Violence and Harassment in the World of Work: Legal Gaps and Reporting Barriers Among Young Workers in Albania

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Abstract

Violence and harassment in the world of work have increasingly been recognised as structural violations of labour rights, human dignity, and occupational health and safety. In response to these challenges, the International Labour Organization adopted Convention No. 190, establishing for the first time a comprehensive international standard on the elimination of violence and harassment at work. Albania ratified Convention No. 190 in 2022, thereby assuming the obligation to align its domestic legal and institutional framework with the Convention's requirements. However, the transition from formal ratification to effective implementation remains complex and not automatic. Moreover, Albanian labour law is not yet equipped to give effect to the Convention's innovative concept of the "world of work," as non-standard and emerging forms of employment remain largely unaccounted for in the existing domestic legal framework. This article examines the extent to which the Albanian legal and institutional framework complies with the standards set by ILO Convention No. 190 and identifies the main gaps hindering its effective application. Methodologically, the article combines normative legal analysis with descriptive findings from an online survey of 153 employed law students at the Faculty of Law, University of Tirana. The survey examined respondents' awareness of workplace harassment and Convention No. 190, their knowledge of reporting mechanisms, and perceived barriers to reporting. The findings reveal a fragmented system of legal protection, characterised by the absence of a unified definition of workplace harassment, unclear institutional responsibilities, and weak enforcement mechanisms. Within the surveyed group, the findings indicate limited awareness of available remedies and uncertainty about reporting mechanisms. The article argues that without addressing these normative, institutional, and cultural shortcomings, the protective potential of Convention No. 190 risks remaining largely symbolic. The paper concludes by proposing targeted legal and policy recommendations to strengthen enforcement mechanisms, improve institutional coordination, and enhance awareness and reporting practices in the Albanian context.

Keywords: ***violence and harassment at work, ILO Convention No. 190, Albanian labour law, comparative labour regulation, institutional enforcement***

1. Introduction

Violence and harassment in the world of work have increasingly emerged as critical concerns within international labour law, human rights law, and occupational safety and health (Kim, 2024). Once regarded primarily as individual interpersonal conflict or isolated disciplinary matters, these behaviours are now widely recognised as structural phenomena capable of undermining equality, dignity at work, workers' physical and mental health, and access to decent work (MacKinnon, 1979; McDonald, 2012). Contemporary labour markets, characterised by organisational restructuring, technological transformation, labour market flexibilization and the expansion of non-standard forms of employment, have further exposed workers to new patterns of psychosocial risks and work-related violence (Cooke et al., 2025; Chappell & Di Martino, 2006). These developments reinforced the need for legal frameworks capable of addressing violence and harassment not merely as individual acts of misconduct but as systemic labour law issues requiring a comprehensive regulatory and institutional response (Carlson & Olney, 2021; Pillinger et al., 2022). The adoption of the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No.190) by the International Labour Organization represents one of the most significant developments in international labour law in recent decades. Unlike previous international instruments, Convention No. 190 establishes, for the first time, a comprehensive and legally binding framework recognising the right of every person to a world of work free from violence and harassment (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2019a). The convention introduces several important normative innovations. It adopts an inclusive definition of violence and harassment, extends protection beyond traditional employees to encompass a broader range of persons participating in the world of work, and embraces the concept of the "world of work", thereby recognising that work-related travel, professional communications, employer-sponsored activities, remote work, commuting, and other contexts are sufficiently connected with employment (Kocher, 2023).

