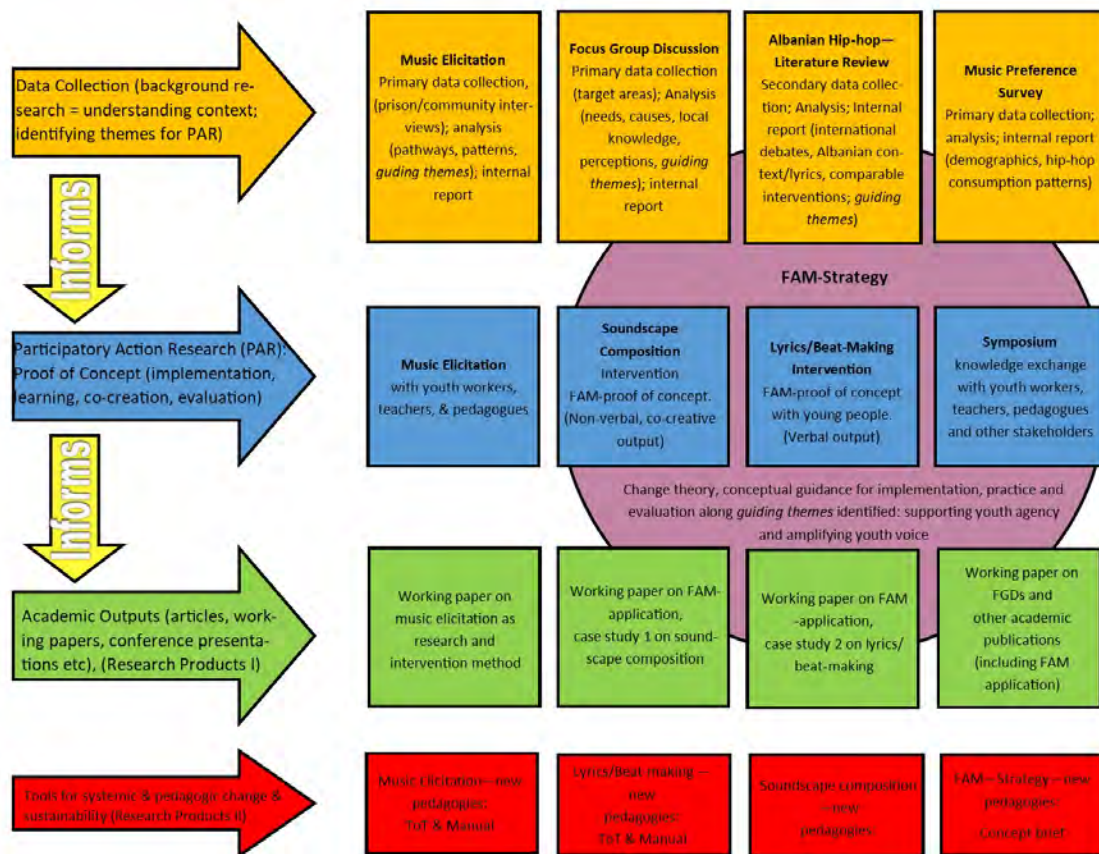


FIGURE 1: OVERVIEW OF RAYS PARTICIPATORY ARTS (MUSIC) – BASED RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Findings from the earlier research components (FGDs, music elicitation) helped structure the tasks offered as part of the PAR activities, thereby guiding (but not prescribing) explorations across social boundaries of exclusion

identified as underpinning risk (see Redwood et al. 2022 on balancing structured tasks and participants' autonomy of choice; also, forthcoming Working Papers by Schwandner-Sievers et al; and Berry).

The PAR-components served as proof-of concept case studies for an epistemological technique, the FAM-Strategy (see forthcoming concept paper by Schwandner-Sievers and Fisher). This strategy was developed in response to the question of how the arts can serve both cognitive and social transformation in development projects, while supporting youth agency and amplifying their voice (Cooke and Soria-Donlan 2019; Mkwanzani and Melis Cin 2021). It further responded to the challenge arising from the suggested 'normalisation' of crime in some Albanian communities (Kushi, 2015; IDM 2018). The term derives from 'Fam', a friendly way of addressing peers in hip-hop culture. It also relates to the classic technique of 'defamiliarisation' associated with tracing cognitive transformations through the arts, where implicit norms and understandings can be made explicit as a basis for change (e.g. Van den Oever 2010; Myers 2011); as well as to 'familiarisation' as empathy-building across social or cultural divisions, used as a counterpoint to self-reflective 'defamiliarisation' of one's own cultural self-evidencies and norms in social anthropological inquiry. Such theoretical conceptualisation of the PAR-activities allows for designing, documenting, and evaluating the effects of these interventions in ways which will be discussed in some details in the immediately forthcoming working papers in this series.

The academic research components briefly described and visualised in above figure 1, of which this FGD study provided the baseline, were an integral part to a much wider range of developmental activities conducted by the Palladium team at large. In line with the overall ethos of the RAYS project, these emphasised local ownership, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) awareness, and they included activities aimed at creating opportunities and building various (not just arts- based) skills supporting employability, critical thinking, and youth voice (see RAYS 2023).

Within the wider array of RAYS activities and complementary research, the FGDs deliver baseline research insights and original voice about the social environment within which crime and exploitation risks arise. The social-anthropologically informed, thematic discourse analysis provided for the data presented, based on NVIVO and highly differentiated coding, evidences local 'webs of significances' (Geertz 1973) in both quantifiable and qualitative ways: revealing, for example, the officially underreported prevalence of domestic violence risks in wider society (quantitatively) as well as contextually-specific meanings of concepts and metaphors used that point to locally shared ways of seeing the world. Such locally shared ways (or 'culture') might even sometimes inadvertently reproduce the risks of criminal exploitation that are recognised as affecting young people within the communities in which the interviews were conducted. This was evident in the ways in which particular metaphors of speech were used, interpreted as part of the discourse analysis presented in this report. For example, when local respondents discussed parental attitudes towards young people who had been exploited and engaged in criminal activities, they often used an 'open vs closed door' metaphor which revealed gendered forms of inclusion and exclusion resonating with Levell's findings through music elicitation (Levell, forthcoming; Levell and Schwandner-Sievers, forthcoming; cf. Kushi 2015). These confirm the effect of adverse masculinity constructions involving some form of acceptance – albeit presented with qualms rather than outright endorsement – of criminal activities for boys.

In summary, the research and analysis presented in this report served as a precursor for designing locally meaningful, arts-based, specifically music-based, co-creative and participatory engagement activities aimed at supporting local youth resilience to criminal exploitation in a locally targeted and meaningful manner. Specifically, and as part of a wider method mix, the FGD research component provided the evidence for developing relevant guiding themes to structure the tasks offered as part of these activities and – without losing sight of the

contextual and structural factors disadvantaging these young people outside their control – supporting them in recognising, calling out and challenging (Mkwanzani and Melis Cin 2021), the local patterns of social exclusion, risk and vulnerability identified.

FGD Research Design and Methodology

The RAYS Focus Group Discussion (FGD) project was the first research activity implemented by the programme team in late 2021 and early 2022 with the **aim** to develop an understanding of local specificities, knowledge, capacities, and vulnerabilities in advance of designing meaningful, targeted interventions with young people at risk of criminal exploitation. Conducting FGDs in three different geographical locations, the municipalities of Kukës, Shkoder and Elbasan, while designed to harvest perspectives from different stakeholders (young people; parents/carers; and professionals working with young people), it enabled comparative analysis of the data generated to highlight specificities, differences and similarities between these regions in local perceptions, knowledge and understanding of risk factors, challenges, support structures, experiences and potentials of young people and those meant to support them.

The **objectives** of this project were defined as follows:

5. Identifying existing local understandings of risk factors; local perceptions of sources of security and protection; as well as of the characteristics and situations of young people at risk of being drawn into pathways to crime in this locality.
6. Mapping locally effective and ineffective structures, practices, strategies, or programmes aimed at identifying, communicating with, and supporting marginalised and at-risk young people.
7. Identifying local knowledge and familiarity with participatory arts-based work with marginalised and at-risk young people through music.
8. Identifying communication and music preferences of young people at risk.

The **data analysis** presented in this report offers differentiated insights about local knowledge, perceptions and attitudes relating to crime risk, vulnerabilities, protection factors and support structures (obj. 1 and 2), and about music as a feasible engagement and intervention tool (obj. 3 and 4), with some unexpected findings emerging. The focus on music, specifically, is in line with the wider Bournemouth University led research design on arts-based, specifically music and sounds based, participatory interventions with young people and the persons around them to support imagination and opportunities outside criminal pathways.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) – sample, scope, and method

FGDs were conducted in each of the three locations, with more than 200 respondents participating in total. The ideal group sizes, originally suggested to range from four to ten people, proved unfeasible when the research attracted numerous participants in the location eager to share their understanding and perspectives. The outcome was that actual focus group sizes ranged from 14 to 33 participants - considerably larger than anticipated. Group composition relied on project networking in situ and was facilitated by local project partners, schools, social services, and municipalities. FGDs usually lasted between 3 and 4 hours, including lunch breaks.

Originally conceptualised by Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers and remotely supervised at Bournemouth University (during the Covid-19 pandemic), the FGDs were locally implemented and conducted by Objective A Lead, Klodiana Thartori, in Kukës; and, under her supervision, locally, by trained local researchers (Shkoder, Elbasan), in November 2021. Following successful ethics approval at Bournemouth University, four FGDs took place in each of the three municipality, composed as follows:

- ‘Professionals’: a variety of professionals from different institutions and roles locally working with youth at risk (including teachers, local social services staff, representatives from education offices, public health, police, child protection workers, representatives of youth CSOs, and social workers).
- ‘Mixed Parents’: a gender-mixed group of parents and carers, such as grandparents, from the local community.
- ‘Women’: adult women, mostly parents and guardians, formed as a distinct focus group after male dominance and female silence became apparent in the mixed groups.
- ‘Young people’, mostly between 14 to 16 years old, selected by the local RAYS facilitator to present a mix of abilities and vulnerabilities (mindful of stigmatisation risks).

All twelve of the FGDs were recorded. Additionally, the local researchers were asked to produce research reporting notes (summaries, including general impressions) immediately following the interviews, which proved an invaluable source to capture early insights into the specific research situation and added important background to the analysis in conjunction with analysis of the translated transcripts of the recorded FGDs.

RAYs’ MERL representative (Merita Mece) attended all FGDs to inform a parallel, wider ‘baseline study’ for the project overall. Results produced in her reports sat outside the specific BU-led research stream and are not replicated here.

The discussion followed an indicative theme guide based on semi-structured, open questions and interactive elicitations aimed at initiating responses (see appendix 1). The facilitators asked open-ended questions along the themes indicated, which were mapped against the research objectives, to encourage the flow of conversation. To mitigate the eventuality of the flow of conversation stopping, this theme guide included optional probes to trigger discussion if and where required. The original conceptualisation furthermore foresaw interactive exercises with all groups. However, these were not received well by the adult groups who considered these as ‘not serious’, and a more conservative questioning style had to be adopted. The FGDs with young people included interactive exercises to trigger free discussion. These successfully relied on the creativity and expertise of the implementing partners, who adjusted engagement techniques spontaneously and skilfully to generate data that responded to the underpinning questions.

As with all research methods, there are also **limitations** with FGDs (Roller and Lavrakas, 2015: 112-13), which any analysis needs to take into account. Group dynamics and environment as well as the moderators’ skills can all play a role in skewing results into a specific direction. The results presented in this analysis are thus indicative of local knowledge, perspectives and attitudes only. Furthermore, focus groups on sensitive topics such as crime may run the risk of potentially reporting hearsay within local communities rather than original findings emanating from those at risks or already in exploitative situations. To mitigate the effects of such risk, firstly, great care was taken by the facilitators to include participants from different social strata in the adult groups and present a mix of abilities and vulnerabilities in the groups of young people (mindful of stigmatisation risks). Secondly, the data analysis remained mindful of such risks, for example in paying attention to situational observations harvested from above-mentioned ‘reporting notes’. Thirdly, and most importantly, this baseline research stood not alone as part of a wider basket of research activities which mutually affirm the findings presented in the following.

The research data generated are securely held on Palladium’s secure SharePoint site in accordance with Bournemouth University’s data protection plan, including access limitations and limitations on retention, as agreed by the university’s ethics committee. The recordings were transcribed and translated by Palladium’s Albanian-speaking research assistant (Stela Kosova) by March 2022 and preliminary results presented in Tirana in April 2022. Subsequently, a qualitative research analyst (Nan Sheppard) at Bournemouth University conducted a meticulous coding and analysis exercise using NVivo software. Where a need for more precise translations arose around specific cultural metaphors and concepts, this was followed up with Palladium’s Albanian-speaking research assistant (Idila Ibrahim) from April 2022.



FACILITATOR QUESTIONS WORD CLOUD

Qualitative Analysis – highlights and limitations

The research analysis software application employed, NVivo, allowed a thematic review of the FGDs, systematically itemising references into codes appropriate to the purposes of the project. NVivo enhances the qualitative research process by coding the data to allow indexing, retrieval and comparison of classifications and attributes such as group types and regions, to examine the relationships between themes and expand analytical avenues (NVivo 2023). Coding for the FGDs was initially performed under headings determined in pre-analysis discussions:

- a) Crime and Social Status
- b) General Socio-Economic Risk Factors
- c) Family and Gender Roles
- d) Institutional Experiences and Experiences with Participatory Arts
- e) Media, Music, Culture, and Identity

These five themes were then expanded into sub-codes as appropriate, and additional themes arising during analysis were added, with 228 themes analysed in total (see appendix 2 for the full breakdown of analysed themes). As the duration of each FGD was approximately the same, each facilitated by trained leaders, we would expect the findings to be a good representation of the qualitative data. Where concerns were raised about potential facilitator bias or unexpected findings, these were discussed within the analysis team to ensure that the data were as reliable as possible, results treated with caution and, if necessary, further queries were made.

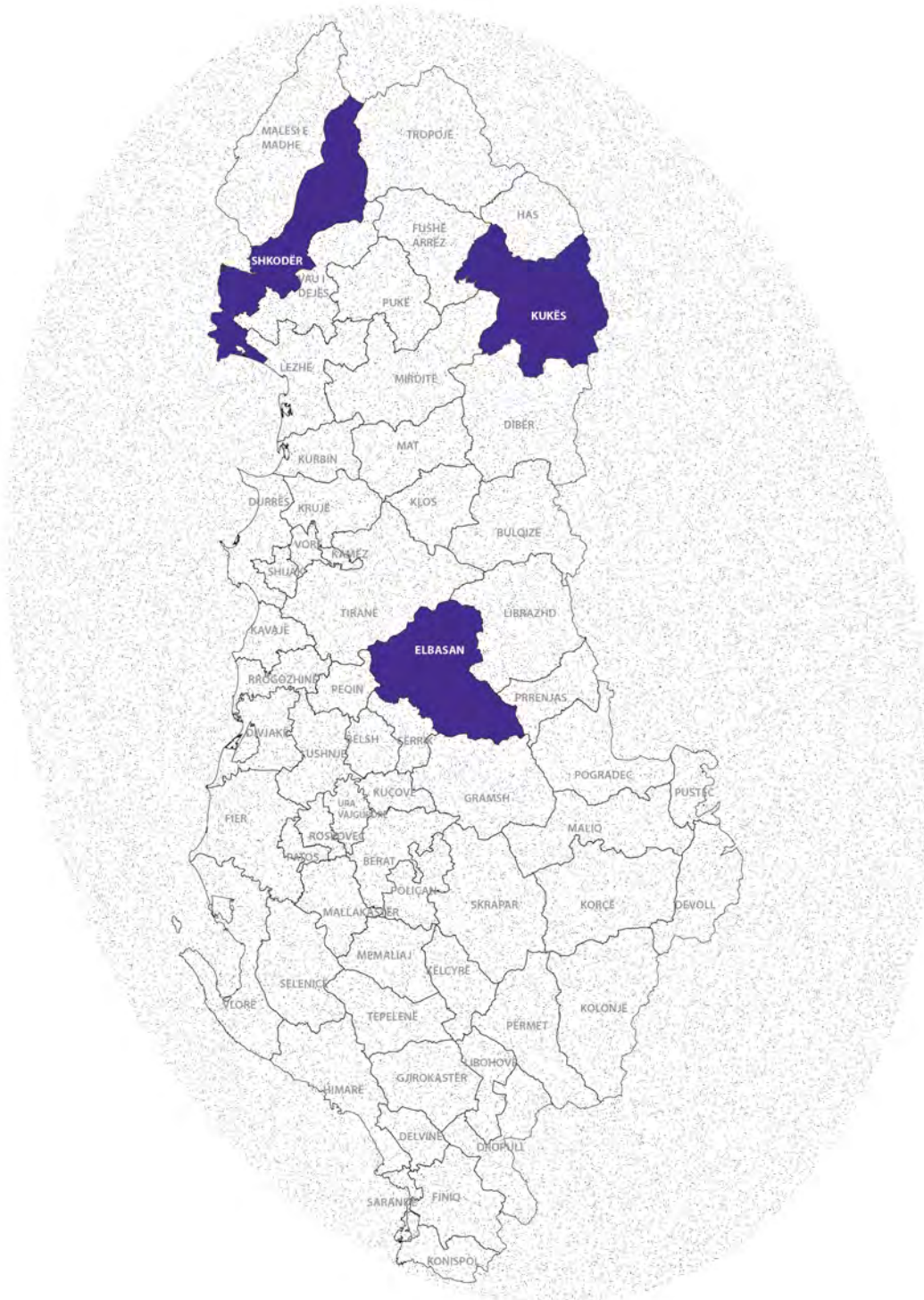
Qualitative data can provide a more in-depth and holistic narrative of issues than statistics alone. They can help identify gaps in knowledge on risks and threat perceptions while allowing a correlation with vectors such as region, gender, age, etc., thus generating more locally sensitive, meaningful analysis and recommendations (Denscombe 2021). For example, in the FGDs, domestic violence was referenced in discussions on crime more often than any other type of crime, which stands in contrast with official statistics on crime (see appendices 3 and 4 to compare). The discussions on domestic violence were also nuanced and showed an understanding of both causes and risks inherent in exposure to such crime. A disparity was also evident between mixed and women-only adult groups where domestic violence was less discussed in the presence of adult men in the FGDs, and the disparity may point to a silencing or under-reporting of domestic violence in official statistical reporting. The in-depth discussion in women-only FGDs highlighted the need for a better understanding of this type of violence and potential risks and effects of exposure.

Qualitative analysis can also pay deeper attention to metaphors and meaning. For example, the analysis brought to the fore the relevance of an 'open door' vs. 'closed door' metaphor which may allow a better understanding of how potential social exclusion and normalisation of crime within some families might be situated and gendered. Similarly, attention to such qualitative detail allowed a breakdown of 'bullying' into distinct types of specific meaning within the local context and language during the thematic analysis of the original FGDs transcripts in Albanian. The overall prevalence of references to 'psychological' bullying in the form of teasing, mocking and shaming, may point to culturally specific forms of social control that could be as far-reaching and critical as the effects of physical bullying, with negative mental health consequences and increased vulnerabilities recognised for young people exposed to shame. By the same token, it was also noted that references to 'education' did not always refer to an academic schooling, but often covered forms of primary and other secondary socialisation. Consequently, 'education' themes were further broken down into sub-thematic coding for female and male genders which included academic, family education, life smarts, manners, morals and values, and self-worth. Sharp contrasts between education expectations for boys and girls emerged. These findings are discussed in more detail further below.

The limitations of qualitative analysis include the consideration that concepts can be highly subjective and acquire different meaning according to a specific socio-cultural context. For example, what is understood to constitute 'good parenting' or 'crime' may vary between parents, families, and different generations just as much as between different cultures. There may be silence on important issues, where internal matters are never discussed. The emic view, i.e. the perspective from within the local context and its shared understanding of specific words and phrases, may be different from an etic perspective, i.e. that of the researchers and any outsider to this context (Eastmond and Selimovic 2012), for example (and as mentioned above), the emergence that 'education' from a local, emic, perspective might refer to 'socialising into gendered cultural expectations' (as an etic, analytical concept).

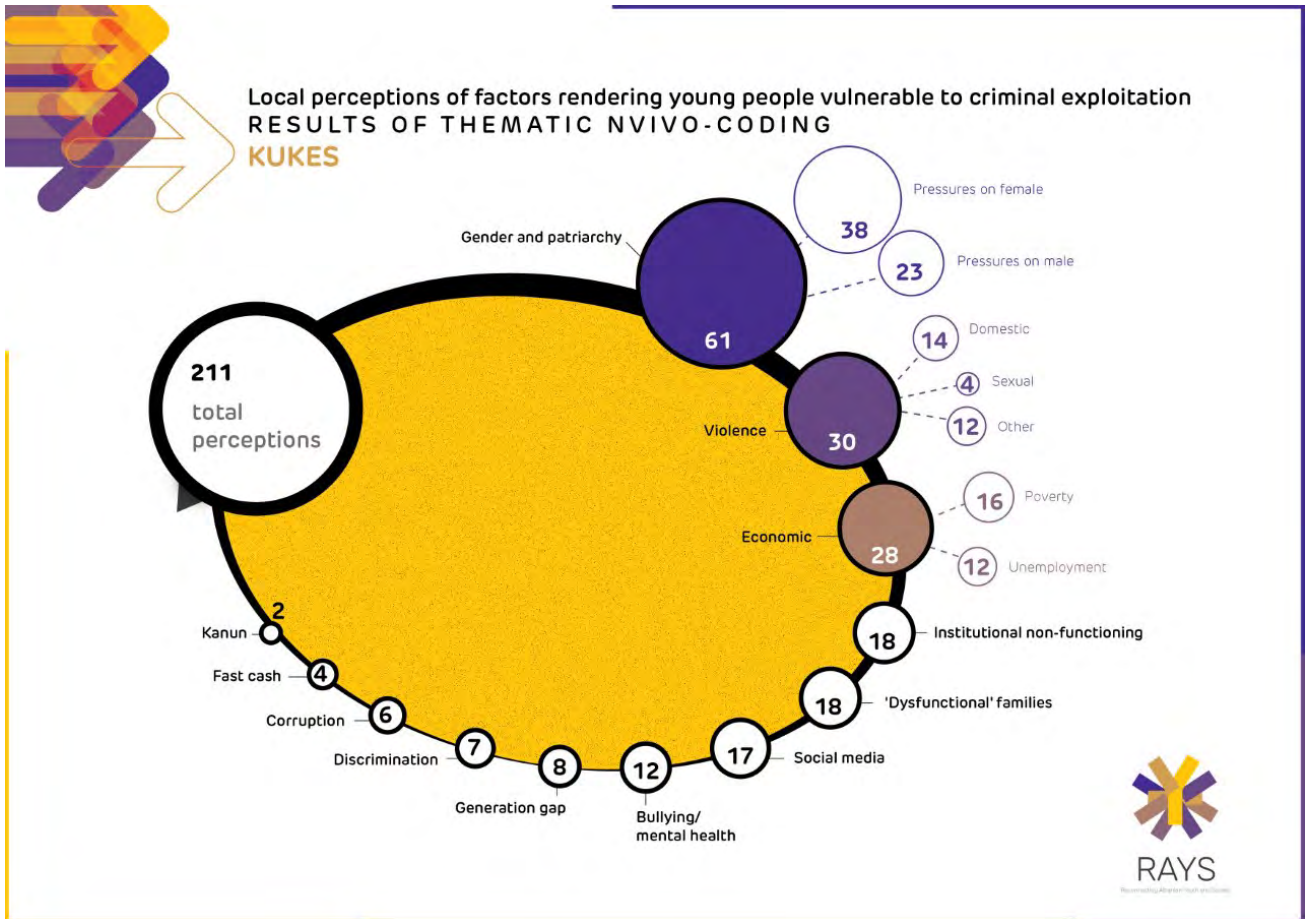
The results of the analysis are presented in the chronological order in which the FGDs were conducted in the different cities (Kukës, Shkoder and Elbasan). The report gives an overview of key trends and patterns found in

the three research regions, as presented by adults and young people. The concluding analysis highlights relevant similarities and differences encountered in the three different settings and points to the implications of the findings on the planned intervention activities. It teases out distinct guiding themes which have since informed RAYS intervention activities and project design in line with the parallel developed FAM strategy (see Schwandner-Sievers and Fisher, forthcoming). Text quotes in the regional sections are from FGD participants of those regions. In the analysis running through, n= numbers in brackets denote the frequency of themes referenced.



