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Abstract

Mass human rights violations, such as those which occurred during the Albanian Dictatorship (1945-91), can impact citizens across generations. Decades later, the lives of families and community members are often defined by efforts to achieve justice and prevent similar future experiences. Existing research shows that social identities predict how survivors experience, understand, and cope with these violations. On the other hand, social identities can also inform societal level strategies of peace and reconciliation in the aftermath. However, it is not known how ingroup norms (e.g., familial, civic) impact intergenerational understandings of and responses towards transitional justice. To explore this, we analyse the accounts of first generation survivors of human rights violations during the Albanian Dictatorship, and their descendants (n=52). The data were analysed through reflexive thematic analysis informed theoretically by the Social Identity Approach and conceptually by transitional justice frameworks. The findings indicate that families take a central role in determining how past harms are understood and responded to and that associated identity-based norms (e.g., family norms) inform transmission of knowledge about past harms and appropriate forms of justice. Identity-based norms can also determine which justice processes are deemed acceptable for the next generation/s to engage in (e.g., peaceful responses, documentation of past harm, education of new generations, and fights for democracy). Implications for social identity and justice theories, as well as for practice, are discussed.

Keywords: Social norms, transitional justice, dictatorship, family identity, civic identity

Public significance statement: The present study suggests that family and civic social norms can guide intergenerational understanding and coping with mass human rights violations as well as responses to transitional justice processes (e.g. non-vengeance, documenting violations, democracy building) in the aftermath. As such social norms should be integrated in the efforts for peace and reconciliation building. The findings also highlight the different benefits and harms of transmitting knowledge of the violations across generations.

Introduction

Mass human rights violations are unfortunately common and have affected over half of the world's countries since WWII (Marshall & Cole, 2008). These violations involve extreme life events (e.g., death, torture) and systematic denial of civil/political rights, impacting many generations (Bombay et al., 2014). When individuals face mass human rights violations, making sense of and coping with the experiences can be a difficult and long-term process: a process that can be perpetuated and complicated by the quest for justice in the aftermath. This is well-documented in the field of transitional justice (Lundy & McGovern, 2008; Teigel, 2000).

The term refers to legal and non-legal measures (e.g., moral and political) that operate at a societal level to redress injustice and facilitate reconciliation following war, conflict, apartheid, and dictatorial regimes (Arthur, 2009). These include criminal justice, historical justice, administrative justice, reparations, and transitional jurisprudence. Transitional justice can also address distributional inequality, promote reconciliation, and social reconstruction (Nagy, 2008). Through redressing injustice and facilitating reconciliation, transitional justice contributes to peace and conflict avoidance in several ways (e.g., establishing and documenting the harm, building reconciliation, making legal and institutional changes that aim to prevent future harm).

Most psychological research on transitional justice emanates from the peace and conflict literature focussing on topics such as political and intergroup apologies (e.g., Gkinopoulos et al., 2022); prosocial behaviour (e.g., Borinca et al., 2022); intergroup acknowledgements (e.g., Vollhardt et al., 2014); competitive victimhood (e.g. Bar-Talk et al., 2009); or inclusive victimhood (e.g., Vollhardt & Bilali, 2015) in intergroup conflict (Borinca et al., 2022) or colonisation contexts (Allpress et al., 2010). Research has also focused on group-based emotions such as guilt and shame, which can lead to support for different forms of intergroup restitution, such as apologizing to and compensating the victim outgroup (Allpress et al., 2010). Other research has investigated the role of the victims' beliefs in inciting and sustaining conflict between groups. For example, reminders of past victimisation of one's group can incite violence and lead to revenge against the perpetrator outgroup or other outgroups (Wohl & Branscombe, 2008), but beliefs can also lead to more positive responses (e.g., empathy) towards other victim groups (Vollhardt, 2009).

Despite widespread support for transitional justice measures, it is common for victims of mass human rights violations to feel that justice has not been done, and therefore that the threat of future violations persists. In fact, one of the key challenges of transitional justice is that all conflict sides are expected (often from international pressure) to make justice concessions in order to create a peaceful coexistence (Mutua, 2015). Dealing with such situations is emotionally and socially challenging, so individuals turn to valued group memberships to make sense of and cope with these challenges (e.g., perceived lack of justice and threat of future conflict and harm). Given that valued social groups guide our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours through prescribing specific social values and norms (Tajfel & Turner, 1985), it is our contention that collective meaning-making and coping with such challenges in the aftermath of human rights violations can be guided by social identity processes, specifically through the transmission and enactment of social norms. Within social

groups, social norms represent rules and standards for behaviour that can either be injunctive (stating what behaviour and attitudes are expected and appropriate for group members) or descriptive (stating what behaviour and attitudes are typical for group members) (Cialdini & Trost, 1998).

Although not exploring social norms explicitly, the role played by social identification (i.e., experiencing a psychological sense of belonging to a group) in helping group members cope with trauma, threat, and uncertainty is well-documented within the Social Cure literature, which explores how people's group memberships impact their health and wellbeing (Jetten, Haslam, & Haslam, 2012). Social Cure research has shown that membership to psychologically meaningful groups can buffer against the negative impact of continuous discrimination (Branscombe et al., 1999) and mass human rights violations (Muldoon et al., 2019), in part through facilitating shared meaning-making of the traumatic experiences and coping (Kellezi, Cassidy, & Reicher, 2009). Identification processes are also related to the group members' motivation to restore their group's positive identity when this is threatened or compromised by an outgroup (Haslam et al., 2009), such as when perpetrator groups aim to undermine the value of the minoritized group they are oppressing.

