**Transcripts of the interviews**

**Interview number 1**

January 16, 2024, 5:20PM

10m 20s

Interviewer 0:05  
Hello, how are you?  
We are here for the interview, in the scope of my thesis.  
The thesis topic is digital propaganda and voting behavior in case of Albania and we are going to have some interviews with real life people with their real life experiences based on our topic.  
So, can you please introduce yourself of course knowing, without your name since it will be anonymous but just the country and city you are from.

**Interviewee 1** 0:36  
Mm-hmm.  
So hello, nice to meet you.  
I'm from Tirana, Albania and currently I don't recite in Albania.

Interviewer 0:49  
OK, good.  
So first of all, I would like to know what's your story, your story in terms of as I said before, in terms of digital propaganda, if you had any encounter in Albania of it, like an experience of yours, of your family or anything that can be relatable.

**Interviewee 1** 1:11  
Yes, I do.  
So I I left Albania in a young age, so luckily for me I didn't get the chance to vote or get, let's say involved much with the political background.  
There, however, I do have stories to share about things that have happened to me or close relatives.  
Let's say one example I can give you.  
Uh, given that when I turned 18, which is the age where you are eligible to vote in Albania, I was getting in my social media, let's say, the push to follow certain youth forums which are connected with the political parties, they're in Albania and for the age that I was in, a young age turned 18.  
It was very interesting because they were always doing these events that were involving different people from my high school as well.  
So yes, I did follow them on, let's say, on the social media and usually any time there was, let's say, voting year when we would have to choose, I don't know a Mayor, Prime Minister or whatever the votes that we do in Albania. These what we call youth forums would always always reach out to me and ask if I would be in Tirana that time, what were my plans for voting and if I sounded uninterested let's say I could tell them: Oh no, I'm on vacations.

Interviewer2:30  
Mm-hmm.

**Interviewee 1** 2:41  
I will not be voting this year.  
And they would always be very pushy and say: “But look, we can reward you.  
You could be, I don't know the leader of the next event, so you can bring as many friends as you want”. It has also reached the point where this was through social media.  
So it was very easily provable where they could say, oh, but we could also give you reward monetary reward, which, was quite the minimum.  
I would say, but they dared to offer this as well.

Interviewer 3:14  
But for example, what was the social media used more, like the most used one?

**Interviewee 1** 3:18  
In my case it was Instagram, but I know friends that were using Facebook as well.

Interviewer 3:24  
Mm-hmm.  
Correct, because of the thesis, those are like the most used apps in Albania as far as I know. So that's predictable.

**Interviewee 1** 3:32  
Yeah.  
Yeah, I I think so.  
At least I think so.  
All of my friends go through these two.

Interviewer 3:38  
So they were offering, monetary rewards, right?

**Interviewee 1** 3:42  
Mm-hmm. Yep.

Interviewer 3:42  
And was your family aware of this, since you were considerably in a young age, even though you were 18 plus.  
But still it's some topic that needs to be discussed with family?

**Interviewee 1** 3:55  
Well, in in my case I did discuss it with my family.  
It was a bit in a way, a funny story because it was not in the in the sense influencing me.  
I saw it just as a strange way of doing propaganda and it at the end of the day it wouldn't influence my voting right, but it was interesting that they were using it as a method and it became a bit of a competition because any political party was doing this.  
So I didn't mean that it was one particular case, and I should be, you know, influenced and think should I get this money and vote for them, whatever it was coming from all different parties so.

Interviewer 4:37  
So you are saying it was like a bit of competition between parties.  
Who is offering more to who?

**Interviewee 1** 4:42  
Umm, yeah.  
And then who they were targeting?!  
Because I remember they told me once there was a lady in this youth forum and she said, hey, look, you will not be offered more from the different parties because we have shared our audiences.  
So you were not on the list of them.  
They will not reach you out.  
So you should accept actually our offer and yeah, get the monetary reward.  
Let's say from us because that's the maximum you will be getting, which was very interesting to know that I belong in a list.  
I didn't give permission to.

Interviewer 5:20  
That's really interesting because as you can see, they are targeting, uh, vulnerable age because it's the age from 18 to 20 where you you are like you are in need of money and in the same time you have the right to vote.

**Interviewee 1** 5:29  
Yep.  
And you are undecided, right?  
Because at that time, I really didn't care who would I vote?

Interviewer5:43  
Of course, because I think it's the age where you just finish your high school and you don't have, like too much information about politics and therefore you are easy like an easy fish to catch I would say, yeah.

**Interviewee 1** 5:54  
It’s the target. Yep.

Interviewer 5:58  
And how did it proceed in your case for example?

**Interviewee 1** 6:02  
In my case, I really didn't care in the sense that anyway, I ended up voting based on my decision.  
But if you were to accept and I know this from the other friends that that received those similar messages, if you were to accept and say yes, I want the monetary reward, and I promise I will be voting for party X, they would want the proof from you. So these things might have changed, but anyway they would request you to take a picture of the vote or I don't know. They had to actually prove whom you voted, but basically it meant that if you accepted their offer, you had to prove it.  
It it was not just, you know, the weight of the word.

Interviewer 6:51  
Maybe it was like in order for a certain individual to not go to different several parties to do the same thing over and over again.  
So they would prove that you are worthy of their party in a way.