Regional Analysis

Kukës



REGIONAL ANALYSIS INFOGRAPHIC, KUKËS

Kukës is a city and municipality situated in the high northern Albanian mountains with some cross-border orientation towards Kosovo. This is a town planned and built during the communist period, which absorbed many of its citizens from the surrounding mountain villages and can rely on links to the surrounding high-mountain, rural, subsistence economy. Here, patriarchal family and kinship emerged as paramount forms of social organisation underpinning both resilience and vulnerability, with a generational divide in music and communication particularly evident.

Focus group information:

Mixed Parents: unknown

Professionals: 17

Women: 20 in total, aged 30 and above, almost all mothers

Young People: 33

Local understanding of general risk factors

Everyone goes to school, and everyone is unemployed - WK

Across the FGDs in Kukës, poverty was the most frequent factor cited as a driver for crime (n=16). But while poverty was the most highlighted, all groups commented on inequality (n=5) and affluence (n=9) as contributing economic factors, including the spoiling of young people by providing them with excessive materialistic possessions, which others in their peer group could not afford. This desire for and display of flashy items seen in young people, as exemplified by their role models,

whether online or in the community, was a major concern in both the mixed parents' and women's groups (n=9), and while the youth group argued that poverty was the main cause of crime (n=5), they too pointed to themes of ostentatiously displayed new affluence (coded under 'conspicuous consumption') as potential drivers. ("Conspicuous consumption" is a sociological concept which links social disadvantage with the desire to demonstrate materialistic success ostentatiously – explained further in the Comparative Analysis and Conclusion section).

Some of them even take loans just to get the latest phones - WK

The group of professionals identified a range of other socio-economic risk factors that increased the likelihood of young people engaging in crime. They highlighted issues such as poor engagement in education (n=3), dysfunctional families (n=7), and detrimental peer influence (n=6). The parent group mentioned the role of families but felt that external societal, economic, political and technological factors were more significant and directly related to family breakdown. Professional and women's only groups cited homelessness in relation to divorce as a contributing factor (n=2), indicative of potentially familist

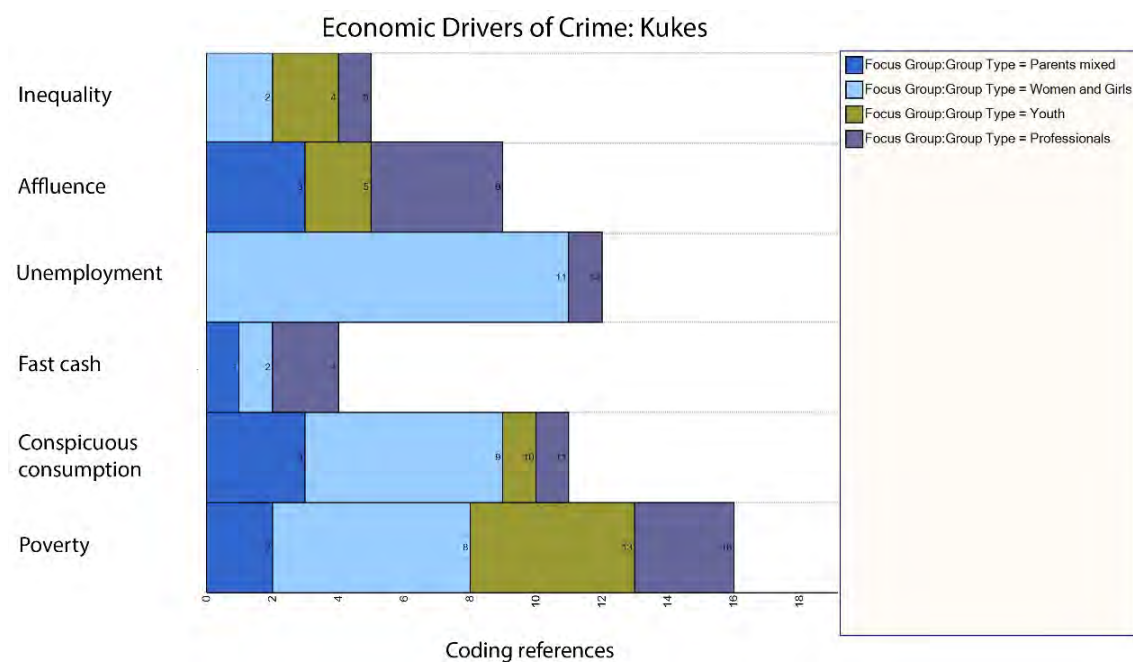
If you are divorced, you are despised by others - WK

We have an expression that says: 'Excessive wealth pulls your eyes out'. In many cases we have said that when you have it all, you can be spoiled - PK

stigmatisation. They commented on the adverse influences in social media (n=4), which professionals also pointed to as a factor in early sexualisation recruitment into organised crime (n=8). The women's group had similar concerns but in one instance, argued that too much unstructured free time was one of the main causes of crime in youth. Unemployment was most cited by women as a source of poverty (n=11). Young people also mentioned psychological issues (anxiety/depression) exacerbated by drug use (n=3), and domestic violence and its effects on young people in the family (n=4). This concern with domestic violence may point to heightened vulnerabilities in young

people originating from families in which domestic violence is prevalent. The qualitative data showed an in-depth awareness of the psychological effects and different types of domestic violence, and also pointed to potential under-reporting and silencing of the issue in the region. Here, domestic violence was referred to both as a crime and as a risk factor.

Economic risk factors



Overall, while poverty and unemployment were mentioned as the greatest risk factors, there was also agreement across all groups that institutional weaknesses (n=20) in offering structured engagement for young people were a major factor explaining young people entering onto pathways into crime and in the desire to migrate. In this, the reproduction of a conservative, yet ambivalent family ideal, was also a factor. Family emerged as a factor of both support and control, and ideas about dysfunctional and divorced families suggested stigmatisation risks for those falling outside the norm of familism.

The concept of change

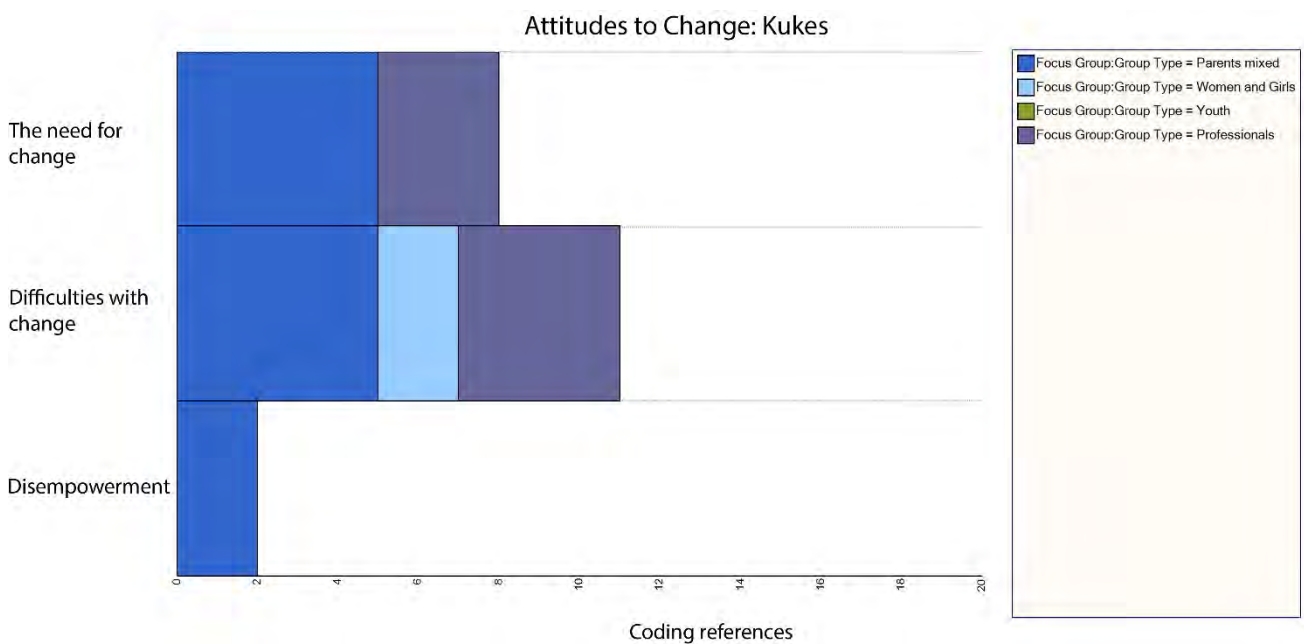
The mixed parents' group and professionals were the two groups who commented on the need for change in Kukës (n=8), and those in the mixed parents' group named songs which they felt spoke to their feelings about change, suggesting that using music as a tool for facilitating discussions about change could be useful in this region. The parents also discussed specific cases where they had seen change which was felt to be positive in young people brought about by changes in environments and educational culture, including where young people's talents had been encouraged. All three adult groups also discussed difficulties with change, including intergenerational misunderstandings (n=11), implying the need for intergenerational communication tools. There was also mention of the feelings of disempowerment related to the inability to create what was seen as necessary changes in the environment as basis for behavioural change (n=2). Young people did not reference change in any way in Kukës.

There was far more focus on the discussion of social or environmental change (n=9) rather than personal, individual (n=3) change in Kukës. There was also more focus on what were perceived by adult groups as the negative effects of the social environment on the individual (n=6) rather than discussing beneficial changes which might be effected in a supportive environment (n=3 total:

n=1 mixed parents; n=2 professionals). Both of the comments by professionals in this regard expanded on the changes seen in specific young people who had been sent to other countries and had undergone what were seen as constructive personal changes in personality and ambition. There were no comments in Kukës regarding the inability of an individual to change, whereas in Elbasan this was brought up in the young people’s group, as will be discussed below.

Now he has returned to Albania and works in a German call center where he earns 5000 euros per month. Imagine how they solved it. With a little investment you can change the life of another - PK

Attitudes to change



Institutional issues & experience with participatory arts

Professionals in Kukës mentioned an absence of sport and recreational activities combined with a deficiency in appropriate infrastructure (n=3). They argued that a lack of appropriate school programmes contributed to the exclusion of young people and resulted in school dropouts (n=3). Professionals also cited budget issues and poor coordination and information sharing between institutions (n=19). The non-functioning of institutions (n=18), along with perceptions of corruption (n=6) and the fear of reprisals (n=3), were seen by professionals to contribute to institutional weaknesses in offering structured engagement for young people. The closure of Havzi Nela Vocational Branch school and the withdrawal of courses by the Center for Children in the Municipality were deemed to be damaging. Professionals highlighted the usefulness of sport, art, and music initiatives, particularly in focusing on the uniqueness and talent in young people (n=10). Both the parents and women groups were fully supportive of vocational and educational training (n=20); however, the former were sceptical about development projects in general. Parents referenced corruption within institutions (n=5) as a factor in this perceived non-functioning. They argued that a lack of appropriate school programmes contributed to the exclusion of young people and resulted in poor attendance.

Courses are closed due to this lack of coordination - PK

The police are very disappointing today, and there is a lot of corruption - MPK

Participatory arts interventions were welcome but there was felt to be limited availability and infrastructure in place to support them. The young people highlighted a lack of services and activities to fill their spare time and that engaging in recreational activities and developing new skills was key in preventing deviancy. They also stated that there was no computer access at schools and only some had

computers at home creating a digital divide, although they all had access to the internet through their mobile devices. Parents commented on the amount of time young people spent on their mobile phones (n=7). These along with poor engagement in activities and schooling (n=5) were felt to be major factors felt to explain why young people might enter into pathways of crime. In addition, throughout the 3 regions, Kukës was the only one in which prison was raised as an option for correcting lawless behaviour (n=2), although there was still a majority of support for other options such as re-education and mental health support (n=14).

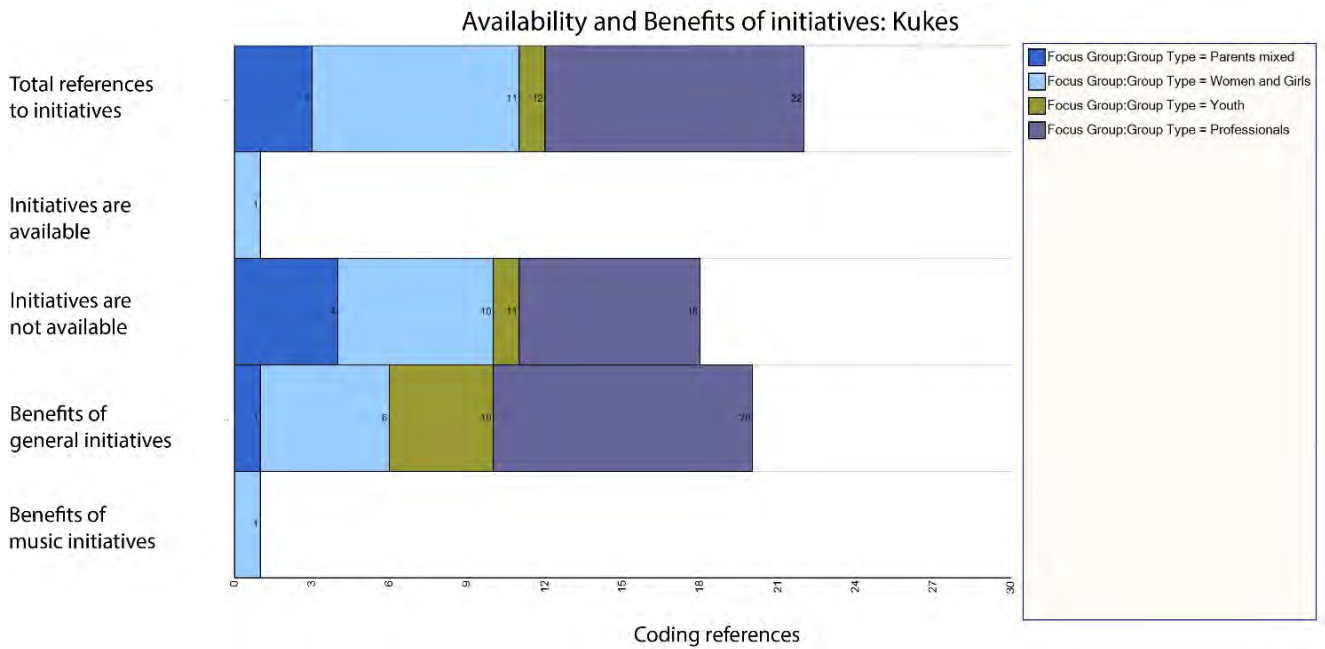
I feel like I am a puppet commanded by those invisible threads that symbolize politics. I often feel powerless to change anything - MPK

Today people get fake diplomas and that is misfortune. You can get a degree but do not get knowledge - MPK

Given these perceptions of how institutions are currently operating in Kukës, the desire for change expressed by participants might not be surprising. Overall, responses of all four FGDs suggested that skills, sports and arts-based interventions that are meaningful and locally sustainable (in contrast to temporary development projects only) would be highly welcome (n=20); yet parents and professionals frequently cited the lack of such initiatives and resources in Kukës (n=17). There was little comment on the benefits of music initiatives,

as these had not been experienced in Kukës. Notably, there was apparent disillusionment with previous development projects leading to distrust in externally introduced initiatives. This makes a locally led and adapted character as well as long-term sustainability of any project initiatives, imperative.

Availability and benefits of initiatives



Music

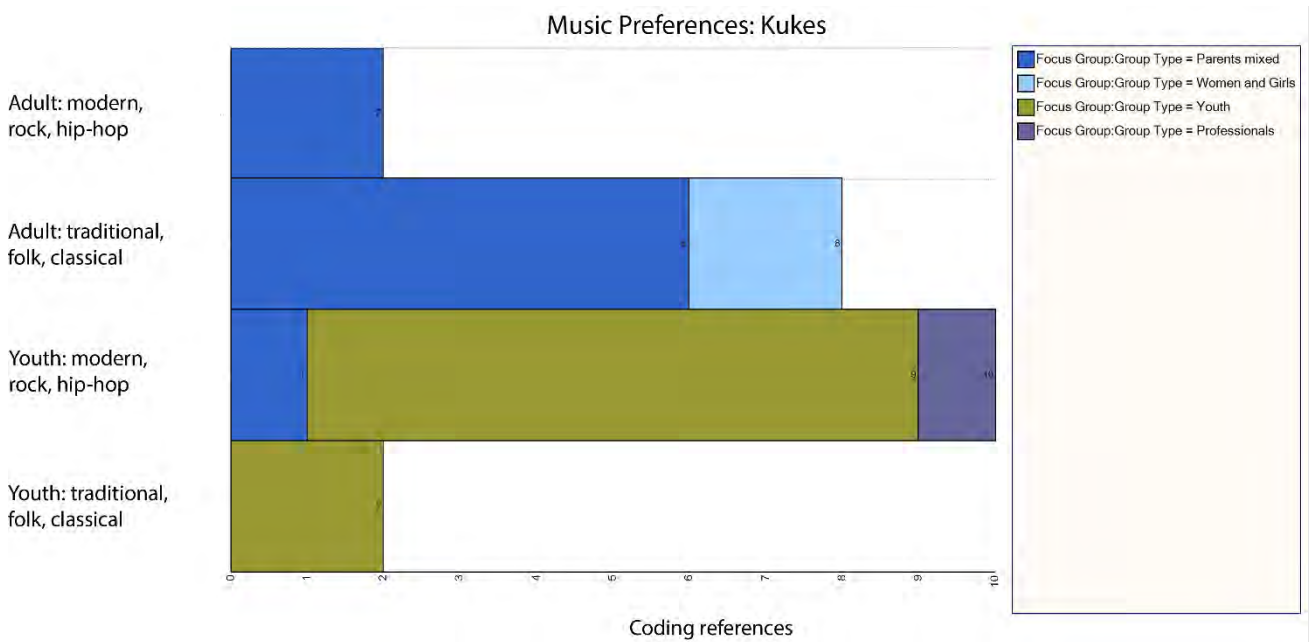
Overall, a generational divide between young people's and adult music preferences was most evident in Kukës compared with other regions. Adults in the mixed parents' and women only groups preferred traditional music (n=8) compared with modern genres (n=2). The group of young people generally preferred modern genres (n=8 according to the young people themselves; n=2 according to adult commenters) with few references to traditional preference (n=2). The FGD of professionals emphasised that hip-hop artists serve as negative role models for young people who they suggested would aim to imitate these artists in both conduct and dress code (n=3). The parents' group, both mixed and female, abstained from much comment, yet the women's FGD indicated their different music taste (folklore, traditional) (n=6). Arguably, parental responses were less judgemental than those of professionals, and while they disapproved of hip-hop, some indicated a preference for rock music which could help them express their frustrations concerning social and political issues (n=2).

I saw my son one day listening to this kind of music. I asked him what music it was and he did not answer. He stopped the music. I took the USB and told him I would remove these songs and put folk songs in it. In my apartment there is no chance to hear those songs - MPK

They imitate the texts, clothes, behaviours, weapons they use in video clips, tattoos. etc. It is a very bad model - PK

Adult groups cited concerns over 'loss of control' of their children's social media consumption and its content which they felt to be negative (n=13), including fears about recruitment into organised crime cited by professionals (n=2). In stark contrast, for the young people interviewed, hip-hop was presented as an antidote to boredom and low mood, providing them with motivation and positive energy in life (n=8).

Music preference findings from focus groups



Family and gender roles

Traditional, patriarchal values were often alluded to in the focus groups in Kukës, either through explicit critique or through statements expressing an implicit value prevalence. Professionals explicitly commented on improvements in freedoms allowed for women. They also critically confirmed that traditional patriarchal values were still prominent (n=9), for example in regard to the effects of poor male role models on young people, particularly boys.

When I gave birth to my daughter in Tirana, a neighbour told me "I'm sorry, next time it will be a boy" - WK

I will take him to a private school. He is a boy after all - MPK

The mixed parent group, more implicitly, seemed to perpetuate a classic patriarchal value orientation. They highlighted the significant role of kinship (*farefisnia*) in exerting social control over young people and keeping them accountable. While stating themselves to be outside of traditional gender norms, their conduct in the session (with men dominating the discussion and women rendered silent) clearly contradicted this. In contrast, the greatest discussion of family and gender

was found in the solely female parents' group. Here, negative references to the mothers-in-law stood out, highlighting domestic power relations, interference, and control (n=11). As one of the culturally specific themes arising (linked to the persistence of a classic patriarchal type of social organisation), this topic will be separately analysed in the comparative analysis - conclusion (see special theme: 'cryptomatriarchy'). All groups highlighted how women were expected to look after the family and the home (n=29) and had less expectation to bring in an income (n=8), which was considered to be more the role of the man who must support his family, often supporting both his parental home and the new marital home (n=11). Respondents suggested that boys are valued more highly by mothers, who will continue to give birth until they have a son, while girls were expected to be 'educated' (n=20). It was in this context that it was noted that references to 'education' did not always mean

A girl must preserve honour. For the family, if the girl does even the slightest mistake, it is considered as if she has violated the honour - YK

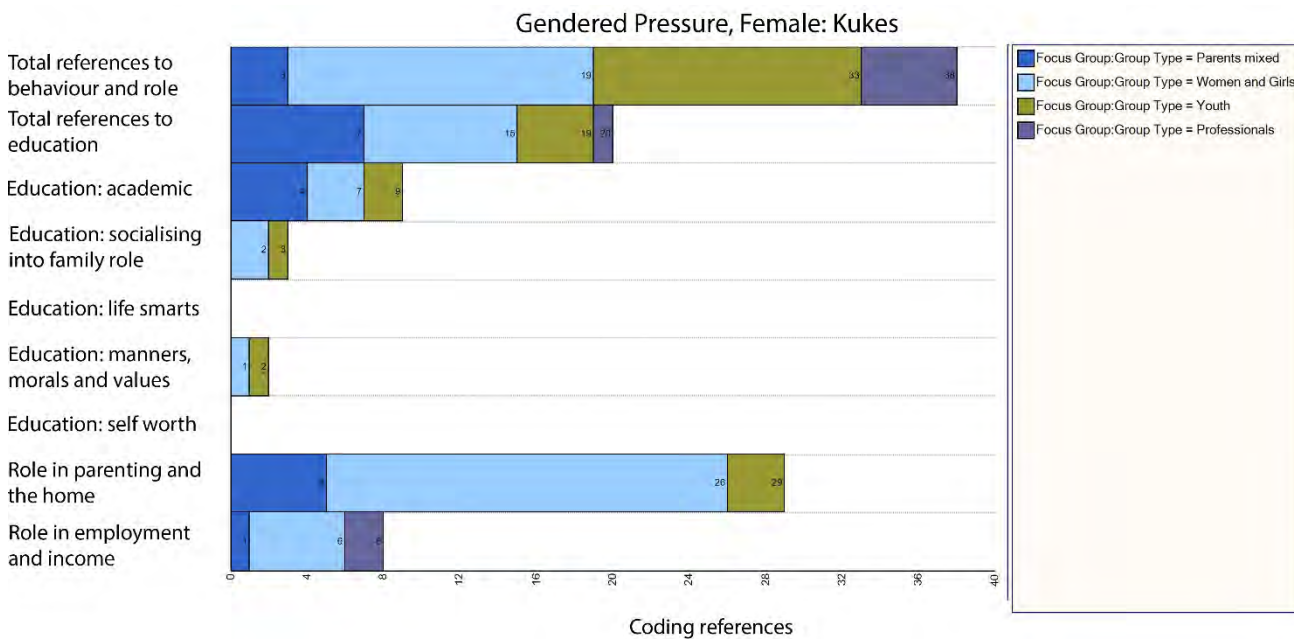
an academic schooling, but often covered normalisation into social roles, or the expectation that girls should be modest and quiet to uphold the family honour (findings, which led to more differentiated coding regarding the themes of both education and gender). There were sharp contrasts between education expectations for boys and girls, as adult groups sometimes referenced the need for girls to be educated academically for their financial independence (n=9) with less frequent but more specific emphasis on boys' academics (n=6).