Moreover, social identification processes lead to group members experiencing a collective view of the world and engaging in mutual social influence, which in turn may lead to group members enacting the norms and values associated with their group. For example, group norms (e.g., alcohol consumption or mass event behaviours) have been shown to impact on group members' health and wellbeing (Livingstone et al. 2011; Neville et al., 2021), but no research has explored how groups norms guide the understanding of transitional justice processes. This is a significant omission, as each of the key types of social identification process (meaning making, striving for positive identity, shared influence, and norm enactment) could predict the nature and role of injunctive and descriptive norms

(Cialdini & Trost, 1998) in influencing justice-seeking responses in the aftermath of mass human rights violations. The present study will therefore address this paucity of empirical evidence by exploring these identity processes within the experiences of dictatorship survivors.

Existing evidence of similar processes supports the importance of this endeavour. In some contexts, groups' traditional norms and values have advocated for the enactment of revenge in response to human rights violations. For example, the Kanun, an influential and foundational text of Albanian traditional law (Dukagjini & Gjecov, 1989) emphasises the importance of revenge in the aftermath of violations. Specifically, the Kanun suggests that when an offence to a family's honour has been made (anything from a family member being insulted to a family member being murdered), the family cannot just ignore it: they must take action (such as confronting or even killing the perpetrator) to re-establish their family's honour (Dukagjini & Gjecov, 1989). Ultimately, Kanun provided a system to maintain valued social relations and the rule of law while resisting the Ottoman occupation (Këllezi, 2006).

Family, community, and national behaviours in aftermath of violations have also been guided by powerful social norms from multiple groups. For example, survivors of war-time human rights violations who are perceived to have affirmed community/national/gender group norms (e.g., fighters who showed strength/fought for the national cause) experience widespread support from their communities and countries, while survivors who are perceived to have contravened family/community/national group norms (e.g., gender norms of maintaining 'purity' in wartime rape) experience lack of support from their communities and countries (Këllezi & Reicher, 2012; 2014).

Justice-related group norms have also been shown to be intergenerational. For instance, parents' norms regarding collective action engagement as a response to injustice

(i.e., approving or themselves engaging in collective action) influence whether their children participate in collective action (e.g. protests; Gonzales et al., 2020). Reactions to trauma have also been shown to be influenced by the intergenerational norms and values of the family group, with the children and grandchildren of victims also being affected, and experiencing desire for justice (Këllezi et al. 2021). These findings reinforce the intergenerational impact of human rights violations documented in historical victimisation studies (Bombay et al., 2014). Given the important role that social groups (like families) can play in helping victims cope with trauma and human rights violations, it is imperative to understand the precise intra-group identity mechanisms through which they might how human rights violations and transitional justice are understood.

The Present Study

As noted earlier, the precise role of social norms in influencing perceptions of and attitudes towards transitional justice is poorly understood within the transitional justice literature and practice, and is even less well understood in dictatorial contexts, where the conflict is both intergroup (supporters vs. opponents of the dictatorship) and intragroup (dictatorships function by exerting control on all individuals, families, and communities within the nation, and transitional justice processes have implication for the whole national group). The present study therefore sought to explore the role of social norms in affecting perceptions of and understanding of transitional justice after the dictatorship through the use of semi-structured interviews with dictatorship survivors and their children/grandchildren. More specifically the study addressed the following question:

What is the role played by social norms on the understandings and experience of transitional justice in the aftermath of a dictatorial regime, and across generations of survivors?

The Albanian Context

The Albanian dictatorship (1945-1991) was motivated by communist ideologies and persistently violated the rights of political opponents while exercising strict control over the rest of the population. The rights violations included the torture, starvation, and execution of those perceived as political opponents, as well as internment and continued persecution of their family members across generations (The Institute for the Studies of Communist Crimes and Consequences in Albania, 2021). The rights to work, family life, healthcare, education, property, and social-political life were also systematically denied to those who were perceived to be a threat to the regime (hereafter referred to as the *persecuted*). Since the fall of communism, there has been very limited progress with transitional justice. Only a few dictatorial political leaders have been indicted, and even fewer convicted (for financial crimes, rather than human rights violations; Elbasani & Lipinski, 2013). The violations affected many generations of the same families, in part because the families themselves were targeted by the regime, and in part because of the continued systematic inequalities they faced after the fall of the regime (Këllezi et al., 2021). Albania thus constitutes a fitting context within which to explore the complexities and nuances of transitional justice.

Method

Design and Participants

Participants were recruited at two main timepoints with the help of two organisations, researcher contacts and snowball sampling (see Table 1 for details). All participants (or their parents) were members of the persecuted group who had experienced internment, death of family members, imprisonment, and/or persistent denial of social, economic and political rights during the dictatorship. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 27 survivors (group 1) between 2016-2017, and then 25 (group 2) between 2021-2022, all in the Albanian

language. The data were combined to form a data corpus. Full details on researcher characteristics, experience and identity can be found in Table 2. Key reflections about the nature of the relationships between the participants and researchers are discussed elsewhere (Këllezi et al., 2021).