The concept of the world of work constitutes one of the Convention's most innovative contributions. By moving beyond the traditional workplace-centred understanding of labour law, Convention No. 190 reflects a profound transformation in contemporary employment relationships driven by digitalisation, remote working arrangements, platform work, algorithmic management and increasingly flexible organisational models (De Stefano et al., 2020; Perulli & Treu, 2020). The Convention therefore recognises that violence and harassment may arise wherever work-related activities are performed or where professional relationships continue to exist, regardless of the physical location in which work takes place. This broader approach requires domestic legal systems to reconsider traditional concepts of employer responsibility, occupational safety and health, labour inspection and institutional enforcement, particularly where national legislation continues to be primarily designed around standard employment relationships and workplace-based regulation. The implementation of Convention No. 190 presents significant challenges for many jurisdictions. Comparative research demonstrates that the ratification of international labour standards does not automatically result in effective domestic protection (Kocher, 2023). While States may formally incorporate international obligations into their legal systems, practical implementation is often constrained by fragmented legislation, institutional overlap, limited enforcement capacity, inadequate awareness among workers and employers, and insufficient coordination among the authorities responsible for labour protection (ILO, 2022b; Gesualdi-Fecteau et al., 2025). Consequently, the effectiveness of Convention No. 190 depends not only on legislative alignment but also on the ability of national institutions to translate international standards into accessible, credible and effective mechanisms capable of preventing violence and harassment and ensuring appropriate remedies for affected persons. These implementation challenges are particularly relevant in Albania. Although Albania ratified Convention No. 190 through Law No. 13/2022, the domestic legal framework has not yet undergone comprehensive reform specifically aimed at implementing the Convention's substantive and procedural requirements. Existing legal protection against workplace violence and harassment is dispersed across several legislative instruments, including the Labour Code and anti-discrimination legislation, each regulating only particular aspects of the phenomenon. While these provisions provide important legal safeguards, they do not establish a coherent regulatory framework reflecting the integrated approach envisaged by Convention No. 190. Equally important, Albanian labour legislation has not yet fully incorporated the Convention's broader understanding of the world of work, leaving significant uncertainty regarding the protection of workers engaged in non-standard, informal, remote or digitally mediated forms of employment. The implementation gap cannot be explained solely through legislative fragmentation. International evidence consistently demonstrates that legal protection is influenced not only by statutory rules but also by institutional effectiveness, organised practices and workers' willingness to invoke available legal remedies (ILO, 2022b). Fear of retaliation, employment insecurity, and limited trust in enforcement discourage victims from reporting violence and harassment, even where formal legal mechanisms exist. Young workers may be particularly vulnerable in this regard. They are more likely to occupy precarious forms of employment and to have limited knowledge of their employment

rights. As a result, they may be less aware of available legal protections and less likely to rely on existing reporting mechanisms.

Although violence and harassment at work have attracted growing scholarly attention, several aspects remain insufficiently explored within Albanian legal scholarship. Existing studies have primarily examined workplace harassment through the perspectives of discrimination law, gender equality, or occupational safety, while relatively little attention has been devoted to the broader legal implications of Convention No. 190 and its implementation within the Albanian labour law framework (Kullaj, 2024). Moreover, empirical research examining workers and their perceptions of institutional reporting mechanisms remains limited (Poni & Xheka, 2023; Çoni Kacollja, 2020). This article seeks to address these gaps by combining normative legal analysis with empirical research. Rather than examining the Convention exclusively from a doctrinal perspective, it evaluates how international labour standards interact with domestic legislation, institutional enforcement and workers' legal awareness.

The article therefore adopts an interdisciplinary approach that integrates labour law analysis with empirical evidence concerning reporting behaviour and institutional perceptions among young workers. In doing so, it contributes to the growing literature examining the domestic implementation of international labour standards beyond legislative compliance. More specifically, the article pursues three interrelated objectives. First, it evaluates the extent to which the Albanian legal framework complies with the substantive and procedural requirements set out in the ILO Convention No. 190. Second, it identifies the principal legislative and institutional barriers affecting the effective implementation of the Convention, with particular attention to the fragmentation of legal protection and the distribution of enforcement responsibilities among competent authorities. Third, drawing on an empirical survey of employed law students at the Faculty of Law, University of Tirana, the article explores workers' awareness of workplace violence and harassment, familiarity with Convention No. 190, perceptions of reporting mechanisms, and the principal barriers discouraging victims from seeking legal protection. The empirical component should be understood as exploratory rather than statistically representative. Its purpose is not to generalise findings to the entire Albanian workforce but to provide additional insight into how a group of young workers with legal education perceive violence and harassment within the contemporary world of work. The article argues that Albania has legal provisions addressing violence and harassment at work, but these provisions remain fragmented. Domestic labour law has yet to fully incorporate the Convention's broader concept of the world of work, while institutional enforcement mechanisms require better coordination for its effective implementation.

The remainder of the article is organised as follows. Section 2 examines the normative innovations introduced by ILO Convention No. 190 and their implications for the regulation of violence and harassment in the world of work. Section 3 analyses the Albanian legal and institutional framework, identifying the principal areas of legislative fragmentation and institutional challenges affecting implementation. Section 4 presents the methodology and findings of the empirical research. Section 5 discusses the findings in light of the existing legal framework and international labour standards, highlighting their implications for labour law enforcement and institutional reform. Finally, Section 6 summarises the study's main findings and outlines recommendations to strengthen the implementation of Convention No. 190 within the Albanian legal system.

2. The Normative Innovations Introduced by ILO Convention no. 190

The adoption of the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention represents a turning point in the development of international labour law. Unlike earlier international instruments, which addressed violence, discrimination or occupational safety through separate regimes, Convention No. 190 establishes the first comprehensive and legally binding framework specifically dedicated to preventing and eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work (ILO, 2019a). By recognising the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, the Convention not only introduces a new catalogue of rights and obligations but also redefines the legal understanding of workplace protection by adopting an integrated and preventive approach (ILO, 2019a). Recent scholarship considers Convention No. 190 a significant shift from reactive regulation towards a preventive and structural approach, shifting the focus from merely sanctioning unlawful conduct to creating working environments in which violence and harassment are less likely to occur (Sedacca, 2026).