While girls were educated to be both modest and quiet, and conversely, independent of men, both young boys and girls spoke about the pressure on boys to support several generations of family. The women's group's comments on men's work and money (n=5) might point to female complicity in reproducing pressures on young people to contribute to household income, often in situations of utmost poverty. This group also held mothers as potentially responsible for the actions of their children, hereby arguably reproducing an elsewhere criticised attitude of blaming women for problems in the home or children. When asked by the facilitator whether there were any difficulties with the expectations of being a boy, the general response

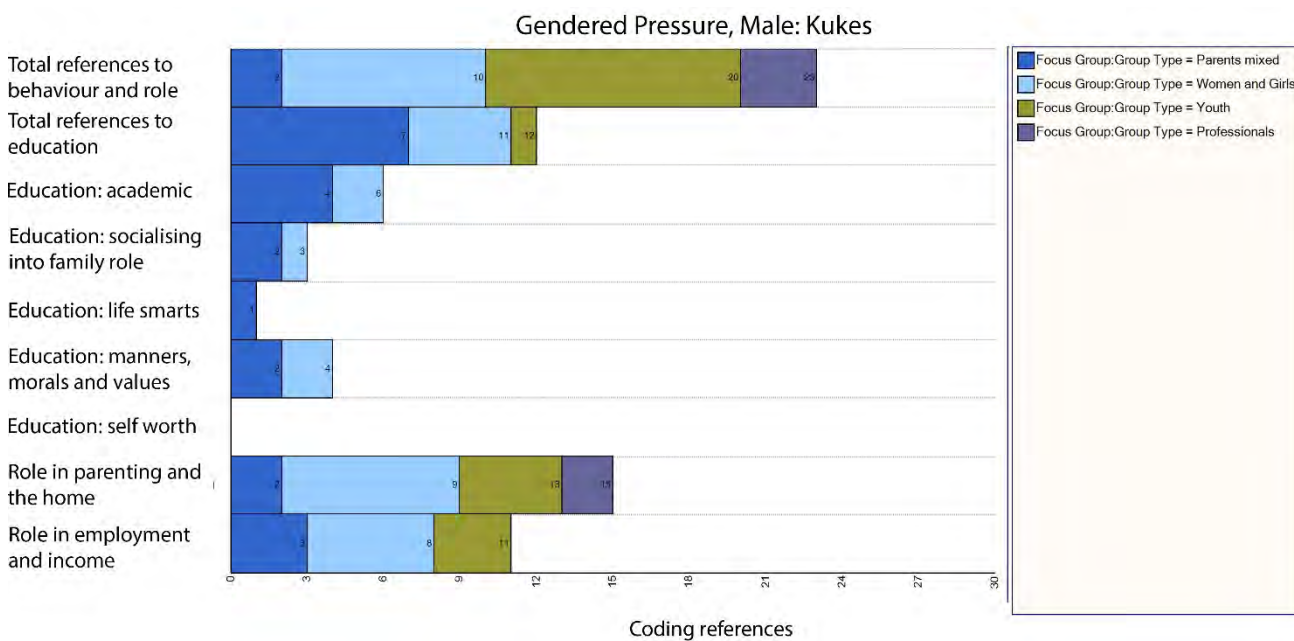
High expectations give the same pressure because when a boy grows up, he has to work so hard to support two families, both his family and his mother and father - YK

was “not at all”, but one boy did comment that, “you get tired of these expectations”. Allowing the male voice to express vulnerability could help both boys and girls understand patriarchal themes.

Gendered pressures: female



Gendered pressures: male



Family factors cited as potential causes of crime included divorce (n=18) (see above), poor parenting (n=22) and domestic violence (n=14). Finally, honour-based crime, namely the killing of a daughter if she brought shame on the family, was referenced and supported by three respondents in two FGDs in Kukës, in the mixed parents and

He did very well if he killed her - YK

The mother asked him where he got it from and the child replied that he had stolen it. The mother said "well done" - WK

young people's group. It was not mentioned in other regions and the relatively low number (n=3) suggests that such understanding is not necessarily mainstream even in a region, northern Albania, which has notoriously been associated with customary traditions of honour crimes and blood feuding.

In terms of regional attitudes indicative of a potential normalisation of crime in families, a mixed picture emerged. The general discourse appeared to critique family values which normalised crime, yet there were also individual expressions which justified honour killings.

There are many cases when mothers approve of their children's bad actions - WK

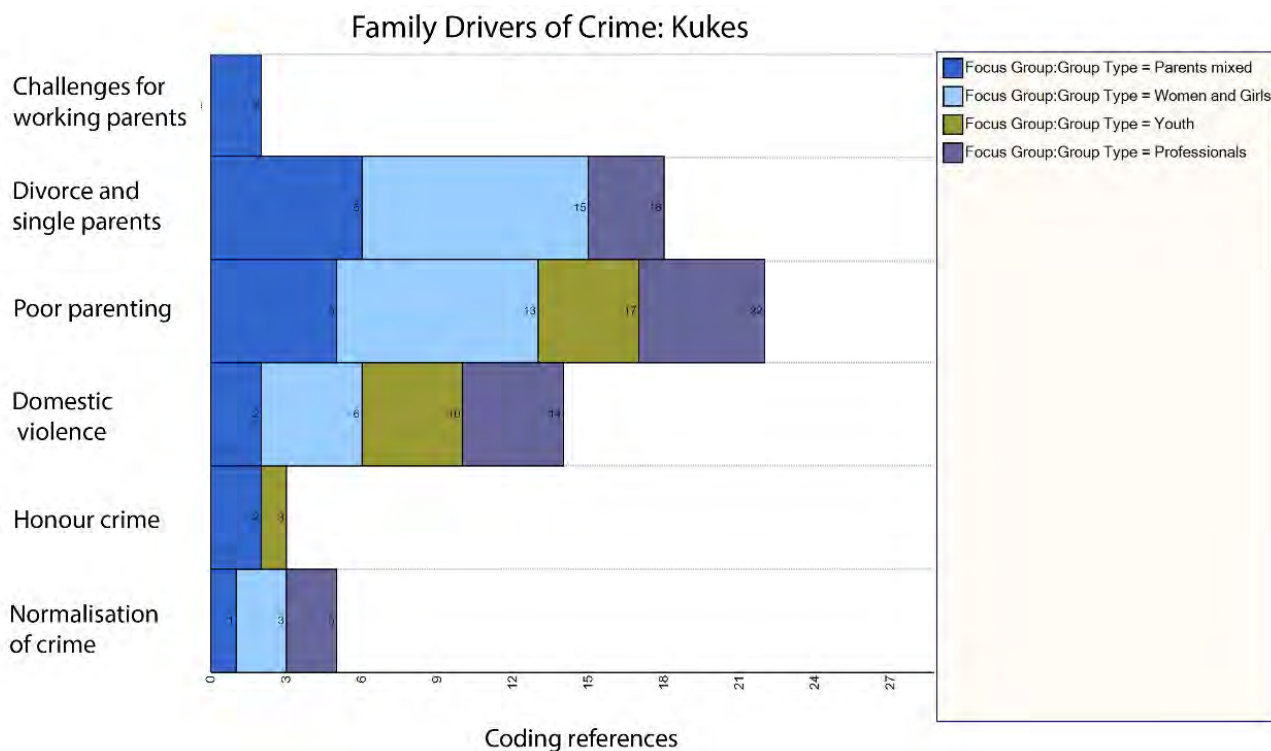
Parents discussed and appeared divided as to whether they would

'close the door' or 'keep the door open' for their child who had committed a crime (n=17). There was some

The door is generally closed to children when they do such things - MPK

discussion in the parent, women only, and youth, groups about gender-based exclusion or tolerance of crime in the family, suggesting that for boys, some types of crime is tolerated while girls are afforded less leniency, and fathers are seen as stricter parents. The culturally-specific metaphor of the open versus closed door will be discussed in more detail under special themes in the comparative section.

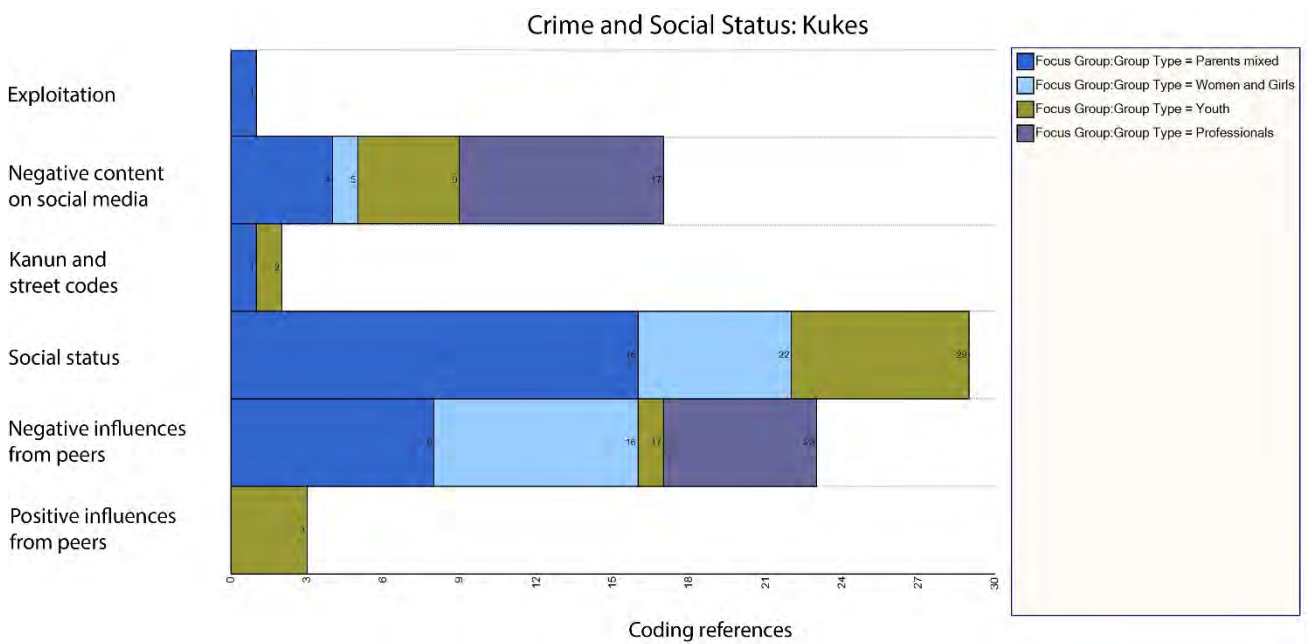
Family drivers of crime



Crime and social status

Overall, the most referenced type of crime in Kukës was drug related offences (n=16), closely followed by domestic violence (n=14) and other types of violence (n=12) (see appendix 4). Peer influence or peer pressure, as well as negative role models online, seem to be a consistent theme in this region: adult groups frequently felt that friends could be a negative influence (n=22), although young people appeared to feel that peers could more often be a constructive (n=3) rather than a detrimental (n=1) influence. Youth comments might suggest that some empowerment could stem from involvement with constructive peer support. This finding points to a generational division in terms of different valuations of socially relevant allegiances, with young people favouring, and adults fearing, horizontal social influences (peer influences) beyond family control. In terms of psychological issues, by far the most comments came from the youth group (adults n=2; youth n=11) who made important connections between mental health and feelings of belonging versus isolation within a social group, particularly in the adolescent years. In Kukës overall, there were fewer references to psychological issues such as mental health (n=13) and the sense of belonging (n=3) than in the other regions studied.

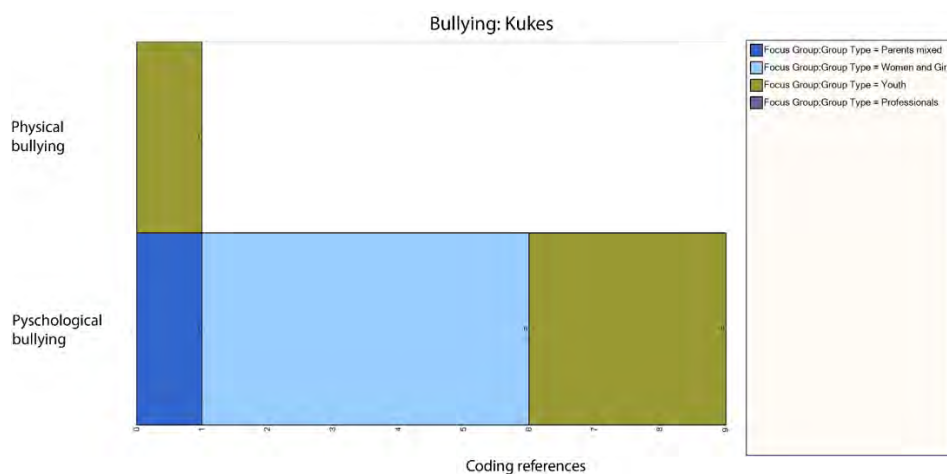
Crime and social status



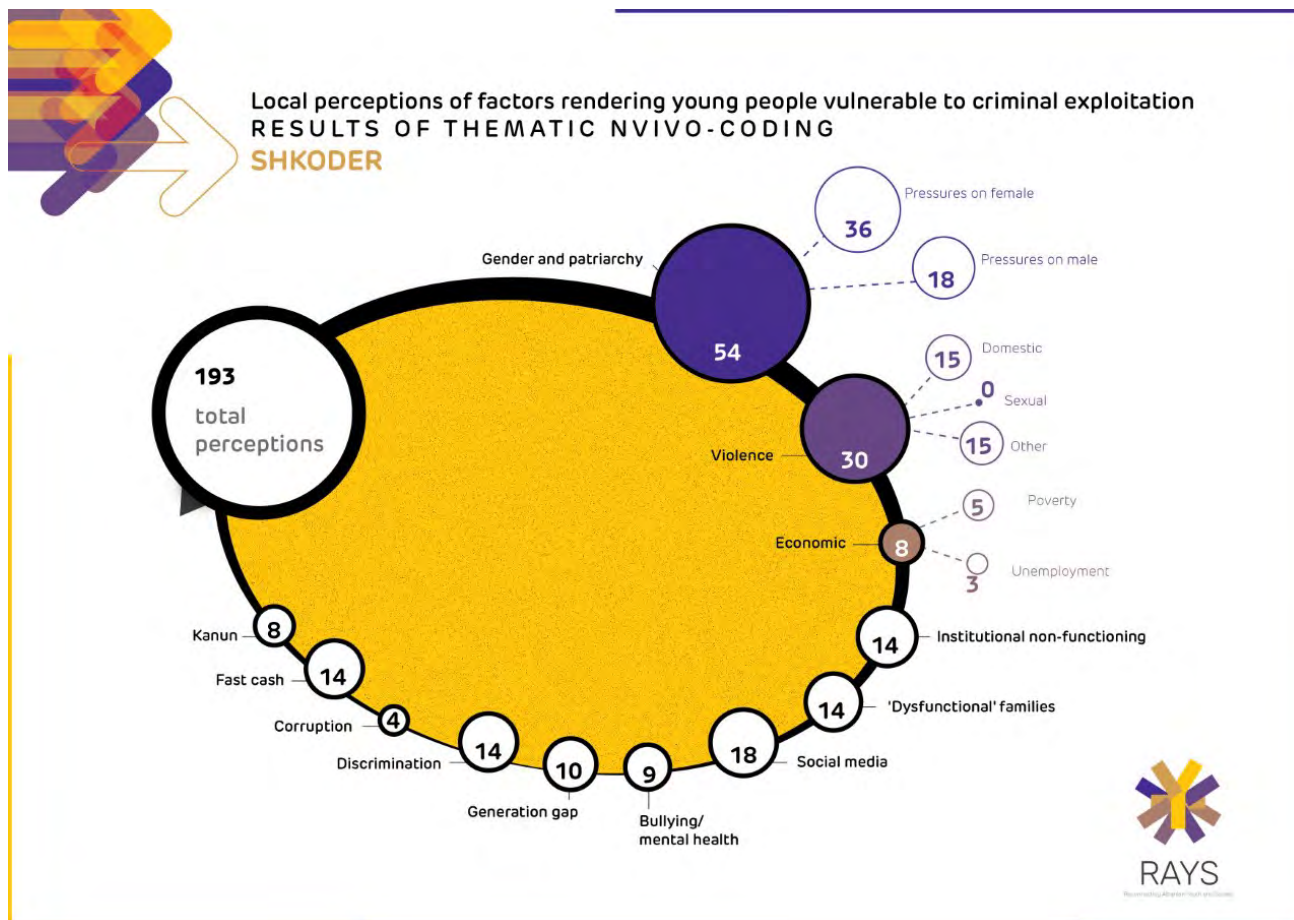
Professionals argued that young people were involved in the consumption and distribution of hashish, including travelling to the UK to work in growing and distribution (n=2) to make quick money. There was also a suggestion of exploitation from criminal adults who targeted vulnerable boys to distribute drugs for them. The women’s group highlighted the prevalence of crimes such as theft (n=2), drug use and drug trafficking (n=8) and referenced irregular migration to work in the drug trade. The urban-rural divide as a risk factor was least referred to in Kukës (n=7), compared with the other regions studied.

Notably, for social drivers of crime in Kukës, young people pointed to individual factors such as mental health (n=11) and experiences of bullying (n=5). Bullying was also referenced by parents, mostly in the women only group (mixed parents n=1; women only n=6). When further analysed, it appeared that most of the specific bullying references related to emotional (n=9) rather than physical violence (n=1), but the negative outcomes resulting from both types were felt to be severe. This is another specific theme which will be discussed in the comparative section in more details.

Bullying types



Shkoder



REGIONAL ANALYSIS INFOGRAPHIC, SHKODER

The northern Albanian city of **Shkoder** at the foot, and to the west of, the northern Albanian mountains and near the Montenegrin border, has a proud and long urban, and an old and new, multi-ethnic, history. Here, criminal tendencies were associated with internal 'others' such as internal migrants populating the growing suburbs, and with Roma and Egyptians, suggesting internal migration and ethnic diversity are locally seen as risk factors for involvement in crime, in conjunction with the desire for flashy possessions and fast cash as a driver for crime. 'Rural' migration trends (internal migration from impoverished rural, including mountain, areas) have led to an expansion of suburbs known as often problematic neighbourhoods in terms of stigma, social conflict, poverty, and marginalisation.

Focus group information:

Mixed Parents: 15

Professionals: 14, majority of which were women (4m/10f)

Women: 15, from 20-50 years old

Young People: 17

Local understanding of general risk factors

In Shkoder, a number of factors were identified as drivers for crime. Here, the population is more heterogenous than elsewhere, including different ethnicities which can lend themselves to diverting association with crime for example assigning the problem to Roma/Egyptians (n=5); but also identifying factors outside the kinship logic. Concerns around peer pressures over status and 'street life', pointing to the role of school and neighbourhood groups, including older peers who have succeeded in becoming wealthy through crime and could manipulate young people (n=4), came to the fore. By this token, even though rap is associated negatively with crime – incidentally in Shkoder throughout all focus groups (n=10), the interviews here suggest potentially reflective questioning within the young people's group. It is those 'older peers' and 'neighbourhood groups', which respondents linked to heightened risks, rather than their own peers.

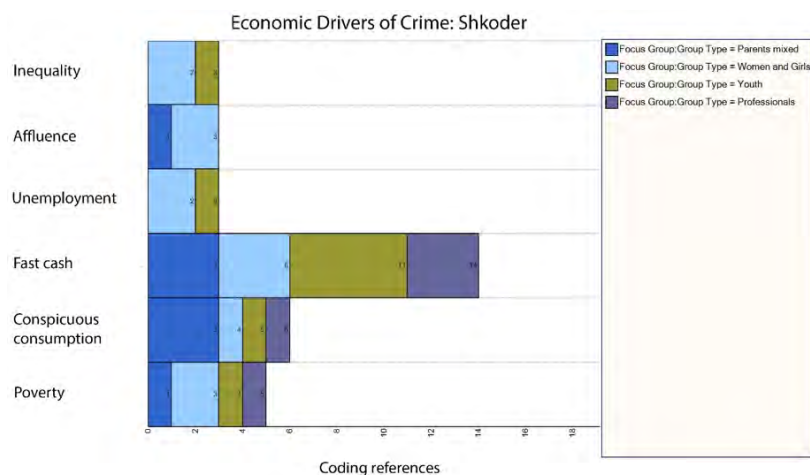
The community itself has changed because the relationships between people are not the same and have changed. They used to know each other... - PS

The FGDs in Shkoder identified fast cash as the most important economic driver for crime (n=14), nearly three times more important than poverty (n=5). While parent groups (n=3) and professionals (n=1) commented on living costs and the lack of money, the parent groups also decried inequality in the relative affluence (n=3) of some peers, which placed young people under pressure to find ways of making money, and the allure of conspicuous consumption driving young people to want expensive possessions (n=4). The youth felt that the need for social status and power was a concern (n=5), particularly toward gaining large amounts of money quickly through crime (n=5).

The parent groups also cited issues with education institutions (n=15), particularly poor engagement. Professionals referenced a prior history of being criminally exploited (n=6) particularly when spending time with older peers of a higher economic status could also motivate young people to commit crime. The youth group commented on internalised problems which resulted in anger, depression and shame (n=9). The parents and professionals also referenced Roma and Egyptian youth as at greatest risk (n=4). The parent groups presented negative views of social media (n=13) and smartphones, which both provided harmful content and acted as a recruitment tool, and young people in Shkoder also cited the negative effects of social media (n=3).

In school we have heard a lot about cases where drugs are sold, or cases of slaughter in schools - YS

Economic risk factors



The concept of change

In Shkoder, there was somewhat less of a generation division apparent regarding attitudes to change, than in Kukës and Elbasan. There were discussions surrounding change within the professionals (n=2) and youth groups (n=6). Again, there was support for empowering facilitation for change and the need for institutions to support young people in implementing change. This included youth comments on the positive effects of mental health training, support and acceptance. In Shkoder, change was generally seen as beneficial, with only 1 professional comment regarding the difficulties associated with a changing community (n=1) and 1 young person commenting on feelings of disempowerment regarding creating change as an individual (n=1). There was also resounding support for non-punitive re-education for behavioural change rather than imprisonment (n=9).