Materials and Procedure

All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interviews for the first group of participants focused on topics relating to life during the dictatorship, their experiences of these events, transitional justice processes, and life in the present-day. The second group of interviews were collected after analysis of the first group, and similarly asked participants to reflect on life during the dictatorship, as well as if/how their families spoke about the traumatic events they experienced during this time. Examples of questions can be found in Table 3, and reflections on combining the two samples can be found in Box 1. The studies were approved by the Nottingham Trent Social Science Ethics committee.

Analytic Technique

Transcripts were analyzed using Theoretically Guided Reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA; Braun & Clarke 2021), which involves identifying common patterns of meaning. Essentialist and constructivist perspectives were adopted, as this enabled exploration of participants' personal experiences (essentialist) and the impact of their wider social environments (constructivist). Data coding involved both induction and deduction (Këllezi et al., 2021) so that we could explore participants' personal experiences whilst also using the social identity approach (SIA) theoretical and transitional justice conceptual frameworks as lenses through which to understand these experiences.

To ensure a rigorous analysis, six thematic analysis steps, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021) were conducted by the first author (see Table 4). First, data familiarisation

took place, involving in depth listening/re-reading of transcripts to enhance knowledge of the data. Detailed notes were kept about key issues and experiences raised by the participants. Second, data were coded using NVivo software to capture key data features. Attention was paid simultaneously to participants' individual accounts (inductive approach), key features in the data corpus, and to examples of key processes (deductive approach) linked to the theoretical framework (e.g., injunctive norms). Third, the codes were organized into initial themes capturing significant patterns in the data. The themes were reviewed and edited to ensure that they appropriately capture the key data patterns and addressed the research questions. Fourth, initial thematic structure was revised in discussion with the other authors, ensuring that each theme had a clear and distinct narrative. Fifth, theme labels were discussed and agreed. Finally, illustrative extracts were selected, and analysis was written up, paying particular attention to how the overall narrative of the analysis related to the existing theory and research. Pseudonyms and participants' age are presented at the end of each extract, and removal of superfluous extract content for brevity is indicated with (...).

Results

Two overarching themes were developed. The first theme reveals the role played by family group norms in determining how human rights violations and associated justice processes are understood and responded to by survivors and their families. The second theme focuses on the influence of civic identity norms on how survivors and their families perceive the concept and processes of transitional justice and wider democracy-related issues.

Theme 1: Family Norms and Values Guide Responses to Human Rights Violations

Theme one describes the role played by family norms and values in how human rights violations and associated justice processes are understood and responded to by survivors and their families. Two key phenomena are evidenced. Families place importance on their

members knowing about and documenting the violations (subtheme 1.1). Families deem some justice responses to be appropriate, and informed justice responses that family members are expected to pursue (i.e., peaceful and unvengeful)(subtheme 1.2).

Subtheme 1.1: Family Norms Transmission and Expectation That Violations are Taught and Understood.

The influence of family norms on how participants understood and responded to the dictatorial violations was evident across all interviews. This reflected a reciprocal process whereby it was normative for parents to feel they had the responsibility to teach their children about their family's past, and for children to have a responsibility to learn about their family history:

I think that in every family it is more than normal to tell the children where we come from (...) Parents are the guides of children, and the narrative starts from the past, where we come from, why we are where we are, what we want to achieve. I think this is a more normal relationship of every parent with their children, especially for us who came from the unusual situations. (...) the truth should be a part of every young person's life, even more so when the circumstances are so specific. It has had a good impact [knowing about the violations] because you know the truth, you are well prepared in terms of expectations, what is waiting for you, you are not up in the air, you are on the ground, and you know what to expect from this society (Ela, 62)

As Ela explains, it is typically expected within the family group context for the younger generation to learn about the family's past, even if doing so is painful. Ela even argues that despite the disturbing nature of the shared stories, children benefit from hearing

them, as they learn to understand the limits and navigate the risks associated with the society in which they live (elaborated further in Theme 2). Ela explains how transmitting this knowledge is accepted as the responsibility of the older family members (in this case the parents) who have to *'tell the children'* who they are and where they are positioned within society. This transmission of information through family groups is an important injunctive family norm, and thus becomes an important feature of family interactions and responses to their experiences, as the parents *'are the guides'*. However, the wider context here, as Ela's accounts highlight, is that the younger generation are receiving crucial learning about past violations through the enactment of this familial norm of information sharing: something also highlighted by Toni:

My father always said that we have suffered a lot with these types of events, at least you should not suffer them. Instead, pass it on to your children as much as you can. You communicate these sufferings that we have experienced. (...). only those who have suffered them know about it. Therefore, let this become an appeal also for the generation that comes today about what happened during the Enver Hoxha's [dictator] regime. (Toni, 54)

Again, we see the appeal for family group members across the generations to learn about the violations and pass the knowledge on to their own children, and to other generations to come. This group norm endorsed in families across the community means that historical suffering is not only documented and remembered, but it is passed on in perpetuity because group norms form an essential component of collective continuity within social

groups (Sani et al., 2007). This transmission of norms could be a direct response to survivors' perceptions that they did not receive justice or recognition in the aftermath of the violations.

