CONSTITUTIONAL VALUES & POLITICAL TRUST: FOUNDATIONS FOR STUDENT DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

1. Conceptual research framework

Political literacy, understood as a combination of knowledge and skills, and democratic values and attitudes, is largely complementary with political culture, which is defined as "cognitive, affective and evaluational orientations toward the political system in general, its input and output aspects, and the self as political actor" (Almond and Verba, 2000: 22). Political culture thus understood encompasses the dimensions of political values, institutions and participation, while the question of whether dominantly democratic political culture shall emerge among citizens depends on social and historical circumstances and specificities of a particular society and political system (Esser and De Vreese, 2007; Inglehart and Welzel, 2007; Sloam, 2012). The detection of the type of political culture is particularly important when dealing with youth. It is expected of them, both in the present and in the future, to understand political processes, relations, and institutions. In doing so, it needs to be acknowledged that youth are not a monolithic social group, because they are mutually "diversified and fragmented as older adults are, they have competing political interests and also exhibit diverse perceptions on how best to influence political systems." (Cammaerts et al., 2016: 198). In this research, we examined the attitudes of final year secondary school pupils, as one of youth subgroups. We presumed that attitudes could be a great indicator of the characteristics of youth political literacy in contemporary Croatia. In this paper, we explore selected political values and trust in institutions, specifically examining of two out of five levels of political support to the system (Norris, 2011): the principles of political system and system institutions. In doing so, the support to the principles of the system is reduced to the acceptance of constitutional values of Croatia, and the support to the system institutions is confined to the question of trust in political institutions. Therefore, the main research question is: what are the determinants of accepting the values of the social and political order and the trust in political institutions among final year secondary school pupils in Croatia?

Croatia is interesting as one of the post-socialist countries where a nominally new political and economic order was established in the 1990s, but also due to the influence of certain specificities that are present in each of these countries. Several relevant Croatian specificities exist. The most important is that alongside the change in the political and economic system, Croatia gained state independence. Exiting the previous federal community led to a four-year war fought on its own territory, and the traumatic wartime experiences left lasting undesirable consequences on overall social development. Additionally, although not unique to Croatia, an important specificity is that the same political party (right-centre) held power during 80% of the time since the independence. Four peaceful changes of power in nine electoral cycles demonstrated that a necessary condition for democratic consolidation was

achieved, but the dynamics of social and political events slowed the expected deepening and widening of the democratization process. Such processes and behaviors did not contribute to the necessary overcoming of inherited democratic deficits, and all of this consequently reflects on the political socialization of new generations.

For the contextualisation of our research problem, prior insight into citizens' attitudes towards politics is necessary, primarily into the characteristics of their political participation – which is permanently in the focus of the social and scholarly interest – with a particular emphasis on youth. In addition to the fact that the political participation of citizens is one of the crucial issues in considering the functioning of a democratic political system, its consideration in the context of this research stems from the basic assumption that the motives, forms and scope of political participation are related to political values and the citizens' trust. Research findings in developed democracies during the last decades emphisized the distancing of citizens from politics, primarily the institutional one (Cammaerts et al., 2016; Furlong and Cartmel, 2012; Garcia-Albacete, 2014; Grasso, 2016; Lawless and Fox, 2015; Marsh et al., 2007; Norris, 2011). The participation of all citizens in institutional politics has been decreasing in the last two-three decades, and within such a trend the weaker participation of youth is particularly visible, both when compared to the older and to the previous generations of youth (Bessant et al., 2016; Fahmy, 2006; Forbrig, 2005; Furlong and Cartmel, 2012; Garcia-Albacete, 2014; Grasso, 2016; Henn and Foard, 2012; Marien et al., 2010; Quintelier, 2007; Sloam, 2012). The main indicators of a downward trend are the continuous decrease of their voter turnout and enrollment in political parties, with often a growing distrust in political institutions and actors (Bessant et al., 2016; Davies et al., 2009; Edwards, 2007; Esser and De Vreese, 2007; Furlong and Cartmel, 2012; Gallagher and Marsh, 2004; Kestilä-Kekkonen, 2009; Kimberlee, 2002; Pedersen et al., 2004; Persson, 2012). When comparing youth to the older, their lower interest in politics is additionally detected, along with lower levels of political knowledge, less frequent political party identification and often even less trust in political institutions and actors (Bastedo, 2015; Dalton, 2011; Forbrig, 2005; Garcia-Albacete, 2014; Henn and Foard, 2014; Lawless and Fox, 2015).