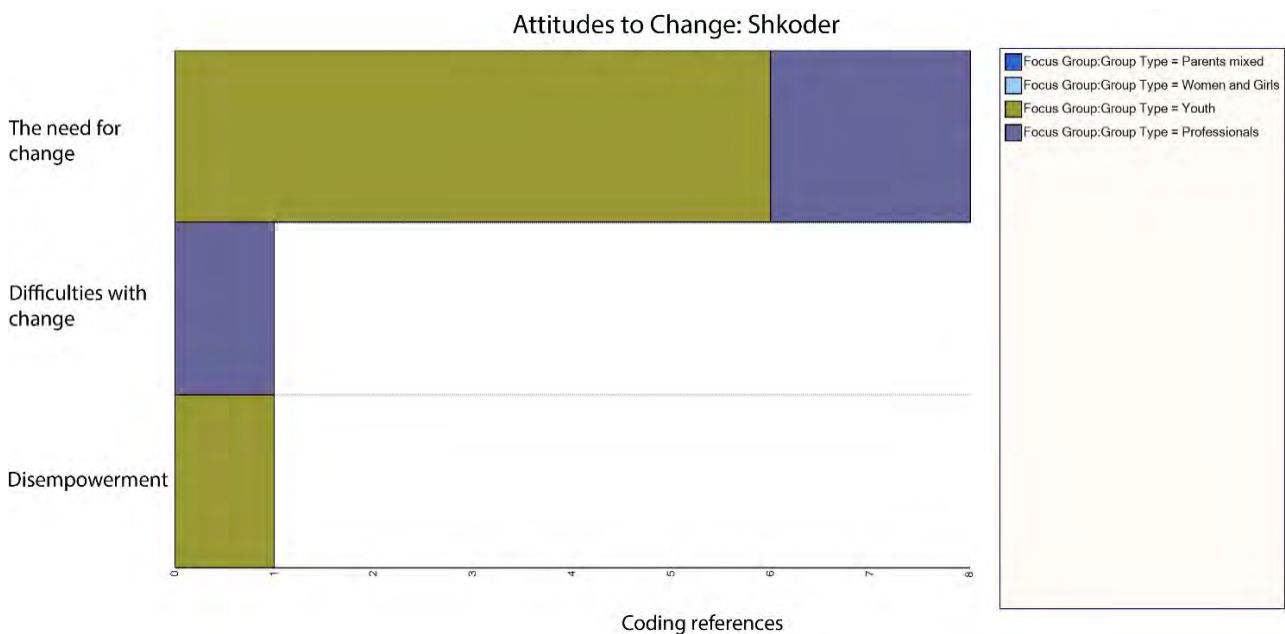
By changing the social circle, we can change a lot of things since everything starts from the social circle - YS

Prison should be the last option - MPS

In Shkoder, there was discussion surrounding the potential for individuals to change, which was not as prevalent in the other regions (n=1 professionals; n=4 youth). In contrast to Kukës, there was far more discussion in Shkoder surrounding individual, personal change (n=6) than social and environmental change (n=2). Also in contrast to Kukës, the majority of the references were from the group of young people. The youths also referenced the potential for changes in society or one's social group to have what they felt was a positive effect on individual change (n=2) including references to peer support as a driver for personal change, which will be further discussed below.

The individual must first accept and then desire change - PS

Attitudes to change



Institutional issues & experience with participatory arts

All adult groups discussed the non-functioning of institutions (n=13) including how the police, schools and social services could play a key role in preventing offending. However, coordination between institutions was felt to be limited (n=30 total, with 3 youth comments) and corruption was felt to be problematic (n=4), with its effect on young people’s attitudes, specifically the impression that there were no real consequences for criminal acts due to corruption (n=2). Adults mentioned that psychologists play an important role in mental

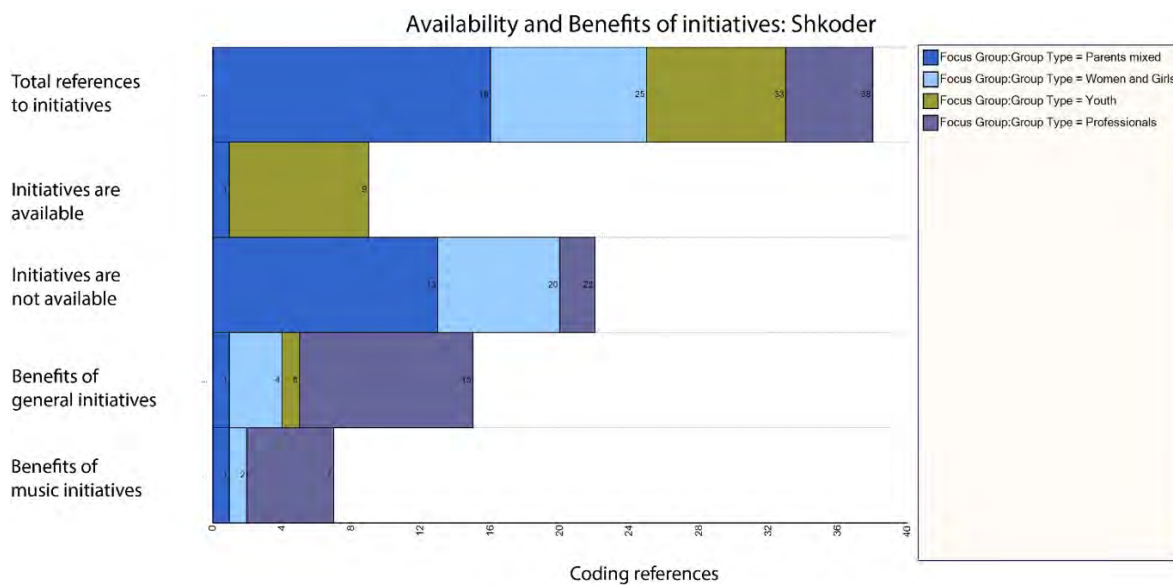
Here there is no club that is free, to have a ping pong room, to play chess, cards, etc. As a community to get to know each other, it would be good to get organized with each other for the kids to develop some games - MPS

We can call professionals... who are very wise and very polite - YS

health, and the youth in Shkoder had the highest frequency of references to psychologists in schools (n=17), who they felt could be helpful. However, there was felt to be too few of them, and they tend to be part time so may not be available, according to young people. Recreational arts, music and sports-based activities were seen as positive, particularly by professionals (n=10), and there was some discussion about the benefits of music

initiatives; however, these were lacking as was the infrastructure to implement them. The parents expressed similar views but also stated the youth centres were not inclusive of people from different backgrounds. Parents cited poor school engagement, particularly dropouts as factors influencing young people into a life of crime (n=10). The women’s group explained that they did not know what social services were available to them in the area and had a significant lack of trust in the police in dealing with cases or preventing criminal behaviour among young people. The youth group confirmed that constructive activities could prevent delinquency but stated a better life could be attained by immigrating to Germany or England (n=8).

Availability and benefits of initiatives



Music

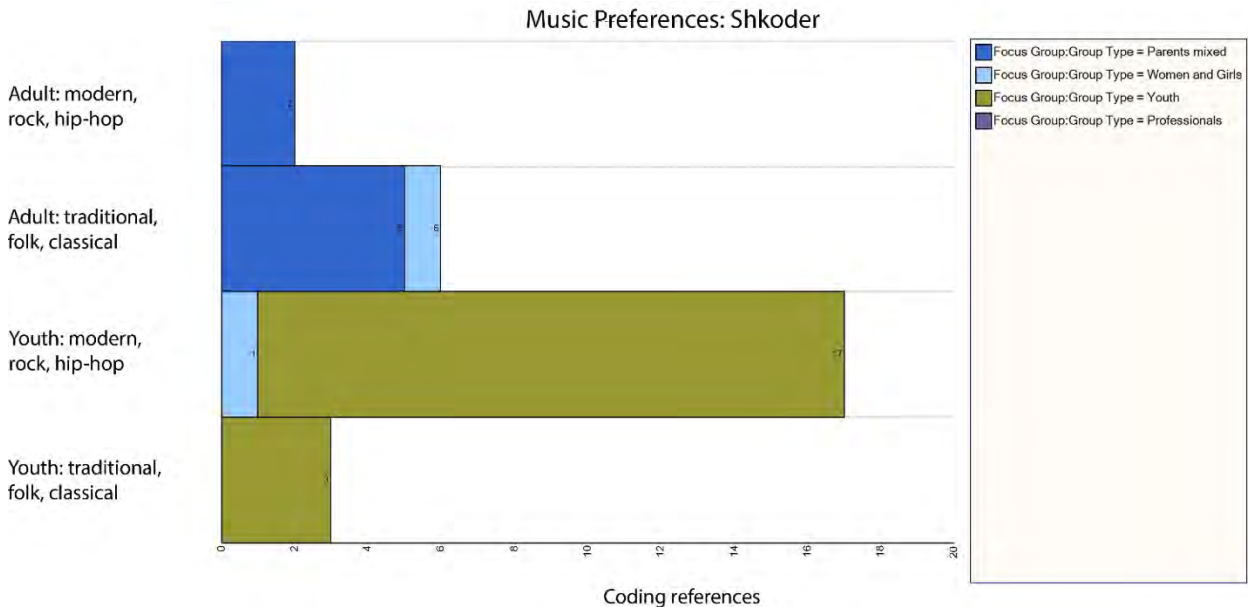
In Shkoder, adults in general preferred more traditional music (n=6), while young people in the group stated to prefer modern music, mostly rock (n=17 total, n=16 according to the youths themselves; n=1 according to an adult commenter). There appeared to be a hesitancy in discussing rap music in the Shkoder youth group, yet there was some indication of potential facilitator bias in this focus group (following a normatively-suggestive question, which prejudged hip-hop music as untoward for young people). The young people in Shkoder pointed to foreign hip-hop which had 'valuable texts, not street texts', but also pointed to cases in the press where rock music was thought to have caused crime. The young respondents claimed that the music of famous rappers had a significant impact on the behaviour of their peers, and highlighted the messages in some hip-hop lyrics which they felt were detrimental (n=5), reiterating the negative stereotypes seen in public debates elsewhere. However, the group also appeared cognizant of the nuances

Children do the deeds they hear from the song
- WS

A girl is always mistreated in these videos - PS

surrounding the positive and negative effects of music on society and open to discuss these. Professionals referenced only what they felt were the negative effects of youth music and videos (n=6) and argued that the representation of women in Albanian music videos could encourage young girls to engage in prostitution. They stated that the presence of weapons in songs was also worrying, and they believed that artists acted as role models that influenced young people into criminal behaviour and had a significant influence on their lives more broadly. The parents confirmed these views, citing youth culture in the form of reality shows and music videos as a significant driver of crime (n=4).

Music preference findings from focus groups



Family and gender roles

Regarding family and gender roles, the group of professionals made little reference to patriarchal norms and family structure but discussed gender divisions in involvement in crime (n=8). They commented on both girls and boys being involved in theft and prostitution, but appeared to feel that girls were more vulnerable to exploitation as a pathway into crime, specifically prostitution and 'tutoring' (recruiting, training succeeding generations of underage girls). Classic patriarchal value orientations – either criticised or implicitly perpetuated - were strongly present in all groups. The discussion of family and gender roles in the women group was notable, with the mother-in-law again referenced as a powerful, yet mostly negative figure (n=8), including stories of mothers-in-law leading the family with some even physically beating their daughters-in-law to control them (see special theme of

Male Facilitator: *Shouldn't I cry?*
Young People: *Absolutely not!* - YS

Those girls who have such a background are more easily exploited - MPS

When I was giving birth to my daughter and leaving the maternity ward, my husband came and told the nurse that she had changed my baby, that she had given me a girl and left my son there. He became very aggressive there - WS

'cryptomatriarchy' in the comparative analysis further below). Women were said to be expected to be in the home doing housework and assist with medical and psychological issues (n=17). The same cultural distinctions discussed above relating to the difference of education of girls versus boys was also seen in Shkoder, with more focus for girls on home matters and learning their social role as women. The youth group referenced

the importance of an academic education for women (n=3), and also discussed critically how the upbringing of girls and boys is still based on gender roles and stereotypes.

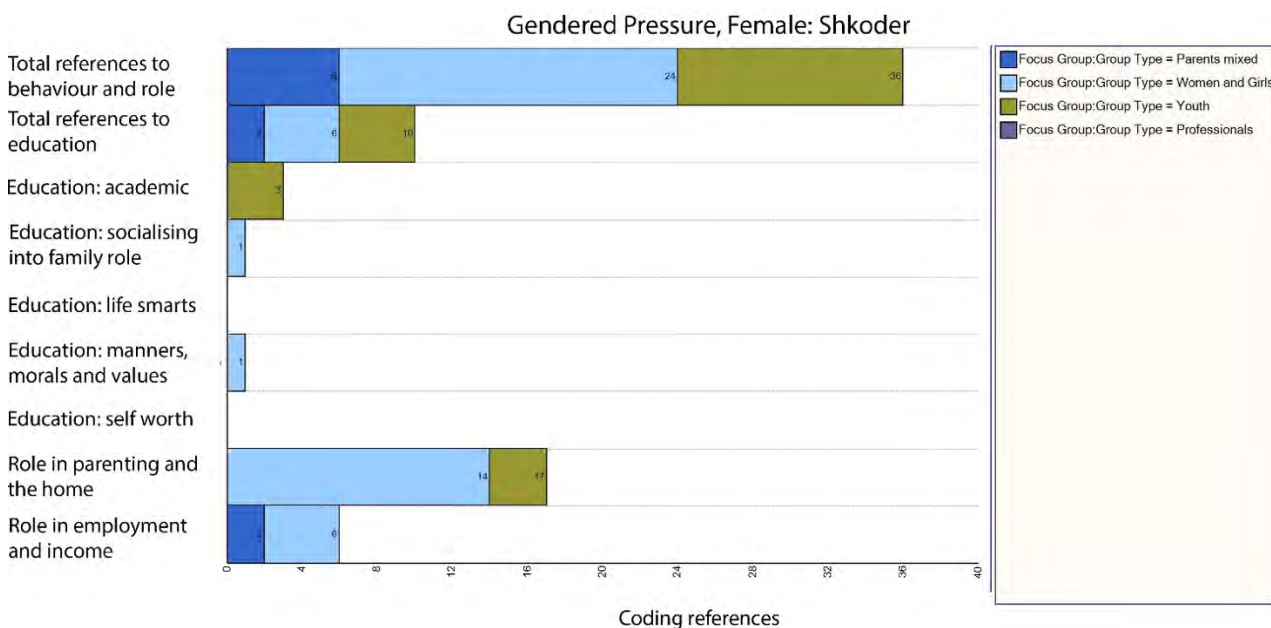
Girls have to deal with the kitchen. We tell the boy not to make the bed because the girl has to make it - WS

Men were expected by all groups to work in a well-paid job, bring in a significant income (n=8) and absolutely not engage in housework, and the youth group referenced emigration in order to find work. It was said that both parents should be equally involved in raising/educating their children, but the types of roles were different with the fathers seen as disciplinarians necessary for keeping the family in control, and mothers having the role of supporter. Yet, mothers were said to be held responsible when things went wrong. Boys were seen as more valuable children overall and were a preference for mothers giving birth. They are also allowed more freedom than girls. It was argued that girls should obey boys based on their gender whilst also dedicating themselves to household chores, and that girls should be under the control of boys.

Gendered, classic patriarchal patterns of allocating roles and responsibilities are evident in Shkoder. The risk profile is shaped by an urban environment in which heteronormative family ideals still play a role, but not apparently as exclusively and totalising as in Kukës. Boys and girls are raised differently and face different social expectations such as to become providers, for adult men; and submissive to male rules and decisions, for young women. The parent groups discussed family issues such as challenges for working parents (n=5) and the women's only group stated that divorce (n=5) could also lead to crime. Youth reiterated these themes, citing divorce as an issue affecting outcomes for young people as a source of anxiety and feelings of emptiness (n=4). Both groups

thus seemed to both highlight and possibly perpetuate stigma relating to divorce and single female parenthood. Overall, classic patriarchal attitudes strongly prevailed as evident also in gendered expectations on young people.

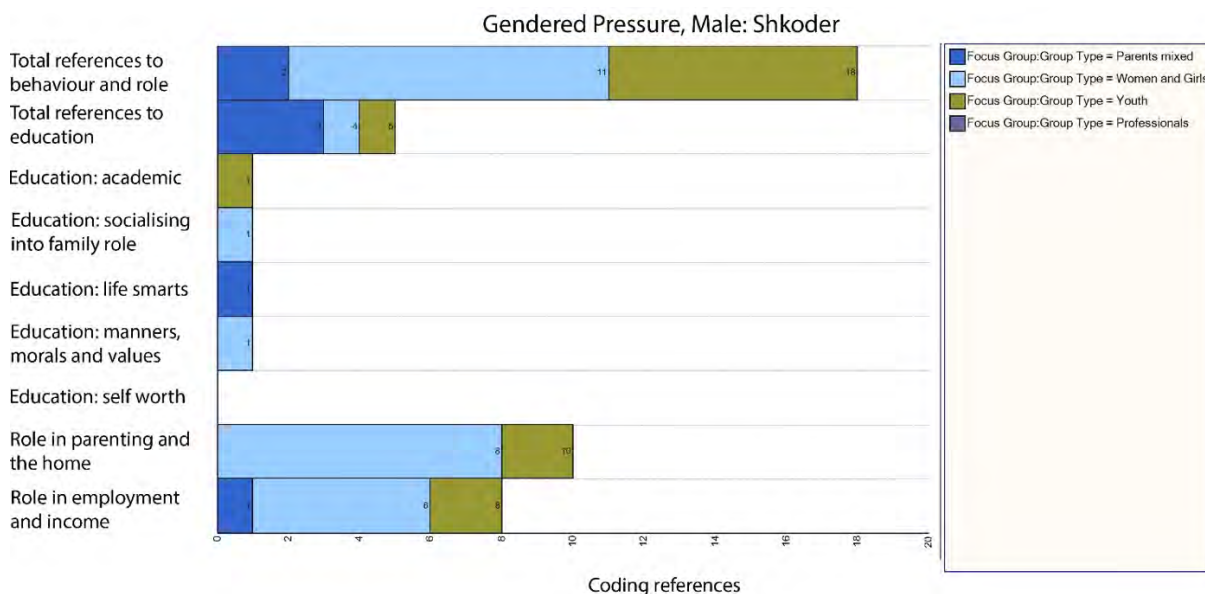
Gendered pressure: female



Gendered pressure: male

[T]he father often comes drunk and does not behave well with the child, and necessarily the child is affected - WS

There is a lot of freedom that the state has given the girls, the girl should not have so much freedom - WS

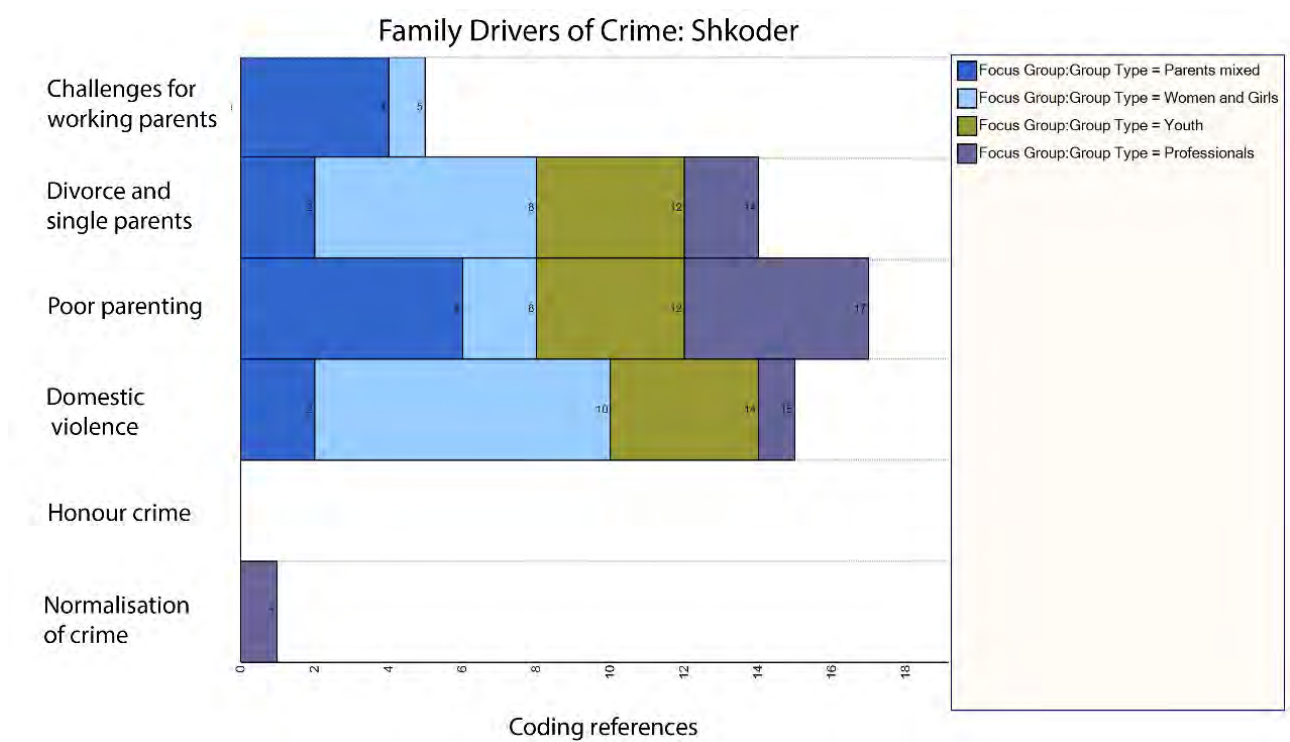


The women only group also mentioned the role of domestic violence (n=8) as a risk factor which could impact criminal pathways, and the influence of parental alcoholism on abuse. Domestic violence was also referenced by all other groups in Shkoder (Mixed parents' group n=2; professionals n=1; youth n=4).

The above mentioned concept of the 'Open' or 'Closed' Door appeared in both parent groups in Shkoder, but it was discussed less frequently than in other regions (n=7) and with no qualifiers as to the severity of the crimes, or genders of children or parents. There was no clear majority on whether it would be right to close the door to one's child (closed n=3; open n=4).

There are many cases where the family no longer accepts them - MPS

Family drivers of crime



Crime and social status

Overall, the most referenced types of crime in Shkoder were domestic violence (n=15) and other types of violence (n=15) equally, suggesting that concerns about violence are prevalent in the region and should be addressed. Drug related offences (n=12) and child exploitation (n=12) were equally also major concerns in the region (see appendix 4). The professionals identified other crimes such as recruitment for stealing, recruitment for violent extremism, prostitution, and cybercrime. They argued that young people around the ages of 15 and 16 can get easily involved in criminal markets such as drugs and prostitution. Exploitation was seen as a factor in recruitment for crime (n=6), especially having older peers of a higher economic status. The women only group stated that young people were more likely to engage in burglary, drug use, drug distribution, drug cultivation and serious violence. There

[The youth say that] it is worth being in prison to have money - PS

was no support for imprisonment in Shkoder, and an overall preference for re-education and other forms of assistance to divert from criminal pathways (n=6). However, the group of professionals commented that prison was seen by young people as a calculated risk that was worth the economic rewards (a topic supporting Kushi 2015, discussed in the introduction).

The mixed parents' group made many references to social status (n=18), which included economic status and 'good' vs 'bad' families, as well as the urban-rural divide in which internal migration could be seen as a risk factor for involvement in crime, whether through exploitation or a desire for social status (n=12). The mixed parents' group also discussed how they felt young people are being recruited into organised crime through social media (n=3). They argued that social media generally plays an important role in pushing young people towards crime. Aside from the crimes noted above, the women group cited domestic violence (n=8), sexual abuse, murder (carried out on behalf of organised crime groups) and economic exploitation being present in the region. Deviant peers with popularity, social status and power in school for their monetary success was also a concern.

The youth in Shkoder were the group which most frequently referenced positive peer support from friends and classmates as a potential driver for constructive change (n=12), which may suggest that peer training and support programs could be most useful here. They also cautioned that peers could influence detrimentally as well (n=13) - so peer influence can be seen both positively and negatively. It is thus seen by young people in Shkoder as overall a greater influence than other social status factors such as social media (n=3) or even exploitation. Exploitation was seen by youth (n=11) and adult groups (n=10) as influenced by older role models in the neighbourhood who have gained power and money through crime. The youth group confirmed this point and stated that social

pressure was significant in determining their behaviours, along with the desire for a luxurious life as seen in social media. The prevalence and impacts of conspicuous consumption (for concept, see below) displayed in the media was referenced by both parent groups (n=4) (in their own words), including the possession of weapons.