Toni's account also suggests that passing on the knowledge of the violations to one's children may constitute a protective mechanism preventing future suffering due to past violations ('*at least you should not suffer them*'). One way in which the sharing of such knowledge may achieve this is to motivate children to become vocal justice advocates, as Turi explains:

All parents should talk to their children (....) ask their children, firstly, to educate themselves, because education creates a perfection (...) through school they will better understand what the situation is. Not just learn the words but take action themselves. They will dig through the archives to find other documents, in new and similar situations. That is, they are researchers, they do not remain silent. (Turi, 82)

The norm guiding older family members to teach younger family members about the violations is again emphasised as is the active role that the younger generation are expected to take. Turi believes that the younger generations must not be passive recipients. Instead, they must become archival/historical researchers so that they can educate themselves about past violations and, in turn, become empowered to be active in the present fight for justice.

In sum, family norms about; remembering the violations; passing on knowledge about them; and fighting for justice in the present, inform how parents are expected to interact with their children, but also place expectations on the children themselves, and thus apply to whole family groups. However, the need to document the past and inform the next generation about these events guides how family members talk and shaped their behavioural responses to the

violations: a topic with clear applications to understandings of transitional justice processes, discussed in the next subtheme.

Subtheme 1.2: Family Norms Prescribe That Responses to Violations are Unvengeful

Many participants emphasised the important role played by family norms in determining what they deem to be appropriate responses and how they should encourage their children to respond to the human rights violations. Specifically, participants talked about the need to teach their children about value of responding to the violations by seeking justice, but for responses to be peaceful. Various reasons are given for this shared normative expectation that seeking revenge is inappropriate:

He [our father] has not fed us with hatred towards certain persons. Neither revenge. (...) He said (...) knowing what religion says, we don't hate people, we hate exactly that kind of ideology that made these people do what they did, which they would have not done otherwise (...) On the contrary, the opposite happened that they [communists] fed them with hatred that even today they are afraid that we will take revenge. That is how they understand that we are now going to kill them. (...) But we were not fed with that sentiment. (...) And in fact, what revenge has happened in these 25 years? Nothing. (Fred, 44)

Fred draws on descriptive family norms to recount the religious reasoning behind the beliefs his father passed on to them which justifies non-vengeful responses in his statement: 'He has not fed us hatred'. He explains how he condemns the communist ideology for leading people to harm others by committing human rights violations motivated by outgroup hatred. It is a resistance against that type of ideology that also influences his personal beliefs

(and his family's beliefs) about revenge. So, in this case, Fredi's behaviour is governed by religious norms ('we don't hate people') which are transmitted and enacted through family norms ('we were not fed with that sentiment').

Other participants describe how unvengeful responses to the violations shared within family dynamics are important for building a peaceful and harmonious future and protecting the next generations of family, and nation's members from pain:

I am careful with my son. I use a beautiful expression from Martin Luther King; "I have decided to live with love because hate is a heavy weight to carry." So I have decided this despite the fact that my suffering cannot be justified, I cannot forgive anyone, but I see that hatred brings nothing but poverty and division. I have another principle that a person should respect the freedom of others, otherwise none of us deserve it, (...) So, I don't feel like feeding this to my boy, but I tell him clearly that, "Son, I will not leave you any wealth because these have been our options (...) But I have left you one thing that is worth more than money (...) when your father's or uncle's name is mentioned, you should mention them with pride, and this is the greatest wealth"!(...)Hatred, of course, for people who have done violence to us for no reason, but not revenge. Absolutely not. (...) we are a small country, and we need each other regardless of political beliefs (Bekim, 77).

As Bekim explains, the transmission of values about peaceful and unvengeful responses to the violations has many potential benefits for his child (avoiding pain, poverty and division), and for society in general (avoiding division). Unvengeful responses can promote opportunities to build democracy and develop a country where there is respect for

every citizen's rights. Bekim's account also makes reference to the importance of family honour and reputation, and his expectation that his child will also cherish this honour/reputation. Indeed, the role of family norms in responding to justice processes in the aftermath of the dictatorship is so strong that some participants believe it informed the actions of the perpetrators themselves:

I am part of 400 years of [family] history. He (my father) has no feeling. Maybe hate is there, but he feels light, he doesn't talk with emotions (...) There is no violence in this man. (...) I mean the principle of right is very clear. But they (perpetrators) are confused, they still continue with violence, want to solve everything with violence. And that is where the defect of our society is, and we still don't deal with it because he (perpetrator) passed it on to his son, the son to the son, passed it on to his grandson, the generations go like this. (Coli, 35)

As Coli explains, while his father does not respond to past victimisation by being violent, the perpetrators continue to use violence, and they pass on the norm of violence to the next generations. So, family norms around peace and conflict in this context are perceived to be important for both the victims and their families (anti-violence) and for the perpetrators and their families (pro-violence).

In sum, subthemes 1.1 and 1.2 highlight the centrality of the family identity in defining how to share information about and how to respond to the historical harms and violations. There was strong reference to injunctive family norms of remembering past events, passing on knowledge of previous suffering and wrong doings, as well as remaining active in documenting this knowledge to empower and protect future generations. Similarly,

although participants talked about the continued fight for justice, family norms, often in combination with norms from other group memberships (e.g., one's religious faith, one's view of the nation), informed the importance of peaceful and unvengeful responses to the violations. Participants also described how valued social norms (e.g., informed by civic identity) were used to address the wider threats of the dictatorial past: a topic which will be addressed in the next theme.

