A STUDY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF POPULIST RIGHT WING PARTIES IN THE NETHERLANDS

Author: Roksana Drabiuk
Examiner: Mats Sjölin
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Abstract
The rise of populism in Western Europe and in the Netherlands is a phenomenon that deserves to be studied to understand the changing political systems and what they mean to the Dutch people. The focus of many studies conducted on the growth of populism has been on a single or few precipitating factors. The current inquiry sought to conduct a narrative review of the available literature to understand the factors that have contributed to the observed right-wing success in the Dutch politics over the last two decades. The study involved a narrative analysis of articles that were identified through a search process. Through thematic analysis of the articles, the main patterns found in the articles were identified and presented on narrative format. While the findings of the article reveal the difficulty of defining populism among the authors, it was established that the growth of new-rightist parties can be associated with structural decline of pillarization, the failure of the mainstream political parties to address critical issues affecting the citizens, the availability of the voter to make informed decisions and the influence of the media and individual leadership styles of the populist leaders. The study concludes that the political rise of populist parties can be explained by both the rational choice theory and the behavioralism theory of politics. The study recommends that further studies are required to effectively understand the impact of the growth of rightist parties in the Netherlands.

Keywords: Populism, Right-Wing, Populist Political Parties, Mainstream Political Parties and the Netherlands.
Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 1
  1.1 Background of the study .................................................................................................................. 1
    1.1.1 General Overview of Dutch Society and Elections ................................................................. 1
    1.1.2 Right-wing Populism in the Netherlands .................................................................................. 2
  1.2 Problem Statement ............................................................................................................................... 3
  1.3 Research Aim, objectives and questions .......................................................................................... 4
    1.3.1 Research Aim ............................................................................................................................ 4
    1.3.2 Research Objectives .................................................................................................................. 5
    1.3.3 Research Questions ................................................................................................................... 5
  1.4 Significance of the study ..................................................................................................................... 5
  1.5 Organization of the Study .................................................................................................................. 6

2.0 Theoretical Background ......................................................................................................................... 6
  2.1 Introduction .......................................................................................................................................... 6
  2.2 Theories .............................................................................................................................................. 6
    2.2.1 Rational Choice Theory ............................................................................................................. 6
    2.2.2 Behavioralism ............................................................................................................................. 8
  2.3 Definition of Right-Wing Parties and Related Terms ......................................................................... 9
  2.4 Right-Wing Populism ........................................................................................................................ 11
  2.5 Analysis model .................................................................................................................................... 13
  2.6 Chapter Summary ............................................................................................................................... 14

3.0 Materials and Methods ........................................................................................................................ 15
  3.1 Introduction ......................................................................................................................................... 16
  3.2 Methods of Reviewing Literature ..................................................................................................... 15
  3.3 Procedures .......................................................................................................................................... 18
  3.4 Search Strategy ................................................................................................................................... 18
  3.5 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria ....................................................................................................... 20
  3.6 Thematic Analysis .............................................................................................................................. 21
  3.7 Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................... 22

4.0 Data Presentation and Analysis ............................................................................................................. 23
  4.1 Introduction ......................................................................................................................................... 23
4.2 The concept of Populism ................................................................. 23
4.3 Electoral Performance of Populist Parties in the Netherlands ............ 25
    4.3.1 Pillarization and depillarization in the Party System .................. 25
    4.3.2 The Role of the Media ................................................................. 28
    4.3.3 Leadership Styles of Populist Leaders ......................................... 29
4.4 The Ideological Bases of Populist Parties ........................................... 30
    4.4.1 Immigration and Euroscepticism ................................................. 31
    4.4.2 Welfare Populism ..................................................................... 32
4.5 Chapter Summary .............................................................................. 33
5.0 Conclusion ......................................................................................... 35
References .............................................................................................. 39
List of Tables

Table 1: Summary of the Search Strategy

List of Figures

Figure 1: Analysis Model

Figure 2: Results of the Search Strategy
1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background of the study
The context of the research is organized into two segments. The first segment provides an overview of the Dutch society and elections while the second segment focuses on Right-wing populist parties in the Netherlands.

1.1.1 General Overview of Dutch Society and Elections
Netherlands ranks among the most densely populated nations in Europe and is comprised of a population of about 17 million people. About one fifth of the individuals residing in the Netherlands have a migrant background (CBS 2018). Majority has a non-western background coming from Morocco, Turkey, Surinam, Indonesia and the Dutch Antilles. Other non-western migrants are refugee groups mostly from Muslim countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria as well as Somalia (Bosco and Verney 2018). The recent years, there has been an increase of these groups residing in the Netherlands due to political conflicts. Furthermore, there are many migrants coming from the western countries like Germany, Belgium and Poland (Andeweg and Irwin 2014). Their main reasons to migrate are work or study related, whereas the Netherlands is an internationally oriented country (CBS 2018).

The high inflow of refugees in the Netherlands combined with the view that Netherlands needed to withdraw from the European Union, contributed to the growth of movements that opposed the high rates of refugee entry in the country (Lilleker and Pack 2016). In particular, the Party for Freedom (PVV) through the leadership of Geert Wilders has been one of the main right-wing populist parties that emerged to oppose the high rate of refugee influx. The opposition was informed by such issues as low rate of economic performance and the slim margins of social welfare necessitated by the austerity measures established by Mark Rutte, the leader of Peoples’ Party for Freedom and
Democracy (VVD). In addition to being a supporter of populism, Geert Wilders is recognized for forming the foundation for current and forthcoming debates in the Netherlands regarding such aspects as Euroscepticism, anti-Islam and immigration (Ceron et al. 2017). Wilder’s ideologies are supported by a high proportion of Dutch people who are concerned with such aspects as crime, austerity measures, immigration policies and the Dutch identity. In the latest general election in 2017, PVV acquired 13.1% of the overall votes, which was their second best result so far. In the recent past, the Forum for Democracy (FvD) led by Thierry Baudet began to obscure the work of PVV. Despite acquiring only two seats in 2017 elections, the party acquired 14.5% of the votes in the Dutch provincial elections in 2019 showing that Baudet’s ideologies are gradually becoming popular (Marguiles 2019).

1.1.2 Right-wing Populism in the Netherlands

The anxiety of Muslim immigrations in the Netherlands has been identified to emanate from the protection of liberal values rather than the fear of either religious or ethnic antagonism (Wodak et al. 2013). Further, stopping Muslim actions in the Netherlands have often been considered a practice of shielding the image of the country, which is considered to be not only inclusive but also non-judgmental (Akkerman et al. 2016). As a result, there is creation of paradox as to whether the image of the Netherlands was meant to include minorities rather than exclude them. In addition to the debate on Islam, there exists a wide array of questions focusing on national identity in the Netherlands. On one hand, some individuals consider the Dutch society to be tolerant and one that includes minority groups in the national discourse. On the other hand, the opponents hold the ideology that the secularist values should be protected from attacks by minority groups from outside (Beyme 2019). In addition to the existence of controversies focusing on immigration and integration, such factors as the loss of regulations through Europeanization, rise in individualism, rise of secularization and disintegration
of pillarized populations, are considered to have contributed to the establishment of populist parties (Lochocki 2018).