**Interviewee 1** 7:00  
Yeah.

Interviewer 7:05  
But that's just my guess, I would say that's good of your of your point for example, because you were not lied in a way to sell your vote for a little monetary value, which is because if you think about it usually in every European country, the votes are once in four years or even five years. So if you are selling your vote for just a small reward it is like exchanging it for five years, it's a bit bad.  
But I'm I'm pretty much sure that there were a lot of people doing that, especially at that age that you mentioned

**Interviewee 1** 7:48  
Yeah, I have to mention also something that let's say in my personal case, I was quite aware about how technology works and the fact that they wrote me on a social media was something that I really didn't like because we have to explain something, how things work in Albania.  
It's a bit also the the fear, right?  
The fact that you are living a digital footprint, that you are agreeing to vote for someone, whoever that is, the footprint remains there, which means that if the other party wins you, you know, could be punished, to not get a job in the future.  
You could have issues that you are university so it was like a very weird way of reaching out to people and they were really targeting,I believe, educated young people that could work with them.

Interviewer 8:42  
Yeah, I understand.  
You mentioned in the beginning of the interview that you are not living anymore in Albania, and I have a question for you.  
Do you plan to go back to Albania to live in your future?

**Interviewee 1** 8:58  
No, no, absolutely.

Interviewer 9:02  
OK, that should tell a lot.

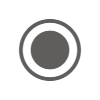
**Interviewee 1** 9:04  
Yeah, I I have my reasons.  
But uh, some of them are as well connected with the current political social environments.

Interviewer 9:17  
OK, so as a closing question, I would like to know from your side to tell us one thing you would improve in Albania concerning this topic.  
Like if you could like change only one thing, for example in terms of the political events and the voting behavior and propaganda that may or may not be present in your opinion, what would you change there?

**Interviewee 1** 9:40  
First of all, the technology that is currently being used for the voting process, I believe it's outdated and the second would be the way how we spread the information, especially to the young people. They should be more educated on the voting process.

Interviewer 10:00  
That would be a really nice upgrade from the current situation, and I completely agree.  
But let's see in the future.  
Thank you very much for your answers and yeah, thank you.

**Interviewee 1** 10:12  
You're welcome.

Interviewer stopped transcription.

**Interview number 2**

0:0:0.0 --> 0:0:1.230  
Interviewer  
Hello, how are you? We are here for the interview number 2 in the scope of my thesis, digital propaganda and voting behavior in the case of Albania. My name is Renis Jakini. I'm the author of the thesis and we are going to interview real life people with real life experiences concerning the topic.  
Can you please introduce yourself?

0:0:24.490 --> 0:0:30.640  
**Interviewee 2**  
Hello I come from Albania and from the city of Lezha.  
I am currently not living in Albania.

0:0:36.580 --> 0:0:37.150  
Interviewer  
Good. So of course, due to the reasons that this will be anonymous, we are not mentioning your name or any other personal information, just the country and the city you are from.  
So what's your story?

0:0:51.910 --> 0:0:55.470  
**Interviewee 2**  
So in this interview, I wanted to share a story that has happened to me in the last elections in Albania. It was two years ago and I couldn't participate in those elections because I was abroad those days, so I couldn't go and vote.  
After some time I was discussing it with a friend of mine that she was part of the staff in the election process and she told me that my name was already checked as I was one of the voters in that date and this is like something very absurd in my opinion, because I didn't even go there to vote and my name was checked as one of the voters that date.

0:1:36.470 --> 0:1:42.520  
Interviewer  
And do you know if there are any other instances of your friends or relatives that had the same problem, for example?

0:1:43.400 --> 0:1:47.950  
**Interviewee 2**  
Yeah, I have heard a lot of story related to this, kind of.  
These kind of things that has happened during the elections, some of my friends, for example, have told me that, the people in the government or in the different parties have tried to bribe a lot of voters, giving them some amount of money or some amount of goods.

But since this didn't happen to me, so it's based on what I've heard around my city.

0:2:20.610 --> 0:2:28.40  
Interviewer  
So did you take any measures about that or you have like contacted the police or you know any other institution for that?

0:2:29.300 --> 0:2:39.280  
**Interviewee 2**  
No, unfortunately I didn't take any measure except of advising my friends around or the people that I knew that the vote should be sacred in a way and it must represent what you believe and what you think it should be the best for your country.

That's all the measures that I took regarding this.

0:2:52.160 --> 0:3:8.310  
Interviewer  
Yeah, I think it's correct because as we all know, in every democratic country, as Albania is, at least in paper, the vote is sacred and it shouldn't be like, especially in your case be used from another representative as you were there, but I guess this thing really happened because you are telling me that.  
So OK, really interesting experience from your side.  
I have some questions. So are you living for the moment in Albania or not?

0:3:24.850 --> 0:3:27.250  
**Interviewee 2**  
No, currently I'm not living in Albania.

0:3:28.590 --> 0:3:33.670  
Interviewer  
So do you plan to go back in the future to live there maybe?

0:3:33.690 --> 0:3:36.210  
**Interviewee 2**  
Umm, no, I I don't think so.  
Based on what I've seen so far there, I don't think it's the best country for me to live.

0:3:42.390 --> 0:3:43.90  
Interviewer  
Does this have to do anything with our topic like like the digital propaganda like the voting elections; corruption?

0:3:50.650 --> 0:3:51.540  
**Interviewee 2**  
Yeah, sure. Because somehow it's everything connected.  
If I'm not being able with my free will to vote for the party that I think is the most appropriate and with all these corruption and these bribery, it affects us somehow also in the work, well also in the everyday activities that we might have or how the government works in general since everything is corrupted and bribed. So there is no free will to do what it's supposed to be done or to act accordingly. Also, this kind of things affect my everyday's life and I don't like it at all.  
So This is why I decide it also not to live there.