Broad and deep social transformations have caused a certain detachment of the younger generation from institutional politics. This is visible through changes in the domain of politics - how political institutions and actors function, especially regarding their responsiveness to the interests and needs of the youth - and in the process of youth socialization. Besides that, some authors argue that these changes are greatly generated by the rise of post-materialistic value orientations (Helve, 2016; Inglehart and Welzel, 2007) and the building of increasingly differentiated lifestyles and identities, including the political ones (Rossi, 2009; Sloam, 2012, 2013). At the same time, these changes are followed by transformations in youth socialization patterns, which are characterised by the decrease of the influence of traditional institutions as socialization agents (Flanagan and Levine, 2010; Furlong and Cartmel, 2012; Grasso, 2016). Political socialization is thus even more important because researches have shown

that people acquire basic democratic values at young age[1]. Individuals who were politically engaged in their youth, as a rule continue their engagement in their maturity, while only some of those who were politically inactive become active in their mature age (Flanagan and Levin 2010; Grasso, 2016).

Building on the attitude of Almond and Verba (2000: 365) that "if political culture cannot support the political system, chances for that system's success are low", the established tendencies elicit concern for the survival of representative democracy, especially when observing the political inactivity of youth. It is due to the "sustained collapse in political participation" that the question is raised whether "will the democratic boat stay afloat if a large portion of a generation falls overboard in a storm of political crises" (Cammaerts et al., 2016: 2). In this context it is clarified that political participation of youth is not merely "a question of participation rates or of waiting for disinterested youths to 'come of age' and join the democratic participatory bandwagon", but "it is also a question that goes to the very heart of the sustainability of the representative democratic model", along with the question of how youth will declare "assent, affirmation or discontent if they feel that traditional modes of expression of both affirmation and discontent are ineffective and inadequate", and eventually the question "whether as societies – as political communities – it is acceptable to exclude a generation or part of a generation of citizens from democratic life" (Cammaerts et al., 2016: 2-3). At the same time, it is not advisable to ignore the notion that the age segregation has a double cost (O'Donoghue and Strobel, 2007). Limiting the interaction between the young and the old deprives the latter of the energy, creativity and passion by which youth can empower public life. It also deprives the young of access to responsibilities and immediate learning from the more experienced older generation. Nevertheless, even if the necessity of empowering youth as a political subject is unambiguous, it remains tentative what can encourage the contemporary generation of youth for stronger and more efficient political engagement.

Based on the analysis of so-called youth mobilisations of the past decades, Roberts (2015: 963) concluded that despite the existence of some necessary preconditions (such as the internet) "up to now there have been no global youth movements". Roberts also questions whether some new political generations will mature based on recent mobilizations, which will inaugurate "new ways of practising politics". Grasso (2016: 207) also invokes the necessity of emergence of a "new, politicized activist generation" that will save "the health of democracy in advanced industrial societies", whereby he argues that "only time will tell if the current context of deepening global inequality in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis will lead to the emergence of a new 'protest generation'". Judging by Roberts'

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[1] The process of political socialization is important for the shaping of political culture because the primacy model "holds that basic political loyalties are formed when young", so that experiences in adulthood more often modify than change " the outlook secured when young" (Hague et al., 2004: 101). Nevertheless, the situation is not unambiguous because it is possible that acquired beliefs change greatly during life. This is testified by "initially youth leaders" that grew up under the patronage of new political generations that changed the politics of their countries and stayed politically active throughout their mature age. Moreover, it was often the case that youth activists, after acquiring power and multi-year service in the political milieu, undertook actions that „have been at variance with their youthful ideals" (Roberts, 2015: 950).

observations (2015: 951), the strength of that trigger for now has not been used, but has caused further „resignation and disengagement rather than revolt"[2].

Low participation of youth in formal politics has instigated research on non-formal forms of political activism, which youth mostly prefer, and which is initially viewed as a kind of substitute or compensation for institutional political participation. Moreover, non-traditional forms of political participation often appear as a transitional stage towards greater institutional political participation, as activities in various civic initiatives and associations function as a training ground for some young people to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for competent participation in traditional political institutions and processes. (Esser and De Vresse, 2007; Fahmy 2006; Garcia-Albacete, 2014; Marzana et al., 2012). Still, it is significant that analyses of youth participation in alternative forms of political activity have shown that such actions reduce differences – otherwise present in formal political participation - regarding age and gender. On the other hand, educational and socioeconomically conditioned inequalities, which also characterise participation in institutional politics, persist or become even more pronounced (Grasso, 2016; Lorenzini, 2015; Marien et al., 2010; Sander and Putnam, 2010; Sloam, 2013). Recently, activities on social networks and portals have enriched a relatively broad spectrum of social engagement. Certain authors met these activities with optimism, seeing them as a platform for enlarging youth political engagement. (Bennett, 2008; Bessant et al., 2016; Cammaerts et al., 2016; Collin, 2015; Farthing, 2010; Garcia-Albacete, 2014; Quintelier and Vissers, 2008). However, certain constraints of online participation have been observed early, which, as such, cannot adequately compensate for traditional forms of political participation. It is therefore necessary, in this context, to emphasize that unequal access to existing forms of political engagement (including virtual), along with the marginalization of critical and radical voices of youth, can "create a form of stunted pluralism" (Cammaerts et al., 2016: 104), i.e. prevent some groups of youth to implement new ideas and practices in the political space.