Right-wing populist parties have been in existence in the Netherlands since 1982 when the Centre Party acquired one seat in the House of Representatives (Lochocki 2018). The success of right-wing populist parties was, however, not evident in the Netherlands until 2002 when Pim Fortuyn won 26 seats (Rydgren 2018). The party leader was assassinated before 2002 elections which resulted to the decline of the party. However, few years after, a new party came into the limelight, namely the Party for Freedom (PVV). In 2006 PVV made its way into the House of Representatives and was known for criticizing the European Union as well as the efforts seeking for European Integration (Otjes, 2017). In addition, the party gained its popularity through taking populist stands towards Islam and advocating for the cultural integration of different migrants in the Netherlands. With the aim of protecting the welfare, sovereignty and identity of Dutch people, PVV drew its backing from the pioneer Rutte cabinet in 2012 citing its failure to agree with the set stringent measures for government operations (Holsteyn 2015). After the 2012 elections, the party’s popularity seemed to suffer as it only managed to garner 15 seats in the parliament and hence its removal from major government decision and policy making. During the 2017 elections, the party increased its number of seats to 20 under the leadership of Geert Wilders, and became the second largest party by composition. Since then, as already mentioned, there has been development of other populists parties in the Netherlands such as Forum for Democracy by Thierry Baudet which won 86 seats out of the possible 570 in 2019 provincial results (Marguiles 2019).

1.2 Problem Statement
Marguiles (2019) argues that there was need for Europe to worry about policies and ideologies proposed by the rising Dutch populist Thierry Baudet.
In particular, the Forum for Democracy (FvD) focused on all elites thus giving them the opportunity to attract voters with less formal education such as the working class. Moreover, Baudet’s ideologies tend to embrace the key philosophies of the European liberal democracy, which has the potential of weakening the democratic coalition at the core of Dutch politics. Rooduijin (2015) argues that it is essential to find out the electoral successes of right-wing populist parties in Western Europe and the reasons why these parties are more likely to remain relevant for a long while. In addition, the author proposed that there was need for further research on the role of electoral volatility, immigration, unemployment and Euroscepticism in the development of the right wing-populist parties. Moreover, Greven (2015) upon conducting a survey in Europe and Northern America concluded that policy makers needed to focus on the ideologies of the right-wing parties’ supporters as a way of legitimizing the existing policies.

The findings from the above discussion show that a research gap on the development of populist/right-wing parties in Netherlands exists. Precisely, there is inadequate research on the factors that have necessitated the continued rise of the populist parties in the country. Moreover, the reviewed studies showed that there was need to investigate the role of multiculturalism, immigration, unemployment and Euroscepticism in the development of the right-wing parties. As a result, the current investigation focuses on the development of right-wing parties in the Netherlands. The objectives guiding the inquiry are highlighted in the section that follows.

1.3 Research Aim, objectives and questions

1.3.1 Research Aim
The main aim of the research is to investigate the development of right-wing populist parties in the Netherlands.
1.3.2 Research Objectives
The specific objectives that guide the research include:

1. To investigate why people turn to right-wing populists parties in the Netherlands
2. To explore the role of multiculturalism, immigration and welfare chauvinism in the development of right-wing populist parties in the Netherlands

1.3.3 Research Questions
The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What factors prompt Dutch people to create and support right-wing populist parties in the Netherlands?
2. What is the role of immigration, multiculturalism and welfare in the development of the right-wing populist parties in the Netherlands?

1.4 Significance of the study
The findings of the research are beneficial to scientists as they provide new perspectives data that may support or refute the existing literature on the factors that prompt the Dutch to establish right-wing populist parties. Moreover, it is anticipated that the political ideologies of right-wing populists will be revealed. The information acquired from this inquiry will help the other researchers to conduct more focused studies to understand the rise of populism in the Netherlands. The findings may also benefit the political leaders to understand the issues that affect the common man and how the rise of right-wing populism may impact the country’s policies. As a result, political leaders will have more insight on the views of the citizens especially in the current times where a high proportion of populations feel that their contribution to the political space is less important.
1.5 Organization of the Study
The background of the research, problem statement and research purpose has been analyzed in the introduction segment. The theoretical background of the study is presented in the subsequent chapter. Precisely, the section focuses on providing the background of the study as well as relevant theories which inform the investigation. An analysis model showing the connection of the aspects being reviewed in the study is presented at the end of the chapter. All materials and methods to be employed in the research are discussed in the third section of the thesis. The findings of the inquiry as well as the analysis are presented in the fourth chapter which is followed by conclusions that show how the theoretical background is related to the findings of the review.

2.0 Theoretical Background

2.1 Introduction
As the introduction has shown, populist political parties are on the rise in Europe and in the Netherlands. In this section, previous theoretical background for the growth of the right-wing political parties is provided. The section also provides an overview of the factors that have contributed to the increase in right-wing popularity.

2.2 Theories
Suitable theories which inform the study are discussed in the segment below.

2.2.1 Rational Choice Theory
The theory is also referred to as choice theory or racion action theory. According to Iannaccone (2016) the rational choice theory focuses on understanding the justification upon which individuals make various decisions. Additionally, the rational choice theory also aims at identifying the
determinants that prompt individuals to make decisions. The philosophy proposes that the overall behavior observed in the society emanates from the conduct of individual actors in the society who make their own distinct decisions (Hindess 2014; Iannaccone 2016). Further, Hindess (2014) provides that the rational choice theory holds that individuals make choices based on the available set of alternatives. The author also provides that people have a tendency of selecting the alternatives that are beneficial in terms of cost and social welfare. Iannaccone (2016) argues that the three main tenets of the rational choice theory include: persons make their choices upon conducting rational calculations, individuals act with carefulness when making a choice and that the main goal of making a decision is optimization. Critics of the theory, however, argue that such aspects as uncertainty and the socio-economic environment play a significant role in the determination of the choices made by diverse individuals (Hindess 2014). Further, Hindess (2014) argues that many individuals are not familiar with the concept of rationality thus making it to be highly abused.

The philosophical foundations of the theory are very applicable in the field of political science in which the study is founded (Chong 2013). The right-wing populist ideology has become prevalent in the Netherlands since a large proportion of leaders and voters have made individual choices to support the right-wing populist ideology. The assumption of this approach is that embracing the concept of right-wing populism is geared towards realizing optimization. For instance, it is assumed among the proponents of populism that opposing the concept of immigration in the Netherlands is beneficial to native populations as they will receive the social welfare benefits without having to share it with immigrants. The presence of minority and immigrant groups in the Netherlands is likely to compromise or lower the proportion of social welfare benefits available to Dutch citizens. Further, the right-wing populists believe that having few immigrants in the Netherlands will cause less
strain on the available resources thus bringing more economic growth. Moreover, right-wing populism promotes optimization since it creates opportunity for individuals to express their views, which in their opinion are ignored by the leaders in the mainstream political parties.