0:4:40.420 --> 0:4:41.110  
Interviewer

I understand. I understand, that's that's correct.  
And one last question for you, if you could change one thing in Albania nowadays or in the future in terms of the political stability or the voting behavior of the citizens or anything related to the politics, what what would you do?

0:5:4.390 --> 0:5:20.360  
**Interviewee 2**  
I think it would be best like in theory, to win the meritocracy, but if we go to practice it, I think it's very difficult with the situation in Albania because the government is corrupted, the institutions are corrupted.  
Also related to the elections stuff, it's it's corrupted, so it needs to be a lot of work in order to fix this. What I can do as a citizen is I will try to give advices to my friends and everyone around that I have to be smart enough not to be corrupted, not to be bribed for five cents.  
I would say because it's the future of our country and our lives, of course, so we can start with the small steps then, we can succeed somehow.

0:6:3.310 --> 0:6:3.920  
Interviewer

Well, sure. The change starts at yourself.  
So I guess that that would be like a really nice first step to to start with.  
But yes, thank you so much for sharing your experience with us and yeah, thank you.

0:6:16.160 --> 0:6:16.750  
**Interviewee 2**  
Thank you too.

**Interview number 3**

Interviewer 0:05  
Hello, how are you?  
We are here for the interview number 3 in scope of my thesis.  
My name is Renis Jakini and I'm the author of my thesis with the topic of digital propaganda and voting behavior in Albania and we are going to have some real life experiences with real life people based on the topic of the thesis.  
And can you please introduce yourself, but always keeping in mind to not mention the name, just the country and the city you are from due to the reason of the interview being anonymous.

**Interviewee 3** 0:38  
Yes, definitely.  
I'm from Albania, specifically from a very small city in Albanian culture Kukes.

Interviewer 0:46  
OK. So can you please tell us your story?

**Interviewee 3** 0:52  
Well, in terms of, propaganda that the government is using.  
Like time to time before the elections, I've been receiving some messages in different social media, mostly on Facebook regarding the preferences to whom I'm gonna vote. The big part is involved and some of them being a bit aggressive being open to offer rewards in case I will vote for them.  
So in a in a nutshell, it was quite an unpleasant experience.

Interviewer 1:35  
And what about their messages?  
Like what would they message you in social media apps?

**Interviewee 3** 1:41  
Well, first of all the they offer their support if I need something and then focusing more on their party and what they are trying to bring in terms of a plan or something and in if somehow you ignore this message they will send you another one trying to convince the content of the messages if they see that you're really not replying then they could add some rewards on top of it.

Interviewer 2:30  
OK, so from what I understand they are like trying with all their power put together more and more people in order to vote for their parties and is it every party doing this in Albania or just like a few of them or just a minority of them?

**Interviewee 3** 2:38  
Exactly.  
Majority of them, it's quite open nowadays and but of course it depends like the budget they have for the the social propaganda like top parties are more aggressive, I would say.

Interviewer 3:03  
Umm OK, I understand.  
And you said this happened to you in Instagram.  
So which are the other social media apps or in general the most used ones?

**Interviewee 3** 3:10  
Ohh, mostly Instagram and Facebook.  
Ohh, these two are the ones I've been contacted.  
Sometimes, like not just social media, which plays the biggest part, but even phone calls or messages as well.  
So pretty much like it.

Interviewer 3:31  
Umm. Interesting.  
And what was the outcome of this whole conversation between, the representatives of the party and you.

**Interviewee 3** 3:47  
All I decided to do was to ignore everything and I didn't want even to to participate.  
It reached the point that I didn't even want to vote at all.

Interviewer 3:58  
Umm. Understandable.  
Especially when everybody in democratic countries says that the vote is sacred and at the end of the day they are just selling it like for some minor reward.  
It's understandable to just not go there at all, so I get.

**Interviewee 3** 4:15  
At at some point they were even trying to assume to which party I'm voting and the other opposite party, they were trying to put more content and to convince me so they play a lot with the with data and especially just before the elections start.

Interviewer 4:43  
Umm.  
I understand. So the security is also a problem there in terms of the data security and I would like to ask, are you living currently in Albania?

**Interviewee 3** 4:49  
It is, yeah.  
No, I'm not.

Interviewer 4:56  
And based on everything you know for Albania nowadays and the topic that we are talking about, do you even plan in the future to go back there to live with your family or by yourself, for example?

**Interviewee 3** 5:09  
Uh family?  
Uh, they all left as well, so I'm not planning any time at the moment and not in the future to go back and live there.

Interviewer 5:22  
Interesting.  
And I have one final question for you, if you could change for example one thing nowadays in Albania in terms of the political stability or the political and voting behavior there and the corruption that is happening right now, what would be one approach that you would conduct there or one change that you would do?

**Interviewee 3** 5:26  
Mm-hmm.  
Education, it's the most problematic one, and it's literally the spine of every system.  
So and unfortunately, it's a rotten and the lack of education, the lack of information, it's printing such unpleasant behaviors from all over the government representative.

Interviewer 6:19  
OK, interesting response.  
Well, I hope in the future, the education systems will be improved and yeah.  
Thank you very much.

**Interviewee 3** 6:29  
I really hope so.

Interviewer 6:30  
Yeah.  
Thank you very much for the interview.