Theme 2: Responses to the Violations Must Involve Upholding Civic Values and Protecting Democracy

Theme 2 focuses on the perceived responsibility of the persecuted, their families, and their children/grandchildren to fight for Albanian civic values and democracy. For many participants, the harms and threats of the regime remain present, in part through the continuous presence of communist ideology, which is perceived to be a clear threat to modern-day Albanian society. The next extract illustrates the nature of the post-conflict context within Albania, which will be important to understand how national and civic norms are evoked and operate:

There are those in Parliament who have committed crimes. The government doesn't care(...) They are in power. All of them are, all of them are from those families that persecuted (...) How can they do it [deliver justice]! They will not put their fathers down to raise us up.(...) I see Sali Berisha [Leader of Democratic Party], who comes from a family of communists, was party secretary himself, a communist(...) You are afraid to turn on the TV because you hear more lies. (Samira, 61)

As Samira and many other participants describe, not only has there been little justice obtained, but they feel that obstacles have also been purposefully placed in their way to prevent achieving justice. As Samira claims, political leaders have very close ties to the past violations and are avoiding delivering justice because it could expose their own/own fathers' roles in these violations. Furthermore, the presence of politicians with close ties to the past is experienced as a threat to modern-day democracy. It is against this background of continued threat and descriptive political apathy that survivors' responsibility to fight for justice is closely linked to the fight for democracy. As Andi explains, both political and public lack of reflection and action about past wrongs has led to apathy and ignorance, which has troubling implications for the functioning and recovery of modern-day Albanian society:

There has been no opening of the files, no lustration [removing dictatorship officials from current public office], no raising awareness of the population about what happened, nothing (...) this risks producing an ignorance of the new generation about what happened. And this translates into repeating mistakes (...) People have reached such a grotesque point that they come and say 'we were doing well during dictatorship time' (...) So it's good to study this country (...) to really understand the drama of the society that are inherited, and I believe will continue to be inherited in the next generation at least (...). We have to work on this. (Andi, 30)

Andi believes that lack of reflection about the dangers of the past and a rose-tinted view of the dictatorship harms the quest for justice and has negative implications for society. As a member of the new generation who have not experienced the dictatorship personally (and guided by family norms outlined in theme 1), Andi believes it is the civic responsibility

of the new generations to address the harms of the past, and to challenge the additional threats that are caused by a lack of justice, sense of complacency and a general lack of reflection about the realities of the dictatorship.

Bora also describes this lack of justice and lack of awareness about the harms of the past, and suggests it poses a threat to democracy, civic values, and the future health, character and morality of the Albanian nation:

Transparency cultivates the democratic culture. If you do not reflect on the past and what is happening here in reality, you become used to being an oppressed person, don't ask for your rights, (...) as citizen you have responsibility towards yourself and towards the next generation (...) Do not violate the rights of others by protecting yours, prepare for tomorrow, prepare for today, and you will not be ashamed tomorrow of the politics that you allowed today to happen. Otherwise, we will all be guilty, because there are many injustices that are being done (...) What is a nation that is afraid to face the past? Face what you have done in the past so that it is clear, and your sons do not make the same mistakes, neither does my son. Time has shown that those persecuted can become persecutors in the future (...) we have accumulated a lot of resentment, injustice inside (...) so this lesson is for everyone really. (Bora, 52)

For Bora (and many others), civic norms and values that promote the protection of human rights must guide reflection about the past, as well as one's democratic and social responsibilities in the present. She feels each person is obligated to reflect on the past and apply positive civic values in the present, otherwise democracy is in danger and national

resentment may pull community members, even the persecuted, towards violent vengeful behaviour. Bora describes all Albanians as having these obligations even survivors and their families.

While Bora was mostly a child during the dictatorship, Tomi was an adult, and he reflects on the link between justice and democracy as dictatorship political prisoner:

If it were about my personal suffering, or even my family's, I forgive communism everything now! However, I do not forgive communism for what it did to Albanians and Albania for 50 years. (...) Isolated Albania for 50 years and did not let it communicate with democratic states. (...) We were just surrounded by barbed wire. This is the biggest misfortune of Albanians. What happened to our Albania? It doesn't matter what I suffered! Here I am, I'm alive. But (...) the soul of the Albanian was deformed. It was alienated. With your permission, I will use a figure of speech, the DNA of the Albanian was changed. (...) it made the new man, this is the new man, the one who is now killing the father and the father his son.(...) it became like a dog let off the chain. Now it will take 40, 50, 60 years for the Albanian to come to his senses. If possible, at all. If possible, at all. If education starts exactly today. (Tomi, 82 years)

Tomi feels that the most significant harm of the dictatorship is the impact on the Albanian society and democracy as a whole. In this account, again, we see civic norms being invoked to inform transitional justice responses, such as the forgiving of violations committed against the individual because violations committed against the nation are experienced as even more important and enduring.