He likes the fast way to make money - YS

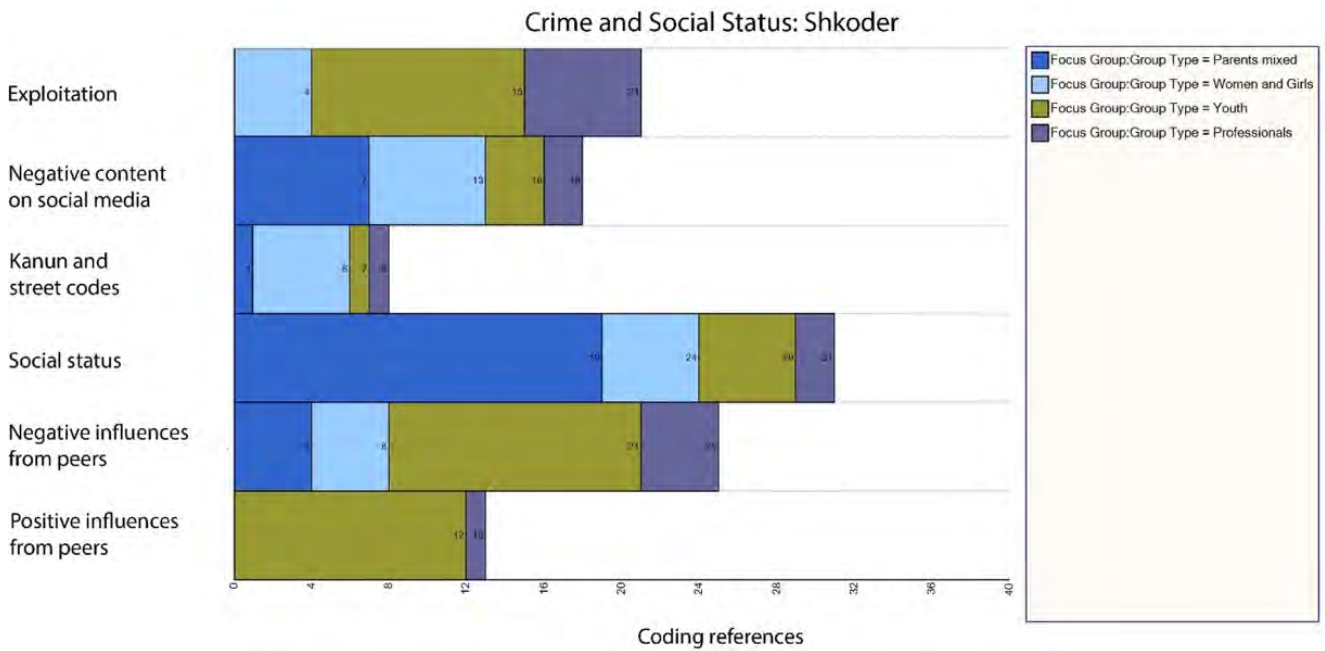
Shkoder was the region with the most references to north Albanian traditional customary law, *kanun* (n=8). The professionals listed 'blood feuds' as one of the crimes known (n=1); the mixed parents groups used it to explain historical crime control (n=1); a young person explained 'honour codes' as a means of social reciprocity and regulation during vulnerable situations arising with irregular migration (n=1); the adult female group, asked directly about blood feuds, discussed whether related risks and vulnerabilities are specifically prevalent among internal migrant groups from the mountains in the suburbs or spread across the city (n=5). Interestingly, none of the speakers related these risks to their own social reference groups.

This can make these young people leave the family and the goods that the family offers and then pursue the luxurious life they see on the internet - YS

Especially in our mentality, responsibility and shame fall almost 100% on the family - MPS

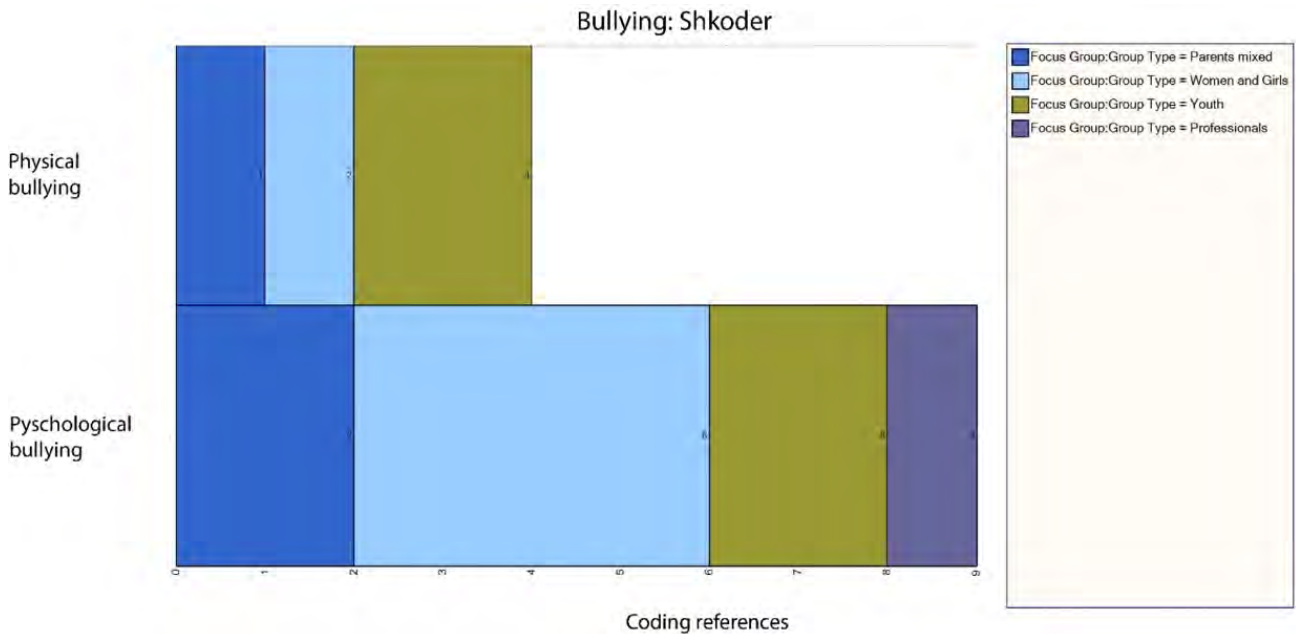
The themes of harmful role models, in the social contexts of school and street life and not just in online music videos prevailed throughout the FGDs. Some mentioned risks arising from 'neighbourhood bosses' reminiscent of the criminological concept of 'street life' known also from marginalised contexts in the UK (Anderson 1999; Levell & Schwandner-Sievers, forthcoming).

Crime and social status



Bullying types

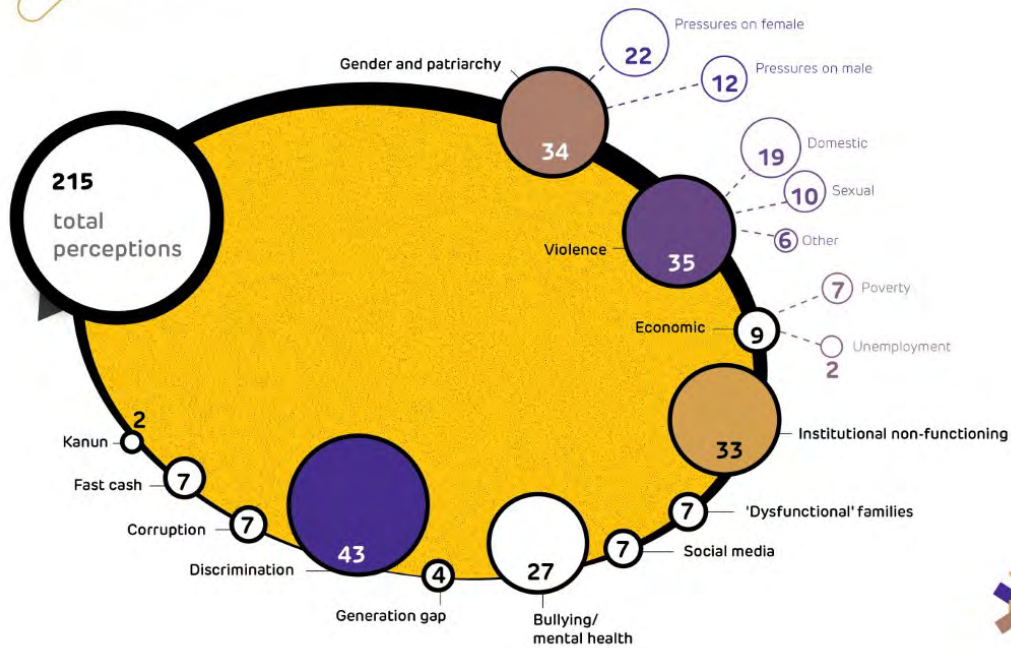
As in other areas, bullying was discussed more specifically in terms of psychological (n=9) than physical (n=4) types, with the effects of both felt to be severe. Youth and adult groups in Shkoder all referenced the importance of a sense of belonging (n=8), and discussed mental health issues in general (n=15), with the youth group particularly aware of emotional issues (n=9).



Elbasan



Local perceptions of factors rendering young people vulnerable to criminal exploitation RESULTS OF THEMATIC NVIVO-CODING ELBASAN



REGIONAL ANALYSIS INFOGRAPHIC, ELBASAN

Elbasan has an industrial socialist history and is within comparatively easy reach of the capital as well as the ports and borders connecting Albania with Greece and Italy. Here, among others, school dropouts and rural-to-urban incomers were highlighted as crime risk groups marked by their social marginalisation, along with Roma and Egyptian groups. The urban/rural divide was frequently discussed as a risk factor in Elbasan, suggesting that, as in the other regions, internal migration might be particularly seen as a factor in exploitation. High rates of gendered violence was reported in this region.

Focus group information:

Mixed Parents: 17

Professionals: 15, majority of which were women (3M/12f).

Women: 17, aged from 23-44 almost all mothers, 9 who have completed secondary high education, 5 who have completed compulsory education, 3 bearing a university degree, mostly unemployed.

Young People: unknown

Local understanding of general risk factors

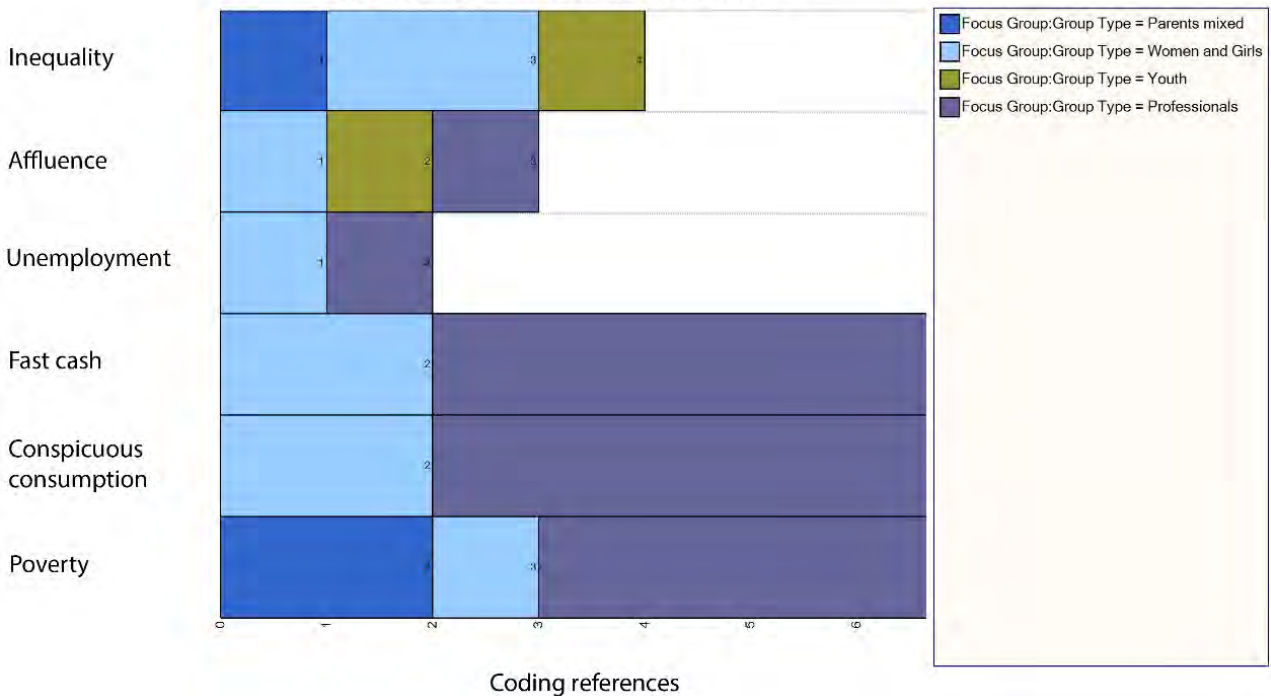
In Elbasan, as in other areas, there was a general agreement between the women’s only group and professionals that poverty was a factor in driving young people into organised crime, but conspicuous consumption and fast cash were equally important factors within economic determinants (poverty, n=7; fast cash, n=7; conspicuous consumption, n=7). Interestingly, the youth group did not reference any of these, but instead commented on inequality (n=1) and affluence (n=1). Domestic violence was referenced by professionals (n=4), women (n=9) and youth (n=6) but not mentioned in the mixed parents’ group at all, indicative of a taboo subject not to be discussed by, or with, adult men, also indicated in the low frequency of references in mixed parent groups in other regions (more in the comparative analysis further below).

Professionals highlighted the prevalence of exploitation (n=11) between peers, particularly in the form of cybercrime which appeared to be little understood or commented upon by other groups. The professionals also cited school drop-outs (n=2) and the parent groups commented on several educational factors (n=14), including lack of engagement and poor administration. Finally, the role of social media, smartphones and violent video games were also seen as drivers of crime within both parent groups (n=5).

Drug distribution is a very quick solution for young people to make money. We are not talking about getting rich but about having some money in your pocket - PE

Economic factors

Economic Drivers of Crime: Elbasan



The concept of change

The need for both behavioural and wider societal changes was commented on by the youth in Elbasan (n=4) and not by the adults. They spoke often of feelings of disempowerment and inability to facilitate change individually (n=7), correlated with concerns over issues such as corruption; with one adult also commenting on disempowerment (n=1).

It is enough for that person to find peace in art or sports wherever he finds himself - YE

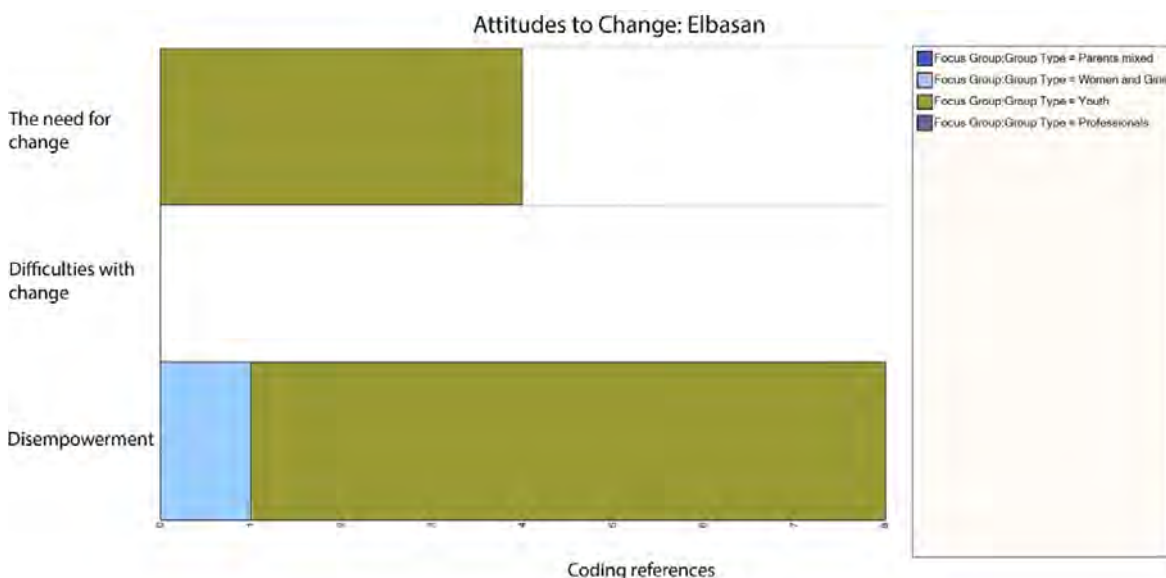
...why not enable the environment or that society to enable change? - YE

Unlike in Shkoder, there were no references to existing support, examples of what works or any other suggestions for how the desired changes might be facilitated, and a lack of awareness of any availability of mental health support.

The youth group in Elbasan discussed individual, personal change more than the groups in other regions (n=8) but there were no comments on personal change from adult groups. There were also a total of 6 references to social or environmental change (youth n=5; adult n=1). The young people also spoke about perceptions of constructive personal change brought about by a change in the social circle (n=4), in line with their comments on the effects of peer support as a driver for individual change as discussed below. There was recognition of the potential for what were seen as negative changes in individuals brought about by one's environment in both the youth (n=2) and adult (n=1) groups. Elbasan youth commented as well on the inability of some people to change (n=7), which was only mentioned once in Shkoder and not at all in Kukës. They also discussed how one could cope with attempting to help someone who will not change, which was interesting in light of their comments that positive peer pressure could be a useful driver for individual change. There was evidence of a nuanced understanding of personal empowerment and choice regarding individual change.

No matter how hard we try, that person does not change if he does not want to change - YE

Attitudes to change



Institutional issues & experience with participatory arts

The professionals cited several institutional problems that put young people at risk (n=16). The lack of communication, good institutional partnerships and joint working between police, schools, social services and families were referenced by professionals in Elbasan more often than in other regions (n=29, with other local group comments: n=33 total), and this was cited as an obstacle to improvement. They also highlighted an absence of infrastructure to support recreational and sports-based activities. The youth referenced the benefits of re-education rather than imprisonment (n=2).

Overall, participatory arts interventions were welcome but there was felt to be limited availability and infrastructure in place to support them. Although both parent groups were very supportive of initiatives and activities (n=16), they stated that schools may lack the facilities to support these programmes. Youth groups also mentioned the benefits of such initiatives (n=8). They also argued that schools do not manage

[T]oday, schools are destroying children more than they are helping them - WE

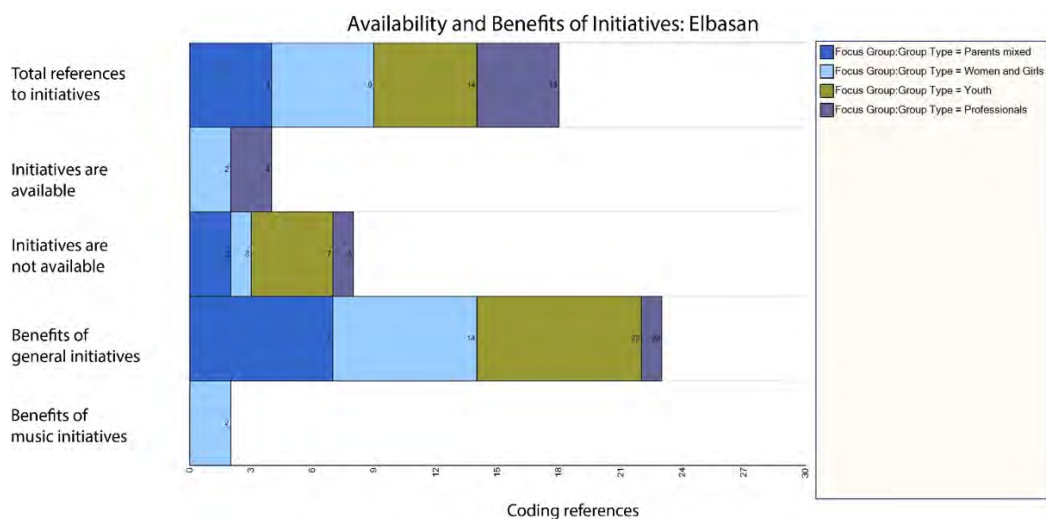
The community is afraid to report - PE

disaffected youth. The women only group stated they knew very little about the types of support available from the social services and were distrusting of the police. Additionally, the prevalence of corruption was cited, (n=5) and was felt to negatively affect young people (n=2), with both comments focusing on the disempowerment of youth when

there are no consequences for adult misdeeds. The youth group also cited distrust and non-functioning of institutions as problematic (n=9). Alongside this, the youth group stated that acquiring skills would reduce crime and many of them wanted to move to Great Britain due to better educational opportunities (n=11).

While a high level of disempowerment was expressed by the youth group in Elbasan with regard to change, along with a silence on the topic within the adult groups, the overall support for initiatives and activities for young people was positive (n=23). Improvements in infrastructure, coordination and trust could be beneficial. As seen below, Elbasan was a region where a generational division in music preferences (particularly hip-hop) was not seen, so it is possible that a hip-hop music initiative could be a particularly meaningful targeted and locally sustainable intervention.

Availability and benefits of initiatives



Music

With regards to music, and as an exception to the rule compared with the other regions, many in the women's only group cited a preference for hip-hop, including Albanian hip-hop music, suggesting its potential for positive messages, (n=5). The young people, as in the other regions observed, preferred modern genres including hip-hop (n=9, with comments from youth n=8; and one adult commenter on youth preference n=1). However, the professionals (n=4) and mixed parents' group (n=3) felt that hip-hop artists could be negative role models who are popular among youth and had a negative effect upon them. Young people themselves referenced media influences on consumers and were the most vocal group in any region concerning VIP influencers (n=12). The mixed parent group stated that wearing unsuitable clothes such as those seen in hip-hop videos was a risk factor in youth, highlighting a possible generational division in style and culture, with particular forms of clothing being misinterpreted as a sign of criminal behaviour. Such adult comments follow common stereotypical views of rap-music being responsible for crime, with young people presumed to be acting out the content of lyrics with no real agency of their own or ability to differentiate

between good or bad behaviour. Youth on the other hand enjoyed hip-hop music, particularly foreign hip-hop (n=9), but also remained critical of the potential, perceived negative effects of the genre.

We cannot apply art and music therapy because we do not have the conditions to do so - PE

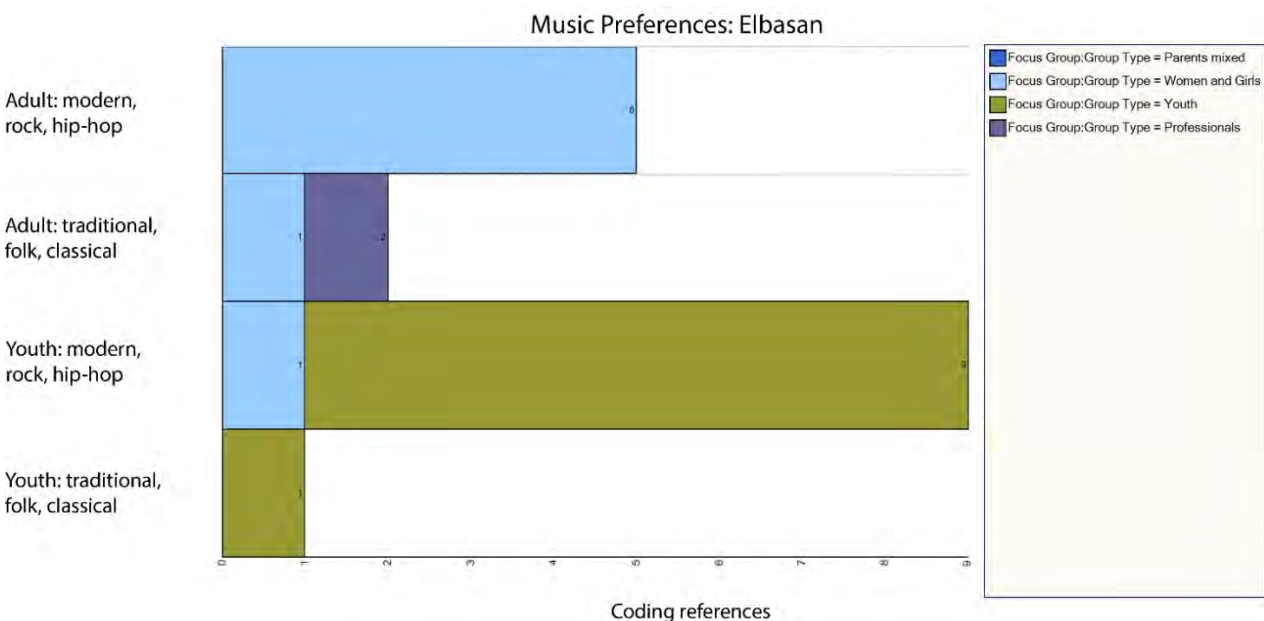
Hip-hop music is not just about showing yourself as strong but it also gives good messages - WE

This is a kind of destruction of moral and social values - MPE

All this media bombardment, adding explicit pornography - MPE

What the song conveys to the public is also what that singer feels within his musical soul - YP

Music preference findings from focus groups



The preference of the women's group for hip-hop (n=5) was interesting, in that this was not a particularly young group in comparison to the other adult groups. However, it is possible that identification with the genre supports modernist self-identifications.