**Interviewee 3** 6:34  
Absolutely.  
Thanks for having me.

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**Interview number 4**

January 17, 2024, 6:53PM

8m 5s

Interviewer 0:05  
Hello, how are you?  
We are here for the interview number 4 in the scope of my thesis, digital propaganda and voting behavior in the case of Albania and we are going to display some real life experiences of real life people in terms of the digital propaganda in Albania and so on.

**Interviewee 4** 0:23  
Mm-hmm.

Interviewer 0:29  
For security reasons, we are not going to name or give any personal information of the interviewees.  
But just the country they are from and the city they are from, you can introduce yourself now.

**Interviewee 4** 0:41  
Sure.  
So I come from a small city in Albania named Kukes and currently I don't live in Albania and I've moved out of the country a while ago.

Interviewer 1:03  
So what's your story in terms of the scope of this thesis?

**Interviewee 4** 1:11  
Uh, so in scope of the thesis about the propaganda, I have been in contact with it.  
Like in my own opinion, I really think we are speaking of my personal experience.  
I was contacted in many forms. Usually it was the by phone number or by social media.

**Interviewee 4** 1:41  
Sometimes I wondered because how they had my phone number, but assuming that my data was being moved around, sold or moved around for the purposes of the campaigns, and usually it was an introduction.  
They were especially nice, they wanted to convince me to vote for their party.  
Actually, I was contacted by most of the big parties, and sometimes even when you try to let them know that you were, not interested, they tried to lure you with promises or to promise you help and everything.  
And especially if you would suggest other people to vote for them.

Interviewer 2:37  
I Understand.  
So this would happen for all the major parties there or just like specific ones.

**Interviewee 4** 2:44  
Most of the major parties, and usually you would see it also in the educational system as the people who tend to really follow the parties or support them had an easier experience as the university students who were ohh supporting these parties usually would get passing grades without even showing up.

Interviewer 3:28  
OK, that that is really interesting.  
So you are saying that there were students who accepted their offers and everything basically, I would say to sell the vote, in order to get better results in universities.  
In the contrary, with other people who wouldn't do that, they would fail or something like that.

**Interviewee 4** 3:45  
Yes.  
Yes, yes, it seemed that it was also supported by the professors.

Interviewer 3:58  
Umm, I understand.  
So it was deep down to the educational system.

**Interviewee 4** 4:04  
Yes.

Interviewer 4:04  
And was there, like any attempt from the students, from the other students who were not, let's just say the word corrupted, to do something against this thing?

**Interviewee 4** 4:16  
Uh, not many attempts were made because this has been going on for many years and sometimes the students might think that their complaints might end up in bad years or might even get them in trouble.  
And usually people would gather data on who would you support or who would students support, and considering that they would favor or disfavor you.

Interviewer 4:53  
Umm, I understand.  
So I get it.  
It's more like the fear of the students not wanting to fail or to cause anymore problems for their families and their personal life.

**Interviewee 4** 5:02  
Yes.  
Yes.

Interviewer 5:05  
So I understand, at the beginning you told me that you are not living in Albania anymore.

**Interviewee 4** 5:11  
Umm, yes.

Interviewer 5:11  
Do you plan to go back to Albania, like keeping in mind this current political and educational system that is right now?

**Interviewee 4** 5:23  
Uh, considering that most of the people that I know uh left Albania also considering that, uh, the situation, even politically or economically, isn't really good, I'm not planning at least in the next five years, to go back to Albania, 5 to 10 years.

Interviewer 5:51  
I understand.  
And do you think like in the future maybe even after this five to 10 year period that you mentioned, do you think this problem will be solved there, the problem of digital propaganda which is deep in every institution like hospitals and universities like I mentioned and political parties, do you think this will be solved in the future?  
What's your opinion?

**Interviewee 4** 6:16  
My opinion in this is that solved I wouldn't say, but evolved and maybe less visible, but it will still be there.

Interviewer 6:28  
So it will be more propaganda in your opinion.

**Interviewee 4** 6:31  
Uh, yes, but maybe more structured and less visible to it, but it's still there and it's still the same aggressive.

Interviewer 6:46  
I understand.  
Last question.  
Uh, what would you change, for example, if you were in charge of the country for one day and you would have the opportunity to change one thing, one of these things that we just discussed, what would it be?

**Interviewee 4** 7:02  
Well, I would , in regarding this topic, I would change the freedom of speech. In Albania it is really lacking right now.  
So people have a tough time to choose what's best for them, or to choose in base of their vision, they are forced to follow these types of propaganda, thinking that it cannot be changed, but if the freedom of speech would be promoted unless pressure would be on the people, then things could start to turn better.

Interviewer 7:51  
Well, let's hope in the future this will happen.

**Interviewee 4** 7:54  
Yes, yes.

Interviewer 7:57  
Thank you very much for the interview.

**Interviewee 4** 8:02  
Thank you too.

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**Interview number 5**

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Interviewer 0:05  
Hello, my name is Renis Jakini and I'm the author of my thesis named digital propaganda and voting behavior in the case of Albania, I'm here with interviewee number 5 and we are going to have the interview with the real life experiences of digital propaganda in Albania.  
Everything is anonymous, so the interviewee will just say the name of the country and the city they are from.  
Can you please introduce yourself?

**Interviewee 5** 0:33  
Hi.  
Hello so I am from Albania, more specifically from Durres, it is the second biggest city in Albania after Tirana.