2.2.2 Behavioralism
The behavioralism theory in politics was dominant in the 1950s and 1960s. According to Landman and Robinson (2009), political analysts had started to shift their focus to the modern trends in political science by drifting away from the traditional discussion that was common among political thinkers. Some of the key areas of concern in the modern political environment are the characteristics of voters, policy inclinations and perceptions regarding the economy (Campus et al. 2011). Behavioralism identifies three main political approaches used to explain the current trends in the field of political science; elitist technique, institutional technique and pluralists method. The institutional technique gives attention to concepts that focus on the constitution as well as institutions. Pluralists on the other hand focus on the capability of political groups to bargain while elitists aim to find out how they can influence power (Walton et al. 2017). Behavioralism is guided by two main approaches; the first is based on the analysis of social behavior and the second on the evaluation of individual behavior. Critics of the theory argue that behavioralism is influenced by positivism and that it is difficult to subject the explanations given by behavioralists to theoretical tests. Secondly, critics of the theory also indicate that there is a general tendency for behavioralists to give attention to mindless empiricism (Walton and Smith 2015). Focus on behavioralism has contributed to the development of further research on such aspects as political perceptions, voting patterns, role played by leaders and the elites in the development of political ideologies and how persons and groups are able to interact in different political systems.
Since behavioralism focuses on modern trends in political science, the theory is applicable to the current research by helping in understanding right-wing populism ideologies regarding such aspects as policy preferences, economic state of the Netherlands, social profiles of Dutch voters and immigration. As mentioned previously, right-wing populists prefer policies that favor native Dutch citizens in terms of such aspects as resource allocation (Brubaker 2017). Right-wing populists mainly focus on voters of low-socio-economic status as a means of weakening liberal democracy (The Guardian 2019). Similarly, as mentioned in the previous chapters, right-wing populists are Eurosceptic and oppose the ideology of European Integration.

2.3 Definition of Right-Wing Parties and Related Terms
According to Ringstrom (2018) right-wing populism was associated with such words as nativism and authoritarianism. Nativism was described as a viewpoint which holds that individuals of the native group are expected to reside in states and that elements that are not native were a threat to the homogeneous nation state. To further elaborate on the concept, Wodak (2015) defines right-wing populism as the reaction of a group to the changes in society. The group usually considered itself to be losing power and viewed the elites and minorities as society parasites. Wodak (2015) however mentions that right-wing populists mobilize their followers through such means as millennial visions, intrigue and demonization. Zabala (2017) indicates that right and left-wing parties shared only one commonality of bringing together individuals to support a given ideology as well as establish the idea of “us” against “them”. The political ideologies that define the populist groups are identified to be completely dissimilar. Right-wing populists are associated with fear for foreigners as well as indifference while left-populists were linked to optimism, equality and justice. Fenger (2018) contends that despite the availability of a wide array of differences between right-wing and left-wing parties, the two factions utilize welfare chauvinism as their uniting aspect. Wodak (2015)
defines welfare chauvinism as the ideology where social welfare benefits are expected to reach individuals from the native groups grounded on such aspects as race, ethnicity and citizenship. Moreover, welfare chauvinism expects that individuals in minority groups are given minimal social assistance. Fenger (2018) deduced that welfare chauvinism is the application of nativism in the process of resource allocation.

Ringstrom (2018) argues that nationalism is a broad concept of describing right-wing populism and that nativism was more appropriate. Rydgren (2017), however, indicated that ethnic nationalism is the most suitable word of describing right-wing populism. The author further argues that the focus of right-wing populist parties on such aspects as national identity, Islamic threat, multiculturalism and national security justifies the use of ethnic nationalism in defining right-wing populism.

Malone (2014) provides that cultural consequences of immigration in the Netherlands and Europe were the key concern of right wing populist parties. The evidence shows that most supporters of right-wing populist parties give attention to the cultural impact of immigration rather than economic or political protectionism. Similarly, Puhringer and Otsch (2018) argue that right-wing ideologies contribute in the splitting of the society into two main parties with conflicting ideologies. Wodak (2015) makes the inference that right-wing parties are characterized by various distinct characteristic keys. Among them is nativism, employment of political styles that relate to different ideologies and its success founded on social media and performance strategies.

Nativism is described by Daigle et al., (2019) as the notion that a specified group of individuals associated with a given race or citizenship are rightfully eligible for acquiring resources that belong to the state. Ringstrom (2018) further added that nativism was an amalgamation of nationalism and
Xenophobia. Oxford English Dictionary (2019) defines xenophobia as “a deep antipathy for foreigners”. Nativism will be employed in the research based on the above definitions.

Authoritarianism is defined by Loxbo (2015) as an “aspiration of an orderly society with definite norms and authorities, where deviant behavior is greatly punished.” The current research focuses on the aspirations of right-wing populists in the Netherlands concerning their society.

Populism is described by the Oxford English Dictionary (2019) as “the political approach that strives to appeal the ordinary people who feel that their concerns are disregarded by established elite groups.”

2.4 Right-Wing Populism

Roodujin (2015) highlights the significance of focusing on the electoral successes of right-wing political parties that were emerging at a high rate in Europe. The study findings showed that immigration and European Integration were some of the key aspects that contributed to the rise of right-wing populist parties. Moreover, Roodujin (2015) established that other factors including electoral instability, convergence of viewpoints between main-stream parties and financial stability contributed to the popularity of right-wing parties. Silva (2018) obtained similar findings and showed that the aforementioned factors enabled right-wing populism to thrive in such country as the Netherlands. The study also established that Euroscepticism, immigration rates, availability of political space to develop and the level of commitment in the development of right-wing populist ideologies were responsible for the high rates of populism growth in Europe and the Netherlands. The combination of the above factors creates an environment that attracts right-wing ideologies to resonate with the people.
Berning et al. (2019) discovered a relationship between media attention and the growth of right-wing populism. Specifically, the study established that the number of right-wing populism supporters increased in the Netherlands when the focus on populist ideologies by the media was high. Ethnic threats combined with Euroscepticism were noted to enhance the extent in which right-wing populist parties considerations were influenced by media. Consistent with preceding outcomes, Hameleers and Vliegenthart (2019) affirm that the continued media coverage of right-wing populist elements in newspapers had made populism to become more visible to Dutch Citizens. The rise in the use of populist aspects in newspapers in the Netherlands has helped to intensify the overall public opinion of Dutch citizens regarding right-wing populism.

Browne et al., (2018) predicts that right-wing populism was likely to expand in Europe and become a strong political force in the future. The authors provide that advancements in social media and communication technologies, politics on culture and identity combined with financial and economic crises are essential components that help in attracting individuals who share similar populist ideologies. The study warned that if leaders failed to set up strategies of defending liberal democracy, there would be increased disintegration of the political ideologies of European voters. Similarly, Otjes and Louwerse (2013), in an investigation focusing on the distinction between right-wing and left-wing parties asserted that right-wing parties had distinct ideologies on identity, immigration and European integration. Criticism of Islam, Europe integration and immigration ideologies, together with the availability of political space are essential in the flourishing of right-wing parties in the Netherlands. The results acquired by Greven (2016) however, contradicted those of prior authors. In particular, the author found that the success of right-wing populism in the Netherlands and Europe as a whole depended on nation-specific aspects like the political history of the nation, culture of the nation and the political
systems of the country. The author did point to the fact that right-wing populist parties share a common ideology; the interests of minorities were not favored by the corrupt elites.