Youth ortientation towards politics in post-socialist societies does not show different tendencies than the one in established democracies. In that context, we need to emphsize that the need for youth political engagement in former socialist countries is greater when considering the fact that they live in a society with inherited democratic deficits, and that a greater participation of citizens is necessary for a succesfull democratic transition and consolidation. At the same time, researches have detected a collapse of youth activism in former socialist countries. The authors assert that in transitional societies,

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[2] We should add to the cited comments that neither recent experiences with unfavourable socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, unpreparedness of political actors for undertaking globally agreed politics for the slowing down of potentially devastating climate changes, nor political and economic uncertainties triggered by the war in Ukraine do not point to the global, or at least regional, political awakening of youth (except for, unfortunately, the still weakly effective engagement around the problems of climate changes). Revolts are happening in particular countries (e.g., in China and Iran) showing that there are always specific focal points of discontentment and that it is always questionable how much pressure "from below" will be able to make the ruling elites change their decisions and way of functioning.

the older generation is incapable of effectively transferring values and experiences from the previous system to their successors, thereby impeding the process of political socialization. In addition, authors claim that there is a great burden on the youth with the pursuit of achievements in the new capitalist setting, and therefore, they lack the time for engaging in politics, albeit they principally accept the new political system (Hurrelmann and Weichert, 2015; Kirbiš and Flere, 2011; Tymowski, 1994; Ule and Miheljak, 1995). Such insights include the youth in Croatia, whose characteristic is lower participation in formal politics compared to the youth generations in the socialist period, as well as lesser involvement in non-conventional forms of political engagement, in comparison to their peers in more developed democratic societies (Ilišin, 2002, 2007). The differences are also evident at the intergenerational level, as the young claim much less willingness to vote than the old, their attachment to a party is visibly lower, and they are less often members of political parties (Ilišin, 1999, 2007). Intergenerational differences spread over the domain of participation. Youth report less general interest in politics than the older generation. Their acceptance of democratic order values and democratic rules is weaker. They trust less in the mobilization strength of both traditional political organizations and the civil sector. They are less socially sensitive, although at the same time more tolerant towards some social groups and phenomena. They trust more in the strength of their own generation to initiate positive changes and express a somewhat stronger readiness to join some civic initiatives and actions (Ilišin, 2007). Futhermore, Vuksan-Ćusa and Raos (2021) also detected certain indications of intergenerational differences. Namely, they emphasize that younger age groups are less authoritarian compared to older ones, but at the same time, all age groups (four of them) exhibit above-average levels of authoritarianism. Also, they point out that younger age groups perceive executive authority as less efficient in comparison to older age groups.

When referring to constitutional values and institutional trust, the results of research conducted in transitional Croatia show quite stable trends. The young and the older show similar levels of acceptance regarding constitutional values in total. Nevertheless, the young less express the highest level of acceptance. (Ilišin, 2007; Čorkalo Biruški et al., 2021). In three cycles of youth research, it has been established that the acceptance of constitutional values was fluctuating, which did not manifest in significant hierarchy changes, but did result in significant weakening of support for the values that have been at the bottom of the scale from the beginning (Ilišin, 2002, 2007, 2017). There are numerous research studies regarding the institutional trust of Croatian citizens, often conducted at multiple time points. The findings of all these research studies suggest very similar tendencies: respondents trusted the army and the police the most and, in some periods, religious institutions. Meanwhile, the lowest trust was without exception reserved for political institutions, and it reduced with time (Bovan and Baketa, 2022; Čorkalo Biruški et al., 2021; Čular and Šalaj, 2019; Henjak, 2017; Nikodem and Črpić, 2014; Rimac, 2000; Sekulić and Šporer, 2010). The youth research yielded similar results as the research on the general population - the respondents showed the greatest trust in the army, police and religious

institutions. (Gvozdanović et al., 2019; Ilišin, 2007, 2017; Ilišin et al., 2013;). Contextually, it is also important that Croatian youth also share the low trust in political institutions with their peers in democratically more developed parts of Europe (Franc and Međugorac, 2015; Henn and Foard, 2012;), and with those from the region (southeastern Europe) and other post-socialist countries (Franc and Međugorac, 2015; Lavrič et al., 2019). Finally, the analyses in the previously mentioned youth research have revealed that regarding the advocacy of constitutional values and the level of trust in political institutions, the youngest age cohort (15 to 19 years) and secondary school pupils (and therefore final year pupils) differ sporadically and rather slightly from other youth subgroups included in the samples (students, unemployed, employed), or the age cohorts from 20 to 24 and from 25 to 29. At the same time, there is a visible trend among the youth population of more strongly accepting some constitutional values, as well as trusting in observed political institutions, as the population ages. Therefore, this short review of research insights allows for an opportunity to regard them as a relevant framework for the understanding of final year pupils' attitudes, just as their attitudes can be treated as an indicator of some aspects of the state of "political spirit" of youth in contemporary Croatia.

