



The Impact of Historical Literacy on Youth Political Attitudes in a Post-Communist Society

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Abstract

This study analyzes the impact of knowledge about the communist system in Albania on the political attitudes and social perceptions of young people within a post-communist society. The study relies on a quantitative methodology and is based on data collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 430 young people aged 18-30 years in the Durrës region. The questionnaire was implemented and analyzed using statistical techniques such as linear regression and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The findings show that although factors such as age and education do not significantly correlate with the level of historical knowledge, knowledge of communism itself has a positive and significant influence on the development of a critical attitude toward the democratic system. The study emphasizes the importance of historical education and highlights the value of a more structured and critical engagement with the communist past within the educational curriculum in strengthening democratic consciousness among young people.

Keywords: Collective Memory, History Education, Political Socialization, Historical Knowledge, Youth Political Attitudes, Democratic Consciousness.

1. Introduction

Albania underwent a prolonged period of political, economic, and social transformation under communist rule, marked by the ideology of Karl Marx and his theories. In Albania, this system of thought became the foundation of a highly

centralized and authoritarian regime that extended control over nearly all aspects of citizens' lives. During the period when the Communist Party was headed by Enver Hoxha, Stalinist policies were zealously implemented, and Albania came to be ranked among the most dogmatic socialist countries. This experience generated a legacy of repression and ideological conformity, the effects of which continue to influence collective memory and social perceptions in contemporary Albania.

The regime not only suppressed all forms of dissent and independent critique but also exercised monopolistic control over education and media to propagate the party's ideology as the singular truth in society. In this context, historical narratives functioned as instruments of political socialization rather than spaces for critical reflection. Therefore, assessing the influence of this historical system on Albanian youth's perceptions and attitudes toward future social and political systems is particularly important.

Young people who have not directly experienced the communist regime, form their views based on the knowledge and information transmitted through families, schools, and the media. These perceptions are shaped by how the history of the communist period is taught and interpreted within the educational system and public discourse. Studying the impact of knowledge about the communist system in Albania on young people's perceptions and attitudes is key to understanding how the past influences future social and political structures, as well as patterns of political participation. Although researches indicate a slight improvement in the political participation of young Albania between 2011-2021, their level of involvement in conventional forms of politics remains significantly lower compared to other generations (Bërdufi & Pacukaj, 2022).

The influence of historical heritage on contemporary social and political perceptions is an increasingly relevant topic in post-communist societies. This research paper examines the impact of past communist connections on the perceptions and attitudes of Albanian youth toward possible future social and political structures. The focus is on how the ideological and institutional frameworks of the communist era continue to shape the views of the younger generation and what the implications of this are for the future trajectory of Albanian society.

During the communist period in Albania, which lasted from 1946 to 1991, the regime created a centralized and repressive political system that influenced every aspect of life—from governance and economic management to cultural and social norms (Fischer, 2007). This historical context has left an indelible mark on the collective memory and attitudes of Albanian society (Assmann, 2012).

The first aim of this research paper is to investigate the extent to which historical experiences under the communist regime shape the current attitudes of young Albanians toward future social and political structures. This includes an analysis of how remnants of communist ideology may influence their expectations and aspirations for democracy, a market economy, and social justice. The second aim is to

examine the interaction between historical heritage and the contemporary political engagement of Albanian youth. It explores how historical perceptions influence political participation, support for democratic institutions, and overall trust in the political system. Finally, this research paper addresses the implications of these perceptions for Albania's future development. By assessing the potential impact of historical heritage on current and future political and social structures, this study aims to offer valuable perspectives on the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead as Albania continues to evolve in light of its communist past. In summary, this research contributes to a broader understanding of how historical heritage influences contemporary social and political attitudes, with a particular focus on young people in Albania. The study also contributes to ongoing debates on history education and youth political socialization in post-communist societies.

2. Literature Review: The Impact of the Communist Legacy on the Political Attitudes of Young People in Albania

The legacy of the communist regime in Albania remains an influential factor in shaping the political attitudes and social identities of younger generations. Although the totalitarian system collapsed over thirty years ago, its effects remain visible in young people's perceptions of democratic institutions, the role of the state, and civic participation (Hoxha & Dervishi, 2018; Krasniqi, 2020).

The literature addresses how historical memory is transmitted. In the absence of a structured educational program that critically addresses the past, Albanian youth develop fragmented understandings, often shaped by family narratives or politicized media (Meta, 2019). According to Bedini and Zotaj (2023), young Albanians' perceptions of democracy are influenced by an interplay between cultural heritage and a lack of critical engagement with the communist past. This dynamic, in turn, shapes their attitudes toward democratic institutions. As a result, portrayals of the former regime often blend emotion and inaccuracy, with nostalgia for security and economic stability coexisting with criticism of the lack of fundamental freedoms (Gjika, 2020; Pano, 2021). The literature also highlights the regime's repressive dimension—political persecution, arbitrary imprisonment, and internment—which contributed to the formation of a traumatic collective memory (Leka, 2017; Shkullaku, 2022).

These experiences influenced intergenerational attitudes and levels of institutional trust. To better understand this phenomenon, scholars have employed several theoretical frameworks. The political socialization and identity construction approach emphasizes the role of social institutions such as the family and school in shaping young people's political beliefs (Shahini, 2021).

The institutional legacy of the former regime, marked by clientelism and strong state control, has been identified as a barrier to effective institutional functioning and to the diffusion of democratic culture (Meka & Kalemaj, 2020). Comparative studies situate Albanian dynamics within the broader context of Eastern Europe. Ekiert and

Hanson (2003) and Pop-Eleches (2015) argue that historical legacies and institutional development shape civic trust and political orientation. Their findings suggest that post-communist authoritarian legacies tend to reproduce past structures rather than foster genuine democratic transformation.