Interviewer 0:43  
Great.  
Nice to meet you.  
So can you please tell us your story?

**Interviewee 5** 0:48  
Yes, absolutely.  
So the story more specifically happened to my parents and it it happened a few months ago on the latest electoral elections.  
And what happened was actually quite a big scandal in Albania.  
There was, umm, maybe not a cybernetic crime, but definitely a hacking of some of the most important databases with private informations of many people who used to vote regularly in the past and they were able to discover the militants and the people close to the main parties being elected, they were able to discover the private information and also for which of the parties these people were voting.  
So in the case of my parents, they found themselves online in these unofficial and scandal like publications, and actually they found even the accurate information for which of the parties they used to vote in the past.  
Subsequently, after this information was made public, the people that made this information public were also reaching out and approaching the people directly in their homes.  
So, for instance, my parents were one day knocked in their home and they were asked if it is true that in the past elections, which happen in on a regular basis every four years, if it is true that my parents voted for party X, let's say.  
Well, my parents were frustrated for so the information was made public and secondly that they were even reaching out to them to make some propaganda to them or to convince them to vote for the other party.

Interviewer 2:47  
I understand.  
So just a quick question how did they explain how they got the address of your parents or for example their data of voting , their history?

**Interviewee 5** 2:58  
So, the private information such as where they live or or other private information, they were pretty clear that they got it from the census and this data could be found.  
But when it comes to for which part they used to vote, they wouldn't explain it.  
My parents did ask it, but the answers were so vague and suddenly so not accurate that you would not be able to to understand where they found the data from.

Interviewer 3:28  
I understand.  
So was there anything your parents did in this case?  
For example, contacting the police, or any institution for this problem.

**Interviewee 5** 3:37  
Uh, they did not contact the police even though they were thinking about it.  
But the way these people or yeah, these militants of the of the part of the opposition party, they said that they come in good intention just to ask and to make some statistics.  
So not obviously to force them or not to ask them to vote for the other party in return of something so.  
Well, according to how they presented and introduced themselves, it was mainly about some some polls, let's say.  
But yeah, parents did not react well.  
They were absolutely frustrated that the information was made public first and foremost, and 2nd that they were even daring to reach them out and to convince them for voting the other party and what is even more absurd in all these things, is that at the moment, specifically my mother was working in at the municipality of Durres, and when this happened, actually the guys that came over to convince to vote for the other party or even saying to my mom that in case she will decide to vote for the other party, she will even lose her job at the municipality.

Interviewer 5:03  
Umm, OK, that's absolutely understandable, because that's a violation of your private data.  
So of course you have to react in some way, and therefore yeah, I understand.  
So just another question, what about other people?  
Do your parents know other relatives or your friends that were in the same situation as your parents?

**Interviewee 5** 5:30  
Oh yes, absolutely close friends.  
Close family friends experience this as well, but the situation became so standard that people were not even surprised from it anymore, and more specifically, some family friends were even fine being contacted by these people and doing the propaganda because at the end they knew that they would get something in return.

Interviewer 5:58  
Umm, OK.  
OK, so you were living abroad or not?

**Interviewee 5** 6:04  
Oh, when this happened so a few months ago in the latest elections I was already not living in Albania.  
I'm living in …., but yeah, I'm obviously in daily contact with my family, so I knew that this was and personally my data was not exposed exactly because I've not lived in Albania for a few years now, but all the data of my parents who were regular of course, in all of the elections were exposed, were made public.

Interviewer 6:37  
So if given the chance, would you go back to live in Albania given the actual way this country is built right now ?!

**Interviewee 5** 6:50  
Umm, I don't think so.  
I don't think I would go back and live in Albania, and even if I would, the political atmosphere and situation is so disappointing that I don't think I would even be encouraged or inspired to vote for any specific party because yeah, for one of the main reasons is the propaganda happening and many other reasons.

Interviewer 7:18  
OK.  
So just the final question, like if you could change one thing in Albania in your homeland for example in terms of what we are talking right now, like digital propaganda or voting elections, corruption, anything, what would you change there?  
So it could give an improvement in the future.

**Interviewee 5** 7:39  
Oh, that's quite a difficult question, and there are so many things to change in Albania, but specifically on the political sphere.  
Yeah, the corruption is so on high levels and so visible and so present everywhere that, yeah, I don't know if I would be able to change something or to come up with an idea of what I could change, but definitely decreasing the corruption level in all political spheres will be one of the most important point because it would make everyone from the elders to the younger generation more motivated to still live in the country.

Interviewer 8:22  
Yes, I completely agree.  
Maybe if that that step is taken, maybe more albanians would come back in Albania or even not leave that country.  
So yeah, quite a good point.

**Interviewee 5** 8:33  
Exactly.  
Or more specifically, I could even say that, uh, since this data were made public through information technology system, and because I'm also part of the field, I would say that one of the things that could help to improve and to avoid such leaks of information would be exactly improving the security system and the the IT systems that are being used by government.

Interviewer 9:03  
Yes, definitely.  
It needs a lot of improvement, especially in that country.  
So thank you very much for the interview and for your answers.

**Interviewee 5** 9:13  
Absolutely.  
Thank you. Bye.

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**Interview number 6**

Interviewer 0:05  
Hello, my name is Renis Jakini and I'm the author of my thesis named digital propaganda and voting behavior in the case of Albania, I'm here with interviewee #6 and we are going to have a chat about some real life experiences, about digital propaganda, voting behavior, corruption, politics, etcetera in Albania.  
For anonymous reasons, we are not going to name the interviewee, but just the city and the country they are from.  
Can you please introduce yourself?