2. Methodology

With the aim of clarifying the main determinants of accepting the values of constitutional order and the level of trust in political institutions, a stratified cluster sample of final year secondary school pupils in Croatia was used (N= 1122). Researchers collected the data during March 2021 in 67 final year classes in 59 secondary schools. The sample was divided based on the type of the secondary school programme (three-year vocational, four-year vocational and generalist), and six regions.

In order to measure the acceptance of the values of the social and political order, the constitutional values respectively, we asked the participants the following question – "How important is each of the following values of the social and political order to you?", and offered them eleven values that are the highest values in the Constitution of Croatia (Article 3). However, there was no explicit information that those were the values from the Constitution. These are – *freedom*, *equality*, *national equality*, *gender equality*, *peacebuilding*, *social justice*, *respect for human rights*, *inviolability of ownership*, *preservation of nature and human environment, rule of law*, *democratic and multi-party system*. In it, participants evaluated each particular value of the constitutional order on a scale from 1 (*completely irrelevant*) to 4 (*completely relevant*). For the purpose of analysis, we created a dummy variable, where answers on a scale from 1 to 3 represent the absence of accepting constitutional values, and only the reporting of a strong relevance (4 on the scale) for a particular value was coded as the acceptance of the value. As the final measure of acceptance, we consider the average of accepting all eleven values of the constitutional order.

For the measuring of trust in political institutions we asked the following question – "How much do you trust each of the given institutions or organizations?", and provided a list of sixteen different

institutions, among which also the political institutions discussed in this paper (*Croatian parliament*, *Croatian government*, *President of Croatia*, *local authorities*, *political parties*). The respondents were evaluating the trust in these institutions on a scale from 1 (*do not trust at all*) to 5 (*trust completely*).

We measured religiosity of participants in a way that we asked them the following question – "What is your relationship towards religion?", and offered them six answers that outline their level of religiosity – *I am not religious and I oppose religions*; *I am not religious, although I have nothing against religion; I am indifferent towards religion; I think about religion a lot, but I am not sure whether I believe or not, I am religious, but I do not accept everything that my religion teaches; I am a convinced believer and I accept everything that my religion teaches*. Initially, the scale was inverted, however, for the purpose of the analysis we recoded it and set up so that it ascends from the lowest to the highest level of religiosity.

Generalised prejudices encompass homophobia, gender prejudices and ethnocentrism. For all of them we asked the same question, in which we requested participants to express agreement with a series of items regarding social relations, while providing a scale from 1 (*do not agree at all*) to 5 (*completely agree*). We encompass homophobia with five items, gender prejudices with six, and ethnocentrism eith eight. After conducting an inter-item correlation, we removed certain items. The remaining items have a stable monofactor structure, and together they comprise a stable factor of second order, which we called generalised prejudices.

We measured authoritarianism with 16[3] items in the form of statements about political relations in the country. The respondents needed to render how much they personally agree with what is given in the statement, on a scale from 1 (*do not agree at all*) to 5 (*agree completely*). After conducting the inter-item correlation, we removed some items and left only five (*Media should be prevented from expressing opinions contrary to the majority*; *The opposition's role is not to criticize the government, but to support its work*; *The opinion of the majority is always the best*; *The ruling party should have absolute freedom to govern between two parliamentary elections*; *It is desirable for one strong party to dominate the political scene for an extended period*), which function as one factor with Cronbach's alpha of 0.63. We used this factor as an indicator of authoritarianism in further analysis.

We examined political knowledge with nineteen questions divided into three groups – basic political concepts, Croatian constitution and political system and everyday political information. For each question, we offered four answers to the respondents, out of which only one was correct. As the final measure of political knowledge, we take the average of respondents' correct answers to these nineteen questions.

Table 1. Results of CFA and descriptives

	N (items)	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	Mean	SD

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[3] This scale was used in the previous research as well. For more details see Bovan and Širinić (2016).