Rather than creating entirely new rights, the Convention consolidates and develops existing international labour and human rights principles through a more comprehensive regulatory model. One of its principal innovations lies in the adoption of a broad definition of violence and harassment, encompassing unacceptable behaviours, practices or threats, whether occurring as a single incident or repeatedly, that result in or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm (ILO, 2019a, art. 1). This formulation moves beyond legal approaches that require repeated conduct or

proof of intent, reflecting a preventive understanding according to which legal intervention should occur before serious harm materialises. A second important innovation concerns the Convention's personal scope. Instead of limiting protection to employees within standard employment relationships, Convention No. 190 extends its protection to all persons participating in the world of work, irrespective of their contractual status, including trainees, apprentices, volunteers, jobseekers and individuals whose employment has ended (ILO, 2019a, art. 2). This broader personal scope reflects the growing diversification of labour markets and acknowledges that vulnerability to violence and harassment is determined not solely by contractual classification, but by a person's participation in the world of work (De Stefano, 2021).

Aloisi and De Stefano (2020) have observed that contemporary labour markets increasingly challenge traditional legal distinctions between standard and non-standard work, requiring labour regulation to respond to new forms of work organisation and digital labour relations. Perhaps the Convention's most significant contribution is the introduction of the concept of the "world of work". Rather than limiting protection to the employer's premises or to working hours, the Convention adopts a functional approach that extends protection to situations occurring in the course of, linked with, or arising out of work, including work-related travel, training activities, work-related communications and employer-sponsored events (ILO, 2019a, art. 3). This legal provision reflects profound transformations in the organisation of work, where digitalisation, remote work and platform-based employment have progressively blurred the distinction between workplace and non-workplace environments. Consequently, the legal connection between violence and work is no longer determined exclusively by location, but by the existence of a sufficient functional link between the conduct and professional activity (Prassl, 2018). Recent studies have shown that the expansion of digital labour and ICT-enabled work has created new forms of cyber harassment and online abuse that cannot be adequately addressed through traditional workplace-centred regulation (De Stefano et al., 2020).

Finally, Convention No. 190 adopts an integrated and gender-responsive approach to prevention. Rather than relying exclusively on individual complaints or ex post sanctions, it requires States to combine legislative measures with labour inspection, awareness-raising, workplace policies and preventive occupational safety and health measures. This reflects an understanding that violence and harassment are not solely individual acts of misconduct but structural risks that require coordinated institutional responses (Karimova & Boehmer, 2024). Recent research similarly emphasises that effective implementation of Convention No. 190 depends not only on legal reform but also on strengthening preventive mechanisms, institutional capacity and workplace governance (Pillinger & Wintour, 2024).

2.1 From international standards to domestic implementation

The adoption of Convention No. 190 does not, in itself, guarantee effective protection against violence and harassment in the world of work. While ratification creates legally binding obligations under international law, the Convention allows States a degree of flexibility in determining the legislative and institutional measures through which its provisions are implemented. Consequently, the effectiveness of Convention No. 190 ultimately depends on the capacity of domestic legal systems to translate its broad normative principles into coherent legal rules, effective institutional arrangements and accessible enforcement mechanisms. Comparative research demonstrates that significant implementation gaps may persist even after ratification where domestic legislation remains fragmented or institutional responsibilities are insufficiently coordinated (Mueller, 2024).

The implementation of Convention No. 190 presents particular challenges for labour law because many national legal systems continue to be structured around traditional models of employment that no longer fully reflect contemporary labour markets. Traditional labour legislation has generally been designed to regulate standard employment relationships performed within clearly identifiable workplaces and under the direct authority of a single employer. By contrast, Convention No. 190 extends protection beyond these conventional parameters by embracing a broader personal and material scope. The implementation of such standards therefore requires domestic labour law to respond to the transformation and increasing diversification of contemporary forms of work, many of which challenge the traditional regulatory foundations upon which labour protection has historically been constructed (Liukkunen, 2020). This transition requires more than formal legislative amendment. Effective implementation also requires domestic legal frameworks to address situations in which the Convention's broader standards of protection extend beyond existing national rules (Zimmer, 2025). A further challenge concerns institutional implementation. Convention No. 190 adopts an integrated approach in which prevention, protection and enforcement are shared responsibilities involving labour inspectorates, occupational safety and health authorities, equality bodies, employers and workers' organisations. The existence of substantive legal rights does not, in itself, guarantee effective protection where regulatory responsibilities are dispersed across different institutions. Fragmentation and complexity may create barriers to the accessibility and practical

effectiveness of labour rights (Gesualdi-Fecteau et al., 2025).