Overall, Theme 2 revealed how injunctive civic norms guiding social group processes are used by participants to define and communicate appropriate forms of justice-seeking in the dictatorship's aftermath. This involves recognition of the threat posed by the historical harms to modern-day Albanian democracy, and, consequently, the importance of enacting justice-seeking processes that address the threats faced by the whole society (not just by the persecuted individuals and their families). Learning, understanding, and acting are thus deemed to be civic responsibilities which must be informed by injunctive civic norms (i.e., what group members and citizens should do), rather than by existing descriptive norms of apathy towards justice-seeking (i.e., what citizens actually do).

Discussion

Main Findings

Family-based norms communicating the importance of remembering the dictatorship's abuses and responding to them appropriately play an integral role in ensuring that younger generations are informed about historical violations and injustices. These norms also instruct family group members across generations about how they should (and should not) engage with processes of transitional justice. More specifically, these injunctive family norms prescribed dual responsibility to group members whereby parents/older generations, had shared responsibilities to educate the younger generations about the violations, and the younger generations were expected to act on this knowledge by passing it onto their children, as well as by actively educating themselves and fighting for justice in an unvengeful manner. Thus, these socially communicated norms are critical in helping ensure that the violations are not forgotten, but also importantly that future generations are in a better position to prevent history repeating itself. This shared responsibility was informed by a desire for justice, and by living in a context where justice is perceived as being purposefully denied and harms

misunderstood or underappreciated in a way that crucially disempowers the community of persecuted and their families to bring about change.

The normative emphasis expressed within family groups on the need to engage in unvengeful responses to the violations was also important. Family norms prescribed the importance (and benefits) of these peaceful and measured responses for their children. Parents taught children to not seek revenge because they believed in and respected the safety and morality associated with democracy and the rule of law, and because they did not want to bring any more suffering to their country. Thus, new generations were prescribed to maintain the higher moral ground (compared to those who harmed them) and remain peaceful, but also to protect themselves from the pain and risks of resentment and hatred.

We see evidence of nested identities where injunctive family norms are used to transmit civic and national norms. Against a background of continuous threat deriving from perceived impunity, the participants emphasised the importance of learning about the implications of this impunity for Albania's present-day and future citizens and democracy. In these accounts participants drew on their understandings of their civic and national identities, and to the importance of building a better, peaceful future for all Albanians. In sum, shared civic norms led them to feel it was their civic responsibility to address the remaining threat that the historical dictatorship poses to Albanian society, and to prevent future harm.

Implications

The findings support previous research on the important role played by family identification in helping survivors make sense of and cope with harm and trauma (Këllezi et al., 2021). In addition, the present study explored how family identity processes, specifically the transmission of group norms, influenced how survivors understood and engaged with post-trauma justice responses decades after the violations, across generations. Thus, the

present study extends previous research by showing the processes through which families can help facilitate the building of trauma and justice narratives which can ultimately be beneficial for recovery (der Kolk, 2014).

The findings also contribute to research on collective victimhood by highlighting the role played by social norms in responding to victimisation of one's group. While past research has focused on group-based responses to victimhood and justice, it has not investigated how family norms and/or civic norms can influence how survivors orient themselves towards justice responses. However, this past research can help to shed light on some of our findings. For example, research by Vollhardt (2014) emphasises how survivors' ability to obtain justice is often hampered by the power inequalities between the survivor and perpetrator groups. This reflects our findings regarding our participants' perceptions of powerlessness and can, at least in part, explain their concern about how the historical perpetrators threaten present-day and future democracy. Past research has also highlighted the role played by religious identities in helping survivors to understand the nature of their victimisation (Hopkins & Dobai, 2020). Here, the present study expands on this by showing that family injunctive norms can facilitate the understanding, transmission, and enactment of religious norms and values.

Research on historical victimisation has shown that reminders of historical victimhood can lead to negative outcomes (increased intergroup conflict; Bar-Tal et al., 2009) and positive outcomes (increased prosocial behaviour towards fellow survivors; Vollhardt, 2009). While it is not possible to establish if either is the case with our participants, the present study has identified several potential benefits of becoming aware of ingroup victimisation: a) compliance with and transmission of injunctive norms that prescribe a need to display commitment towards and willingness to work for a better democracy for the nation in a way that can benefit everyone; b) increased awareness of the relationship between the

historical dictatorship and present-day injustice and threats to democracy, which can in turn lead to the addressing of these injustices and threats; and c) improved understanding of family narratives of trauma and justice, which can lead to stronger family bonds and better shared understanding of the suffering across generations.

The present findings also support research which suggests that appraisal of current situations as being illegitimate or unfair (Van Zomeren et al., 2012), and experiencing a sense of shared identity and collective efficacy with fellow ingroup members (Drury & Reicher, 2000) can facilitate collective action in an attempt to address perceived injustice. Our research showed that both appraisal of illegitimacy and shared identity, interactions, and proximity with ingroup members shape justice-seeking responses in the dictatorship's aftermath. However, in the context of the present study, participants' accounts suggested that their sense of being able to work with other survivors to achieve justice (i.e., collective efficacy) has been undermined by the obstacles and lack of progress they have experienced over the last 30 years. It is possible that this strong sense of inefficacy has led to the survivors devoting their efforts to trying to achieve forms of justice that they feel they are within their control and likely to obtain (e.g., transmitting and documenting their knowledge of the violations within their families, and engaging in civic action which promotes cross-society education and reflection on the crimes), rather than trying to achieve forms of justice which require judicial and political reforms, such as criminal and administrative justice. It is also possible that the focus on more peaceful approaches to obtaining justice could be informed by parents' own understandings of the dangers of more radical forms of collective action for justice-seeking, such as activism and protest (Gonzales et al., 2020). While Gonzales et al's (2020) survey studies of Chilean activists found that both injunctive family norms (a sense of moral obligation and family duty) and descriptive family norms (outlining what parents did and achieved) informed the desire to engage in disruptive collective action,