The ambivalence of Albanian youth toward the former regime is another recurring theme. While some appreciate the regime's perceived stability and order, many express growing disillusionment with current democratic institutions, often viewed as corrupt and ineffective in addressing societal problems (Ding & Slater, 2021; Hysa, 2019). This ambivalence contributes to a disconnect between professed democratic values and actual civic engagement. Many young Albanians view their future in the country as bleak, not only due to economic hardship but also because of institutional distrust, social exclusion, and the perception that undemocratic practices from the past still persist. This perception is closely tied to how historical and political knowledge is conveyed through the educational system (Likaj et al., 2024). The effects of the economic transition are also critical. The collapse of communism was followed by rising inequality and high unemployment. These conditions have shaped young people's views of the political system and their willingness to participate actively (Ule, 2014). In this context, international actors such as the EU and other Western institutions have attempted to influence reforms but are not always perceived as positive forces (Levitsky & Way, 2010).

Despite valuable contributions, gaps remain in the Albanian literature. First, there is a lack of intergenerational research examining how attitudes toward communism are transmitted. Second, there is a need for more comparative analyses to clarify distinct features of Albania's transition. Finally, the influence of the educational system on youth political culture remains underexplored (Meta & Leka, 2023).

In conclusion, the literature shows that the legacy of communism in Albania is multifaceted and deeply intertwined with broader processes of social and political development. Advancing a sustainable and participatory democracy requires Albanian society to engage in critical reflection on the past through education, public dialogue, and ongoing scholarly inquiry.

3. Methodological Analysis

3.1. Study Purpose

The purpose of this study is to analyze how knowledge of the communist system in Albania affects the perceptions and attitudes of young people regarding their future preferences for social and political systems. The focus is on young people's knowledge and perceptions of the communist system, their sources of information, and the significance of historical awareness related to this system.

3.2. Methodology

The sample for this study consists of data collected from 430 young individuals aged 18 to 30. The participants were selected from the Durrës district and represent a diverse range of educational and socio-economic backgrounds.

3.3. Data Collection Method

The interview method was used, with a structured questionnaire serving as a tool to gather data relevant to the study's objectives. This approach was chosen due to its effectiveness in collecting pertinent data in real time. The survey includes both filter questions and closed-ended questions with predetermined options. A Likert scale was used to measure responses where appropriate.

Purposive sampling, a non-probabilistic sampling technique, was employed to intentionally select participants within the specified age range.

The questionnaire was divided into four sections based on the study sample. The first section collects general demographics such as age, gender, educational attainment, and field of study.

Section II provides insights into the participants' understanding of the Albanian communist system, with questions such as "How much do you know about the communist system and ideology?", "Are you aware of our nation's communist past?", and "What is your opinion of Albania's communist government?"

To achieve this objective, a set of Likert – scale items was employed, focusing on key aspects of the communist period, including ideological principles, general historical knowledge, such as formal education, family and personal narratives, media exposure, and social discussions, These source – related variables were analyzed separately, allowing for a clear distinction between respondents' overall level of knowledge about the communist period and the channels through which this knowledge was acquired.

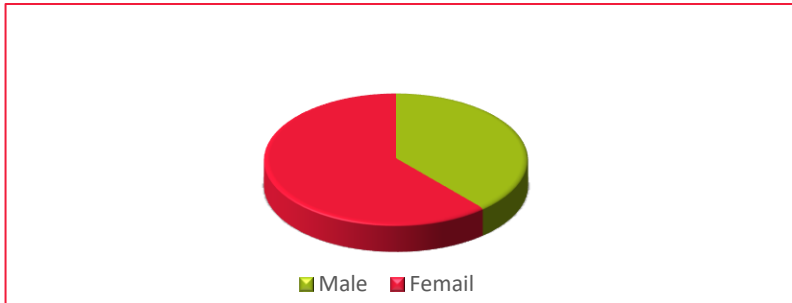
Section III examines and evaluates the main sources of information about the doctrine and the communist system, namely the media, the family, education, and society.

Section IV focuses on the importance of recognizing the historical period during which the communist system was in place. It assesses the perceived advantages and disadvantages of this system.

4. Findings

The sample includes responses from 430 participants, 61% of whom are female, while the remaining 39% are male (Figure 1).

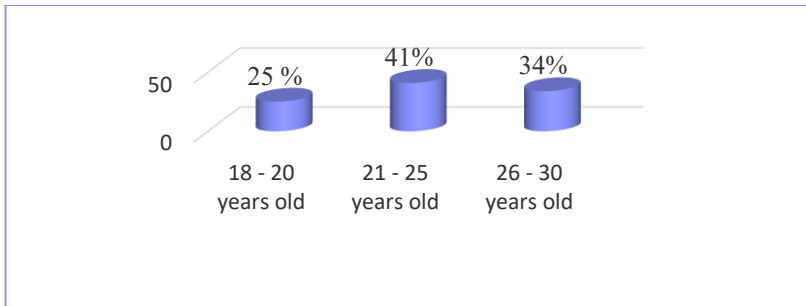
Figure 1. Gender distribution of respondents



Source: Authors' calculation, Survey 2025

Regarding the distribution of respondents by age group, 41% belong to the 21-25 age group, followed by the 26-30 age group with 34%, and finally the 18-20 age group with 25% (Figure 2).