Family and gender roles

[T]oday I have 4 months of remembrance of my sister who died because her husband killed her - WE

observed, particularly in the women's only (n=9) and youth groups (n=6). However, it was not mentioned at all in the mixed parents' group, in contrast to Kukës and Shkoder where mixed parents' groups did discuss domestic violence. The adverse effects on the children in the family were also discussed. This qualitative analysis is in contrast with the available statistical data (see appendix 3), and it may point to an under-reporting and silencing of the crime of domestic violence in the area, as well as a high perception of domestic violence as a risk factor. While professionals felt that the situation has improved, allowing more freedoms for women as society becomes outwardly more progressive, comparatively, the women's group discussed the prevalence of traditional patriarchal gender norms around the roles of women and men, and we may be seeing evidence in the qualitative data of rising concerns about

The values and norms of society we all know come from family. We professionals cannot do much if we do not have family support - PE

Women commented on their role in the home (n=30), that is, in the home doing housework, whereas men were expected to 'lead' the home. Men were also said to be allowed more freedom in purportedly deviant leisure activities with smoking and drinking being permitted, but were expected to provide for families (n=8). These two factors could put males in a position where they turn to crime to fulfil their role as the main breadwinner. Also here,

Comments concerning an increase in domestic violence and the murder of women, as well as young people as witnesses to domestic violence as a cause of emotional distress and criminal behaviour, was seen in Elbasan. Domestic Violence was referenced more frequently (n=19) in Elbasan than in any of the other regions

Even in case of a divorce that the girl may have done because her husband abusing her, still the family tells her to go to her husband because the one who beats her loves her - WE

The husband does nothing but bring money - WE

domestic violence within families and a possible backlash to the perceived changes in gender roles and norms. Divorce was cited as a troubling factor by the women's group (n=6) but not by any other groups in Elbasan. Young people mentioned poor parenting in families (n=7), highlighting what was seen as excessive freedoms and 'spoiling' of boys.

There are cases when the mother-in-law tells the bride that you have to separate from my son because you are not giving birth to a son - WE

there were comments on the role of the mother-in-law, seen in the women’s group as a negative powerful influence (n=10) (see on crypto-matriarchy in comparative analysis below).

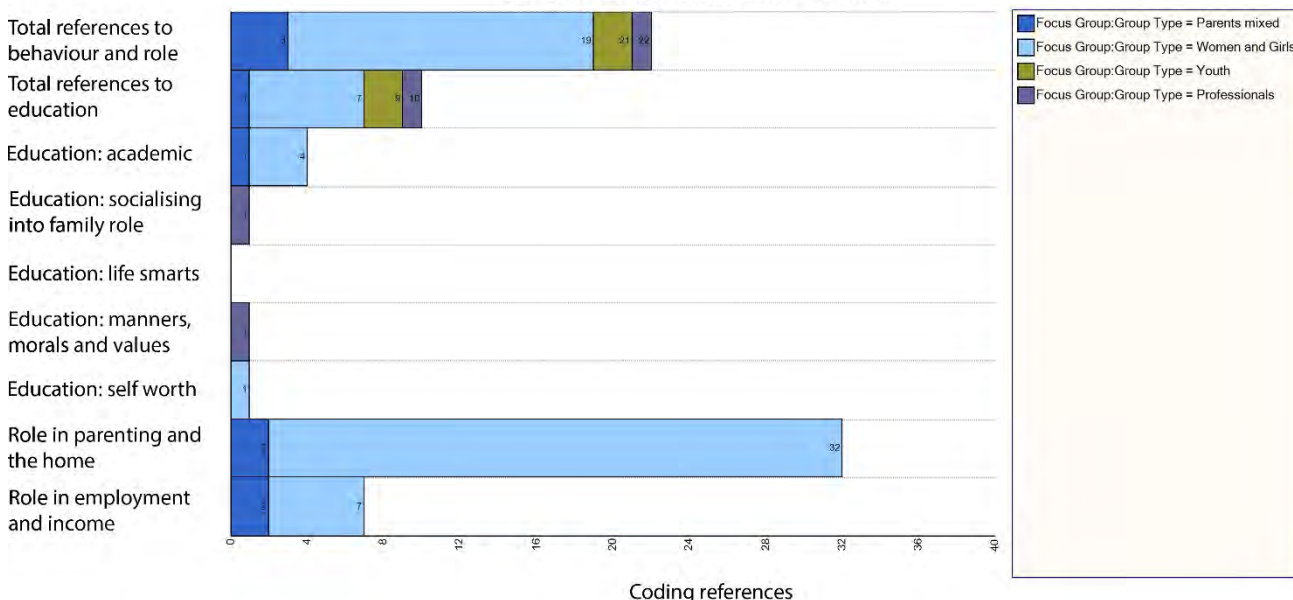
I have a cousin who went with a friend to England to work on drugs. His mom even pushed him to go there - WE

Similar as in Shkoder, also here the parent group stated that it is the mother who usually gets the blame for having deviant children due to poor parenting. They stated that crime was mostly a male activity, and boys are more often forgiven for delinquent activities “because he is a boy”. However, it was also said that while girls are more easily exploited, they can become manipulators in criminal activities, particularly girls who move from rural to urban areas.

Elbasan saw the highest frequency of references to gendered issues in crime (n=17), with many commenting on the rise in female involvement in smoking, drugs, and prostitution. There were also references to mothers being blamed for pushing their children into the latter role by taking them out to work on the streets.

Gendered pressure: female

Gendered Pressure, Female: Elbasan



I cannot close the door of the house. There are also things that are tolerated - WE

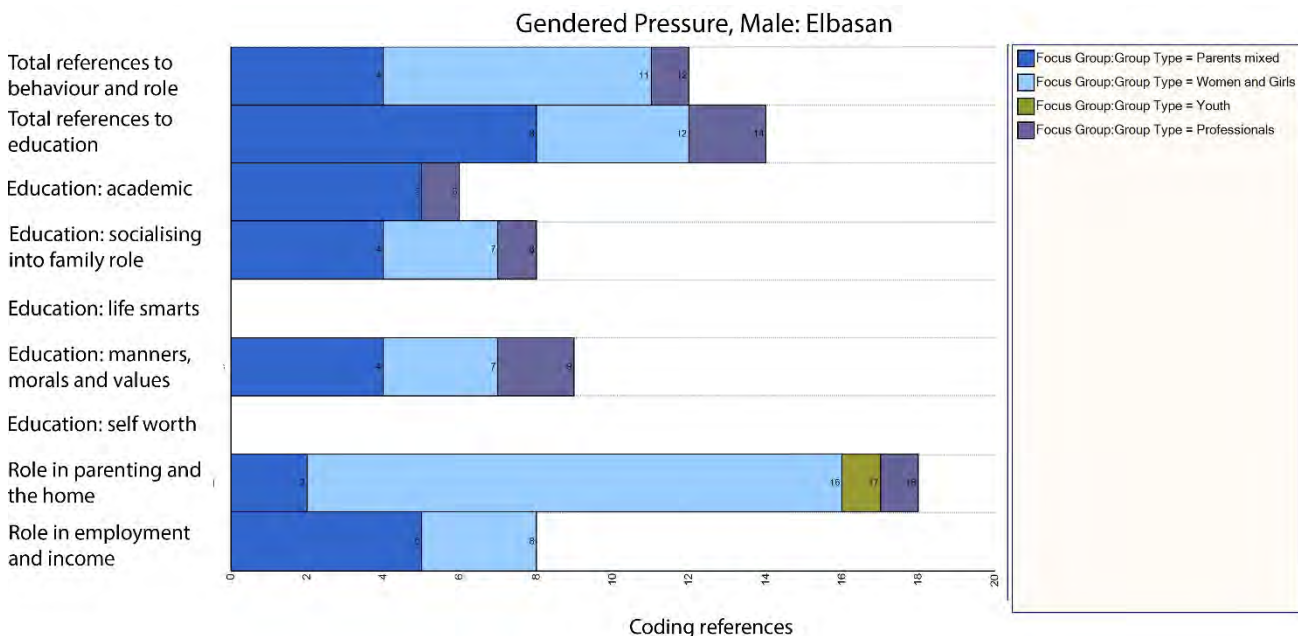
The issue of normalisation of crime within the family, versus exclusion from the family, was also starkly apparent in the women’s only group discussion (n=13). The youth group discussed pressure from mothers in this regard, but also from siblings offering a bad example and exploitation of younger siblings (n=2). Professionals in Elbasan commented on the normalisation of crime in families (n=3), as did parents

(n=3), appearing to critique the types of families where they felt crime is tolerated or encouraged. However, as in Kukës, parents were divided as to whether they would personally ‘close the door’ or ‘keep the door open’ for a child that committed a crime but raised the issue often (n=14), and this

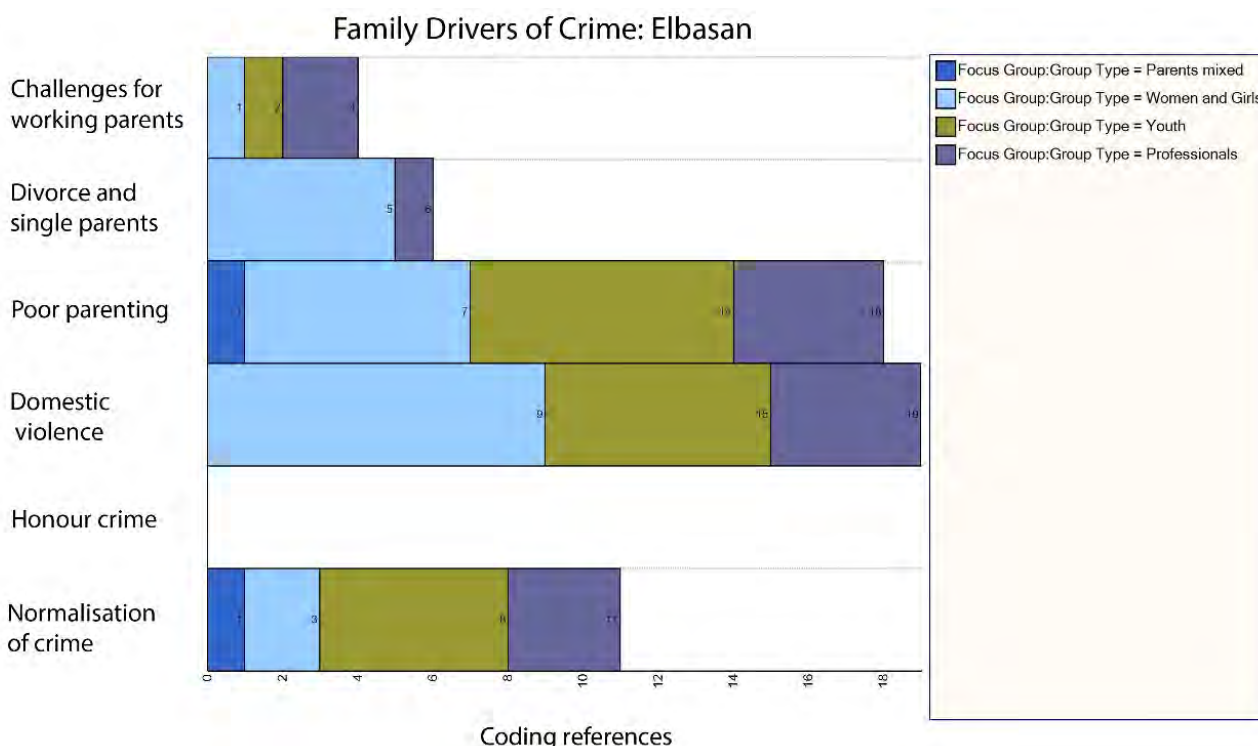
If he just stole, that's okay. I would not open the door only if my child raped or killed - WE

depended not only on the type of crime (n=5) but on the gender of the child (n=1, where families are less lenient with girls) and of the parent where the father is perceived as the one closing the door compared with the mother who might be more forgiving (n=1).

Gendered pressure: male



Family drivers of crime



Crime and social status

As mentioned above, there was a focus on the crime of domestic violence in Elbasan. It was the most frequently referenced type of crime of any type in any region (n=19), despite the silence on the issue in the Elbasan mixed parents' group (n=0). Rape and sexual violence was the second most frequently cited (n=10), particularly by women and girls (n=6), although the mixed parents' group commented on this only in relation to young people being at risk in schools (n=2). Focus on crime was followed by corruption (n=7) with drugs, child exploitation (particularly in the form of forced begging), cybercrime and other types of violence also referenced. Professionals argued that in the Elbasan region, due to poverty, young people start being involved in delinquency from the age of 11 to 12 years old and are often involved in consumption and distribution of hashish.

Parents saw what they perceived as negative peer pressure leading young people into lives of crime (n=7). They stated that young people are sometimes bullied by older peers and then go on to become bullies themselves. They argued that there was a prevalence of organised crime structures within their territory which were easy to get into, and materialistic ideals and aspirations as well as the glorification of guns were also identified as risks arising from social groups and influences both online and offline. The youth group also pointed to what they saw as negative peer pressure (n=8) and claimed that social status was a key driver of crime and that popular young people in school who engage in crime (VIPs) have power and are leaders of the class. Such VIP status makes it difficult for them to change their behaviour. Youth in Elbasan were optimistic about the usefulness of constructive peer support (n=6) in helping young people to divert to a non-criminal path, but still referenced possible negative effects of peers in manipulating and exploiting those in their age group (n=8). Other role models included those on social media, but while there were some references these were not as prevalent as in other regions. The group of professionals was the only group to discuss exploitation in this region (n=11), with a focus on exploitation by older age groups and online grooming risks.

Let's say they are forced to do it, even if they do not like something they will do it because they want to be part of that group where he is the strongest - YE

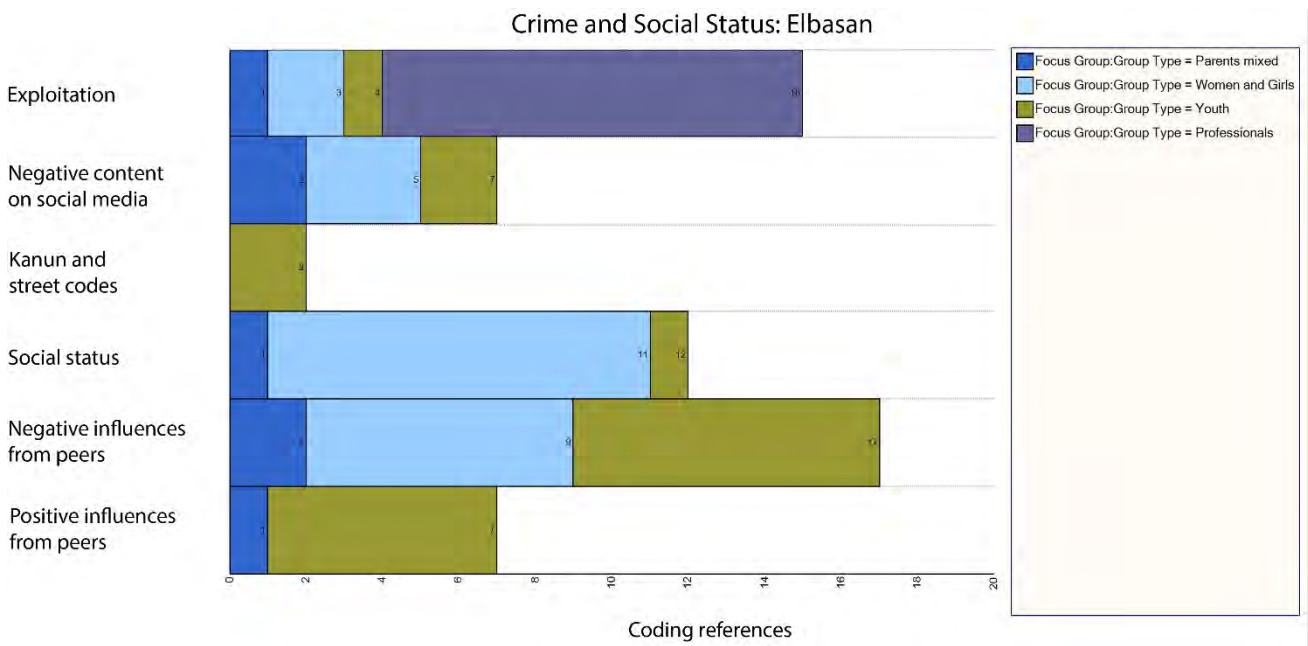
I think that crime is promoted more by village lifestyle - WE

Internal migration was seen as a risk factor for crime, as seen in Elbasan in particular compared with other regions. The FGDs in Elbasan specifically highlight the perceived impact of rural-urban migration on crime (n=23 for the two parent groups; n=15 for professionals; n=5 for the youth group, n=43 in total). While there was some disagreement as to whether rural or urban youths were more likely to be involved in crime, those coming from rural areas were seen

as more vulnerable to exploitation and thus more at risk. Newcomers can feel excluded and marginalised and, therefore, more socially vulnerable and, arguably, exposed to crime as the only pathway to an income and recognised social status. Discrimination based on family background and origin was also problematic. The participants in the youth group were especially perceptive and cited a broad range of socio-economic factors, and also discussed the role of social status displays in school, which they argued made deviant behaviour attractive and undermined motivations to desist. Young people also mentioned Roma/Egyptians as being at risk (n=4). Factors, both, of internal displacement and ethnicity were seen to add to the existing constellation of vulnerabilities faced by young people.

If girls move from rural to urban areas they will become victims faster - PE

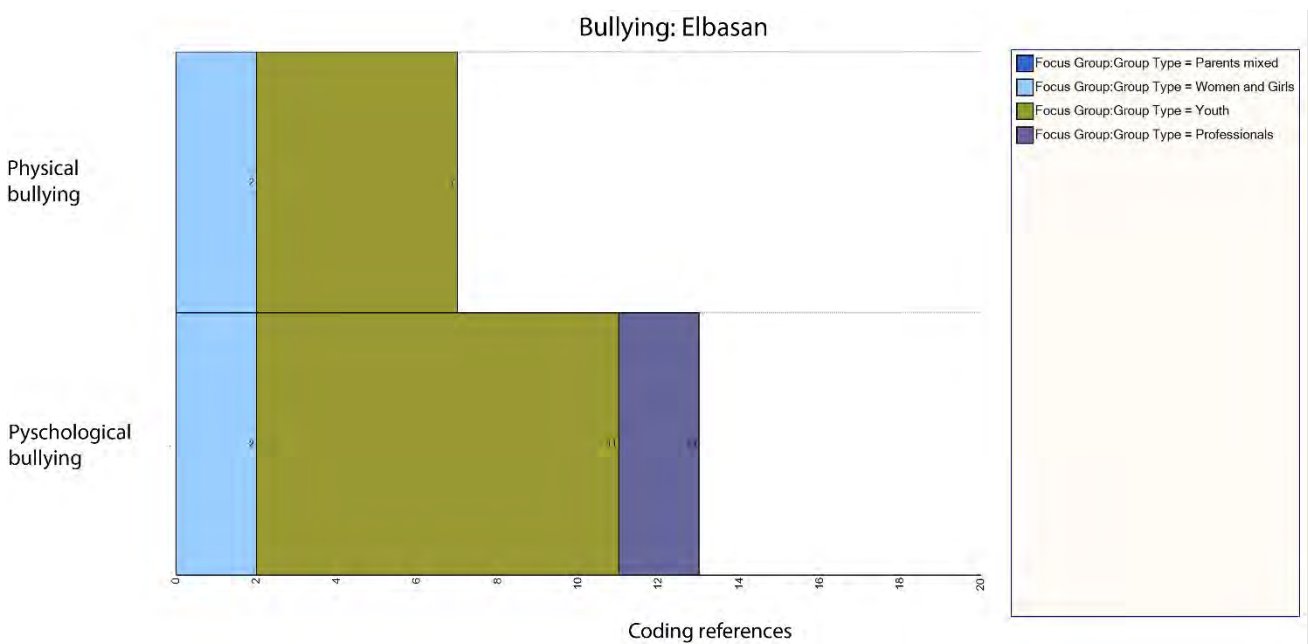
Crime and social status



Bullying types

The need for a sense of belonging was discussed frequently in Elbasan in adult and youth groups (n=12), and the availability of and need for mental health support was also frequently referenced in all the groups in Elbasan (n=19). These FGDs, similar to those in Shkoder, suggest social status negotiations among young people in school, in which criminal success becomes rewarding for the materialistic indicators of high status and a proof of personal and social ‘mattering’ (Billingham and Irwin-Rogers, 2021; cf. Levell and Schwandner-Sievers, forthcoming).

[T]here is a guy who has done a folk song and has been very bullied by it. If he had done a song with banalities, they would have called him VIP immediately - YE



Again, the theme of bullying, here presented as a vicious circle, stands out and sits aside 'peer pressures', with the youth of Elbasan highlighting the detrimental effects and prevalence of bullying in the form of psychological and emotional violence. Elbasan was the region in which bullying was most often referenced, with the highest proportion of physical violence apparent (emotional bullying n=13; physical bullying n=7), with both types most frequently discussed by young people and felt to have severe effects. The overall prevalence of references to psychological bullying may point to specific forms of social control which require further research and investigation.

[T]he biggest victim is the bully himself - YE

Comparative analysis - conclusion

Synthesis of findings

In line with the overarching aim to gain a better understanding of local specificities, local knowledge, capacities, and vulnerabilities in preparation for designing meaningful, targeted interventions with young people at risk of Serious Organised Crime, the FGDs offered detailed and complex learning. They generated useful and novel insights into local knowledge, perceptions and attitudes relating to crime risk, vulnerabilities, protection factors and support structures (obj. 1 and 2), and information about music as a feasible engagement and intervention tool (obj. 3 and 4).

Lessons learned by facilitators from the FGDs, benefitting from their direct engagement, were immediately integrated and applied to RAYS intervention activities, preceding this publication of results. These helped tailor the activities to local needs and contexts. This systematic data analysis, however, produced important insights about the relevance of special themes, from a local perspective, previously not sufficiently evidenced or recognised as relevant, both in the project, as well as in the wider literature, thereby providing learning beyond immediate project needs that are replicable in future projects, relating to both research and intervention activities. The systematic NVivo analysis has helped identify and sharpen relevant guiding themes for FAM-strategy based interventions implemented as proof-of-concept case studies (see forthcoming Working Papers on soundscape composition and lyrics/beat-making workshops as well as FAM concept paper, forthcoming).