Muis and Immerzeel (2017) amalgamated the ideologies of many of the studies by noting that the upsurge of right-wing populism is dependent on external and internal supply-side factors. Specifically, social media support and advancement, repression effects, unification of ideologies among main-stream parties, institutional backgrounds and refusal by other parties to political mergers with right-wing parties were identified to externally influence the rate of growth of right-wing populist parties. Moreover, the political ideologies of the parties joined with financial stability and leadership were acknowledged to internally affect right-wing parties’ development. Otjes and Louwerse (2013) in supporting the findings note that the presence of suitable supply-side factors in the Netherlands was responsible for the growth of right-wing populism. The presence of an open-electoral system, politics that focused on consensus and the occurrence of a depillarized Dutch Society supported the high rate of right-wing populism growth.

2.5 Analysis model
Figure 2.1 below summarizes the connection of various aspects to the focus and development of right-wing populist parties in the Netherlands. The current study will focus on the role of immigration, Euroscepticism, availability of political space to develop, leadership qualities of the party leaders, social media and the welfare populism in the development of right-wing populist parties as presented in the figure that follows.
2.6 Chapter Summary

The theoretical background has provided critical information that will be used while discussing the growth of the right-wing populist political parties in the Netherlands. In providing some of the ideologies and the theories that are applicable in explaining the political behavior of the political parties and individuals, the section has provided a platform upon which the researcher shall argue and critique the articles that will be used in the narrative reviews. The section has also shown that the growing influence of the right-wing political parties is a phenomenon worthy studying to have a more informed understanding of the dynamics of populism in the Netherlands.
3.0 Materials and Methods

3.1 Introduction
The current study utilized an analysis of secondary sources about the development of right-wing and populist parties in the Netherlands. The choice of the extended literature review as the appropriate methodology was based on the availability of high quality studies that have conducted research in similar areas. The investigator deemed the available data to be sufficient in responding to the research questions. The review of literature was also essential in readily identifying the gaps in completed studies which will be filled by recommending on new ways of understanding the political ideologies of the right-wing political parties in the Netherlands and by extension in Europe. Creswell and Creswell (2017) provide that performing a literature review is suitable while conducting an inquiry into a fragmented topic like the one under consideration in this investigation.

3.2 Methods of Reviewing Literature
Different methods of reviewing literature can be utilized as part of a larger process of completing an investigation or as a stand-alone methodology for conducting a study. The most commonly used strategies for conducting reviews include argumentative, systematic, narrative, theoretical and integrative methods. Machi and McEvoy (2016) contend that the systematic review of literature is a more rigorous and defined method compared to the other forms of reviews. The author further provides that the method is comprehensive and “systematic” as it provides the various stages required when utilizing it. There are two forms of systematic reviews; meta-analysis and meta-synthesis. Meta-synthesis of literature involves the integration, evaluation and interpretation of qualitative studies and follows an inductive approach while the meta-analysis is used when the articles in the review utilized a quantitative design and a deductive approach. The latter approach
seeks to ensure that the patterns and correlations are identified using statistical procedures (Machi and McEvoy 2016).

Varker et al. (2015) provide that another alternative to a systematic review is the Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA). The authors provide that the method utilizes the same approaches and stages as the systematic reviews. The two methods begin by first defining the background to the study, the criteria for including the materials to be reviewed as well as the search strategy. The investigator utilizing the two approaches then completes a critical appraisal of the evidence, presents and synthesizes the results before drawing conclusions (Moher et al. 2015). While the two methods may use a similar approach, they are fundamentally different on the basis of the amount of time taken to complete each of the studies. Harker and Kleijnen (2012) contend that the REA makes critical sacrifices on the strategy for searching the evidence and adopts a less vigorous approach in its depth and breadth. The search in REA is thus made simpler to allow for quick identification of results meaning that fewer databases are consulted and many of the unpublished works are excluded.

Another approach utilized in conducting a review of literature is the argumentative strategy which conducts a selective examination of the available data to either refute or support a particular assumption, viewpoint or problem found in the literature (Moher et al. 2015). However, the approach is prone to bias because of the selective nature of identifying the articles to be included in the review. On the other hand, an integrative review of literature focuses on criticizing and synthesizing secondary information in a given subject with the aim of creating new frameworks and perspectives. Like all other forms of literature review, primary data is neither collected nor analyzed. Another form of literature review is the theoretical strategy which focuses on a specified theory that has been developed over time on a given concept, theory, or hypothesis (Machi and McEvoy 2016). The tactic examines the
current methods and associations between the concepts while seeking to develop new one.

The final form of literature review, the one that was utilized by this analysis, is the narrative review of literature. Moher et al. (2015) argue that narrative reviews of literature are intended to critique and summarize the large body of current data and help in drawing generalizations and conclusion about a specified topic. Newell et al. (2011) contend that the approach is also used in establishing gaps and inconsistencies in the pool of literature and that the focus is not only on adding new dimensions, but also to draw recommendations on the strategies that can inform practice. The choice of the narrative review of literature was also informed by the fact that it enables the investigator to describe new developments in the political scene in the Netherlands and establish the growth of the right-wing politics and ideologies. The focus of the current investigation was not to add new dimensions of the current political trend in the Netherlands; instead, the exploration sought to explore the factors that have contributed to the growth, project the future of the populist parties and understand the impact of the stated growth of the political activities. As scholars (Moher et al. 2015; Newell et al. 2011) have argued, narrative reviews are essential when exploring controversial subjects such as the political activities in the Netherlands and Europe and the somewhat complicated topics and policies advanced by the various political groupings.

The current investigation focuses on producing narratives to explain the growth of populist parties in the Netherlands. However, just like the argumentative review, the selection of the studies to be included in the study is a limiting factor as it presents bias because of the subjective means of identifying the articles. Similarly, the bias may lead to misleading results and conclusions. Another critical point that was observed while synthesizing the evidence was the difficulty of integrating and establishing the major themes
from the highly sophisticated interactions of the political parties’ activities in the Netherlands, from the large pool of the available data.

3.3 Procedures
The current investigation followed a systematic approach in completing the narrative literature review. After identifying the topic to explore, the investigator developed an inclusion and exclusion criteria to determine the studies that will provide the most relevant information to respond to the research questions. The inquiry relied on published data, journal articles and other materials discussing the growth of populist parties in the Netherlands and in Europe. The inquiry also looked at the ideologies espoused by these parties, and the factors that are contributing to their popularity. The identified results were analyzed and presented in themes. The investigator then discussed the themes and drew conclusions and recommendations about the future investigations and what the popularity of these right-wing parties means for the political activities and policies in the Netherlands. In the review, the origins of the populist parties, their growth, the factors influencing their growth, were identified and collated to produce a single document that highlights the trends of the right-wing political movement in the country. Reference is made to the last few elections to determine how the parties performed in comparison with the mainstream political parties.