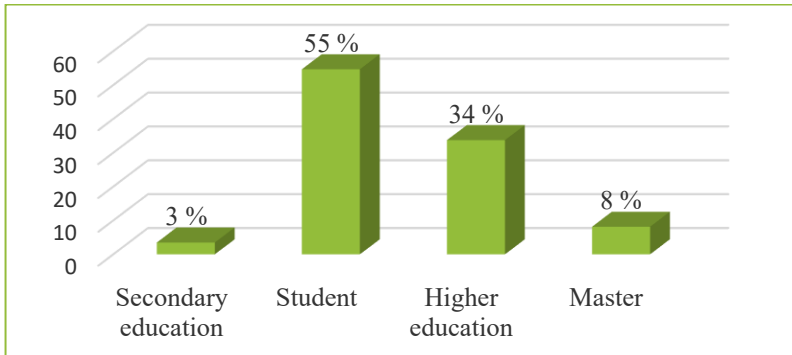
Figure 2. Distribution by age group of the respondents



Source: Authors' calculation, Survey 2025

Regarding the distribution by educational level, 55% of respondents are still students, followed by 34% who have completed higher education. The remaining 8% and 3% have completed a second-cycle master's degree or possess general or vocational secondary education, respectively (Figure 3). The field of study include law, engineering, teaching, social sciences, medical sciences, and information technology.

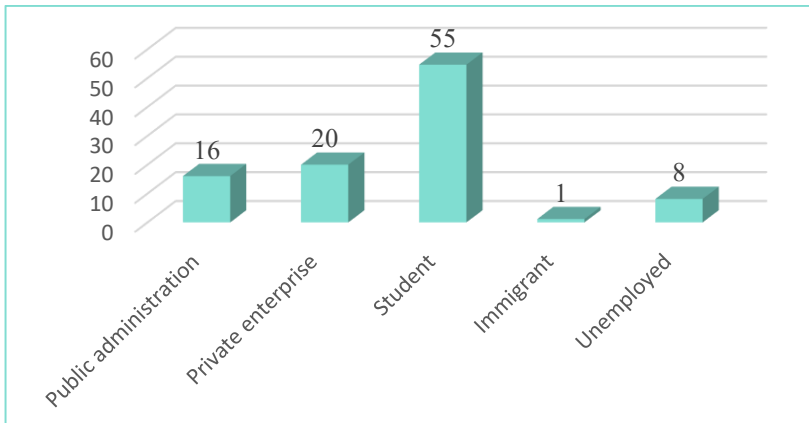
Figure 3. Distribution by educational level



Source: Authors' calculation, Survey 2025

The data in the graph below show that 55% of respondents are still students, followed by 20% who stated that they are employed in private companies. Another 16% work in public administration, while the remaining 9% reported being either unemployed or living abroad. (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Employment status of respondents



Source: Authors' calculation, Survey 2025

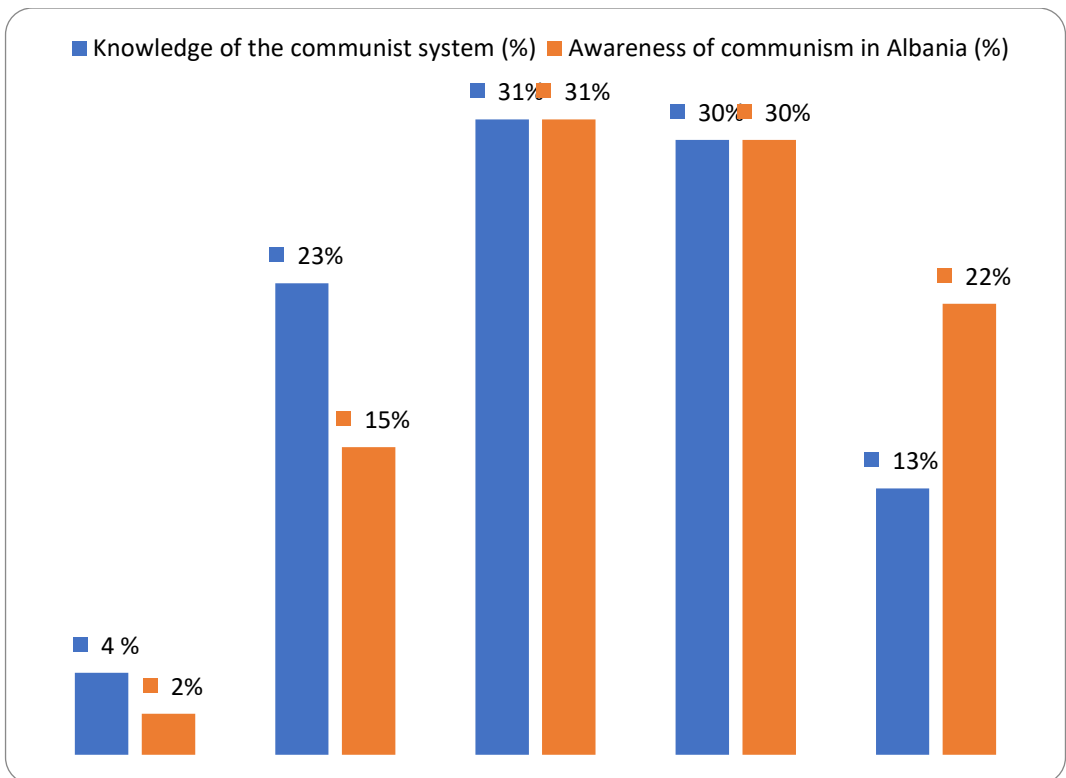
Regarding the main problems that young people and their families face, the most commonly mentioned issues include the inability to secure a stable job that provides a reliable income, challenging socio-economic conditions, and the unfair ratio between prices and salaries. Another concern raised by young people is the poor quality of vocational schools and training programs, which could otherwise serve as valuable pathways into the labour market.

In response to the question “Did you vote in the last elections (central or local)?”, 75% of respondents responded positively, stating that they voted. The remaining quarter did not vote, with 46% of these non-voters belonging to the 21-25 age group, and

another 31% to the 18-20 age group. Many from this latter group indicated that they had not reached the age of 18 at the time of the election or had abstained for other reasons.