The Convention also represents a shift towards a more preventive and integrated regulatory approach. Rather than relying primarily on judicial remedies after violations have occurred, it requires States to combine remedial mechanisms with measures aimed at risk identification, labour inspection, workplace policies and awareness-raising among employers and workers (Nowak, 2025). This preventive orientation reflects the growing recognition that violence and harassment are structural occupational risks rather than isolated incidents requiring only individual dispute resolution. Accordingly, implementation should be assessed not solely by reference to legislative compliance but also by the extent to which domestic institutions are capable of preventing violence and harassment before harm occurs. These considerations are particularly relevant for Albania. Although the country ratified Convention No. 190 in 2022, the extent to which its legal and institutional framework reflects the Convention's expanded understanding of the world of work and its integrated preventive approach remains open to examination. The following section therefore analyses the Albanian legal framework to assess whether domestic legislation and institutional arrangements effectively give practical effect to the Convention's normative innovations.

3. Implementing Convention No. 190 in Albania: Legislative Fragmentation and Institutional Challenges

3.1 Fragmented protection against violence and harassment

Albania does not lack legal rules addressing violence and harassment at work. The main difficulty is that these rules are dispersed across several legislative instruments, each of which approaches the problem from a different perspective and applies its own concepts, scope and enforcement mechanisms. Such regulatory dispersion corresponds to what Gesualdi-Fecteau et al. describe as horizontal and institutional fragmentation, whereby labour protection is distributed across different branches of law, regulatory instruments and enforcement bodies (Gesualdi-Fecteau et al., 2025). The Labour Code addresses harassment through the employer's duty to protect the employee's personality and dignity. The Law on Protection from Discrimination treats harassment as a form of discrimination, while the Law on Occupational Safety and Health focuses primarily on the prevention of occupational risks and the protection of workers' health. Although these provisions offer important safeguards, they do not yet constitute the coherent and comprehensive framework required by ILO Convention No. 190. Comparative research similarly demonstrates that the coexistence of separate labour, anti-discrimination, occupational safety and gender-equality rules may leave important forms of violence and harassment insufficiently covered unless those regimes are integrated through a comprehensive legislative and enforcement framework (Sychenko et al., 2025).

The most direct protection is contained in Article 32 of the Albanian Labour Code. Following the amendments adopted in 2015, the provision requires employers to respect and protect employees' personality in the employment relationship and to take the necessary measures to safeguard their physical and mental health. Employers must prevent moral and sexual harassment committed either by themselves or by other employees and must refrain from conduct that degrades working conditions, violates the employee's dignity or rights, or damages physical or mental health (Law No. 7961/1995, art. 32). Article 32 also shifts the burden of proof once the employee presents facts indicating harassment and protects those who report it from retaliation. Although its references to moral harassment, dignity and mental health extend protection beyond sexual harassment, the provision remains centred on the traditional employment relationship. It does not expressly cover all categories of persons protected by Convention No. 190, such as self-employed workers, volunteers and platform workers, nor does it adopt the Convention's broader definition of violence and harassment, which includes physical, psychological, sexual and economic harm resulting from single or repeated conduct (International Labour Organization, 2021).

Protection is also provided by Law No. 10221/2010 on Protection from Discrimination, as amended in 2020. The law treats harassment as a form of discrimination when unwanted conduct related to a protected ground violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It prohibits discrimination throughout the employment relationship, including recruitment, vocational training, working conditions, remuneration and termination. Victims may complain to the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination or seek judicial protection, with a shift in the burden of proof once facts indicating discrimination are presented (Law No. 10 221/2010, arts. 3, 12 and 33). This framework broadens the available remedies but generally requires a link between the harassment and a protected ground, such as sex, race, disability, age or sexual orientation. Abusive conduct unrelated to such a characteristic may therefore fall outside its scope. Convention No. 190 is broader because it treats violence and harassment as an autonomous violation, without requiring a discriminatory ground, while separately recognising gender-based violence and harassment (ILO, 2019a,