Values	11	/	/	/	6.95	3.30
Institutional trust	5	/	/	/	2.45	0.87
Political knowledge	19	/	/	/	8.78	3.41
Religiosity	6	/	/	/	4.27	1.66
Ethnocentrism	5	0.968	0.984	0.054	2.48	0.81
Gender prejudice	6	0.956	0.973	0.077	2.14	0.86
Homophobia	5	0.984	0.992	0.067	2.83	1.23
Authoritarianism	5	0.979	0.989	0.038	2.5	0.72

With the aim of understanding the main determinants and their contribution to the explanation of the acceptance of constitutional values and the level of trust in political institutions, we have agreed upon employing the hierarchical multiple regression in four steps. In the first step, we included particular sociodemographic variables (sex, education of mother and education of father) in order to control their influence in later steps. Then, in the second step, we added the type of secondary school education, with a presumption that the length of these programmes and availability of various educational contents (more contents from social sciences and humanities in generalist programmes) will reflect, as a kind of a socialization, on the acceptance of the constitutional order values and on the trust in institutions. The third group of predictors encompassed the level of religiosity, generalised prejudices and authoritarianism. This group of predictors introduced individuals' value orientations to the analysis. This should contribute significantly to the explanation, especially in the case of constitutional values, given their relatively close relationship. Eventually, in the fourth step, political knowledge was included (knowledge of basic political concepts, knowledge of the constitutional-political system and political awareness), which measures the level of independent information among respondents and indicates their interest in politics, political processes and the functioning of the system.

3. Research results

3.1. Constitutional values of final year secondary school pupils

Building on the previously presented ways of measuring and applied analyses, we first present descriptive data, and then the results of hierarchical regression. We constructed the scale of constitutional values (Graph 1) based on the answer "highly important", because here the basic constitutional principles are examined, for which a high consensus is expected without relativization. However, among final year pupils, that consensus is absent, and we need to point out that this has been a constant characteristic among youth since 1999 until today.

Graph 1. Hierarchy of acceptance of constitutional values – the highest degree (%)

INSERT GRAPH 1 HERE

It is not surprising the respect for human rights, freedom, and equality are at the top of the scale, as these are universal principles present in philosophical works and political documents since the 18th century, forming a heritage of the democratic world. At the bottom of the scale, we find democratic and multi-party system, as well as the rule of law. Additionaly, the respondents showed low level of importance regarding the inviolability of private ownership. These values are embedded in the architecture of the liberal-democratic order, and, as such, do not have as many generally accepted connotations as the universal principles. When the highest level of importance is complemented with the answers "mostly important" it becomes apparent that a significant majority of respondents mostly accepts constitutional values: from 97% (respect for human rights) to 69% (democratic and multi-party system). In particular, it is indicative that almost a third of respondents considers democratic and multi-party system "completely and/or mostly unimportant", and alsmost a fourth considers the rule of law "completely and/or mostly unimportant". The hierarchy of acceptance of constitutional values in this study is very similar to the results of previous research conducted on youth in Croatia. However, final year secondary school pupils experienced changes that induced further reduction of the support for the values of the liberal-democratic order[4]. Specifically, the high level of support of final year pupils for the democratic and multi-party system dropped to less than a third of supporters, while support for the rule of law fell to somewhat more than a third of supporters.

The latter data are twofold devastating. Firstly, only a minority of final year pupils show unreserved support for liberal-democratic values. Secondly, the trend of the standard liberal-democratic values losing support continues alongside the growth of experience in living within a democratic social and political environment. These results require further targeted research, and at this moment, we can only make general assumptions about the reasons for the detected declining trend of supporting the observed liberal-democratic values. It is not a novel conclusion that Croatian democratic deficits arise from both the socialist and transitional legacy. At the same time, the past period of democratic consolidation was often characterised by non-democratic functioning of political institutions and actors, and some groups of citizens, which under the circumstances of economic recession and social crisis can encourage the escalation of civil discontent with a consequence of reduction in general support to democracy. Contemporary events on the Croatian social and political scene (and not just Croatian) provide affirmation of such hypothesis. It is evident that, simultaneously with the prolongation of

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[4] In youth research of 1999, 2004 and 2013 (Ilišin, 2002, 2007, 2017) both the top and the bottom of the scale of acceptance of constitutional values are mostly identical to results of final year secondary school pupils. However, the most interesting point is that during the "time of transitional innocence," approximately 60% of respondents highly accepted the democratic and multi-party system, and between 55% and 64% of them highly accepted the rule of law. Nevertheless, in the 2013 examination (Ilišin, 2017: 199) for the first time less than half of youth (43%) highly accepted the democratic and multi-party system, while the rule of law hardly managed to gather majority support (51%).

socioeconomic adversities and political disagreements, the democartic political system is also destabilized to some extent. Respectively, the thirty-year experience of transformation in Croatia showed that the normative-institutional establishment of a pluralist society and the liberal-democratic political order is not sufficient to overcome the democratic deficits that the post-socialist society is facing. In order to address these deficits, it is necessary to complement pluralist society and liberal-democratic order with the democratic (formal and non-nformal) political socialization of citizens, especially young ones, and the building of a democratic political culture.