**Interviewee 6** 0:38  
Hello, Renis.  
Thank you for this call.  
I’m currently living abroad. I'm from Albania's capital city of Tirana.  
Years ago, I left Tirana for a better life to live abroad, where to study and work.  
I was quite young when I left the country and for this reason I did not manage to vote quite a few times.  
It happened only once, but also during that period, my time of voting was a lot of pressure.  
I can say that there was certainly email. There were, like, call conference calls from different parties in Tirana asking for me to go to vote or trying to somehow abuse with the fact that it was my first time voting.  
So somehow they will see using this as in their favor and to offer me quite a lot of stuff for example, I've been also mentioned that there can be money included in case I needed to vote for a specific person, or this was mostly general my first time experience on the voting.  
But then afterwards, when the next election arrived, I was also again contacted while I was living abroad in order for me to go back to my hometown and do the voting, so there is going to be pressure from their side with text messages which you do not even approve to provide to them.  
So I think this is some sort of abusive or usage from their side that they can still find their numbers and they can still go each time after you in order to vote and to get your number.

Interviewer 2:40  
I understand.  
So the channels you mentioned were like via email and by phone number for example, did they try to contact you or your friends?  
For example, in social media apps like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etcetera.

**Interviewee 6** 2:56  
Yes as well mostly in Facebook, because most of the time they do make those posting via the Facebook and by that time I think it has been mostly in common to find you or was easier accessible to text you via the Facebook.  
So there was posters being sent out or invitations from different groups, so most of the time has been email or either Facebook.

Interviewer 3:22  
OK, so for example, uh, did you question yourself in terms of how they manage to find your email or your phone number?  
Because it is some private information of yours, not like exactly private, because you enter your email and phone number in a lot of places, but still you can question yourself for example, where did they find my number?  
And so on.

**Interviewee 6** 3:46  
I think that's something to be questioned about and how did they manage to usually find these numbers and send because it was not just my number or my number could have been easily found in some organizations that might have been part of political.  
I have been a political activist for some party, but I wasn't for all of them.  
So it's questionable to know how did they reach out to get those numbers.  
And there was happening to all of our family members, which is quite interesting to find out on how do they actually find from the whole family, where do they get this data and how safe is actually to live in Albania when this sort of data comes up.  
What more data might be appearing right?

Interviewer 4:33  
Yeah, I understand.  
And you mentioned they were giving monetary rewards to the people that were voting, let's say, for their party or something like that.  
And was this approach direct from them or they were trying to do some indirect method of rewarding you?

**Interviewee 6** 4:53  
I think it was not in direct way because mostly was from people that know you or if for me that sort of the time when I was offered, I was also political activist.  
So they were still, like trying to convince me to be to the other side.  
So somehow it was friend of a friend and calling through different kind of ways in order for me to make this offer, but there is, it's never in a direct way.  
I think they are quite tedious about.

Interviewer 5:26  
I understand.  
So what was the outcome of all this interaction?  
How did you proceed with that voting in that particular time?

**Interviewee 6** 5:35  
In that particular time, I didn't know, what’s up to the offer.  
I had different perception of or I had my own choice of who I will go on to vote.  
I was clever about it, so I just decided to go on and do the voting as I had decided to.

Interviewer 5:56  
That's really good.  
So you said that you are living abroad, right?  
So do you plan to go to Albania to live there again in your future?

**Interviewee 6** 6:01  
I think as I moved abroad in a quite young age and living abroad, it really helps you know the world quite different.  
It gives you a few more opportunities.  
So I think it's opportunity, personal choice of mine apart from what is currently happening there or what might be happening in Albania, I would not go back.  
I will prefer to gain more experience abroad and have a different perspective of life.

Interviewer 6:43  
Yeah, understandable.  
I'm asking because, you know, just the current state of the country that is right now and a lot of people are leaving or not even planning to go back.  
And this is also a lot, especially for the young age.

**Interviewee 6** 6:57  
Yeah, but as I said, this is a personal choice, which I don't know want to mention where it's coming from.   
If you know the situation, then Albania might improve.  
That can be a thing that the situation in Albania might be improved anytime soon or is it the tourism is going is up.  
So it's really helping Albania to get improveD a bit, but still no matter the improvement that there will still go on, it's a personal choice, that I've decided to live abroad and try different experiences.

Interviewer 7:32  
Yeah, of course.  
Understandable.  
And just one final question, if you could for example change one thing, you know being right now in terms of the electoral voting and the corruption that is happening there, that digital propaganda, if you could change like if you had the power to change one thing, what would it be?

**Interviewee 6** 7:52  
I think the way how they do the elections should be a bit changed on how they do approach to the people and if they are trying to get the trust.

As I said, the situation with the numbers is still going on, so it's quite common that you still get to receive text messages by unknown numbers asking for their vote.  
So it's somehow not solved.  
So in case people would like really to vote and give you their hope, or somehow on the way how they should be treated, at least start from this.

Interviewer 8:36  
Umm understandable.  
So that's all from my side.  
And thank you so much for the interview and for your answers.

**Interviewee 6** 8:48  
Thank you. Awesome.

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**Interview number 6**

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Interviewer 0:06  
Hello, my name is Renis Jakini.  
I'm the author of my thesis named digital propaganda and voting behavior in the case of Albania, I'm here with interviewee number 7 and we are going to discuss about the digital propaganda, voting behavior, corruption and real life experiences in Albania.  
With the interview, for the reason of the interview being anonymous, we are not going to name any personal information or the name of the interviewee.  
It just the country and the city they are from.  
Can you please introduce yourself?