Given that the sample includes individuals aged 18 to 30, respondents' level of knowledge of the communist system that governed Albania for an extended period was assessed. This assessment helped analyze the legacy of the system and compare it with the current democratic structure, thereby facilitating an understanding of both models. When asked, "How well do you know the communist system and ideology?", one-third of respondents said they know it sufficiently, and an equal number claimed to know it well. The remaining 23% and 4% indicated limited or no knowledge at all, respectively, with 44% and 33% of these respondents belonging to the 18-20 age range. Only 13% reported very good knowledge of the communist ideology and system, of whom 44% were aged 26-30.

Figure 5. Respondents' knowledge and awareness of the communist system in Albania (%)



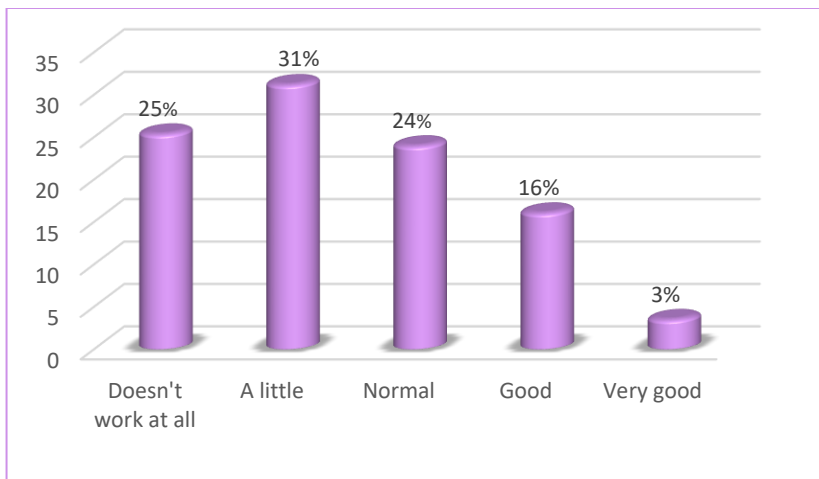
Source: Authors' calculation, Survey 2025

In response to the question, "Are you aware of the history of communism in our country?", about one-third of respondents, consistent with the previous question,

reported that they know the history of the communist system in Albania sufficiently or well, while another 22% stated that they know it very well. The remaining 15% and 2% reported limited or no knowledge, respectively, of the history of the communist system. Among these latter groups, 43% and 41%, respectively, belong to the 18-20 age group. This age group did not live during the communist era and, on the other hand, appears to show limited interest in history in general and in the history of communism in particular. This disinterest may be attributed to the fact that the social conditions and interests of today's youth differ significantly from those of the generation that lived under that system.

However, respondents were also asked to assess democratic system in the country. One-third of the respondents believe that the democratic system of Albania functions poorly, while another 25% state that the democratic system does not function at all. On the other hand, about one-quarter believe that the democratic system functions normally, and the remaining 19% say it functions well or very well (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Assessment of the functioning of the democratic system in Albania (%)



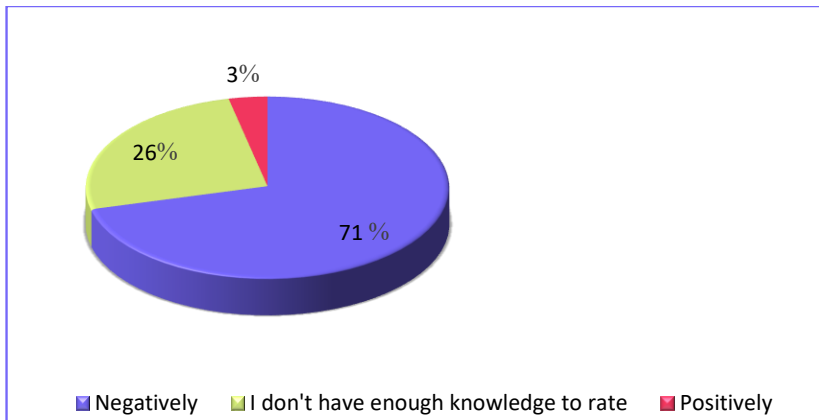
Source: Authors' calculation, Survey 2025

Referring to the communist doctrine, respondents were specifically asked whether they were familiar with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. A total of 73% stated that they knew and recognized these two key figures of communist ideology, while the remaining 27% did not know about them. Among those who responded positively, 56% said they had only heard of Marx and Engels but had not read their works, while another 31% stated that they had read some of their writings. The remaining 13% claimed to have had a good understanding of both figures and had read extensively about them.

In response to the question, "How do you evaluate the communist regime in Albania?" the majority 71% rated it negatively, considering it a bad and harmful system for

society. Another 26% reported that they lacked sufficient knowledge to assess the system; most of the respondents (70%) belong to the youngest age group in the sample (18-20 years old). On the other hand, only 3% of the participants considered the communist system to be positive.

Figure 7. Respondents' evaluation of the communist regime in Albania (%)



Source: Authors' calculation, Survey 2025

Respondents were asked the question: "What is communism?" Based on the suggested alternatives, 47% of respondents defined communism as a political and economic system associated with domination by a privileged political class. This is followed by 44% who perceived communism as a system aiming at social equity and the elimination of private property. Only 10% described communism as a political and economic system associated with individual freedom and the free market.

Regarding specific features of the communist system in Albania, 90% of respondents agreed that communism was characterized by complete control over the economy and private property. The remaining respondents expressed alternative or inaccurate perceptions, with 7% and 3%, respectively, associating communism with freedom of speech, democracy, or a free market economy.

