

Review of: "Collective Guilt and the Search for Meaning in Post-Communist Albania: An Existential Perspective"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Dear authors

I will keep my overall review brief. The overall idea of the research is interesting and thought-provoking. However, there are many problematic aspects to this study to the point that it does not hold up to the standards of academic research.

This is for the following general reasons:

1. The research does not pose a research puzzle based on the literature or a relevant research question related to a clear social issue. While collective guilt might be a social issue in Albania, this has to be argued and situated properly in the introduction.
2. The conceptualisation is too brief and not specific enough. Because of this, there are multiple questions that can be formulated with regard to the choice of the central concepts of the study: Is collective guilt an emotion or an idea? What is its ontological status? How does it differ from other emotions? Why specifically 'guilt'? Why meaning-making? Why not other processes that are more specific and clearly linked to guilt?
3. The research needs to clearly specify that it wants to make a claim about Albanian society in general and that it explains how it aims to probe the predominance of this sentiment.
4. Moreover, the decision needs to be made whether the research wants to make a descriptive claim about these emotions and coping mechanisms or if it wants to engage with issues of memory and current struggles with the communist past. The lack of clarity regarding these choices generates an overall vagueness to the research, which is telling of a research design that is not well thought through.
5. The most important point might be that the methodology is flawed. The participants needed to write out answers to questions that directly referred to what the authors wanted to know. In effect, these answers cannot indicate whether these issues are prevalent or important in Albanian society. If you ask directly of people what they think of a particular issue, you shouldn't assume that this issue is then salient.
6. The conclusions also do not match the exact contributions that the text makes. Try to be more concrete and focus specifically on what you can state based on the research that has been done.

While there are some interesting aspects to this research, I do think that this research requires a fundamental rewrite. I wish the authors all the best and hope they are not too discouraged with this review.

Kind regards