art. 1, 4). The Law on Occupational Safety and Health adds a further, mainly indirect, layer of protection. It applies to the public and private sectors and requires employers to protect workers' health, assess occupational risks and adopt preventive measures (Law No. 10237/2010, art. 3-7). Although these duties may encompass psychological harm, the law does not expressly recognise violence, harassment or psychosocial risks as occupational hazards or establish specific procedures for their prevention and reporting. An effective occupational safety and health approach should expressly integrate violence, harassment and psychosocial hazards into workplace risk assessment, preventive policies, reporting procedures and employer responses (Cox, 2024; Cox & Lippel, 2020; ILO, 2022c). These limitations illustrate the fragmented nature of the Albanian framework. Unlike national legislation, Convention No. 190 protects persons regardless of their contractual status, including trainees, volunteers, jobseekers and former workers, and applies beyond the traditional workplace to commuting, work-related travel and digital communications (ILO, 2019a, arts. 2–3). Albania ratified the Convention on 6 May 2022, and it entered into force for Albania on 6 May 2023 (ILO, 2022a). Although ratified international agreements form part of the domestic legal system and prevail over incompatible national laws under Article 122 of the Constitution, effective implementation still requires coordinated legislative reform. The existing framework provides meaningful but partially indirect protection. It lacks a unified definition, comprehensive personal and spatial coverage, explicit recognition of violence and harassment as occupational risks, and clear employer duties regarding prevention, reporting, investigation and protection from retaliation.

3.2 Institutional responsibilities and enforcement mechanisms

The effective implementation of Convention No. 190 requires a coordinated institutional framework capable of ensuring prevention, monitoring, enforcement and access to remedies. Article 10 of the Convention requires ratifying States to enforce the relevant legislation, provide safe and effective complaint and dispute-resolution mechanisms, protect complainants against retaliation and ensure access to appropriate remedies. In Albania, these responsibilities are distributed among employers, the structure responsible for labour inspection, the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination and the courts (ILO, 2019a, art. 10). The specific mandate of labour inspection is regulated by Law No. 9634/2006 on Labour Inspection, while its general organisation and procedures are governed by Law No. 99/2024 on Inspection in the Republic of Albania, as amended in 2026. The latter introduced a unified inspection framework based on coordination, risk assessment, electronic information exchange and centralised monitoring. It also amended the legislation on labour inspection and occupational safety and health, including the rules on annual reporting and administrative procedures (Law No. 99/2024, art.13 and 70-71). However, neither the general inspection legislation nor the Law on Occupational Safety and Health expressly identifies violence, harassment and psychosocial risks as specific priorities of labour inspection. Their systematic treatment therefore depends on the combined application of the Labour Code, occupational safety and health legislation and the more recent Law No. 64/2025 on Gender Equality.

The Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination provides specialised mechanisms for complaints concerning discriminatory harassment. The Commissioner may investigate complaints, conduct administrative proceedings, issue decisions and recommendations, and impose sanctions under the anti-discrimination legislation (Law No. 10221/2010, art.32-33). This mechanism, however, primarily addresses harassment connected with a protected ground. Conduct without a clear discriminatory element may instead need to be pursued through internal workplace procedures, labour inspection or judicial proceedings. The availability of several mechanisms broadens the range of potential remedies but may also create uncertainty regarding the appropriate reporting and enforcement pathway. Law No. 64/2025 on Gender Equality has strengthened both prevention and enforcement. It requires employers to adopt internal regulations addressing violence, discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment, including formal and informal complaint procedures and preventive and disciplinary measures. Employers must also inform employees of these procedures and provide mandatory training (Law No. 64/2025, art. 27). Complaints may be submitted internally, to the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination or to the courts, while the structure responsible for labour inspection and the Commissioner may sanction violations within their respective competences (art. 47-49).

These reforms bring the Albanian framework closer to the preventive approach of Convention No. 190. However, effective implementation still requires clear referral procedures, institutional coordination, specialised training and accessible information about available remedies. As Law No. 64/2025 entered into force only in December 2025, its practical impact cannot yet be fully assessed, while its focus on gender equality remains narrower than the general scope of Convention No. 190. These issues are particularly relevant given previous findings that limited trust in public institutions may discourage the reporting of workplace violence in Albania (Çoni Kacollja, 2020). The following section examines awareness, institutional trust and reporting behaviour among the young people included in the survey.

4. Methodology and Empirical Findings

4.1 Research design, participants and data analysis

The empirical component of this study originated from a research project conducted in 2025 by the Department of Civil Law at the Faculty of Law, University of Tirana. The project aimed to examine third-year law students' awareness of ILO Convention No. 190 while they were attending the Labour Law course. The present article uses the data collected from the participants who were simultaneously engaged in an employment relationship, as their work experience made the questions concerning workplace violence, harassment and reporting mechanisms directly relevant to them. A link to the questionnaire was distributed by email to the 350 third-year students involved in the departmental project. Eligibility for the empirical part of this study was limited to students who declared that they were employed at the time of data collection. A total of 153 eligible participants completed the questionnaire, representing 43.7% of the students to whom the link was distributed. However, this figure should not be interpreted as a conventional response rate because the employment status of students who did not complete the questionnaire was not recorded. The final sample therefore constitutes a purposive, non-probability sample of employed law students rather than a representative sample of Albanian students or young workers.