In response to the question: "How was the communist period assessed by public opinion in Albania after the fall of the regime?", 68% of respondents described the communist period as predominantly negative, characterizing it as dark and oppressive. Another 26% viewed the period as mixed, marked at times by progress and at other times by regression. Only 6% of respondents perceived communism as a positive or "glorious" period, while 1% reported having no clear understanding of the communist system that existed in Albania prior to the 1990s.

When asked about their sources of information on the communist period and its ideology, 81% of respondents who claimed to have knowledge of the communist system identified school education and second-hand narratives as their primary

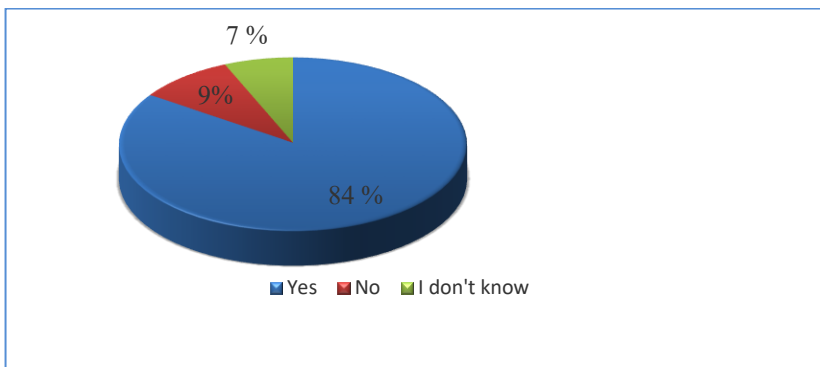
sources. Another 19% reported learning through books and specialized studies, while only a very small proportion cited family members as their main source of information. Notably, a significant number of respondents admitted having little or no information about this historical period.

To this question: “How important is it to know about communism and its ideology in the context of Albania’s history?”, 73% of respondents stated that such knowledge is important or very important, as it helps them understand the challenges and transformations the country has undergone. The remaining 27% considered knowledge of this past system to be of limited importance, arguing that they should focus instead on today’s challenges.

In response to: “Do you think that knowing about communism and its ideology can influence your future political and social attitudes or actions?”, 47% answered affirmatively, believing that understanding past ideologies can help shape their personal beliefs and decisions. Another 36% disagreed, stating that their actions and beliefs are shaped primarily by current realities and needs. The remaining 17% reported indifference, indicating that they had not given the issue much thought.

Finally, in response to the question: “Do you think it is important for young people to learn more about the history of communism in Albania?”, a strong majority of respondents (84%) agreed, emphasizing that young people should be educated about Albania’s communist past, similarly to practices in other Eastern Europe and former Soviet countries. On the other hand, 9% disagreed, arguing that the period holds limited historical importance, while 7% reported having no clear opinion (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Respondents’ views on the importance of learning about the history of communism in Albania



Source: Authors' calculation, Survey 2025

How important is it for young people to know the history and facts related to this system? Among those who stated that it is important to know this period, 54% assessed this knowledge as very important, while the remaining 46% considered it is simply important for the younger generation to understand the history of Albania and

the period during which the communist regime functioned. This finding reflects a broader trend observed in democratic societies, where past periods are discussed openly, regardless of their nature, in order to reflect on their consequences, build collective memory, and draw lessons from past mistakes for the future.

In response to the question “Is the perception of youth about the communist period in Albania influenced by the media, education, or discussions in the family and society”? 21% of respondents stated that their perception was primarily shaped by discussions within the family and society. This was followed by 11%, who believed that educational institutions had the greatest influence, and 10%, who identified the media and social networks as the main source. A considerable number of respondents indicated that all three sources played a significant role in shaping their knowledge of the communist system in Albania. There were also respondents who stated that none of these channels had served as a source of knowledge or perception of communism and its ideology.

Regarding how knowledge of this system and period can contribute to personal development and the process of critical thinking, 65% of respondents stated that understanding the communist era helps them better grasp social changes and form their own opinions about political and economic systems. For 10%, this knowledge was considered relevant only for politicians and researchers. The remaining 25% stated that this period and its history do not significantly impact their personal development or critical thinking.

When asked how knowledge of communist ideology can contribute to the promotion of democratic values and human rights, 65% responded that such knowledge helps them appreciate freedom and understand the importance of respecting human rights. For 14%, such knowledge was considered important only for human rights activists, thus limiting its perceived broader relevance. Meanwhile, 21% believed that evaluating the communist system has little impact on the promotion of democratic values.

When asked how young people would describe the democratic system, one quarter of respondents stated that the most accurate definition is that it is a system that values individual freedom and human rights. Another 11% defined it as a system that supports political pluralism and free election, while 10% described it as a system that respects the rule of law and democratic institutions. However, 48% believed that all three definitions accurately reflect the meaning of democracy. An additional 7% rejected all the provided definitions as accurate descriptions of a democratic system.

In terms of political engagement and awareness, 34% stated that they are consistently informed about the political situation in the country, although they are not directly involved in any political party structures. Another 25% reported that they are not interested in political processes at all, with most of them belonging to the 18-20 age group. Furthermore, 16% explained that their lack of engagement stems from a general disinterest in politics, while only 13% admitted to being active members of

political structures. The remaining respondents either follow political developments without active participation or reported having no plans to engage in political life in the near future.