The similarities and differences encountered in the three different settings of Kukës, Shkoder and Elbasan underscore the significance of tailored approaches to each individual case. Firstly, the analysis identified some strong, partly unexpected, similarities, such as the overarching prevalence and impact of **domestic violence** which respondents singled out as an important vulnerability factor exacerbating the risks of young people's criminal exploitation in all three municipalities. This result arose from the introduction of women-only groups, who spoke more freely about violence and pressures faced than the adults in the mixed parents' group. Also, the prevalence of classic patriarchal forms of social organisation and associated familist values and expectations was evident in all three regions, yet there was some difference in degree and character. Notably, although not fully absent (and individual statements such as on 'honour killing' were noted), the relatively low degree of mentioning 'blood feuds' as a risk factor contradicted the ubiquitous ways through which Albanians can find themselves exposed to associated, culturalist stereotypes abroad.

Kukës displayed the most rigid, classic/traditional gender roles and heteronormative familism, rendering vulnerable both young men (imbued with the provider role) and women (confined to subservient support, bound to the private space, and charged with responsibility of family 'honour'). Conversely, while the same norms were shared in the other locations more broadly, they were less tied to the specific, cultural idea of 'honour' but elsewhere appeared more materialistic. Peer pressures and criminal role models were highlighted with more emphasis than family and wider kinship obligations. **Patriarchal, hetero-normative familism**, evident as a social norm in all three regions, produces stigma for those falling outside this normative framework. In consequence, risks of social exclusion, stigma, and exploitation appeared thus amplified for divorced women and their children. Furthermore, this social norm underscored gendered risks such as pressures on young men to provide by whatever means and, for young women, to comply and forfeit opportunities of self-development, while being held responsible for any norm deviation (similar to findings offered in Byrne et al., 2021).

The FGDs further revealed effective **internal structures of exclusion** that cause risks and vulnerabilities for young people who are thus marginalised and in need of seeking alternative means of generating social recognition and a

Kinship and family as a form of solidarity and support, as well as affirming social pressures and obligations, and social exclusion, where a person finds themselves outside the social norm, were particularly evident in Kukës. Ethnicity specifically mattered in Shkoder. Rural-urban internal migration, albeit present as a risk factor underpinning social exclusion also in Shkoder, was particularly evident in Elbasan.

sense of belonging. Gendered social differentiations were prevalent in all three regions, yet there were also specific regional differences in the intersecting factors informing such internal structures of exclusion. For instance, kinship and family as a form of solidarity and support, as well as affirming social pressures and obligations, and social exclusion, where a person finds themselves outside the social norm, were particularly evident in Kukës. Ethnicity specifically mattered in Shkoder. Rural-urban internal migration, albeit present as a risk factor underpinning social exclusion also in Shkoder, was particularly evident in Elbasan.

Finally, the data allows delineating both **gender and generational divisions** in perceiving risks and vulnerabilities within and across the three regions. For example, young people in Kukës seemed more attuned to risks arising from mental health issues and bullying than the adults in this region. Generational differences

were also seen regionally in attitudes to behavioural change, belonging and mental health issues. Regarding societal change, adults in Kukës appeared most discouraged by perceived changes; young people in Shkoder were the most vocal concerning the need for change; while in Elbasan youth expressed a high level of disempowerment regarding opportunities for change.

Institutional issues

Similarities in all three research locations included a widely shared understanding of contextual, structural risk factors such as poverty and low confidence in the institutions, including respondents' observations on deficient educational provisions for young people and a lack of coordination between institutions, as well as perceptions of corruption and its impacts on young people. These findings offer additional evidence for the need for activities enhancing institutional coordination and capacity building of professionals working with young people at risk, both streams subject of RAYS's Objective C interventions. Within these discussions, the need for enhancing institutional support for young people was identified. The themes of implementing positive encouragement, institutional support and influencing, rather than punishment, was seen in discussions surrounding prison.

[W]e live in a country where you cannot find justice - WE

Overall, the enveloping topic of music was a useful starting point to encourage general discussion. Music appeared to incentivise an open conversation and debate around relevant themes while also revealing societal fissions such as a generational divisions pertaining to certain topics. The relevance of some previously unrecognised or ignored local concepts were brought to the fore by the qualitative data analysis, which were not previously evident from the raw statistical research. These will require further analysis in order to enhance an in-depth understanding of local and regional specificities regarding risks of young people's criminal exploitation. These will be discussed as specific themes in the following.

Special theme 1: open door vs closed door

The issue of family support or rejection of children seen as breaking the norms was starkly apparent within the qualitative data in comments referencing the 'open door' versus the 'closed door'. This dichotomy of support, seen as tolerance of crime versus control in the form of the threat of exclusion, was seen in all three regions. The specific open door concept points to an emic understanding ranging from the prioritisation of family solidarity and unconditional support for one's child to a potential normalisation of crime within those families keeping the door open. The closed door pertains to exclusion of the young person for his or her involvement in specific crimes.

The information analysed in this context provides insight into the valorisation of different crimes and appears directly connected to questions of gender as well as social status in the community: when a crime is seen as abominable to such an extent that protecting the child would shame the family in the wider community, the 'closed door' would sacrifice the child to the authorities for the benefit of upholding family reputation and status. Parents were divided as to whether they would 'close the door' or 'keep the door open' for a child that committed a crime. This depended not only on the type of crime but on the gender of the child and of the parent: for girls, a mistake could more easily lead to exclusion from the family, and fathers were seen as more likely to 'close the door'. The discussions hinted at the ways in which status would be affected by a decision to include or exclude the child.

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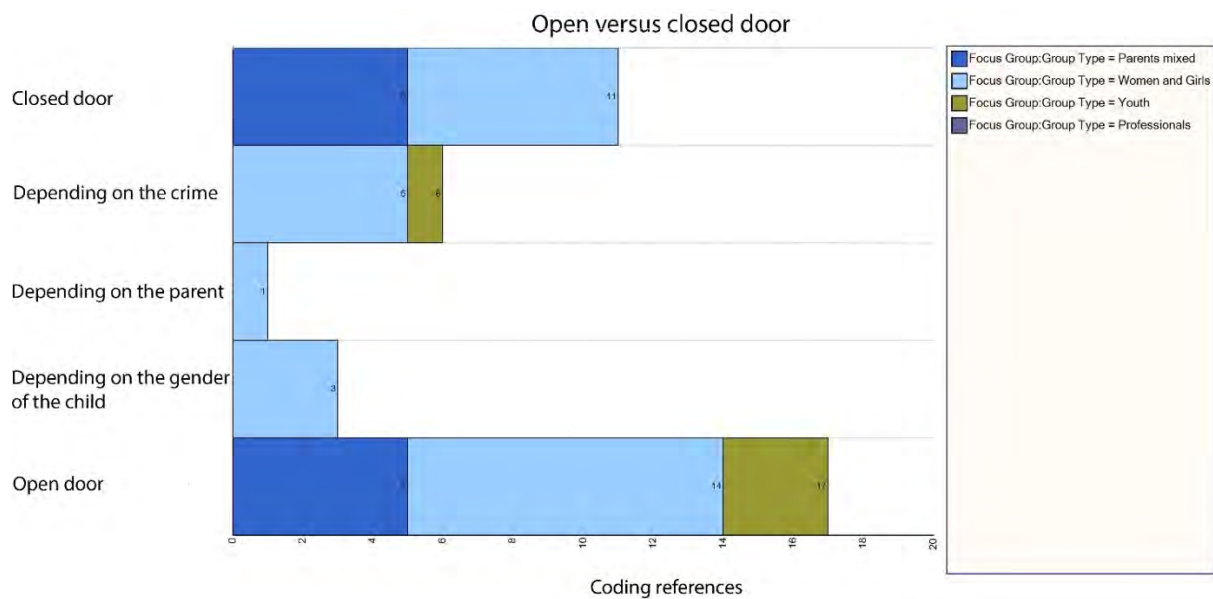
*If he was going to kill or rape a woman,
I would never open the door for him
again. If he was going to commit a theft
I would forgive him because it could
have been just a period in his life - WE*

Some focus groups suggested adult responsibility in 'normalising crime' such as when reporting of pressures on young people, particularly (but not only) young men, to generate an income regardless of the source. Interestingly, the discourse around the normalisation of crime in general critiqued the values of other families than one's own, either explicitly pointing to examples where young people had been pushed into specific crimes by family members or more generally alluding to the values and influences portrayed within such other families. This critique was

detected more in Kukës and Shkoder and was not discussed by parents in Elbasan. Arguably, and erring on the side of caution, this might suggest potential hearsay only rather than necessarily a wide-spread normalisation of crime. However, when the discussion turned to the 'open door' and 'closed door' terms specifically, the parent groups appeared to perpetuate the very values being critiqued in other families. The pre-eminence of the value of family solidarity over societal laws and rules, however, does not equate with the normalisation of crime as a legitimate (albeit illegal) income-generating activity. No parent spoke about pushing their children into illegal activities. Keeping the door open for a child who committed a crime was reframed as supportive of a young person's needs.

Age and gender seniority principles appear to underpin gendered, hierarchical (commonly authoritarian, in distinct cases abusive) adult-child relationships, including parent-child relationships. Ways to counteract such abuses of power and lack of egalitarian relationships may require considering the inclusion of parental (and even grandparental) cohorts across genders in activities directed at introducing more egalitarian means of communication. We suggest that this emic metaphor of the open/closed doors requires further exploration in

order to unpick local family attitudes and gendered norms towards young people involved in diverse types of crimes and their rehabilitation chances.



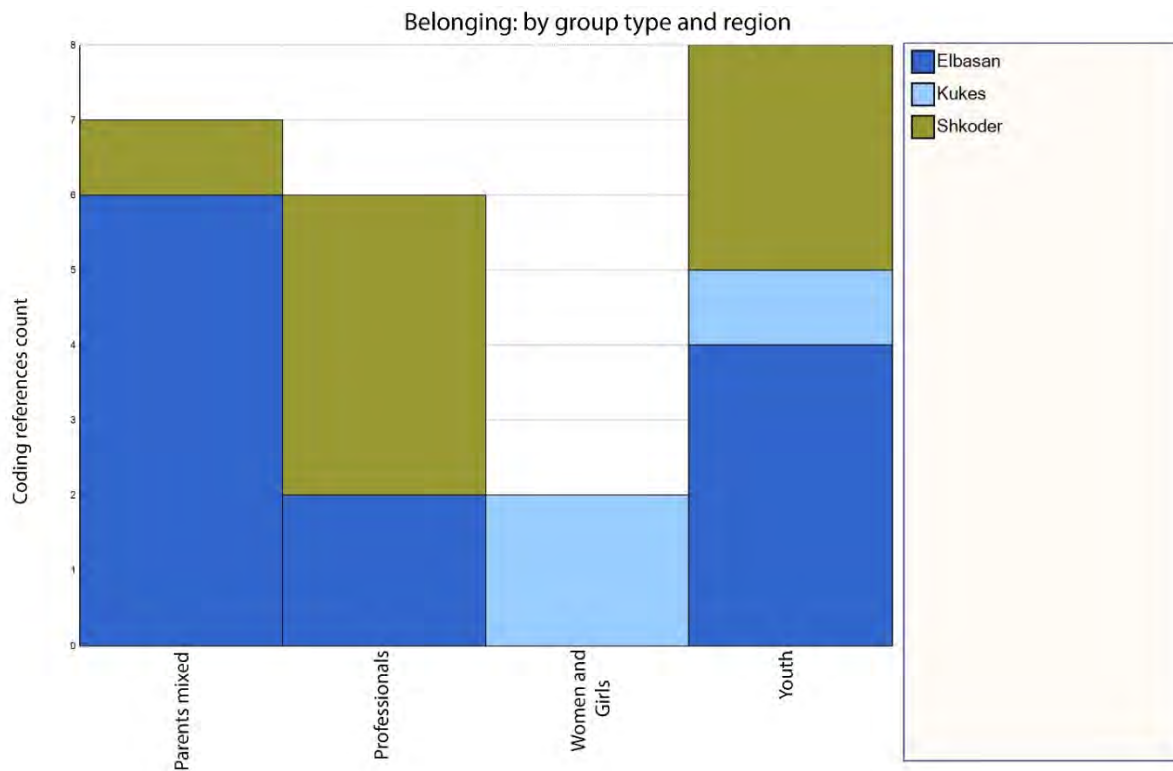
Special theme 2: mattering, belonging and social status

Discussions concerning mattering and belonging, or a sense of recognition of social status by the peer group and group inclusion versus exclusion, were not only seen specifically in terms of the ‘open door versus closed door’ of families, or in the discussions related to bullying and the cultural importance of family reputation, but also in connection with questions of individual social status throughout the discussions, particularly in Elbasan and Shkoder. A person’s belonging within social groups was related to the potential for effecting personal change for either better or worse. Respondents highlighted the appeal of fast cash and flashy display of wealth acquired by whatever means (coded under the theoretical concept of “conspicuous consumption”), conveyed through role models in the neighbourhood or online; and exacerbated by some parents exerting pressures on young men to provide for the family.

The sociological concept of Conspicuous Consumption indicates an eye-catching display of luxury items (e.g. fast cars, golden necklaces etc) to suggest economic success (disposable income and accumulated wealth), thereby heightening social prestige (Veblen 2009 [1899]). Contemporary updates of this theory suggest that such display is more likely in social groups fending off poverty assumptions and in emerging economies than among social groups with established wealth (Charles et al. 2009).

Conversely, discrimination, marginalisation and stigmatisation of specific societal categories including internal migrants and children from divorced families; experiences of bullying and feelings of isolation by young people who did not feel like part of their group in school and who were excluded from activities by teachers; and other vulnerability inherent in lacking belonging, were recurrent themes. Sometimes they were identified from implicit conjectures (such as when the discussion reproduced stigma, e.g. in relation to divorce families), at others they were explicitly evident (when respondents highlighted a specific form of exclusion). Often, the discussion was linked to how street life in the neighbourhood can offer alternative avenues to mattering and belonging (this is elaborated in Levell and Schwandner-Sievers, forthcoming; cf. Billingham and Irwin-Rogers 2021). For example, adults commented on the perceived sense of belonging felt by young people in criminal groups and the

requirement for trust in such situations. It is notable to compare these comments with those on peer influence, where both Elbasan and Shkoder more frequently referenced the possibility for peer influence supporting resilience. In Kukës, supportive peer influence and a need of belonging were barely recognised with exception of the women only group.



Special theme 3: domestic violence

In contrast to statistical analysis on crime which deems domestic violence as less prevalent than assault, drug crimes, theft, and traffic offences in Albania (see appendix 3), the qualitative data highlight domestic violence as the most referenced type of crime in the FGDs. The discrepancy between the official statistics and qualitative results of the FGDs may point to silencing or under-reporting of domestic violence, particularly notable since in the mixed parents’ groups there are far fewer references than in the women-only and youth groups in all three regions. The perceived increase in domestic violence voiced in some discussions may point to a possible backlash to the changes in gender roles and norms in a society undergoing rapid changes. Women and youth groups also discussed the emotional and life course impacts on young people in far greater detail. A report on domestic and gender-based violence in Albania (Home Office 2018) noted that the pressure on men and boys to provide financial support could be channelled into aggression towards families. The same report also noted regional distinctiveness in the definition of domestic violence, including psychological abuse within the discussion of domestic violence and an overall use of the term ‘violence’ rather than ‘abuse’. In this FGD analysis report we have therefore used the localised term ‘violence’ rather than the more encompassing phrase

[M]y sister's mother-in-law, who was killed [by her husband], tries to give money to the judge to get her son out of jail - WE

'abuse'. As seen in the analysis of references to bullying, the outcomes of emotional abuse were considered in the local context to be as severe as physical violence, in terms of heightened vulnerability for young people and the potential for exploitation into criminal pathways either as victims or perpetrators. Young people were particularly cognizant of the vulnerabilities attached to domestic violence in the home, suggesting risk connections between insecure home environments and risks of exploitation.

Special theme 4: crypto-matriarchy

In all three regions analysed, the role of the mother-in-law was seen as highly regulatory, with elements of support and control within families. Seminal work on classic patriarchy and culture change (Kandiyoti 1988) suggests that, in classic patriarchal socio-cultural context, mothers of adult sons reproduce this form of social organisation, exactly because this family-based system provides them with both social status and social security where social protection outside the family is lacking, such as in Albania still today (ILO 2021). With culture change challenging their cryptomatriarchal role (Simić 1983), however, yet insufficient alternative support available other than through their sons and their daughters-in-law, they may either end in destitution or assert their traditional power.

Crypto-matriarchy refers to matriarchal features within classic patriarchal societies, which are not immediately obvious to outsiders. Accordingly, in extended, classic-patriarchal families, women can exert great influence and power over internal family affairs during the later stages of a life-cycle, i.e. once mothers of adult sons. This includes dominance over the younger women of the household and a voice in the 'family council'. (Simić 1983; cf. Rrapi 2003: 88)

Meanwhile, in Albania, for married women, co-residence with, and care duties for, their mother-in-law remain common for many young wives as a result of the prevalence of customary, post-marital, virilocal forms of residence. Their husband is the social security guarantor of his mother. These rules reinforce traditional, gendered, domestic hierarchies within the marital family and can cause much friction, ample evidenced in the commentaries of the women's FGDs cited.

These findings point to complex questions regarding socio and cultural change: under what conditions could intervention activities facilitate a better understanding of the contradictions within the current system of social organisation, raise empathy across the gender and generational divides, encourage visions for alternative forms of social interaction and provoke meaningful change, without stripping the older generation of women of their main form of social protection?

Music and initiatives perceptions

Finally, the FGDs probed openness toward, and interest in, music-based activities. Several FGDs suggested the

There were lyrics that I liked because of the content because they had a proper message for the listener - YE

need for engaging and structuring young people's time. Kukës FGDs, specifically, also displayed disillusionment with many international interventions. Clearly, local interventions need to build a sustainable legacy beyond development project duration only. This should be assured through appropriate design from scratch, local ownership and cocreation, as well as communicated clearly throughout. Concerns expressed by adult FGD groups regarding the lyrics of hip-hop songs and an assumed potential for these to negatively impact on young people, led the RAYS team to administer a music

preference survey among the target groups. Questions to the young people included whether they understood the language of the songs, listened to the lyrics, and how they felt about these (Cf. forthcoming Working Paper on soundscapes by Schwandner-Sievers et al.). Preliminary results also here suggest the young people's critical reflections and engagement with the lyrics. The parallel lyric and beat-making action-research activities

Stresi has a very beautiful song that is dedicated to his mother... Although he is a rebellious boy, he comes of age when he shows his feelings - WE

investigated these findings further, with the additional aim of cultivating creative-critical thinking skills (in application of the FAM strategy) with young people around the music that they listen to (see forthcoming Working Paper on lyrics/beat-making by Berry).

In the FGDs, the following picture emerged, suggesting generational communication divide as evident in music preference (specifically, hip-hop): many adult FGDs presented stereotypical assumptions about the link between hip-hop and crime known also from public debates and media in the UK. As an apparent exception to the rule, several members of Elbasan's women's group expressed a hip-hop preference. Overall, the adult groups appeared distanced from (either feeling estranged from or concerned about, blaming, or simply not understanding) young people and their worlds as embodied in music preferences, and their music and social media consumption.

This generational communication gap identified was most evident in Kukës, where young people saw their engagement with the genre as an escape route from harsh realities and a chance for creativity. The young people in the other municipalities were more hesitant to admit such preference, however, this finding had to be treated with caution because of possible facilitator bias as evident from the transcripts. Overall, the Kukës findings correspond with our as of yet unpublished Music Preference Survey results, see figure 2 below, according to which hip-hop is by far preferred music genre among Albanian young people in the target areas, including Elbasan and Shkoder.

Music is a very effective method because it lowers barriers and resistance to expression - PS

The popularity of hip-hop among young people at risk, as documented also in the FGD data, supports the choice of activities which utilise hip-hop as a creative youth engagement tool directed at the intended target group. Hip-hop based activities lend themselves to youth-led, co-creative outputs that provide counternarratives to issues of concern highlighted in the FGDs, structured and guided along the FAM-strategy. However, the risk of 'imposing' hip-hop, where it is not the preferred genre among young people, has to be mitigated through offering alternative music interventions (see forthcoming Working Paper evaluating soundscape composition).

Hip-hop/Rap was by far the most often listed as the most preferred music genre (n=31). Other genres were most favourite as follows: Pop (n=19), Classical (n=17), R&B/Soul (n=10), Electronic/Dance (n=8), Rock (n=8), Folk (n=6) and Heavy Metal (n=6)

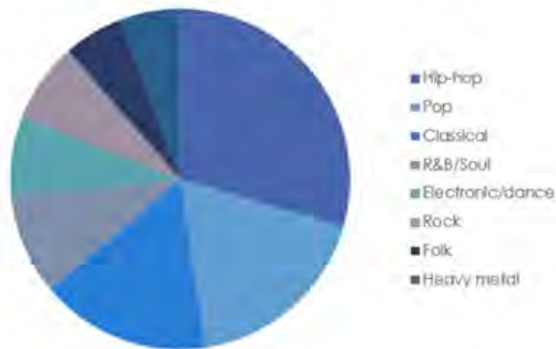


FIGURE 2: RESULTS FROM THE RAYS MUSIC-PREFERENCE SURVEY. (N=56) © RAYS 2022

Given the findings described, hip-hop lends itself to addressing the cross-generational communication gap identified. However, such plans will have to be considered under caveat in awareness of the prejudices in wider society, including among parents and professionals, such as teachers and youth workers. Follow-up planning should explore possibilities to include hip-hop in pedagogic training (capacity building) for engaging learners in critical thinking as well as addressing the generational communication gap at a wider societal level with a specific view to promoting more equitable relationships of youth professionals and young people (first piloted by RAYS in a workshop in Tirana in October 2021).

In conclusion, hip-hop emerged as a promising engagement tool for exactly those young people considered at risk. Participatory, music-based, co-creative activities have already been developed and designed based on the findings presented in this report (and from recommendations arising from earlier analysis rounds and an internal draft report). Such activities, based on participatory action research (PAR), included a lyrics/beat-making workshop and, as a non-verbal story-telling alternative, soundscape composition workshops with young people in Kukës and Shkoder in summer/autumn 2022. These aimed beyond simply ‘taking off the street’ young people considered at risk. Rather, they intended to provide space and support for critical, creative, transformative experiences and solution-oriented explorations, guided by tasks structured according to specific **guiding themes** based on the findings from the FGDs as pertaining to internal patterns and structures of exclusion and marginalisation. Implemented along a conceptual framework developed and presented as the FAM-strategy (see Schwandner-Sievers and Fisher, forthcoming), for which these activities served as proof-of-concept, these tasks invited young people to critically explore and tell their stories in reaching out beyond the social and cultural divisions prevalent in their everyday lives, to recognise and reflect on the social norms and their impact as prevalent in their home environment, and to imagining constructive futures.