The questionnaire consisted of ten closed-ended questions and was administered through Google Forms during November 2025. Data collection was completed before Law No. 64/2025 entered into force. Before its electronic distribution, the content and formulation of the questionnaire were reviewed by members of the research team, although no formal pilot study or psychometric reliability testing was conducted. Participation was voluntary and anonymous; no personally identifiable information was collected, and the responses were processed in accordance with Albanian data protection legislation. The questionnaire examined four main areas: awareness of workplace violence and harassment, familiarity with Convention No. 190 and its concept of the "world of work", knowledge of available reporting mechanisms and perceived barriers to reporting. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including response frequencies and percentages. No inferential statistical tests were conducted because the study was exploratory and the sample was neither random nor statistically representative. The findings must therefore be interpreted as indications of awareness and reporting attitudes within this specific group of employed law students. They cannot be generalised to all young workers in Albania. The participants' legal education and simultaneous exposure to Labour Law may distinguish them from other young workers and could result in a different level of legal awareness. Nevertheless, the sample remains relevant because it offers insight into whether young people with legal education and employment experience are familiar with the protections and reporting mechanisms associated with Convention No. 190.

4.2 Awareness of ILO Convention No. 190 and "the world of work"

When asked about their knowledge of ILO Convention No. 190, 46.4% of respondents said they had no information about the Convention, while 53.6% reported some awareness. Among those who considered themselves informed, 40.4% could not identify a specific source of information. University lectures were identified as the main source by 26.0%, social media by 28.8%, and the workplace by 3.8%. These percentages are reported as recorded in the survey and are rounded. The survey also examined respondents' understanding of the expanded concept of the "world of work". When asked whether the home should be regarded as part of the workplace when work is performed online or remotely, 124 respondents (81%) answered negatively, 24 (15.7%) answered positively, and 5 (3.3%) provided no answer or an unclear response.

Table 1. Perceptions of the home as a workplace in remote or online work (N = 153)

Response	Number of respondents (n)	Percentage (%)
Home is not considered part of the workplace	124	81.0
Home is considered part of the workplace	24	15.7
No answer or unclear response	5	3.3
Total	153	100.0

Source: Author's survey, 2025.

4.3 Reporting pathways and institutional awareness

Approximately half of the respondents indicated that they would report an incident of workplace violence or harassment to their employer. Awareness of external labour-law mechanisms was considerably lower: 18 respondents (11.8%) identified the labour inspection authority as a competent reporting body. By comparison, 53 respondents (34.6%) selected the police, while only 3 (2%) identified trade unions as a possible reporting avenue.

4.4 Perceived barriers to reporting and the role of universities

Fear of job loss or other negative career consequences was the most frequently selected barrier to reporting, identified by 53 respondents (34.6%). It was followed by lack of trust in institutions, selected by 47 respondents (30.7%), and a culture of silence or normalisation of harassment, selected by 26 respondents (17%). Fourteen respondents (9.2%) identified fear of retaliation other than dismissal, while three (2%) selected lack of information about reporting mechanisms. The remaining ten respondents (6.5%) selected another barrier or did not provide an answer.

Table 2. Perceived barriers to reporting violence and harassment at work (N = 153)

Perceived barrier to reporting	Number of respondents (n)	Percentage (%)
Fear of job loss or negative career consequences	53	34.6
Lack of trust in institutions	47	30.7
Culture of silence and normalisation of harassment	26	17.0
Fear of retaliation other than dismissal	14	9.2
Lack of information on reporting mechanisms	3	2.0
Other or no response	10	6.5
Total	153	100.0

Source: Author's survey, 2025.

All 153 respondents agreed that universities should provide education on labour rights and protection against violence and harassment at work.

5. Discussion and Implications

5.1 The gap between legal protection and awareness

Among the employed law students surveyed, the responses suggest a gap between the existence of legal protection and respondents' understanding of how that protection may be used in practice. Although the participants were employed law students, 46.4% reported having no information about the Convention. Even among those who indicated some awareness, many were unable to identify a specific source of information. More importantly, 81% did not consider the home to be part of the workplace when work is performed remotely or online. This result suggests that limited awareness concerns not only the existence of Convention No. 190 but also one of its principal normative innovations: the extension of protection beyond the employer's physical premises to the broader "world of work". The distinction is important because knowledge of a legal rule does not necessarily mean that individuals can recognise an experience as a violation of rights or identify an appropriate remedy. Blackstone et al. (2009) show that experiencing conduct that may constitute harassment, labelling it as a legal wrong and deciding to seek redress are related but distinct processes. Similarly, the distinction between legal consciousness and rights consciousness helps explain how individuals may possess general knowledge of legal protection without perceiving a particular right as practically claimable through institutional mechanisms (Vargas Murillo & Falconi Tupiño, 2026). The findings are particularly noteworthy because the participants had legal education and were attending a Labour Law course. The responses concerning reporting pathways further illustrate the distance between formal rights and practical knowledge. Approximately half of the respondents stated that they would report violence or harassment to their employer, but only 11.8% identified the labour inspection authority as a competent reporting body. By contrast, 34.6% selected the police, while only 2% identified trade unions. These results indicate that respondents were more familiar with internal workplace reporting or general criminal-law institutions than