Table 1. Respondents' information and political participation

Alternatives	Frequency	%
I am informed about politics but without getting involved	147	34
I follow political developments and am informed	29	7
I am not yet involved but I am thinking of getting involved in the future	21	5
I am not involved because young people do not support politics	67	16
Politics does not interest me; it is not for me	109	25
I am politically involved; I am a member of a political party	57	13
Total	430	100

Source: Authors' calculation, Survey 2025

Regarding the evaluation that young people have made concerning the candidates they voted for, the majority 70% stated that they vote is primarily based on the electoral program of their preferred party, as well as the profile of the candidate. This evaluation appears to be primarily driven by respondents' assessment of the candidate's personal values. Additionally, 55% agreed that the personal benefits they expect from the victory of a candidate or political party play an important role in their decision-making process.

Half of the respondents indicated that their choice of political party and candidates is significantly influenced by their family. In contrast, 25% stated that family had little or no influence on their voting decisions, viewing their electoral choice instead as an opportunity to support positive development and change in the country's socio-economic environment, particularly for young people. Within the same evaluation, party loyalty also emerged as a key factor, shaped by stable and long-standing political convictions .

Moreover, the influence of social networks was highlighted, particularly in the context of national or local elections. These platforms appear to increase political engagement and access to information, particularly among young people, as further illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Reasons for voting for candidates/political parties

	Not at all little	A little	Average	A lot	Extremely much	Total
Loyalty to a political party	12	12	26	29	22	100
Personal characteristics of a candidate	6	6	20	32	37	100
Electoral program of the political party or candidate	4	6	19	31	40	100
Personal benefits that await me from the victory of a candidate or party	14	9	22	33	22	100
Influence of relatives, parents, friends	14	11	25	34	16	100
Information received through the media and social networks	7	13	29	39	12	100
Personal acquaintance with the candidate	8	9	22	33	29	100

Source: Authors' calculation, Survey 2025

The study variables are:

Dependent variable:

The importance of young people's knowledge of the communist system and ideology and its perceived impact on socio-economic life.

Independent variables:

- Sources of information related to the communist system and its ideology.
- Young people's knowledge of the communist system and ideology.

Control variables:

- Age of young people.
- Educational level of young people.

The main hypothesis of the study:

Hypothesis 1: Young people's knowledge of the communist system and ideology is a significant factor in understanding and comparing democratic and communist

systems and is associated with attitudes toward democratic governance and the prevention of authoritarian tendencies.

The research questions:

Research question 1: Does the age of young people affect the level and desire to acquire knowledge about the communist system in Albania? If so, which age group shows the greatest interest?

Research question 2: Does the level of knowledge about the communist system depend on the educational level of young people? If so, which group of young people demonstrates greater knowledge?

Research question 3: Does the voting process (including candidate selection and access to political parties) influence the importance of knowing and comparing political systems?

To analyze the hypothesis and research questions, the characteristics of the variables were first examined, including factor loadings, reliability coefficients, and correlations between independent variables (i.e., multicollinearity).

Table 3. Factorial loadings of study constructs (PCA)

Construct	Representative items	Factor loadings
Importance of knowledge of communism	Influence on future attitudes; Contribution to critical thinking; Promotions of democratic values	0.447-0.837
Sources of information	School, media, family and social discussions	0.740
Knowledge of the communist system	Historical awareness; Evaluation of the regime; Knowledge of Marx & Engels.	0.501-0.860

Source: Authors' calculation, Survey 2025

Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis (PCA). All factor loadings exceed the acceptable threshold (≥ 0.40)

Table 3 presents the factor loadings of the items representing the main study constructs, obtained through Principal Components Analysis (PCA). All factor loadings exceeded the commonly accepted threshold (≥ 0.40), indicating adequate representation of the constructs. Consequently, all items were retained for further analysis. No problematic cross-loadings were observed.

Multicollinearity is also assessed among the independent variables. The analysis shows that there is no significant correlation between the independent variables that could affect their relationship with the dependent variable, as the correlation coefficients between them fall within the acceptable range [-0.7; 0.7].

Table 4. Correlation between the independent variables (multicollinearity check)

	Sources of information regarding the communist system and ideology	Young people's knowledge of the communist system and ideology
Sources of information about the communist system and ideology	1	
Young people's knowledge of the communist system and ideology	-.123*	1

Source: Authors' calculation, Survey 2025. Pearson correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis 1: Young people's knowledge of the communist system and ideology is an important factor in understanding and comparing democratic and communist systems, in order to avoid mistakes or autocratic processes in the future.

To analyze this hypothesis, a multiple linear regression equation is constructed. The initial step involves examining the results of the ANOVA (Analysis of Variance). The analysis indicates that the significant value is Sig. = 0.019, which is less than 0.05. This confirms that it is statistically valid to discuss the relationship between the dependent variable and the two independent variables.

Table 5. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Predictors of the Importance of Knowledge about the Communist System and Ideology

Model	ANOVAa				
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1.361	2	0.680	4.004	.019b
Residual	72.556	427	0.170		
Total	73.916	429			

Source: Authors' calculation, Survey 2025

a. *Dependent Variable:* The importance of knowing the communist system and ideology.

b. *Predictors:* (Constant), Sources of information, Knowledge about the communist system and ideology.