Further analysis using hierarchical regression (Table 2) should assist us in identifying the characteristics related to the observed acceptance of constitutional values. In the case of predictors for constitutional order values the final model explains 17.7% of the variance. At each particular step, the introduction of new variables significantly contributes to explaining the total variance, with the exception of authoritarianism in the third step. From the final model it is evident that female respondents are more prone to accepting the constitutional values. Additionaly, respondents who are more religious and have lower levels of generalised prejudices (lower inclination towards homophobia, gender inequality and ethnocentrism) are more likely to accept constitutional values. Finally, individuals with higher levels of political knowledge also expressed higher levels of acceptance for constitutional values. Interestingly, the influence of attending a particular school programme (three-year vocational compared to generalist and four-year vocational compared to generalist) was not significant in the final step of hierarchical regression. We expected that persons with lower levels of generalised prejudices would report higher levels of accepting constitutional values. Given that among the constitutional values, there are those related to the respect for human rights, freedom, equality, gender equality and national equality, such a result does not come as a surprise. Since religion often promotes acceptance at a general level in its teaching, it is possible to understand this influence as well. Additionally, higher levels of political knowledge imply better-informed respondents on the rights ensured within the democratic order and a certain interest for these questions among respondents. Therefore, its influence is also expected.

Table 2. Results of hierarchical regression predicting constitutional values

Predictor	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3		Step 4	
Gender (0-male; 1-female)	**1.62****	[1.23, 2.01]	**1.32****	[0.92, 1.72]	**0.48***	[0.04, 0.92]	**0.59****	[0.15, 1.03]
Education of mother	0.18	[-0.09, 0.45]	0.00	[-0.26, 0.27]	-0.06	[-0.32, 0.20]	-0.08	[-0.34, 0.18]
Education of father	**0.31***	[0.04, 0.58]	0.16	[-0.11, 0.43]	0.12	[-0.14, 0.38]	0.14	[-0.12, 0.40]
School programme (1-three-year vocational			**-1.77****	[-2.35, -1.19]	**-1.04****	[-1.64, -0.44]	-0.55	[-1.22, 0.13]

	Model 1 β	[95% CI]	Model 2 β	[95% CI]	Model 3 β	[95% CI]	Model 4 β	[95% CI]
programs, 0 – generalist programs)								
School programme (1 – four-year vocational programs, 0 – generalist programs)			**-0.77**	[-1.25, -0.29]	-0.28	[-0.77, 0.21]	-0.01	[-0.52, 0.50]
Religiosity					**0.17**	[0.05, 0.30]	**0.17**	[0.05, 0.30]
Generalised prejudice					**-1.24**	[-1.55, -0.92]	**-1.22**	[-1.54, -0.91]
Authoritarianism					-0.09	[-0.39, 0.21]	0.02	[-0.29, 0.32]
Political knowledge							**0.11**	[0.04, 0.18]
R²	.076**		.109**		.168**		.177**	
ΔR²	-		.033**		.059**		.008**	

Results in the Table are beta coefficients with 95% confidence intervals; * p < .05; ** p < .01.
ΔR² refers to change to the preceding step.

3.2. Trust in political institutions of final year secondary school pupils

Political institutions and actors are primarily responsible for the public promotion of liberal-democratic values. However, we should not neglect the contribution of other social institutions responsible for building regulated democratic society and providing objective information to citizens about social events and processes. While this paper focuses on political institutions, trust in other social institutions and sources of information only serves as a framework within which the (dis)trust of final year pupils in political institutions positioned itself. Data in Table 3 were aggregated into indicators of higher and/or lower trust (based on which the scale was constructed), i.e. into indicators of distrust in all the examined institutions.

Table 3. Trust in institutions, actors and sources of information (%)

Institutions, actors and sources of information	Trust completely/mostly	Do not trust at all/mostly
Army	66.7	12.7
Scientists	63.5	15.0
Police	40.2	35.8
Religious institutions	37.0	37.1
Civil society organizations (associations)	25.4	19.3

President of Croatia	**23.3**	**45.7**
Local authorities	**21.1**	**43.2**
Television	18.3	49.1
Croatian government	**16.8**	**49.6**
Printed media (newspapers and magazines)	16.6	51.2
Justice	16.4	48.3
Social networks	15.6	53.1
Croatian parliament	**14.7**	**48.6**
Trade Unions	13.3	39.3
Internet portals	13.0	58.0
Political parties	**7.2**	**58.3**

Among the respondents, the majority expressed trust only in the army and scientists (which was important to test during the COVID-19 pandemic, as various conspiracy theories were circulating among the public and a significant number of citizens resisted the recommendations by health professionals and the government authorities). Nevertheless, respondents showed relatively respectable trust in the police and religious institutions[5]. At the same time, the majority distrusts political parties and three representatives of the media, including internet portals and social networks, which some social scientists hope can contribute to the development of a network of non-formal political participation among youth. Alongside such low registered trust and high distrust in the so-called new media, it seems that the young realised, probably from their own experience, that participation in these media platforms does not guarantee the desired personal influence, especially if things start going the wrong way. We should also note that in more than two thirds of examined institutions, actors and sources of information, final year pupils express significantly more distrust than trust, which most certainly indicates their low generalised trust.

