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Which Dimensions Are Related to Populist Attitudes: An Educational View Based on a Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract: In the last decade, we have witnessed increasing knowledge production on populism at the level of individuals. However, the systematization of these studies' conclusions is still scarce. There is also little research on the relationship between populism and education. Based on a systematic literature review, this article contributes to this by first focusing on what studies have revealed about the relationship between populist attitudes and socioeconomic, political, emotional characteristics and media-related preferences. Based on predefined criteria and a double-screening process, our literature search led to the selection of 68 studies focused on populist attitudes. The analysis of these articles enables us to understand that populist attitudes (i) are influenced by socioeconomic characteristics; (ii) have a nuanced relationship with politics; (iii) are driven by emotional dimensions; and (iv) are associated with diverse views about the media and media consumption preferences. We discuss the main findings of this systematic literature review and point out possible educational responses to individual populist standpoints according to their various causes, particularly in terms of the role of political and media education.

Keywords: education; populism; populist attitudes; systematic literature review

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1. Theoretical Introduction: Ideational Approach, Studies on the Demand Side of Populism, and the Need for an Educational Perspective

In recent years, the world has witnessed a "perfect storm" [1]—combined economic, media, political, and social crises [2,3]—that has opened doors for the (re)emergence and intensification of populism. As Mudde [4] (p. 281) notes, we are witnessing the "age of populism".

At the same time, the literature points to the contested nature of the definition of populism [5]. Therefore, to study the phenomenon, it is necessary to start with a clear definition that delimits its boundaries [6,7]. Some authors define populism as a political discourse [8,9], a political strategy [10], or a discursive and stylistic repertoire [1], while others adopt a sociocultural approach [11]. Despite the important contributions of these approaches, they overlook the importance of understanding how populist ideas are disseminated among citizens. Thus, we define populism as a thin ideology that sees society as divided into two (intra) homogeneous and (inter) antagonistic groups—the 'pure' people as opposed to the corrupt (economic, media, political) elite—and that emphasizes that political decisions should be the expression of the will/sovereignty of the people [12–14]. This view of populism is not without critics (see, for example, [15,16]). Nevertheless, we believe that the definition of populism as a thin ideology potentiates a theoretical and empirical approach to the phenomenon that allows us to understand how populist attitudes are spread and the conditions under which they tend to be activated [7,13,17]. This ideational approach [12,14,18,19] served as the theoretical basis for the creation of scales to measure people's agreement with the constituent elements of the populist worldview. The first was

proposed by Hawkins and colleagues [20] and further modified and popularized by Akkerman and colleagues [21]. Several versions are currently proposed in the literature [22–24], and their validity and distinctiveness have been demonstrated [25]. Recent studies have, therefore, focused more on the so-called demand side of populism, that is, on both the populist attitudes of people [26,27] and the electorate of populist parties [28,29]. Yet, it should be noted that these are two different dimensions, even though they are inextricably linked [30,31]. The electorate of populist parties does not consist only of people with populist attitudes, nor do people with high levels of populist attitudes only vote for populist parties. Moreover, we must consider that populist attitudes are not merely old wine in new bottles [32] (p. 247) as they are different from political trust and external political efficacy.

There has been an intense production of knowledge on populism at the level of individuals [6,33]. However, despite the importance of making sense of the existing literature on populist attitudes—agreement with the ideas of anti-elitism, people-centrism, and the homogeneity of people [22,34]—and of the electorate of populist parties, the systematization of these studies is still scarce [35]. This article contributes to this by focusing on what research has revealed about the relationship between populist attitudes and socioeconomic, political, emotional characteristics and media-related preferences.