this relationship was more complex within our data and context. For instance, it was mainly injunctive norms (a more measured and risk-conscious method) that informed transitional justice responses (e.g., the need to share and document historical harms), which is a process that is likely to take longer and be more difficult to implement than specific actions such as participation in a protest. Injunctive norms transmitted more privately via family groups and more publicly (but peacefully) through civic identity norms may allow survivors to continue their fight and ensure that the efforts are effective over the longer-term and intergenerational.

The findings presented also contribute to understanding of transitional justice theories by highlighting the important role that strategies such as documentation of harm, historical and political education, and removal of past political influence on current society has for the victims. Importantly, these strategies are transmitted to new generations through family and civic injunctive norms – two central social identities guiding group members' behaviours. These more historical forms of justice can be very important for the victims and democracy, especially when criminal justice processes are limited (Teigel, 2000), as is the case within Albania. The participants also emphasised the importance of having their victimisation acknowledged by the perpetrator group, which can have a positive impact on psychological wellbeing and intergroup relations (Vollhardt et al., 2014).

Strengths and Limitations

The present study recruited survivors from a range of backgrounds and geographical locations across Albania. This provided the unique opportunity to understand the experiences of several generations, from those imprisoned and interned for decades, to those born at the end of the dictatorship, or after it. Our study focuses on rarely studied contexts and experiences of transitional justice processes. Using qualitative methodologies allowed for an

indepth exploration of the nuances and complexities of these experiences and how social identity processes are used to manage them.

One limitations is that our study investigated the experiences of the persecuted 25-30 years after the fall of the dictatorship, and it is not possible to establish changes in understanding over time (e.g., if initial responses included preferences for more radical and/or violent forms of justice). However, this timeframe allowed us to investigate the long-term experiences and justice-achieving strategies that, over time, participants believe to be potentially more successful and important. Investigating participants' understandings of such experiences sooner after the events occurred would be a valuable addition from future research.

Conclusion

The present study provided a rich source of evidence for the important roles played by family and civic identities in helping survivors to manage and respond to their suffering and engage with appropriate justice responses that are respectful of the suffering that took place and protective of current and future generations. This understanding and engagement was achieved through prescribed group norms and values which ultimately focus on solutions that collectively benefit society and democracy in multiple ways. While the persecuted carry the pain of their experiences and past harms, they also feel the necessity of protecting future generations and hold the responsibility of obtaining justice and protecting democracy. Their awareness and understanding of the relationship between past harm, impunity, and current democracy can be an invaluable resource to enable the building of a better and more peaceful society and the social bonds they share with others allow them to construct and share the vision of this future.

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Table 1:

Participant and interview details

Participant characteristics	Details
Gender	35 males (67%), 17 females (33%)
Age	M_{age} (69 years; 30-84 years)
Recruitment strategy	We used different strategies to identify a diverse sample of participants who had been directly persecuted by the doctorship or whose' families had been persecuted. There were four key sources: 1. Foundation Kujto.al 2. Organisations working with survivors (Institute for the Study of the Consequences and Crimes of Communism) 3. Personal contacts 4. Snowballing Many of the participants were known to the researchers due to their prior collaboration in other research. A small proportion refused to take part in the study (less than 10%)
Method of approach	Participants were mostly approached via telephone and email (from contacts known to the organisations and researchers) or contacted the researchers when existing participants suggested them.
Dates of interviews	August 2016-April 2022
Place of interview	All participants were interviewed face-to-face at work/home, on their own or in presence of family member and were residing in Albania
Interview length	M_{length} (70.9 minutes; 19-240 minutes) There were no repeated interviews.
Recording and transcription method*	All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim in the original language.

*No transcripts were returned to the participants for comments or corrections. All the recordings were checked by a member of the team who did not transcribe them and any errors were corrected. The transcript reflected the local dialects of each participant.

Table 2:*Researcher details*

Researcher characteristics	Details
Knowledge of context	All interviewers shared similar experiences. They were born in Albania during or in the years after the dictatorship and have lived most of their lives in the country. They all were Albanian native speakers. Most of the interviewers are also actively working with survivors in different capacities (e.g. researchers, psychologists, journalists)
Interviewers identity and experiences	Initial interviews were conducted in the first instance by the first author. With time, other researchers were recruited to support the expanding research project, creating a six-person all-female research team. The interview team was composed of insiders (members of persecuted families) and outsiders (people who had experienced the dictatorship but were not members of persecuted families).
Interviewer experience and training	The interviewers had extensive expertise in conducting interviews and were from psychology, medicine, and journalism backgrounds. The leader author provided training to all researchers on the aims of the study and the key features of psychological semi-structured interviews. Meetings were held throughout to discuss any questions that might arise.
Relationship with researchers	As many of the participants were known to the researchers, it was very easy to establish relationship. The full research aims were communicated to the participants prior to participation. Relationship was very easy to establish even with participant who were not known to the researchers as evidenced by the length of interviews and particularly the length or responses to the first opening question.