Regarding the trust in political institutions, the repondents ranked the President of Croatia and the local authorities the highest, partly because they are more recognizable to the young, and therefore possibly more credible to them. However, the Government and the Parliament, as collective bodies on the national level, received noticeably lower levels of trust, reflecting their greater responsibility in creating and implementing public policies. Political parties, on the other hand, are the absolute champions of persistent lack of trust. Their unpopularity is common finding in empirical research among both the young and the general population (e.g. in three longitudinal measurements among the general population during the COVID-19 crisis, as shown in Čorkalo Biruški et al. 2021). It is probably so

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[5] Youth research conducted in four waves between 2004 and 2019 (Gvozdanović et al., 2019; Ilišin, 2007, 2017; Ilišin et al., 2013) revealed that, with smaller oscillations, young have the highest trust to the army, police and religious institutions. Variations in results were rarely such that they could disturb the hierarchy of trust in examined institutions. To illustrate, between 33 and 40% of youth trusted the army, while in most recent times this trust doubled among final year secondary school pupils. At the same time, trust in religious institutions dropped permanently from cca 54% to a third, which is along with the general decline of trust in the majority of examined institutions enough to keep religious institutions at the top of the scale of trust. These tendencies suggest that it is probable that institutional (dis)trust is more prone to variations under the influence of social occurences of the local and global nature, than when it comes to political (constitutional) values.

because they are viewed as groups of politicians who are equally unpopular as public persons. It is probable that citizens, including the young, do not acknowledge political parties as necessary actors in a pluralist and democratic society that mediate interests of particular groups of citizens into the political space. Instead, they may perceive them as clientelist organizations preoccupied with the fulfillment of personal and close group interests[6]. In any case, one can argue that the trust of final year pupils in political institutions is very low, in contrast to the prevalence of distrust, which is significantly higer.

In the case of hierarchical regression (see Table 4) related to predictors of institutional trust of final year pupils, it was shown that political knowledge does not contribute significantly to the explanation. Therefore, we present the model with the third step as the final one. In this third step, it is evident that male respondents and pupils from generalist schools reported higher levels of trust. Similary, respondents who are more religiously oriented and those who have a higher propensity for authoritarian attitudes exhibit more trust in political institutions, along with those whose generalised prejudices are lower. However, it is important to note that the model explains only 7.7% of variance, which implies that the envisioned set of variables is not sufficient for a more significant explanation of the low levels of trust in political institutions.

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[6] The odium of youth towards political parties is further evidenced by the data in all to-date youth research conducted in 2004, 2012, 2013 and 2019 (Gvozdanović et al. 2019; Ilišin, 2007, 2017; Ilišin et al. 2013), where political parties were convincingly in the last place of the scale of trust. Somewhat unexpectedly, that trust was the highest in 2012 (17%), and the lowest in 2013 (5%). It is possible to see the similar trend in the case of the Government (drop from 20 to 7%) and the Croatian parliament (drop from 21 to 7%). Such variations probably reflect the (dis)contentment of respondents with some moves of the governmental authorities in the time of conducting the research.

Table 4. Results of hierarchical regression predicting trust in political institutions

Predictor	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3	
Gender (0-male; 1-female)	-0.03	[-0.13. 0.08]	-0.04	[-0.16. 0.07]	-0.13*	[-0.25. -0.00]
Education of mother	0.03	[-0.04. 0.10]	0.02	[-0.06. 0.09]	0.02	[-0.05. 0.09]
Education of father	0.05	[-0.03. 0.12]	0.04	[-0.04. 0.11]	0.06	[-0.01. 0.14]
School programme ((1-three-year vocational programs. 0 – greneralist programs)			-0.12	[-0.28. 0.04]	-0.27**	[-0.44. -0.10]
School programme (1 – four-year vocational programs. 0 – generalist programs)			-0.19**	[-0.33. -0.06]	-0.27**	[-0.41. -0.14]
Religiosity					0.06**	[0.03. 0.09]
Generalised prejudice					-0.12**	[-0.21. -0.03]
Authoritarianism					0.30**	[0.22. 0.39]
R²	0.01		.014*		.077**	
ΔR²	-		.008*		.064**	
Results in the Table are beta coefficients with 95% confidence intervals; * p < .05; ** p < .01. ΔR² refers to change to the preceding step						