with specialised labour-law mechanisms. This matters because the practical effectiveness of legal protection depends on workers being able to identify the institution competent to receive, refer or investigate a complaint. The availability of several reporting mechanisms may broaden access to remedies, but it may also create uncertainty where their respective functions are not clearly communicated.

The perceived barriers reported by participants reinforce this interpretation. Fear of losing employment or suffering other career consequences was the most frequently selected barrier, followed by lack of trust in institutions and a culture of silence or normalisation of harassment. These findings are consistent with Duan's (2025) concept of strategic non-mobilisation, according to which a decision not to report should not automatically be understood as passivity or lack of legal awareness. Workers may deliberately avoid formal mechanisms when they believe that reporting could threaten their employment, damage their professional relationships or produce no meaningful institutional response. Organisational practices that minimise, dismiss or normalise grievances may further discourage reporting by signalling that complaints are unlikely to be taken seriously. Similar research has shown that silence, avoidance, and reliance on informal support may serve as coping strategies when formal organisational channels are perceived as unsafe or ineffective (Nguyen, 2023). However, the results of the present survey concern respondents' awareness and perceptions of reporting barriers rather than their personal experiences as victims or their actual reporting behaviour. They should therefore not be interpreted as establishing the prevalence of workplace violence and harassment, or the reasons why particular victims did not report incidents. Nevertheless, they identify conditions that may influence reporting decisions among this group of young workers. The findings are also consistent with international evidence showing that fear of reputational or professional consequences, uncertainty about procedures and limited trust in institutions are common barriers to disclosure, particularly among younger workers (ILO et al., 2022).

The unanimous response within this sample indicates strong support for more systematic labour-rights education at university level. University education can help young workers recognise different forms of violence and harassment, understand the expanded concept of the world of work and distinguish between internal and external reporting mechanisms. Awareness-raising alone, however, is unlikely to overcome fears of job loss or institutional distrust. Confidential and accessible complaint procedures, clear referral pathways, effective protection against retaliation and credible institutional responses should accompany such education. Closing the gap between formal protection and practical access therefore requires both improved legal education and enforcement mechanisms that young workers perceive as understandable, safe and capable of producing an effective remedy. These findings also help explain why the availability of several legal reporting channels does not necessarily make them accessible in practice. Under the Albanian framework, complaints may follow different routes depending on the nature of the conduct, including internal workplace procedures, labour inspection, the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, and the courts. Yet only 11.8% of respondents identified the labour inspection authority as a possible reporting body. Within this sample, that result points to a need for clearer information about the functions of each institution and how a complaint may be referred between them. Because the survey was conducted before Law No. 64/2025 entered into force, it cannot assess whether that law's new procedures have improved awareness or reporting in practice.

5.2 From formal compliance to effective implementation: comparative lessons

European experience shows that the implementation of Convention No. 190 cannot be presumed from ratification or from the existence of general protective provisions. Italy ratified the Convention without adopting comprehensive implementing legislation, leaving its requirements to operate through rules dispersed across labour law, anti-discrimination law and occupational safety and health regulation. Italian scholarship has consequently identified a need for greater coordination between these areas and for the Convention's broader concepts to guide the interpretation of domestic law (Scarponi, 2021; Calafà, 2024). The Italian Court of Cassation's use of Convention No. 190 in its decisions demonstrates how national courts can apply international standards when interpreting domestic legislation on workplace violence and harassment (Marinelli, 2024).

A similar concern has emerged in Austria, where ratification was based on the official position that the existing legal framework required no substantial adjustment. Subsequent analysis has nevertheless identified possible shortcomings regarding enforceable workplace measures, remedies and the practical application of employers' obligations (Ettl, 2025). These comparative experiences are relevant to Albania because they demonstrate that formal compatibility should not be treated as evidence of effective implementation. The application of Law No. 64/2025 should therefore be reviewed through administrative practice and judicial decisions, with particular attention to whether national institutions interpret existing provisions consistently with the scope and objectives of Convention No. 190. This would

allow implementation gaps to be identified without presuming that every international obligation requires an entirely separate legislative instrument.