3.4 Search Strategy
The investigation used materials from the online databases to locate the materials for inclusion in the inquiry. The researcher relied on Google Scholar, JSTOR and EBSCO, information from governmental institutions, professional bodies, established political and communication scholars to identify the required materials for inclusion into the inquiry. Identifying such a large databases allowed easier location of the materials necessary to complete this
review. However, for the very reasons that the internet offers a large pool of data, the researcher sought to reduce the amount of materials to be included and choose the most relevant articles and sources. The investigator developed a search strategy to narrow and enhance the quality of the articles to be included in the review.

The inquiry used both primary and secondary articles that provided information on the growth of populist political parties in the Netherlands. Primary sources are articles providing the original results and findings that include the researcher getting into direct contact with the respondents (Neuman 2013). On the other hand, secondary studies are the articles and materials that review the findings of primary studies with the goal of critiquing, summarizing and interpreting the findings of the primary studies (Neuman 2013). To obtain the materials with the most relevance, a Boolean search was performed where the keywords were combined with operators AND and OR. The key words used in the search include: Right-Wing, Populist, Political Parties, and Netherlands. The table below summarizes the search strategy that was utilized.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Populist Parties</th>
<th>OR</th>
<th>OR</th>
<th>Populism movements Right-Wing Parties</th>
<th>AND</th>
<th>Political Ideology/Policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Right-Wing/Populism growth</td>
<td>AND</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>OR</td>
<td>Dutch Holland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors enhancing the growth</td>
<td>AND</td>
<td>Populism Ideologies</td>
<td>AND</td>
<td>The Netherlands/Dutch/Holland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Utilizing the strategy, the search resulted in 53 articles. However, the number was still large for the current inquiry and as such the investigator developed an inclusion and exclusion criteria to refine the search and identify the most relevant materials. The early review of the articles showed that populism and right-wing political parties and movements may have been mentioned in articles from as early as 1980s, but for this investigation, the effect of the movement in the Netherlands was deemed to have been most visible in the last 20 years. While effort was made to include articles published within the last 10 years, the investigator determined that some articles from as late as the year 2000 contained classical information that was significant in responding to the research questions and these were included. Moreover, the literature review included articles that were only written in English, were empirical, expert opinions and systematic review of literature. Upon using the above criteria, the researcher analyzed the abstracts of the materials to ascertain the relevance of the information to the research question. All articles that did not meet the above outlined criteria were excluded from the review. From the refined search, a total of 15 materials were found to have relevant information for inclusion in the inquest. The figure below summarizes the search results.
Figure 2: Results of the Search Strategy

3.6 Thematic Analysis

The synthesis of the articles was completed with the use of thematic analysis. The strategy depends on the capacity of the investigator to identify, assess and take note of essential patterns present in a specified set of data. Braun and Clarke (2014) contend that the process involves six crucial stages that must be adhered to if the findings are to be objective and valid. The advantage of using thematic analysis as Clarke and Braun (2013) contend is that it is a method and not a methodology indicating that it is founded not on any specific theoretical or epistemological bases. The researcher began by familiarizing with the set of the available data by thoroughly reading the identified documents. Each found article was read by the researcher twice before beginning the second process of generating of essential patterns available in the data. During this stage, the investigator used open coding by starting with line to line ciphering. Using open coding means that the researcher did not start with pre-codes, instead, the codes were developed as the analysis of the content progressed. However, after completing the first stage, ideas of what codes may exist in the data emerged. The use of line coding was meant to adjust and modify the initial codes that occurred during the first stage. In the third stage, as Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas (2013) recommend, the researcher probed the existing patterns and identified the
patterns that captured significant implications about the literature. The investigator was careful to only capture patterns that had relevance to the research questions.

The fourth stage of the thematic analysis that the study utilized was reviewing of all themes from the primary codes that were identified in step three and sought to establish whether they were relevant to the question under considerations. In this step, the investigator was aware not to fit too much data into one single theme and determined that some subthemes could suitably describe a set of findings within a large theme. In the fifth stage, the investigator defined the patterns where the essence of the patterns identified was provided. The relationships existing between the themes were also identified in this stage, before the presentation of the findings in the last stage.

3.7 Conclusion
The materials and methods section is an essential component of conducting an inquiry as it describes the process of completing the various components of the investigation. The current study utilized a narrative literature review to locate sources that are relevant to the growth of populism and right-wing political parties and ideologies in the Netherlands. The search strategy that was used helped narrow down the number of materials to be used in the analysis. Using thematic analysis, the researcher was able to critique and summarize the available data and present the findings as themes. Narrative reviews also allowed the investigator to incorporate recent developments in the politics of populism within the country and larger Europe.
4.0 Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

Over the last two decades, the electoral support for populist parties in many countries in Western Europe has been on the rise. The rapid growth has increased academic attention to the factors that are contributing to popularity of these parties. The radical right-wing ideologies of these parties in the Netherlands have been pushed by the growth of the Freedom Party led by Geert Wilders and before him Pim Fortuyn who was assassinated in 2002. The Forum for Democracy (FvD) led by Thierry Baudet has been gaining significant support in the last two elections. In the chapter, the results of the narrative literature review are presented alongside the analysis. The results are arranged in different themes identified in the various articles that were included in the review.

4.2 The concept of Populism

The reviewed articles indicated a strained effort to describe the origins and meaning of populism. Various authors provided different meanings for the concept showing how it lacks a universal definition (Bakker, Rooduijn and Schumacher 2016; Herkman 2016; Mudde 2004; Van Kessel 2011). For instance, in acknowledging this ill-definition, Van Kessel, (2011) provides criteria for classifying political parties as populist. The criterion which is also evident in the Herkman (2016) study provides that parties are considered populist if they appeal to and utilize the interests of the ordinary citizens and not the elite. In essence, populist political parties must be hostile to the government, which allegedly acts not in the interest of the common citizen. Mudde (2004, p. 543) defines populism “as an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus the ‘corrupt elite’ and which argues that politics should be
an expression of the general will of the people.” Bakker, Rooduijn and Schumacher (2016) argue that populist parties and individuals do not have a distinct way of practicing politics. The authors argue that the populist parties rely on the message that they send to distinguish themselves from other parties. The authors borrow the definition of populism from Mudde (2004) provided above in their analysis. In explaining the meaning of the definition by Mudde (2004), Bakker et al. (2016) contend that the elite are considered as arrogant, corrupt, lazy absorbed by self-protecting interest and less concerned with the ordinary people.