The inability to ascertain a clear set of determinants for trust in political institutions in the Croatian context is not a novelty. Nikodem and Črpić (2014) used data from the European Values Survey to test six models with various indicators, including modernization, individualization, religiosity,

democracy and political order, sociability and politicalness. However, they concluded that "regression analysis of the extracted factors and six predictor sets […] did not yield more significant results" (Nikodem i Črpić, 2014: 277). Another important insight from their study is that they also did not find a correlation between the general trust in people and the trust in institutions.

As previously pointed out, trust in political institutions is exceptionally low and declining even further with time. The potential reasons for the impossibility of detecting determinants of trust could be related to the chronic distrust in political institutions. It appears that Croatian citizens, including the pupils in this research, have completely lost trust in political institutions, regardless of their different characteristics and attitudes. Our findings do not provide a concrete answer to this phenomenon but definitely point to the importance of investing further research efforts in understanding of determinants of the permanently low trust in political institutions, which is obviously present among the new generations who are becoming rightful citizens. Nikodem and Črpić (2014) asume that there is a great discrepancy between citizens' expectations and the agency of institutions that are, as they suggest, characterised by corruption and inefficacy. In this context, one could add that the high expectations of Croatian citizens date back to the very establishment of the nominally liberal-democratic order in the early 1990s when normative optimism prevailed, implying that the implementation of democratic institutions automatically ensured their adequate functioning (Kasapović, 1996). This is indicated by research conducted in the 1990s and 2000s, during fifteen years of democratization. (Kasapović, 1993; Ilišin, 2007). These studies showed that Croatian citizens, including young people, demonstrated a considerable lack of understanding of democratic rules and conflicts while striving for a harmonious community. However, experience quickly showed that the establishment of an independent national state and multi-party system with institutions suitable for a democratic political system does not guarantee either an easy reconciliation of ever-existing different interests or the democratically responsible and competent functioning of political institutions and actors. The optimistic expectations of the citizens after the democratic changes were not only unfulfilled but also deteriorated over time. This occured because the establishment of democratic processes and relations took place slowly and to a very limited extent due to the inherited democratic deficits. These deficits characterized both the citizens and the new political elites, similar to the majority of other post-socialist countries. Our hypothesis is that socialization in such a setting has also led to the situation in which youth generations, including final year pupils, who have not yet had the opportunity to participate in political life as rightful citizens, start from the position of exceptionally low trust in political institutions. Confirming or rejecting this hypothesis requires an understanding of the primary political socialization of young people through appropriate qualitative research.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we aimed to address the question of the main determinants influencing the acceptance of the values of the social and political order and trust in political institutions among final year secondary school pupils in Croatia. To achieve this, we placed our discussion within a broader theoretical framework related to political culture, and we examined the acceptance of values and trust in political institutions as two out of five aspects of political support to the democratic system. In light of the trends related to the younger generations's disengagement from institutional politics, the adoption of post-materialistic values, and complexities of socialization processes, we analysed the data collected in the spring of 2021.

The descriptive data reveal that among constitutional values youth most widely accept those considered universal principles. However, only approximately a third of respondents embraces democratic and multi-party system and the rule of law, indicating low support for the values of the liberal-democratic order. Moreover, this low support is accompanied by clear lack of trust in political institutions, especially in political parties, which serve as the primary mediators of citizens' interest in political life. Additionaly, there is low trust in the Parliament, which servs as a formal political body that should articulate citizens' positions in representative democracy, and in the government, which holds the highest executive power and is reposnible for defining and implementing public policies. The hierarchical regression procedure highlighted the significance of generalised prejudices, religiosity, political knowledge, and respondents' sex as determinants of the acceptance of constitutional values. On the other hand, our results indicate that the model used for institutional trust is not sufficient, with some tendencies, to offer a more substantial explanation for the low levels of trust in political institutions. Regarding the fact that the research involved youth, who have mostly not yet had the opportunity to participate in formal political processes, it is not entirely justified to expect that this exceptionally low trust is solely a result of disappointment in the agency of political institutions. It is more convincing to assume that young people reflect dominant attitudes from both their narrower and wider environments, which were shaped under the influence of inherited democratic deficits from socialism, undemocratic tendencies from the period of transition and consolidation, and unrealistic expectations about the automatically successful functioning of established democratic institutions. For that reason, it is necessary to once again to underline the importance of primary political socialization and its influence on the attitudes of youth, as well as the need for further, especially qualitative, insights that can help us understand these values and attitudes, which are crucial for the preservation and development of representative democracy.

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