Guiding Themes

- 1) *Gendered identity constructions; masculinity and vulnerable masculinities; gendered forms of exclusion and effects of domestic violence.*

- 2) *Mattering, belonging, social status anxieties.*
- 3) *Other boundaries of social exclusion/inclusion (e.g. ethnic; rural-urban internal migrants; environmental; return migrants; familist prejudices and 'social honour' concepts).*
- 4) *The role of the family / generational divide.*
- 5) *Experiences of bullying / mental health issues*

Recommendations

When designing and implementing ongoing and future activities aimed at supporting and strengthening the resilience of young people considered at risk of criminal exploitation in the target regions:

1. For any intervention at community level, local attitudes, perspectives, knowledge and needs should always be gauged before designing activities aimed at change. In order to be meaningful with a chance of sustainability, any such activities need to be closely tailored to local needs, situation, and context.
2. The FGD-methodology and NVIVO-led, critical discourse analysis provided in this report may serve as guidance for research to generate a critical and contextualised understanding of young people's risk, including of relevant social norms that are not always made explicit in the spoken word. Ideally, such method should be part of a method-mix, e.g. including individual music elicitation interviews and participatory action research (PAR).
3. Research should be expanded to include young people as co-researchers.
4. Research findings and analysis should be used to formulate 'guiding themes' (for application through the FAM-Strategy).
5. When designing activities, ethics and safeguarding for children/young people must always be prioritised. In order to do so, researchers and facilitators should be mindful and reflective about the potential adversarial factors within the local, social, and wider context identified in mind, such as specific family and peer pressures on, and expectations of, adolescent men and women; the wide-spread problem of domestic violence; and young people's lack of control over the ambient factors which underpin their vulnerability.
6. Egalitarian and co-creative means of engagement with young people should be advanced, both in working with these directly, and in capacity-building activities such as in training of teachers, youth workers, or in other training-of-trainers (ToT). Egalitarian forms of engagement with young people mean acknowledging and supporting participants' existing knowledge, skills, and intelligence, while simultaneously offering space and opportunity for co-creative activities which may enhance their confidence, expand their cognitive horizons, and amplify their critical voice.
7. While not losing sight of wider, geopolitical factors of exclusion, internal, societal structures of exclusion should be co-creatively addressed - as an underpinning cause of heightened risks - through the art works co-created. In this, facilitate young people's critical and reflective storytelling through their art work – telling about their everyday lives and experiences with societal divisions such as those based on gender and patriarchal norms, rural-urban or return migration, ethnic differences, and more.
8. The FAM-strategy should be used to structure and design co-creative arts/music-based activities around the relevant guiding themes identified to support young people's agency as potential drivers of change based, firstly, on their critical co-exploration and generation of an improved understanding of the issues in question; and, secondly, on the development of a creative and critical voice in artistically addressing and calling out the causal factors of their disadvantage as well as venturing, artistically, to bridge societal divisions.

9. Based on the creative outputs, critical youth voice could be amplified, e.g. through their artworks, co-creatively working towards making discrimination and marginalisation experiences (such as highlighted in the guiding themes and part of young people's everyday experiences) part of wider debates in Albania. Local radio or TV, social media, or an exhibition online or offline, could provide a platform for such amplification of youth voice.

10. Needs across generations should be considered, in contrast to a focus on young people alone; consider possibilities of including the parental and grandparental generation in activities directed at bridging gaps of understanding and communication between the generations, e.g. through music-based, joined FAM-led activities, aware of their human security needs (in lieu of a sufficient social welfare system).

11. Based on the existing base-line research and guiding themes identified, expand evidence base and proof-of-concept studies using the FAM-strategy, e.g. through different arts-based and pedagogic activities with youth aimed at strengthening their resilience (e.g. in relation to online abuse).



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Forthcoming Working Papers in this Series:

Levell, J., Music Elicitation Research, Training, and Intervention Pilot 2021-2023:

Music Elicitation research with men in conflict with the law in prison and on probation, Music Elicitation training with social/youth work professionals, Music Elicitation interventions with at-risk young people.

Schwandner-Sievers, S., Amelidis, P., Ibrahim, I., and Fisher, E. Co-Creating Soundscapes: Piloting the 'FAM-strategy' in a Participatory Action Research Workshop Fostering Creative Thinking and Non-Verbal Storytelling with Young People at Risk of Criminal Exploitation in Shkoder, Albania, September 2022.

Berry, M., Music for Futures. Lyrics and Beats Making Workshop: cultivating resilience to organised crime in Albanian youth through music.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Original research concept & indicative theme guides for researchers

Aims of the FGDs

- Research/intervention - team to develop a baseline understanding of local specificities, knowledge & capacities and vulnerabilities in preparation of designing meaningful, targeted interventions with young people at risk
- [Developing potentially replicable tool for baseline surveys in advance of local interventions with youth]

Objectives of the FGDs

1. Identifying existing local understandings of risk factors; as well as characteristics and situation, of young people at risk of being drawn into pathways to crime in this locality
2. Mapping locally effective/ineffective structures, practices, strategies, or programmes aimed at identifying, communicating with, and supporting young people at risk or marginalised
3. Identifying local knowledge and familiarity with participatory, arts-based work with, specifically, marginalised/at risk young people, specifically through music
4. [Identifying communication and music preferences of local young people at risk]

Target Audience

- Teachers (arts, social, class, head), ‘pedagogues’ in school & local youth workers, social workers
- Local parents, community elders – mixed group
- Local parents, community elders – female only group
- Local young people (gender-mix; 14-16 years-old; mixed targeted ‘at risk’ and other young people)

Size of target group (in locality)

- Between 4 and 10 local stakeholders per group
- 1 to 3 groups per location

Resources

- Researcher(s)’s time
- Researcher travel, accommodation, subsistence
- Password-protected recording device and storage device
- Access to secure Palladium email account/ dedicated sharepoint folder
- Venue, refreshments / hospitality for FG
- Transcript & translation of interviews Alb/Engl

Theme Guides (semi-structured, open questions / interactive elicitations / probes optional)

0. Preliminaries:

- Introduce
 - Yourself
 - Project overall (hand out *Participant Information Sheet / alternative visuals*)
 - FDGs' specific aims & objectives
 - Expected duration
- Ethics
 - Explain anonymisation at source; voluntary participation only; right to withdraw at any time without any reasons given (up to anonymised transcription of data); storage and anticipated uses of anonymised data
 - Rationale for recording and how to secure anonymisation
- Sign *Agreement Form* (copy for participants and for you)

...

A. FGD1: 'Professionals' (teachers, e.g. of arts, social, class, head of school), 'pedagogues' in school; local youth workers, social workers

0. General demographics

1. Local young people at risk

1.1 Risk identification: Are their young people in your catchment area who are particularly at risk of being drawn into crime? Who are these young people? How do you identify them as 'at risk'? Consider drawing 'risk map' or 'timeline' of pathways.

Probes:

- Are there shared characteristics?
- Is there a similar background?
- Is there specific behaviour?
- What are their hopes, needs, aspirations?
- Do you use a 'risk assessment' tool? (if so, which one; does this work; are there problems with that?)
- Other...

1.2 Causal factors: who/what do you think drive or prevent young people from getting drawn into crime? (what influences these young people most when getting drawn into crime? What role do other people play; e.g. as role models; or exerting pressures and expectations; role of media; role of structural factors)? (consider 'influence diagram tool' or other interactive, collective drawing exercise; e.g. post-it/whiteboard collection of suggestions)

Probes:

- Peers, friends
- Parents, families
- Community
- School

- Local 'gangs' or Big Men
- Celebrities, other role models
- Social media
- Local story-telling
- Transnational / migrant stories
- Specific music
- Socio-economic; poverty
- Political factors
- Family situation/structures
- Other...

1.3 Gender: How do you see boys involved; how do you see girls involved? *Consider body map method here.*

1.4 Professional challenges / experiences: What specific problems do you feel you are dealing with, with these young people at risk, as a teacher?

Probes:

- Communication (style, channel)
- Conduct
- Truancy
- Protection/threats
- Other...

1.5 Other... / anything else we should understand?

2. Local prevention/mitigation measures in place

2.1 Support structures: what structures are in place to identify and support young people at risk in this catchment area?

Probes:

- In school
- Engagement with their parents, community
- In the municipality
- Youth projects
- Police, community policing
- State programmes
- International projects or programmes
- Other...

2.2 Experience/challenges: can you share your experience of what works well or what the challenges are, of dealing well young people at risk? *Consider drawing mind map / or problem-solution chart*

Probes:

- Individually, as a teacher
- Collectively, as teachers
- As school
- Locally, other
- Other...

3. Familiarity with participatory, arts-based methods (music)

3.1 Cross-generational communication: do you feel you know what the concerns, needs, fears, aspirations and hopes of young people at risk are?

3.2 Generations & music: do you know what music young people at risk in your catchment area listen to? (What music is important to them?)

3.3 Music as method, experience: do you have experience with using music as a non-verbal communication or intervention tool? *Researcher to introduce future music intervention plans; probe whether there is interest and whether welcome at all.*

3.4 Best practice experiences: How should young people at risk be worked with best, without inadvertently heighten risks, stigmatise or expose them; or inadvertently support criminal ideals?

Probes:

- In family, community, schools, child protection councils...
- Separately or in wider, neutral groups?
- Gender segregated?
- Age segregated?
- Based on verbal expression, or finding ways that are other than verbal?

4. Follow-up/conclusion: thanks, future communication, intervention plans, dissemination and flow-back of results.

....

B. FGD2: Local parents or guardians, community elders

0. General demographics

1. Local young people at risk

1.1. Risk identification: What young people in your community might be particularly at risk? Are there any specific characteristics in common which make them susceptible to being drawn into crime? *Consider drawing 'risk map' or 'timeline' of pathways.*

Probes:

- Are there shared characteristics?
- Is there a similar background?
- Is there specific behaviour?
- What are their hopes, needs, aspirations?
- Other...

1.2. Causal factors: who/what do you think drive or prevent young people from getting drawn into crime? (what influences these young people most when getting drawn into crime? What role do other people play; e.g. as role models; or exerting pressures and expectations; role of media; role of structural factors)? *(consider 'influence diagram tool' or other interactive, collective drawing exercise; e.g. post-it/whiteboard collection of suggestions)*

Probes:

- Peers, friends
- Parents, families
- Community
- School
- Local 'gangs' or Big Men
- Celebrities, other role models
- Social media
- Local story-telling
- Transnational / migrant stories
- Specific music
- Socio-economic; poverty
- Political factors
- Family situation/structures
- Other...

1.3. Gender: How do you see boys involved; how do you see girls involved? *Consider body map method here.*

1.4. Parental/community challenges / experiences: What specific problems do you feel you are dealing with, with these young people at risk, as a parent/guardian/community leader?

Probes:

- Communication (style, channel)
- Conduct
- Truancy
- Protection/threats
- Other...

1.5. Other... / anything else we should understand?

2. Local prevention/mitigation measures in place

2.1. Support structures: what structures are in place to identify and support young people at risk in your community?

Probes:

- In school
- In the community, family; engagement with their parents
- In the municipality
- Youth projects
- Police, community policing
- State programmes
- International projects or programmes
- Other...

2.2. Experience/challenges: can you share your experience of what works well or what the challenges are, of dealing well young people at risk? *Consider drawing mind map / or problem-solution chart*

Probes:

- Individually, as a teacher
- Collectively, as teachers
- As school
- Locally, other
- Other...

3. Familiarity with participatory, arts-based methods (music)

3.1. Cross-generational communication: do you feel you know what the concerns, needs, fears, aspirations and hopes of young people at risk are?

3.2. Generations & music: do you know what music young people at risk in your community listen to? (What music is important to them?)

3.3. Music as method, experience: do you have experience with using music as a tool of non-verbal communication in the family/community? *Researcher to introduce future music intervention plans; probe whether there is interest and whether welcome at all.*

3.4. Best practice experiences: How should young people at risk be worked with best, without inadvertently heighten risks, stigmatise or expose them; or inadvertently support criminal ideals?

Probes:

- In family, community, schools, child protection councils...
- Separately or in wider, neutral groups?
- Gender segregated?
- Age segregated?
- Based on verbal expression, or finding ways that are other than verbal?

4. Follow-up/conclusion: thanks, future communication, intervention plans, dissemination and flow-back of results.

...

C. FGD3: Young people (DRAFT, developed to be thoroughly interactive, participatory, playful)

0. General demographics *consider 'train exercise'*

1. Music

1.1 What music do you listen to? *Collect video clips, names, tick tock*

1.2. Where do you find your music?

Probes:

- Peers, friends
- Family, community
- School
- Local bands
- TV
- Social media (youtube, ticktock...)
- Other ...

1.3. Who are the coolests artists, and what makes them cool? (celebrities, role models)

1.4. Do you like HipHop? What type? Does everybody like it?

1.5. Do parents, teachers, others of the older generation share your music taste?

1.6. Do you know any music produced by local bands? What are they, what music?

1.7. What else, other than music, do you enjoy? (Sports...)

2. Identity, pathways to the future

2.1. Who will you be in 3 years/ who will you be in 5 years? Who do you want to be? What will need to be in place, what helps/hinders getting there? *Exercise mapping now/then*

2.2. *Exercise: finish sentence: 'I am more than....'*

2.3. *Exercise: challenge statement: 'All northern Albanians are 'gangsters''; 'everyone in Kukes wants to go to England'.*

3. Follow-up/conclusion: thanks; possibility/interest in participating in possibility of future music intervention workshop?

Appendix 2: RAYS FGD analysis codebook

Total number of FGDs: 12

Total number of themes identified: 228

Theme	Within number of FGDs	Total references
1 Crime and social status	12	827
Crime	12	673
Family influencers in crime	12	196
Exclusion vs integration	12	98
Open vs closed door within families total	7	39
Closed Door	4	11
Depending on the crime	2	6
Depending on the gender of the young person	2	3
Depending on the parent	2	2
Open Door	7	17
Honour crime	2	3
Impact on crime	10	64
Cause	9	26
Instigators	1	8
Normalisation of crime	8	17
Rescue	2	3
Gender issues in crime	8	67
Female	8	22
Male	4	10
Impunity	3	6

Theme	Within number of FGDs	Total references
Pathways into crime	12	143
Age at which sensitive to criminal involvement	12	55
Criminal opportunities	1	1
Excessive free time	4	5
Exploitation	9	49
Female	6	18
Male	3	5
Manipulation by older individuals	5	11
Manipulation by peers	3	7
Vulgar (banal) vocabulary, aggression	8	30
Types of crime referenced	12	261
Blackmail	2	3
Child exploitation	8	23
Corruption	7	17
Crime general	6	14
Cybercrime	4	13
Cyber 'bullying' and insults	2	2
Sexual exploitation online	1	3
Domestic violence	11	48
Drugs	10	34
Money laundering	2	2
Prostitution and sexual exploitation	5	11
Rape and sexual violence	7	14

Theme	Within number of FGDs	Total references
Sex abuse minors	2	2
Theft	8	17
Trafficking	4	9
Violence other	9	33
Weapons	6	7
National image	6	15
Social status	12	139
Kanun and street codes	7	12
Materialistic and economic gain via crime	10	49
Conspicuous consumption	10	24
Fast cash, significant financial gains	9	25
Power accrued through criminal activities	4	6
Social status	10	72
in school	3	7
in the family	7	43
Social status in the community	6	22
2 General socio-economic risk factors	12	824
Alcohol	5	6
Belonging	8	23
Disaffected families general	12	134
Challenges for working parents	6	11
Divorce and single parents	9	39
Neglect	6	12

Theme	Within number of FGDs	Total references
Orphans and orphanages	5	7
Poor parenting	12	57
Sex abuse in families	1	1
Underage pregnancy	1	1
Drug use	7	12
Educational issues	12	70
Low attainment	5	8
Poor attendance	2	4
Poor engagement	9	19
Poor school administration	7	22
School dropouts	7	15
Ethnic background	6	11
Other ethnic issues	1	1
Roma and Egyptian	5	10
Health	1	1
Homelessness	2	2
Migration	10	65
Immigration to England	7	26
Poverty, unemployment and inequality	12	168
Affluence	8	16
Inequality	8	12
Poverty	11	28
Unemployment	6	17

Theme	Within number of FGDs	Total references
Psychological issues and emotions general	11	50
Anger, aggression	4	7
Anxiety	2	3
Depression, hopelessness	4	5
Isolation	4	9
Trust	1	1
Social - Peer and community influence	12	218
Bullying	10	95
Bullying defined and explained	2	4
Bullying emotional, mocking, shaming, teasing	10	31
Bullying physical violence	6	12
Community role models	10	28
Friends age group	11	89
Negative influences from friends and age group	11	65
Positive influences from friends and age group	5	24
Urban rural divide	10	64
3 Family and gender roles	12	625
Effective parenting (perceived)	8	45
Generation gap	9	22
Patriarchal gender and family norms	12	546
Family honour	6	14
Family structure	5	41
Living with grandparents	2	3

Theme	Within number of FGDs	Total references
Mother-in-law	3	29
Gender difference in roles and expectations	11	432
Female	11	253
Behaviour and role F	11	96
Education, all refs F	11	58
Academic	6	16
Family education	4	5
Life smarts	0	0
Manners, morals and values	4	4
Self worth	1	1
The home, parenting F	7	78
Work and money F	7	21
Male	11	178
Behaviour and role M	10	53
Education, all refs M	9	55
Academic	5	13
Family education	6	12
Life smarts	2	2
Manners, morals and values	6	14
Self worth	0	0
The home, parenting M	10	43
Work and money M	8	27
Gender equality	8	32

Theme	Within number of FGDs	Total references
Patriarchal tropes	11	27
Religion, values (old fashioned), respect and spirituality	4	12
4 Institutional issues & experience with participatory arts	12	503
Education	12	78
Community engagement	5	7
Education provision and monitoring of students	10	42
Positive effects of education	4	10
Quality of Education	5	19
Participatory arts, sports & recreational activities	12	185
Availability of programmes, activities and interventions	12	120
Available	5	14
Not available	11	48
Perceptions of benefits, general interventions	12	65
Perceptions of benefits, music interventions	5	10
Adult	5	10
Negative	0	0
Positive	5	10
Youth	0	0
Negative	0	0
Positive	0	0
State and society institutions (police, social services, education, sport, government etc)	12	240
Community engagement and relations	7	7

Theme	Within number of FGDs	Total references
Coordination and information sharing between institutions and families	11	86
Non-functioning of institutions	12	75
Fear of reprisal	5	10
Psychologists in schools	7	28
Re-education vs prison	7	16
Prison	2	2
Resources	4	21
Facilities	3	4
Money, budget	3	8
Services	3	6
5 Media, music, culture and identity	12	353
Influence of media on consumers	10	65
Influence of media role models (VIPs)	7	33
Music preferences	10	97
Adult	6	45
Adult Modern, hard, eg rock, hip-hop	3	9
Adult Traditional, soft, eg folk, classic, soft pop	6	16
Youth	7	50
Youth Modern, hard, eg rock, hip-hop	7	36
Youth Traditional, soft, eg folk, classic, soft pop	3	6
Other media (eg TV, Film)	6	11
Adult	2	4
Negative	2	4

Theme	Within number of FGDs	Total references
Positive	0	0
Youth	1	1
Negative	1	1
Positive	0	0
Perceptions of dress code and identity	7	25
Adult	6	20
Negative	6	17
Positive	0	0
Youth	2	5
Negative	2	4
Positive	0	0
Perceptions of youth culture music and videos	10	51
Adult	7	33
Adult perception - Negative	7	26
Adult perception - Neutral	4	6
Adult perception - Positive	1	1
Youth	3	16
Youth perception - Negative	2	11
Youth perception - Neutral	0	0
Youth perception - Positive	3	4
Social media	11	67
Negative content on social media	11	47
Recruitment tool for OC	4	7

Theme	Within number of FGDs	Total references
Types of social media	5	14
Facebook	3	3
Instagram	3	3
Tiktok	2	5
Twitter	0	0
YouTube	2	3
Usage	1	6
Technological issues	9	37
Digital divide	2	2
Gaming	2	3
Mobile Phones and internet use	9	32
6 Attitudes to change	7	85
Changing society or environment to change individuals	4	7
Difficulties with change	4	12
Disempowerment	4	11
Social vs individual change	6	35
Individual	5	17
Inability to change	2	8
Potential for change	5	9
Social	5	18
Negative change due to social pressure	4	9
Positive change due to social pressure and environment	4	9
The need for change	5	20

Theme	Within number of FGDs	Total references
7 Facilitator Questions	12	423

Appendix 3: INSTAT statistics on crime 2021, translation

Statistikat e krimeve dhe drejtësisë penale, 2021 (Published 5th May 2022)

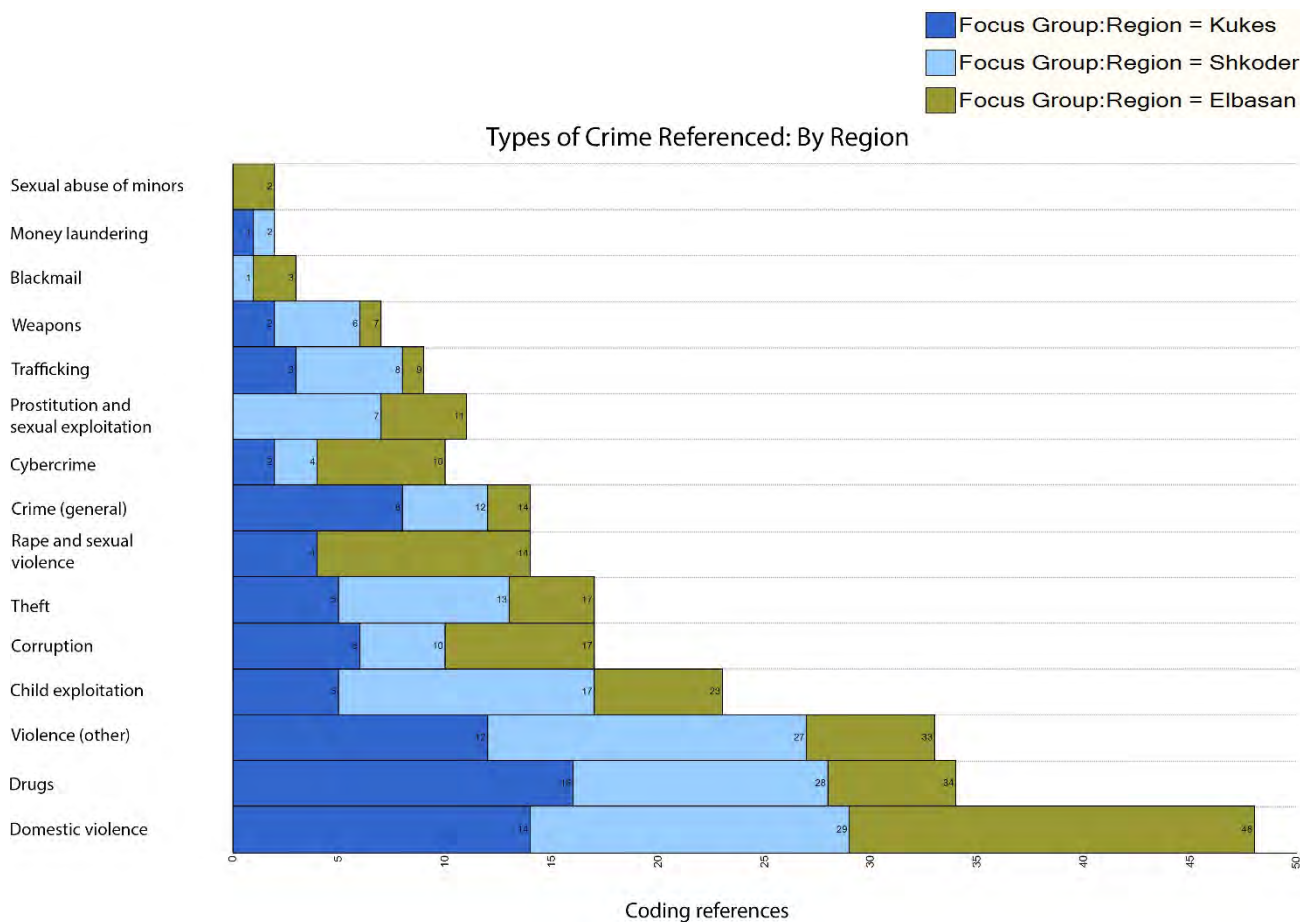
Tiranë, më 5 Maj 2022 (Statistics of crimes and criminal justice, 2021).

In the year of 2021, there are 32,175 identified criminal offences, 7.5% more compared to the year of 2020. In relation to population in the year of 2021, there are 125.1 identified acts per 10 thousand residents, from 115.4 that were in 2020.

Identified criminal offences - 2021

Types of Crime	2021
Armed robbery	11
Intentional murder	61
Theft misusing the job title	67
Counterfeit money	67
Theft with violence	85
Attempted murders	101
Sexual crimes	136
Fraud	975
Domestic violence (article 130/a)	1631
Assault (Intentional crimes against health)	2176
Crimes in the drug field	3078
Theft (article 134)	3508
Breaking traffic rules	5854
Other	17425
Total	35175

Appendix 4: Regional types of crime as reported in FGDs





RAYS

Reconnecting Albanian Youth and Society