Utilizing the definition provided from the above discussion, populism cannot be considered to be left or right, conservative or progressive; instead, it is combined with a countless number of host ideologies. In the Netherlands, the PVV has been vocal on its message of criticizing the multiculturalism of the elites for compromising the national interests at the benefit of the European Union (Van Gent, Jansen and Smits 2014). Van der Waal, and De Koster (2018) argue that Geert Wilders has consistently utilized populist rhetoric for the last decade to win over support for the party. Indeed, in 2006 election manifesto, the uniting call from the PVV was that the political elites were systematically ignoring the interests of the citizens. Van Kessel (2011) argues that the populist parties are characterized by an antagonistic relationship between the people and the establishment. Like other authors, Van Kessel (2011) provides that many populists are not specific on who their core audience and target is because it is not clear on who belongs to the ‘ordinary people’ group. While populists are not necessarily xenophobic, they usually target immigrants and minority groups (Vossen 2016). The reviewed articles reveal that the populist parties do not only oppose the government or the mainstream parties; instead, they criticize the entire establishment and any other parties that associate with the mainstream political system.
As will be seen later the welfare chauvinism is one of the many ideologies that have dominated populism in the Netherlands and may be responsible for the observed growth of the right-wing parties. In conclusion, despite the challenges of defining populism, the discussion shows that the parties differ from the mainstream political parties because of the message that they send. Rooduijn (2015) provides an explanation that captures many of the reviewed articles ideas and definition of populism and populist parties; that the good citizens are continuously being exploited by the corrupt and evil mainstream parties. All populist parties tend to sell an anti-establishment agenda despite differing in the host ideology (Pauwels 2014; Wejnert 2014). For the current analysis, two parties and personalities will be given importance for their contribution to the populist and right-wing politics in the Netherlands; List Pim Fortuyn and the Freedom Party led by Geert Wilders.

4.3 Electoral Performance of Populist Parties in the Netherlands
In seeking to understand the growth of populism in the Netherlands, the research determined that it is essential to understand the emergence and the performance in election of the populist political parties. The articles reviewed indicated a variety of factors that contributed to the emergence of the populist parties. Some of the factors that were mentioned in a number of the materials included the party system, the electoral system, the media and the political culture (Van Kessel 2011; Lucardie 2008; Bakker et al. 2016; De Koster, Achterberg and Van der Waal 2013; Koopmans and Muis 2009). These aspects are discussed as subthemes in this section.

4.3.1 Availability of political space: Pillarization and Depillarization
The reviewed articles showed that the Dutch political party system is fragmented as a result of pillarization (Bakker et al. 2016; Koopmans and Muis 2009; Lucardie 2008). The term pillarization describes the association of the masses and the political elites through organizations networked by ideologies
For more than a century, no single party in the Netherlands has won an absolute majority because of the production of political parties on the basis of pillars. This case implies such aspects as different religious denominations establishing political parties and persuading the followers to vote for the candidate along the religious lines (Koopmans and Muis 2009; Lucardie 2008; Van Kessel 2011). For the last 70 years, the number of political parties in parliament has ranged between 7 and 14 and this represents an example of pluralism (Lucardie 2008). While the main political parties during the 1950s to 1980s included the Christian Democratic Party, The Labour Party (PvdA) and the Liberal party (VVD), secularization, individualization and depillarization in the 1960s and 70s, led to the erosion of the hegemony of the Christian based political parties (Lucardie 2008), resulting to a non-pillarized public. The rise of a depillarized public grew with the help of media and social movements that refused to commit to specific belief systems. Another factor that is related to the depillarization and how it contributed to the rise of populism in the Netherlands is presented by the argument by Van Kessel, (2011) that the breaking of pillars increased the availability of the electorate. The author argues that pillarization had been responsible for the relative unavailability of the electorate especially after the WWII, meaning that the main political parties and religious organizations were closely knitted. Such pillarization only helped the electorate to vote along the lines of social status and religion.

Beginning with the 1994 elections, the main parties the CDA and the PvdA lost considerable support and seats to the less pillarized parties such as the VVD (Lucardie 2008). The elections saw the first time in the history of the country where two liberal parties formed a coalition government with the social democrats and the Christian Democrats becoming the opposition. One of the notable outcomes of this coalition was the move by the PvdA leader, Wim Kok to shun the ideologies of his party and pursue liberal policies.
(Koopmans and Muis 2009; Lucardie 2008). Among some of the issues that this analysis discovered to have been the outcomes of this change was the reduction of the public debt, privatization of the energy sector, tax breaks for companies and individuals, a liberalized law on same sex marriages and euthanasia.

The review also established that many articles reflected on the growing reduction of the ideological differences in many of the mainstream parties (Lucardie 2008; Van Kessel 2011; Andeweg 2001). Indeed, populism in the Netherlands, as the studies show, has been attempted over the course of the last century with the purpose of breaking pillarization. Moreover, Lucardie (2008) cites a prediction by Jacques Thomassen in 2000 that the populist parties will be the greatest beneficiaries of the growing generalization of ideological positions of the mainstream parties in the Netherlands. Van Kessel, (2011) also cites other predictions that had been made before the rise of Pim Fortuyn in 2002. The author in addition to quoting Jacques Thomassen (2000) recognizes the work of Rudy Andeweg who in a 2001 article provided that the consensus democracy experienced in the Dutch politics would be a perfect ground for increased criticism. While the articles reviewed showed that the rise of populism has been witnessed in the Dutch political system as early as in the 1920s, it was in the 21st century that the most notable influence of the rise against establishment was felt with the rise of Pim Fortuyn (Lucardie 2008; van Ostaijen and Scholten 2014). Van Kessel, (2011) contended that the failure of the main political parties to recognize the issues affecting society, gave room for an alternative force to challenge their authority and narrative. Populist parties take this failure and use it to sell an anti-establishment message. As is discussed in the following sub section, pillarization had been the root cause of anti-establishment message, but other factors including the media kept this message stronger and resonated with a majority of the people.
4.3.2 The Role of the Media

Media is an essential player in not only informing the public of the political developments in a country, but also shaping opinions (Rooduijn, 2014). As a critical institution, some media organizations had been pillarized and hence once the pillars were broken, such institutions lost relevance together with the substantive influence they yielded (Lucardie 2008; Rooduijn, 2015). The emergence of new media, expansion of TV stations and the increasing interference of government in the broadcasting operations only helped reduce the popularity of the pillarized media outlets (Rooduijn, 2014). With the increasing commercialization and competition among the media houses, the focus of many media institutions has been on controversial themes, not supporting the ideologies of the mainstream political parties (Rooduijn 2015). The deliberate actions of avoiding the ideological core of the parties and focusing on trending events and notable and charismatic personalities has been utilized by the populist parties of the 21st century to a great benefit (Bakker et al. 2016; Lucardie 2008; Van Kessel 2011; Rooduijn 2015). Rooduijn (2015) contends that political opportunities and potential for success in elections are shaped by the public opinion. However, for this to happen, the visibility in the media for the main personalities representing these parties, plays a significant role in increasing the popularity of the party.

Many of the reviewed articles discussed how the media shaped and presented Pim Fortuyn and how that portrayal shaped the performance in the elections (Lucardie 2008; Van Kessel 2011; Rooduijn 2014). Rooduijn (2015) established that the increased media attention and the resulting reactions from the public were crucial factors that explained his claim of the political space in the Netherlands. Lucardie (2008) and Van Kessel (2011) contend that Pim Fortuyn was successful in increasing medial visibility and consonance, which helped in making stronger impressions to the public. The authors agree that
the nature of leadership of the populist parties is essential in ensuring a breakthrough. However, if they are to remain relevant as Norris (2005) and Van Kessel (2011) argue, persistence through party organization is essential.