Table 3:

Interview topic guides

Interview topic guide for group 1 of interviews*	Example questions.
General information	Can you tell me about yourself/your family?
Experiences of the dictatorship	What happened to you during the dictatorship?
Understandings of crimes and perpetrators	Why did you think this happened to you? Who was responsible for what happened?
Transitional justice	What changes have happened since the end of the dictatorship? Who is responsible for executing these changes?
Life in the present	How would you describe your life today?
Interview topic guide for group 2 of interviews*	
General information	Can you tell me about yourself/your family?
Discussing dictatorship in the family	Have your family spoken about the dictatorship? Why did they discuss?
Documenting the suffering	Have you spoken to others about your experiences? What motivates you to talk about these experiences?
Prompts used with both groups of interviewees	General prompts such as ‘Can you please tell me more about this topic?’ or, ‘Can you please give any examples?’ or ‘Can you please explain what you mean by (topic raised by participant)’ were used throughout the interviews.

*No pilot interviews were conducted because of the semi-structured nature of the interview. In addition, the interviews were conducted by researchers with extensive experience of interviewing. Regular meetings were held between the researcher and lead authors to discuss any areas that needed further investigation in consecutive interviews.

Table 4

Phases of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2021)

Analytic steps	Description	Actions
Step 1: Data familiarization and writing familiarisation notes	Immersion into the data to become familiar with the content.	The lead author listened and read transcripts several times while taking notes of initial ideas of interest. (e.g. repeated reference to not forgetting) The lead author held a journal of reflections and thoughts about their role in the analysis process and impact of the analysis process on them. Some key reflections (e.g. the overall sadness in

		participants and researchers listening to their stories) was discussed with colleagues and monitored as part of the analysis process. Attention was paid the phrasing of the questions in the interview and moments when the researcher was present in the process (e.g. when asked about family origin, when there was reference to gender etc).
Step 2: Initial code generation	Detailed coding of the data to reflect surface and more conceptual meanings of the data.	Systematic reading and labelling of segments in the dataset that appear interesting in relation to the research question (e.g. revenge, forgiveness).
Step 3: Generating (initial) themes	Identify shared patterns in the data that might provide a meaningful answer to the research question(s).	Organising of codes and related data into sections that capture a meaningful aspect of the data. (e.g. concerns with democracy).
Step 4: Theme review	Revisiting the structure of the theme and dataset to ensure each theme represents important patterns in the dataset.	Each theme and the overall structure of the themes were revisited to ensure they were distinct and helped address the research question. Dataset was revisited to make these decisions.
Step 5: Theme defining and naming	Each theme is defined and labelled to best represent the essence of the theme.	Each theme was revisited with the whole team to ensure they had a clear story and fit with the overall data. Names that best described the theme were agreed.
Step 6: Report product*	The writing up is finalised to ensure there is a coherent story and convincing data evidence.	Initial writing of the analysis was revisited and expanded further, paying attention to the relationship between data presented and analytic arguments, and the coherence of the overall narrative.

* While we did not ask the participants to provide feedback on the paper, this analysis was presented to a large group of survivors which included some participants in the study.

Box 1: Reflections on combining group 1 and 2 interviews

There were no major challenges or issues with combining the samples from group 1 and group 2 to form the same data set and analyse it for this paper.

Content of the interviews: It was clear from the analysis of group 1 interviews that families were key to the experience of the dictatorship and desire for justice. Given these

findings, we explored more systematically the role of families on the experience and understanding of justice in group 2. We further used the interviews in group 2 to explore in more detail if and how families spoke about the traumatic events.

Timeline of data collection: There were no major differences between the contexts where group 1 and group 2 interviews took place in terms of transitional justice processes and political power. The three main transitional justice developments in Albania have taken place between 2010-2016 and all before group 1 and group 2 interviews took place. These include the approval by the Albanian Parliament in 2010 of the Institute for the Study of the Crimes and Consequences of Communism, establishing of the Authority for Information of Former State Security Documents in 2015, and the opening of Bunk'Art museums depicting the dictatorial past in 2016. The debates and delivery of economic compensation remains a current issues in Albania with each new government promising to complete the processes. However, the same political party and leader of government has been in power since 2013.

Differences in participant characteristics: Apart the interview questions, the only other difference between the samples is the wider geographical spread of group 2 which was facilitated by the Kujto.al foundation and additional funding obtained by BA/Leverhulme small grants. This wider geographical spread in group 2 complements further the already diverse participant backgrounds from group 1.

Data coding: The two data sets were combined into the same N-Vivo Software file. The coding of data in group 1 was so rich in terms of overarching codes, that it allowed easy integration of group 2 coding. Codes were developed further on if/how families spoke about the traumatic events experienced during dictatorship, but the overall diverse strategies used by families were already identified in the analysis of group 1. Analysis of group 2 provided further examples and detail on if/how these strategies took place and how they were perceived by different members of the family.

Data analysis: The data analysis was based on the combined groups creating the same data set.