**Interviewee 7** 0:39  
Yes.  
Hello I come from Albania.

Interviewer 0:44  
Good.  
Do you recite in Albania or are you living abroad?

**Interviewee 7** 0:50  
I am living abroad.

Interviewer 0:53  
Cool.  
OK.  
So can you tell us your story?

**Interviewee 7** 0:58  
Yeah.  
So a couple of years ago, my town was holding local elections for mayor.  
Meanwhile, I just turned 18 and that meant that I was now eligible to vote for the first time.  
Umm me and my peers were all excited to finally do this, but at the same time we didn't have much information on the whole voting process.  
So for this reason, one of the candidates for Mayor gathered all new citizens eligible to vote in a conference.  
But at the end of the conference, we were asked to show our support on social media basically, but we didn't know that there was actually a part of a digital propaganda scheme.  
So they were manipulating our posts and stories and social media to spread false information.  
So this is just one experience of how important it is to, umm, be aware of the information or news you hear digitally in times of elections because it might not always be real and true.

Interviewer 2:12  
OK.  
So just some quick questions.  
What were the social media apps you were contacted, you and your peers?

**Interviewee 7** 2:20  
Yes, that was Instagram because it's the most common used social media network in Albania for people of my age.

Interviewer 2:31  
And what was like the message that was communicated to you in terms of like together in a certain physical place or online meeting or what?

**Interviewee 7** 2:44  
Uh, yeah, we were gathered in, in a physical place.  
Basically, he was at school actually.

Interviewer 2:56  
Understood. So what was the message in general, in order to get some more information about this, this experience?

**Interviewee 7** 3:07  
Umm, like I said, we after the conference we tried to see posted pictures of the conference and wrote a little about how we were supporting them, but they basically they enhance everything, making it show like we were actually gonna vote for them and yeah…

Interviewer 3:33  
OK, OK, I understand.  
And so it was only one party doing this or we're like multiple parties doing the same thing.

**Interviewee 7** 3:41  
Yes, it was only one party.  
There was only one party.

Interviewer 3:47  
OK.  
Do you know if this thing happened only once in your city during that time or it happened, for example to different groups of students or different groups of people?

**Interviewee 7** 4:01  
From what I know, it only happened one time and after that nobody ever tried to do it again.

Interviewer 4:09  
OK, cool.  
So you said that you are not living anymore in Albania and if you had the opportunity to go back to live there, considering the current situation of the digital propaganda and that some people think that it it is present there, some people think it's not like the corruption and everything else in terms of economic and social life.  
Would you go there?

**Interviewee 7** 4:36  
Umm, no, I don't plan on going back to Albania.  
I do, however, see Albania uh developing in the future.  
Yeah.  
In terms of economics and even I, I think digital propaganda will be reduced by then, but I personally left because of several reasons, other reasons too.  
So that's why I don't plan on going back.  
It's not just the economic factor or those not just mentioned from you.

Interviewer 5:04  
OK.  
OK, at least there are some optimistic opinions to your country and for example, looking at the current situation, would you, if you had the power to change one thing, for example, if you were in charge of the country for one day and you could change only one thing based on what we talked today, what would you change in Albania?

**Interviewee 7** 5:33  
Yeah.  
I think one thing that would change concerning this topic that we talked about would be to improve transparency in digital communication platforms.  
So this could be done by putting stronger rules on social media platforms or checking more to stop false information.  
So yeah, I believe that if we keep a closer eye on what's online, what's showing digitally can help make the Internet safer and more reliable place for everyone in our in our country, Albania.

Interviewer 6:11  
Yeah, I agree.  
Definitely, great advice.  
OK, so that was all for the day.  
Thank you so much for your answers and for the interview.

**Interviewee 7** 6:21  
Thank you.

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Interviewer 0:06  
Hello, my name is Renis Jakini and the author of my thesis digital propaganda and voting behavior in the case of Albania, we are here today with interviewee number 8 and we are going to discuss some real life experiences of digital propaganda, voting behavior, corruption, etcetera in Albania. For the reason that this interview will be anonymous, we are not going to name any personal information of the interviewee, just the country they're from and the city.  
Can you please present yourself?

**Interviewee 8** 0:36  
Hello.  
Good evening.  
I'm an Albanian citizen and currently I'm living in Albania, Lezhe.

Interviewer 0:46  
OK.  
Thank you.  
Can you please tell us your story?

**Interviewee 8** 0:50  
OK, one particular case I know and I've been part of even though not directly was May 2023 for voting for the major of my hometown and the most powerful political parties with a very high chance of winning.  
Let's put it in example Party A and B.  
In this case, the Republican and Democratic one, one of my friends whose mother works in the Public Library of my hometown, received a letter.  
Demanding supposedly to vote for the first party, otherwise, there would be consequences for her and her family because in some kind of way, her mother got the job position because of some deal, which means that: first point, the system shows one of the principal corruptions ways on how to get a job, even if you're not qualified, but the let's say that in order for you to maintain the job position you have “to serve and obey”.  
So that they require it and then put you there.  
In this case, my friend couldn't go voting that day because of the health problems she had, and she had to fly outside of Albania.  
Therefore, she couldn't express, let's say, her personal opinion.  
Days later, her mother got fired and my friend received another letter with a very threatening zone saying that those are the consequences of not supporting your party and not being loyal to the one that paid you and for her own good, she shouldn't follow anymore this case.