4.3.3 Leadership Styles of Populist Leaders

Bakker, et al. (2016) chose to analyze the personality of the people who support the populism parties and established that the congruency principle, where the citizens tend to choose politicians whose characteristics match their own, was relevant. In this case, the congruence could be found in the message communicated by a populist and the personality of the voter. The sharing of information from the party is essential in enabling the voters to make a connection between the party and their own traits. Rooduijn (2015) agrees with this assertion by arguing that people who vote for the populist radical right (PRR) align with the ideological stances of the parties, which include the nativist outlook. Bakker et al. (2016) quotes the work of Caprara and Zimbardo (2004) which established that one of the most effective skills for successful politicians is speaking and touching on the issues of personality. The skills require the politician to convey the individual characteristics that are more appealing to a specified public at a specified time. The indication from the Bakker et al. (2016) and Rooduijn (2015) assertion is that for many supporters in the Netherlands who align with populism, the structure, content and symbols of the populist message is congruent with their personality traits. However, for such a message to have a meaningful effect on the public, the characteristics and style of the leaders communicating the message is critical.

According to Mudde (2014) the leadership of political parties was an essential component for the breakthrough of the right wing populist parties. However, the parties must have a leadership and an organization plan beyond the breakthrough period if they are to remain relevant. Some authors have
suggested that the decline of the List Pim Fortuyn was associated with the lack of internal discipline and organization especially after the assassination of the founder (Vossen 2010; Mudde, 2014; Van Kessel 2011). In analyzing the leadership of populist leaders after the death of Fortuyn, Vossen (2010, 2016) feels strongly that Geert Wilders has been more successful, or seen to have succeeded in remaining relevant in the Dutch politics because of his consistency to the populism ideology. Rooduijn (2015) also contributes that most PRR parties rely on the charismatic traits of a leader to enhance their message and grow their relevance. The leaders, according to Rooduijn (2015) should understand their tasks internally and externally. While leadership is essential in all parties including the mainstream, the latter’s solid bases means they can survive even with shortcomings in the leadership. The significance of charismatic leadership can be seen in Dutch politics when Pim Fortuyn left the newly formed Livable Netherlands in 2001 and formed the List Pim Fortuyn in 2002. The new outfit gained substantial support in the 2002 elections and made its debut to parliament by winning 26 seats (Vossen 2016). On the other hand, Livable Netherlands failed badly after the departure of Fortuyn, further highlighting the significance of a leader in populist parties. The elections called a year after, the LPF lost support and only managed 8 seats and won no seat in the 2006 elections when the Party for Freedom under Geert Wilders had positioned itself as the populist successor (Van Kessel 2011). Lucardie (2008) provides that the success of List Pim Fortuyn in the elections was down to the “flamboyant personality, dandyism and provocative statements” that set him apart from other politicians in the Dutch political space.

4.4 The Ideological Bases of Populist Parties

Another significant theme that was identified in the studies relates to the ideology that the populist political parties take. As already explained, the populist parties tend to take an anti-establishment position that criticizes almost everything that the establishment promotes. However, there are critical
aspects that populism has managed to promote in the Netherlands. These are discussed in this theme.

4.4.1 Immigration and Euroscepticism

The reviewed articles identified common trends in populist parties on issues related to immigration and dislike for the European Union (Lucardie 2008; Rooduijn 2015). In the run up to the 2002 Dutch elections, most of the issues that were being discussed included insecurity and the increase in the crime rates and lack of investments in healthcare. These areas had been, according to journalists and the citizens, neglected by the governing coalition. Kleinnijenhuis et al. (2003) as cited in Lucardie (2008) established that the media was focused on highlighting the failure of the coalition government as opposed to presenting the achievements. The outstanding feature that the populists targeted was linking the rising crime rates and insecurity to immigrants. A significant number of the native populists continuously expressed their despsisal for Islam, migration and multiculturalism (Lucardie 2008). The available evidence indicates that a majority of the Dutch Muslims are immigrant workers mainly from Turkey, Morocco, Surinam and Indonesia with smaller numbers originating from Somalia, Iraq and Iran. The statistics indicating that the Muslim population from 0.4% of the total Dutch population in 1971 to 6% in 2006 led to attempts to pillarize Islam by forming political parties, constructing schools and organizing along religious lines (Lucardie 2008). While the growth cannot be considered significant, a majority of the people felt that the attempts to pillarize the country were uncalled for and hence their public disdain for the Muslim and immigrants in general. At the helm of attacking the actions of immigrants and especially the Muslims was the maverick Pim Fortuyn (Lucardie 2008). While he attacked Islam on his columns at first, Fortuyn published an entire book, Against the Islamization of our culture in 2001 showing how determined he was with selling the anti-
multiculturalism agenda. Fortuyn was concerned with a more restrictive immigration policy where immigrants are assimilated into the Dutch culture.

Studies have also indicated that Euroscepticism is an essential factor in the growing rise of populism in the Netherlands and Europe at large (Koopmans and Muis 2009; Lucardie 2008; Rooduijn 2015). Rooduijn (2015) cites the works of such scholars as Arzheimer (2009) and Werts et al. (2012) who contradict the moderate messages communicated by the mainstream parties with the extreme messages of the populist parties against the integration of Europe. Indeed, voters that are skeptic about Europe are more likely to support the parties that promote the Euroscepticism agenda (Koopmans and Muis 2009). One such leader was Pim Fortuyn who was opposed to the idea of a federal Europe by arguing that it would lack a soul (Fortuyn 1997) as quoted in Lucardie (2008).

4.4.2 Welfare Populism
Closely related to immigration is the traditionally sensitive and politically relevant issue of the welfare state. The studies have shown that populist parties in Europe have sought to build their economic agendas based on the welfare state alongside the nativist and cultural agendas (Banting 2010; De Koster, Achterberg and Van der Waal 2013; Van Kessel 2011). The parties focus more on the needs of the common citizens as opposed to the redistribution of the wealth from the rich to the poor that has been the focus point for the traditional right-wing political parties. For the background, it is understood that most European countries have adopted welfare to be available to all people irrespective of their origins. However, the new rightist populist political parties have shown a desire to criticize this stance and only make welfare available to the natives (Banting 2010; De Koster et al. 2013). Indeed, De Koster et al. (2013) argue that some countries have already succeeded in excluding immigrants from welfare entitlements. The stance that welfare benefits should
be a preserve of the native is consistent with the agenda that is supported by the right-wing populist parties (De Koster et al. 2013). However, as discussed earlier, the citizen support for the populist parties is explained by the people feeling and experiencing their personalities in the leadership of the parties. In other words, the populist parties attract a section of the population because these people see their feelings and personalities in the message sent by the parties and their leaderships.