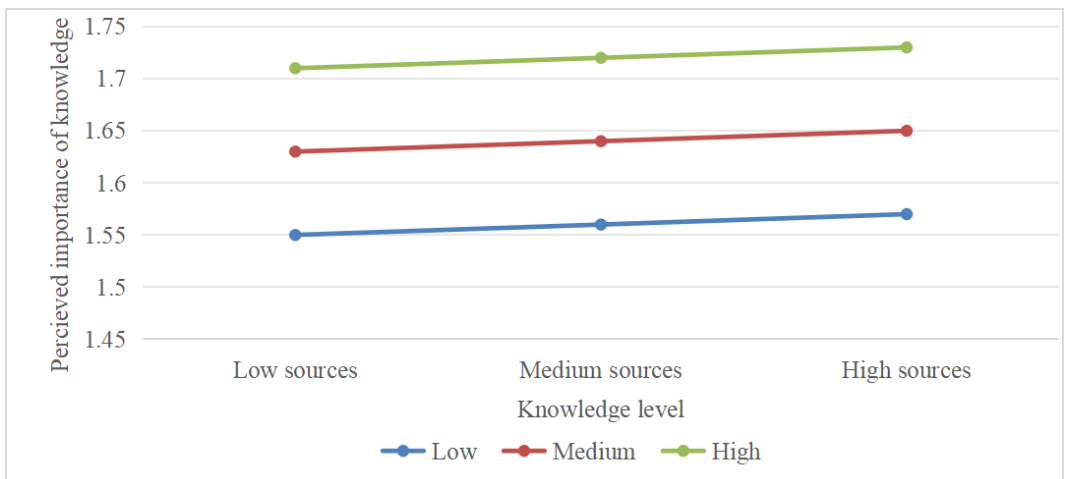
To access the correlation and construct the multiple linear regression equation, The table data are examined. The results indicate that only one of the independent variables; Knowledge of young people about the communist system and ideology, has a statistically significant effect on the dependent variable, The importance of knowledge of the communist system and ideology, as the significant value is Sig. = 0.015 < 0.05. This result suggests that this variable accounts for approximately 1.4% of the variance in the dependent variable.

Table 6. Multiple Linear Regression Results for Predictors of the Importance of Knowledge about the Communist System and Ideology

	R ²	R ² adjusted	T	Sig
<i>(Constant)</i>	0.018	0.014	11.113	0.000
Young people's knowledge of the communist system and ideology			2.452	0.015
Sources of information regarding the communist system and ideology			1.704	0.089

Source: Authors' calculation, Survey 2025

Figure 9. Interaction plot of knowledge and information sources on young people's perceived importance of knowledge about the communist system



Source: Authors' calculation, Survey 2025

Figure 9 illustrates the interaction between young people’s level of knowledge and sources of information in shaping the perceived importance of knowledge about the communist system. The relatively parallel trends suggest that while higher levels of knowledge are consistently associated with higher perceived importance, differences across information sources levels appears limited.

Therefore, the form of the multiple linear regression equation is as follows:

$$\text{Importance of knowledge of the communist system and ideology} = 1.612 + 0.122 (\text{Young people's knowledge of the communist system and ideology})$$

From this equation, it is also noted that the coefficient (β) of the independent variable—Knowledge of young people about the communist system and ideology—is positive. This indicates a positive association between the independent variable and the dependent variable. Thus, higher levels of knowledge about the communist system and ideology are associated with higher perceived importance of such knowledge, highlighting its role in shaping comparative understanding between the communist system and the current democratic framework.

Research question 1: Does the age of young people affect the level and desire to have knowledge about the communist system in Albania? If so, which age group shows the greatest interest?

To analyze this research question, the correlation between these two variables is examined using ANOVA.

The result shows a Sig. value = 0.170 > 0.05, indicating that there is no statistically significant correlation between the variable knowledge about the communist system and the age group. Therefore, the desire to acquire knowledge about the communist system is not influenced by the age of young people.

Table 7. ANOVA Results for the Relationship between Knowledge about the Communist System and Age Groups

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.573	2	0.286	1.780	0.170
Within Groups	68.674	427	0.161		
Total	69.247	429			

Source: Authors' calculation, Survey 2025

To confirm this conclusion, reference is also made to the Post Hoc test using the Tukey Procedure, which shows that the corresponding Sig. values in the pair wise comparisons are all greater than $p=0.05$ (Table 8).

Table 8. Multiple Comparisons - Post Hoc Tests

Tukey HSD				
(I) Age		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
18 - 20 years old	21 - 25 years old	-0.070	0.049	0.331
	26 - 30 years old	-0.094	0.051	0.157
21 - 25 years old	18 - 20 years old	0.070	0.049	0.331
	26 - 30 years old	-0.024	0.045	0.852
26 - 30 years old	18 - 20 years old	0.094	0.051	0.157
	21 - 25 years old	0.024	0.045	0.852

Source: Authors' calculation, Survey 2025

Research Question 2: Does the level of knowledge about the communist system vary according to the educational level of young people, and if so, which group of young people has more knowledge?

To analyze this research question, ANOVA analysis and the Multiple Comparison Test using the Post Hoc test with the Tukey Procedure are employed. The ANOVA analysis shows that the corresponding Sig. value is greater than 0.05 (Sig. = 0.247). Consequently, the educational level does not appear to be an influencing factor in the level of knowledge that young people have—or wish to have—regarding the communist system in Albania.

Table 9. ANOVA

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.668	3	0.223	1.384	0.247
Within Groups	68.578	426	0.161		
Total	69.247	429			

Source: Authors' calculation, Survey 2025

Once again, this conclusion is confirmed by the multiple comparison test conducted through the Post Hoc test using the Tukey procedure, which shows that, in this case as well, all corresponding Sig. Values are greater than 0.05 (Table 10).

Table 10. Multiple Comparisons - Post Hoc Tests

Tukey HSD				
(I) Educational level		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Secondary Education	Student	-0.163	0.107	0.422
	Higher Education	-0.202	0.109	0.247
	Master	-0.219	0.124	0.290
Student	Secondary Education	0.163	0.107	0.422
	Higher Education	-0.039	0.042	0.792
	Master	-0.056	0.073	0.868
Higher Education Level	Secondary Education	0.202	0.109	0.247
	Student	0.039	0.042	0.792
	Master	-0.017	0.076	0.996

Master	Secondary Education	0.219	0.124	0.290
	Student	0.056	0.073	0.868
	Higher Education	0.017	0.076	0.996

Source: Authors' calculation, Survey 2025

Research Question 3: Does the voting process (candidate selection and access to political parties) affect the importance of knowing and comparing political systems?