5.3 Targeted priorities for implementation in Albania

The analysis supports a targeted approach to implementation rather than the immediate adoption of a separate legislative instrument. First, Albanian occupational safety and health legislation should expressly recognise violence, harassment and related psychosocial risks as workplace hazards subject to risk assessment and preventive measures. At the same time, the protection available under national law should be clarified for persons and situations falling outside the traditional employment relationship, without requiring all persons covered by Convention No. 190 to be classified as employees. These amendments would address identifiable gaps in the existing framework while giving effect to the Convention's broader personal and material scope and its preventive requirements (ILO,2019a, arts. 2-3, 9).

Second, the internal regulations required by Article 27 of Law No. 64/2025 should be accompanied by clear minimum standards. These should include accessible reporting channels, defined procedures and time limits for examining complaints, confidentiality, impartial investigation and protection against retaliation. Paragraph 7 of Recommendation No. 206 provides a useful basis for developing these standards (ILO, 2019b, para.7). Their implementation should be supervised through labour inspection rather than treated solely as an internal matter for employers. As Davidov (2021) argues more generally, the effectiveness of labour rights depends not only on the availability of remedies after a violation, but also on credible mechanisms that promote compliance and detect infringements before workers are required to initiate judicial proceedings.

Institutional responsibilities should also be clarified through cooperation and referral protocols between the labour inspection authority and the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination. Such a protocol should explain which body is competent for different categories of complaints and ensure that cases are referred without placing the burden of identifying the correct institution entirely on the complainant. During the initial application of Law No. 64/2025, the competent authorities should publish anonymised information on complaints, referrals, inspections, sanctions and outcomes. This would permit the effectiveness of the new framework to be assessed through administrative and judicial practice. Finally, the survey findings support the introduction of practical labour rights education in universities and workplaces, particularly on reporting procedures and protection against retaliation. Together, these measures would strengthen the accessibility and enforcement of existing protection without unnecessarily duplicating the current legal framework.

6. Conclusion

This article examined Albania's implementation of ILO Convention No. 190 by combining normative legal analysis with exploratory evidence on awareness and perceived reporting barriers among employed law students. The analysis shows that Albania's principal challenge is not the complete absence of legal protection against violence and harassment at work. The Labour Code, anti-discrimination legislation, occupational safety and health law, and, more recently, Law No. 64/2025 on Gender Equality contain relevant provisions. The difficulty lies instead in their fragmented scope, the different legal concepts on which they rely and the absence of sufficiently coordinated enforcement pathways. As a result, the existence of formal protection does not necessarily ensure that all persons covered by the broader concept of the "world of work" can identify and effectively use the available remedies.

The empirical findings illustrate a related gap between legal protection and practical awareness within the specific group surveyed. A considerable proportion of respondents had no information about Convention No. 190, while most did not recognise that remote work performed from home may fall within its broader material scope. Knowledge of specialised labour-law reporting mechanisms was also limited. Fear of job loss or other career consequences and lack of trust in institutions were identified as the most significant perceived barriers to reporting. These findings do not establish the prevalence of violence and harassment or the actual reporting behaviour of young workers in Albania. They nevertheless indicate that the effectiveness of legal protection depends not only on the availability of legislation and institutions, but also on whether workers understand the relevant procedures and consider them safe and credible. The article therefore argues for targeted implementation rather than unnecessary legislative duplication. Priority should be given to expressly integrating violence, harassment and related psychosocial risks into occupational safety and health regulation, establishing clear minimum standards for the internal procedures required by Law No. 64/2025 and clarifying cooperation and referral arrangements between the labour inspection authority and the Commissioner for Protection from

Discrimination. Administrative practice, judicial decisions and anonymised institutional data should subsequently be used to assess whether the new framework provides accessible remedies and effective protection against retaliation. Legal awareness measures in universities and workplaces should complement these reforms but cannot replace credible enforcement. The empirical component of the study remains subject to important limitations. The participants were third-year law students from a single faculty and constituted a purposive, non-probability sample. Their legal education may distinguish them from other young workers, and the findings cannot be generalised to the wider Albanian workforce. The questionnaire relied on closed-ended questions and was not subjected to formal pilot testing or psychometric reliability assessment. Future research should therefore include more diverse groups of workers across economic sectors and contractual arrangements, together with qualitative interviews and analysis of complaints, inspections and judicial decisions. Such research will be particularly important in evaluating the practical application of Law No. 64/2025. Ultimately, implementation of the Convention No. 190 should be assessed not only by the formal compatibility of national legislation, but by whether prevention, reporting and remedies operate effectively for those exposed to violence and harassment in the world of work.

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