Interviewer 2:35  
I understand, I just have one question.

**Interviewee 8** 2:39  
Yes, yes.

Interviewer 2:40  
So as I see, this was a direct like a response from the party to the person.  
And was there any step from the person, any measure taken from the person, for example going to police since there was some physical evidence in this case, even though it's suggested to not go there since they lost their job?

**Interviewee 8** 2:47  
Yes.  
OK, this was one of the first things I thought at the beginning when my close friend told me this case.  
But living in Albania and in my hometown, we know perfectly how things are really needed and connected to each other so well, normal citizens.  
The first thing that I would do would be like going to the police station and reporting the case, but we know very well that obviously those entities are very well connected to each other and some of these we understand that at least take hours, having your own opinion, expressing it freely and protecting your privacy is impossible.  
So yeah, so in this case my friend didn't do anything, but she just, let's say like this,  
updated her mother that she just got fired and nothing else.  
And if I can add secondly, the meritocracy, it was never an option in our place, or this is what I understood from all this.  
You, growing personally and professionally doesn't depend on your own skills and achievements, but on how much you pay for a job position and how many contacts and friends should be there and invest it until the head of the specific political party who supports the company you wanna work for is willing to accept this.  
So no privacy, no meritocracy.  
A place where being correct and doing things properly doesn't help you at all.

Interviewer 4:32  
OK, I understand.  
So just a quick question about the case that you told me.  
So was this a one-time occurrence of this phenomenon or was it other people having the same problems?

**Interviewee 8** 4:40  
Yes.

Interviewer 4:48  
For example, colleagues of your friend's mother or other friends in this case.

**Interviewee 8** 4:55  
Yes, there are a lot of cases I've heard of this was the latest one. If I can see it like this, but in the past I've I've heard a lot of other cases similar to this one.  
For example, you go to vote for a specific political party and then, for example, the people knowing right after who you voted for or supported.  
So this tells us another time how our privacy is not protected and how everyone knows something that has to be a big secret, like to vote or other cases.  
For example, when even though you are not working in a public entity for example, you have your private business, there are many people who come to your business offering you money to vote for their political party.  
For example, I have a private business store and starting from one week before the election, They are in your business, in your store and they just offer you money, not only to you, but to the whole family and not only money.  
It depends.  
For example, on the development of your family too, they can offer other groups such as foods for example, or.  
There are other cases, for example, that these people threaten you if you don't vote for their party, for their political party, you won't get a scholarship, you won't get another job position and the people who work who are currently working in a public entity, they're gonna be fired just like the latest example, I just told.

Interviewer 6:40  
OK, I understand.  
So there are all kinds of briberies there, connected with the parties.

**Interviewee 8** 6:42  
Mm-hmm. Yes.

Interviewer 6:46  
OK, so you said that you are living in Albania.

**Interviewee 8** 6:47  
Yes, exactly.

Interviewer 6:49  
And do you think or what is your opinion on living in Albania or would you plan to always live there or do you want to leave your country?

**Interviewee 8** 6:50  
Yes.  
Well, living in Albania in a 3rd world country, uh, in my opinion, isn't that easy.  
First of all, it's very difficult for you to have a place in the community just because of the reasons I just told before, just because of the meritocracy, even that presence.  
So I find it very difficult to develop, to personally develop in my own country.  
So in the near future, it's not that I'm thinking about it, I'm just planning to move abroad.  
I can be free to express my opinion and have No Fear that it can affect my career or my personal growth.  
I'm just planning to go to a new place where I can feel less than a corruption.  
The threatening either urged to lower my independence and voting is a right and therefore it has to be respected and kept untouched.

Interviewer 8:14  
I understand it's such a shame that the youth is leaving the country and nobody wants to stay there because of the stated reasons above, but therefore I have a final question linked with your answers.

**Interviewee 8** 8:27  
Yes.

Interviewer 8:28  
What would you change in Albania in terms of the digital propaganda that it's occurring there or the corruption, the voting system, the security, what would be one thing if you had the the chance to change there in your country?

**Interviewee 8** 8:45  
Well, as you said it before, it's such a shame and it's very sad seeing the youth or young people moving abroad leaving the country and going in a new place where it's kind of starting from zero and facing new, let's say new difficulties and in new language let's put it like this.  
So for example, one of the first things I would do if I were like the head of my country or if I would have like some power in my hands.  
First of all, I would do everything to attract these young people.  
But not only them.  
I would do everything to protect their family for example, starting from not only the voting part, but in the privacy of the voting process and everything, but I would do everything for them to feel free to invest in their own country, to invest to, to have their personal growth.  
And as I said before, and what else I would help them with, I would help them, for example, to start activity with the scholarships.  
And yes, because these are the main reasons why the young people are leaving.

Uh, what else?  
One of the most important things is too, for example, as I said it before, having the job position, getting a new job, it's always connected to money.  
So offering money or for example having context in this way I would put a lot of competitions and a lot of other barriers that would help me choose correctly the people that I need for example to be in a specific company in this case.

Interviewer 10:58  
Yeah, that's really nice.  
At least one of these points would be as a good starting point for the country in the near future years.  
But yeah, thank you very much for the interview and for your answers.  
They were really valuable and yeah, thank you.

**Interviewee 8** 11:15  
It was a pleasure.  
Thank you.

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