To analyze this research question, the Chi Square Test of Independence is applied. The results show that the Pearson Chi-Square coefficient has an Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) value of 0.456, which is greater than 0.05. This indicates that there is no statistically significant relationship between the two variables. Therefore, it can be concluded that the voting process—including candidate evaluation and political affiliation—is not a dominant factor in determining the perceived importance of understanding and comparing political systems. This suggests that such elements do not significantly influence the desire to understand systemic differences or to avoid conditions that might lead to a return to a one-party, communist-style system characterized by concentrated power (Table 11).

Table 11. Chi-Square Test

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.772a	8	0.456
Likelihood Ratio	6.362	8	0.607
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.363	1	0.547
N of Valid Cases	430		

Source: Authors' calculation, Survey 2025

4. Discussions

4.1 Empirical Findings in Relation to the Educational Framework

From an empirical perspective, the findings of this study indicate that knowledge about the communist system in Albania is significantly associated with young people's critical attitudes towards the current democratic system. Unlike socio- demographics factors such as age or formal education level, which were not statistically significant,

the content and quality of knowledge about communism emerge as key determinants of young people political orientation.

These findings suggest that the issue is not primarily related to the duration of schooling, but rather to the ways historical knowledge is taught, interpreted, and internalized. In this sense, the results highlight a distinction between formal educational exposure and critical historical understanding. Although young people may have completed different levels of education, this does not necessarily guarantee a deeper comprehension of the communist experience or its contemporary implications. Consequently, history education should not be understood merely as the transmission of factual information, but as a formative process that supports development of analytical and reflective engagement with the past.

4.2. Theoretical Discussion and Comparison with Existing Literature

The international literature on history education and democratic citizenship emphasizes that the manner in which societies come to terms with their authoritarian past is reflected in the political culture of younger generations. Previous studies argue that critically engaging with history of repression and authoritarianism can foster democratic and pluralistic thinking (Barton & Levstik, 2004).

The findings of the study are largely consistent with this perspective, as deeper knowledge of communism is associated with more critical attitudes toward democratic governance. However, in the Albanian context, this relationship appears to be shaped by a specific historical legacy. The experience of extreme isolation and centralized state control under communism has produced a fragmented transmission of historical memory, in which family narratives, public discourse, and formal education may coexist or contradict one another. This complexity influences how young people construct their understanding of the past and assess its relevance for the present.

This makes education an essential domain for the development of a balanced and critical historical perspective. Here, teaching methods that focus on comparative historical analysis, working with historical sources, and engaging with the ethical dilemmas of the past are widely regarded as effective ways to facilitate students' understanding of the historian's moral and political problems (Epstein & Peck, 2018). The findings of the study suggest that the absence of a critical dimension within the current curriculum may limit the formative impact of historical knowledge about communism.

4.3. Educational Implications and Reflections on the Curriculum

From an educational perspective, the findings highlight the importance of critically examining how the communist era is addressed in school curricula. Although the results do not suggest specific curriculum reforms or interventions, they indicate that a predominantly narrative-based approach may be insufficient to foster critical thinking at this stage of education. Conversely, a focused and reflective engagement

with issues of power, repression, and communism's long-term social consequences, can support the development of democratic awareness and civic consciousness.

The teaching process in this context can therefore be understood as a gradual shift from traditional, teacher-centred methods of knowledge transmission to approaches that encourage analysis, debate, and critical reflections by learners. Such strategies enable students not only to understand historical events, but also to reflect on their causes and broader implications for contemporary political and social realities.

As Kerr (2003) points out, educational modules that integrate history education with education for active citizenship can become an effective means of strengthening democratic engagement and civic participation among young people. In the Albanian context, this reflection is especially important, as the findings suggest that formal education alone does not necessarily lead to a deep or critical understanding of the communist past. This highlights that both curriculum content and teaching approaches are as important as the broader educational framework. (Kerr, 2003)

4.4. Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Despite its merits, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the data used were gathered within a particular geographical region, and as such, the findings may not be representative of the whole youth population of Albania. Furthermore, the evaluation of historical knowledge in this study relies on the participants' self-assessment, which may have been influenced by subjective perceptions.

Future research could consider a wider range of cases across the country, as well as in-depth qualitative approaches such as interviews or focus groups, to better understand young people's perceptions of and engagement with the communist past in relation to their educational background. Additionally, comparative studies between post-communist countries could help identify both shared features and contextual differences in the role of history education in shaping political culture among younger generations.

Conclusion

The data analysis reveals the following key findings:

- The importance and value of knowing the communist system and its ideology are significantly influenced by the information young people receive about this system.
- The desire to understand the communist system once established in Albania is not influenced by the age of young people. However, other social and economic factors may drive some individuals to explore this historical period, particularly due to its consequences on their families.
- The educational level of young people does not significantly impact the extent of knowledge they have or wish to acquire about the communist system in

Albania. This suggests a declining interest in this historical period among the younger generation.

- The voting process—including candidate evaluation and political engagement—does not play a dominant role in shaping the perceived importance of understanding political systems. Consequently, it does not significantly contribute to efforts to distinguish between democratic and communist systems or to prevent a return to centralized, one-party governance.

Recommendations

- Promote greater involvement of young people in accessing information about the country's history, particularly the era of the communist regime.
- Organize more educational initiatives and awareness programs to communicate factual and comprehensive information about the communist period in Albania, especially for generations that did not experience it firsthand.
- Encourage the active participation of young people in political life—not merely for electoral purposes, but as an investment in the future of the country. This includes involving them in political, decision making, and broader socioeconomic processes.

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