De Koster et al. (2013) argue that similar sentiments about the welfare entitlements are common among the public. The natives in the European countries feel that unemployed, elderly and handicapped populations are more entitled to welfare benefits than the immigrants (Lucardie 2008). The result of opposing the distribution of resources to immigrants and redeployment of resources from the rich to the poor has resulted to ‘welfare chauvinism’ phrase according to Van der Waal et al. (2010) as cited in De Koster et al. (2013). The welfare chauvinists support the redistribution of resources, but only to natives. The studies above support the notion that welfare chauvinism might explain why the new populism parties are gaining support as no other parties have combined this to great effect. The populist parties have used the anti-establishment message alongside the welfare chauvinism stance to criticize the government and the state of welfare despite upholding some egalitarianism ideologies which De Koster et al. (2013) calls ‘welfare populism’.

4.5 Chapter Summary
The current chapter has provided the results and analysis of the identified articles. The findings, arranged according to themes, illustrate the factors that have contributed to the growth of the populist parties in the Netherlands. As the results show, the factors can be grouped into structural and ideological. The structural factors involve the failure of the mainstream political parties to address some of the relevant issues affecting the people and hence the right-
wing populist parties take the small window and exploit if for their own gain. The fall of pillarization has also contributed to the decline of commitment of individuals to any particular party meaning more people are free to choose what they consider as the party that best represents their interests. Despite the external factors, internal factors of the parties also play a role in the growth of the parties. Such factors having charisma from the party leadership is essential in attracting a following. Effective use of the new and emergent media, which is depillarized through commercialization, has helped the populist parties to find more airtime to broadcast their message. Despite the relative short life time of such parties, it is evident that populism and right wing politics and ideologies will continue to have an impact in the Dutch politics. The next chapter will provide the conclusion and impact of the findings that have been explained in this chapter.
5.0 Conclusion

The inquiry was guided by two research questions:

1. What factors prompt Dutch people to create and support right-wing populist parties in the Netherlands?
2. What is the role of immigration, multiculturalism and welfare in the development of right-wing populist parties in the Netherlands?

From the analysis, the two questions have been answered from this review. For the first research question, the investigation has shown that the development of right-wing and populist parties is necessitated by the structural factors inherent within the Dutch political system. For instance, the depillarization resulting from secularization and individualism increased the number of political parties and reduced the commitments that people had towards the mainstream parties. The pillarized media was affected by the commercialization effects and many of the media outlets stopped aligning to specific ideological positions of the parties and focused on the individuals. The review also indicated the growing rapprochement of ideologies of the mainstream political parties was sufficient ground for the establishment of populist parties. Finally, the political history of parties forming coalition government for failure to register absolute majority in elections continues to ensure that the political space is fragmented.

The second question was equally handled and answered from the analysis. The three components (immigration, multiculturalism and welfare) have close relationships. Immigration has been an issue of debate in the Dutch politics in both the mainstream and the populist parties. However, the two sides take different ideological positions with populists favoring stringent regulations to curb the number of immigrants entering the Netherlands. In contrast, the mainstream parties take on a less strict position and encourage a liberal
approach. The inquiry has shown that populist parties are opposed to multiculturalism and support a nativism agenda where all people, including immigrants are required to adapt to the Dutch way of life. Moreover, the populist parties support a nativism approach towards the distribution of welfare and propose that only native Dutch citizens should benefit from state welfare. On the contrary, the mainstream parties propose that all individuals should benefit from the welfare. The review established that the failure to find a crucial solution for the three controversial issues has led to increased growth of the populist parties. Many supporters of the populist parties believe that immigration leads to reduced economic growth and the resources available to the natives.

Having reviewed the various articles and provided the theoretical background upon which the study was founded, this section is concerned with establishing a relationship between the two sections. The theoretical background looked into the role of rational choice theory in informing the choice of populist political parties among the voters in the Netherlands. Equally, the section identified the function of the behavioralism theoretical foundation for the observed political and electoral success of right-wing populism in the Dutch political systems. In the results chapter, a number of themes were identified and analyzed regarding their contribution to the understanding of the growth of populism in the Netherlands.

The rational choice theory explains the ability of people to make their personal choices depending on what they think provides the highest meaning to their lives. The citizenry is constantly gaining the capacity to make personalized and distinct decisions as a result of a combination of factors including the improvement in the literacy levels. The investigation into the voting behavior and what prompts individuals to vote for the populist parties in the Netherlands and by extension in Europe, established that a good number of citizens are
making individualize decisions to support the parties because it reflects their own personalities. It was established that the mainstream parties have been reluctant to address some of the key issues that the ‘common man’ feel are important. Such structural failures continue to frustrate the citizenry who then find a party that resonates with their thinking. The review also indicated that the rational choice made by the citizens may have been influenced by other factors external to their understanding of the political system. Indeed, the theory itself is based on selecting the most effective actions from a variety of choices. In providing the choices, the media plays a significant role in exposing and presenting the positions of the antagonist parties to the populations.

Explaining the behavioralism theory and its applicability in the Dutch politics was also identified in this study. Behavioralism is based on elitist, institutional and pluralist approaches in explaining the behavior of the voters. The review of literature indicated that most populist parties favor political ideologies and policies that are focused on nativism. The skepticism of the right-wing parties towards the federalization of Europe is an example of preferring nationalism and nativism. Besides, the research has also indicated that populists prefer more stringent rules on immigration to control the number of immigrants entering into the Netherlands. The argument proposed by the populists is that immigration is responsible for the straining of the resources of the natives and as a result reducing the rates of economic growth. Surprisingly, the parties also hold that the distribution of wealth should be to the needy natives and that immigrants should not enjoy the benefits of welfare. The stand led to the establishment of a welfare populism phrase which defines the support of egalitarian politics while also rooting for nativism and opposing multiculturalism by the new elitist parties.
Behavioralism is also based on the elitist and institutional techniques and how they influence support for populist parties. In the Netherlands, and indeed, in other countries, populist parties rely on selling the anti-establishment message to the masses. Such a message seeks to provoke the political elites who are considered as evil and corrupt with less focus on the needs of the common man, while the populist parties present themselves as political outsiders focusing on safeguarding the interest of the common citizens. The review also indicated that the structural depillarization of Dutch politics led to reduced commitment and support for the mainstream parties. The media, which was also highly pillarized, was forced to change tactic and focus on covering individuals and notable events as opposed to supporting the political ideologies of the parties. The populist parties capitalized on this structural change in the political system to capture the media space and especially of the new media that is highly commercialized, to sell the anti-establishment message. At the core of the media success of the parties are charismatic leaders that are able to sway undecided individuals with a single episode of talk-show. Such leaders as Pim Fortuyn and Geert Wilders relied on the social media and flamboyant communication of their messages to gain support.

The findings of this analysis have gathered critical evidence from various studies to highlight the factors that are contributing to the growing populism in the Netherlands. The study has established that while the success cannot be called phenomenal, there is need to focus on the trend of the rightist movements and how they may influence the Dutch community. It is not beyond imagination that sooner or later, a right-wing populist government will be a reality. The study recommends that more empirical studies are needed to understand the ideologies of the parties further and hence predict what such governments may look like when they come to power.
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