In addition, populism has been studied using interdisciplinary approaches involving different social science fields (political science and sociology, among others) [36]. Nevertheless, there is a paucity of theoretical and empirical research that seeks to understand the possible responses of education, namely formal educational contexts, that could mitigate the adherence to populist appeals [37–39]. As Giroux [40] points out, the question of what role education should play in democracy is even more urgent today. Populism poses challenges to contemporary democracies that are not exclusively or primarily educational. This does not mean that it does not have clear educational implications [41] and that it does not pose various challenges to educational contexts [42]. We are aware that the relationship between populism and education is a complex issue that requires in-depth reflection and research. We also agree with Cino Pagliarello and colleagues [43] (p. 24) that there is a need for "more research efforts [. . .] to understand the affective mechanisms through which populism operates [and this] research should adopt an educational angle to help to create learning materials that can be adapted and widely used". This article attempts to contribute to this by reflecting on possible educational responses that could curb the political, affective, and media mechanisms that drive the spread of populist attitudes based on a theoretical framework constructed through a systematic literature review (SLR).

The following section presents the procedure employed in our SLR. We describe the pre-defined criteria and the double screening process that allowed for the selection of papers. We then present the results of the SLR on populist attitudes. Finally, the main findings of the SLR are discussed, particularly how political and media education can be a remedy to mitigate individual populist standpoints according to their various causes.

2. Methodology

An SLR is the most appropriate option for organizing and making sense of the vast literature that has built up on populism at the individual level. Indeed, it is a methodological process that allows for the identification and in-depth understanding of existing knowledge on a given topic [44,45].

The SLR we developed followed the PRISMA-P protocol. This protocol supports the transparent description of systematization [46]. We only included articles published (or under early access) in peer-reviewed journals written in English, Portuguese, or Spanish. Furthermore, we restricted the search to empirical studies employing quantitative methods published since 2010. Table 1 details the reasons for these choices, explaining the inclusion criteria adopted for the SLR.

Table 1. Inclusion criteria for the SLR; source: own elaboration.

Inclusion Criteria	Rationale
Type of publication: articles published in peer-reviewed journals (or under early access)	We believe the peer review process contributes to the scientific quality of manuscripts. We have, therefore, excluded publications that have not been subjected to this type of scientific arbitration (e.g., conference proceedings and technical reports). We also decided not to include books or book chapters.
Publication period: from 2010 to 2021	Over the past decade, the world has witnessed a rising wave of populism that has impacted electoral outcomes in several countries [47]. As a result, academic attention to this phenomenon has increased, especially since 2010 [6,33].
Language: English, Portuguese, or Spanish	Many studies are published in English. This is justified because it facilitates the wide dissemination of the knowledge produced. We have also included texts written in Portuguese and Spanish. These are also important languages from southern countries, namely Latin America, where research on populism is recurrent.
Methodological type of publication: only empirical quantitative studies	As Marcos-Marne and colleagues [35] point out, studies on populism at the individual level have predominantly used quantitative approaches.

The search was conducted across four databases: Web of Science (WoS), Scopus, EBSCO, and Scielo. Many international journals from different areas are indexed in these databases. Data collection took place in November 2021. The search was carried out on the articles' titles, abstracts, and keywords using the formula: "populism OR populists AND survey OR questionnaire OR instrument". A total of 1169 articles were identified. Following the screening steps proposed by Xiao and Watson [45], we eliminated duplicated articles (n = 455). We analyzed the remaining articles' titles, abstracts, and keywords in the second screening step. At this stage, the articles that did not meet the above inclusion criteria were excluded (n = 407). The final selection of papers was made following an analysis of the methodology section and the sections devoted to the presentation and discussion of the results.

The main objective of this SLR was to access the dimensions most closely related to populism at the level of individuals, i.e., to people's adherence to populist ideas and their voting for populist parties. We were therefore interested in texts that examined people's populist attitudes and the electorate of populist parties. Based on that, studies were excluded when (i) it was not possible to access the full text; (ii) they were not relevant to answering the objectives of the review (e.g., texts that do not address people's agreement with populist attitudes or the electorate of populist parties); or (iii) they did not demonstrate the quality of the instruments used (e.g., the absence of psychometric information on the scales used). This third screening resulted in 151 articles being included in the SLR. In addition, we included 11 manuscripts that we considered relevant to the scope of this systematic review. These articles were either derived from previous searches in other databases or their subsequent identification from the texts read during the systematic review process. We ensured that these papers met the established inclusion criteria. Figure 1 details the process of the selection and analysis of these articles.

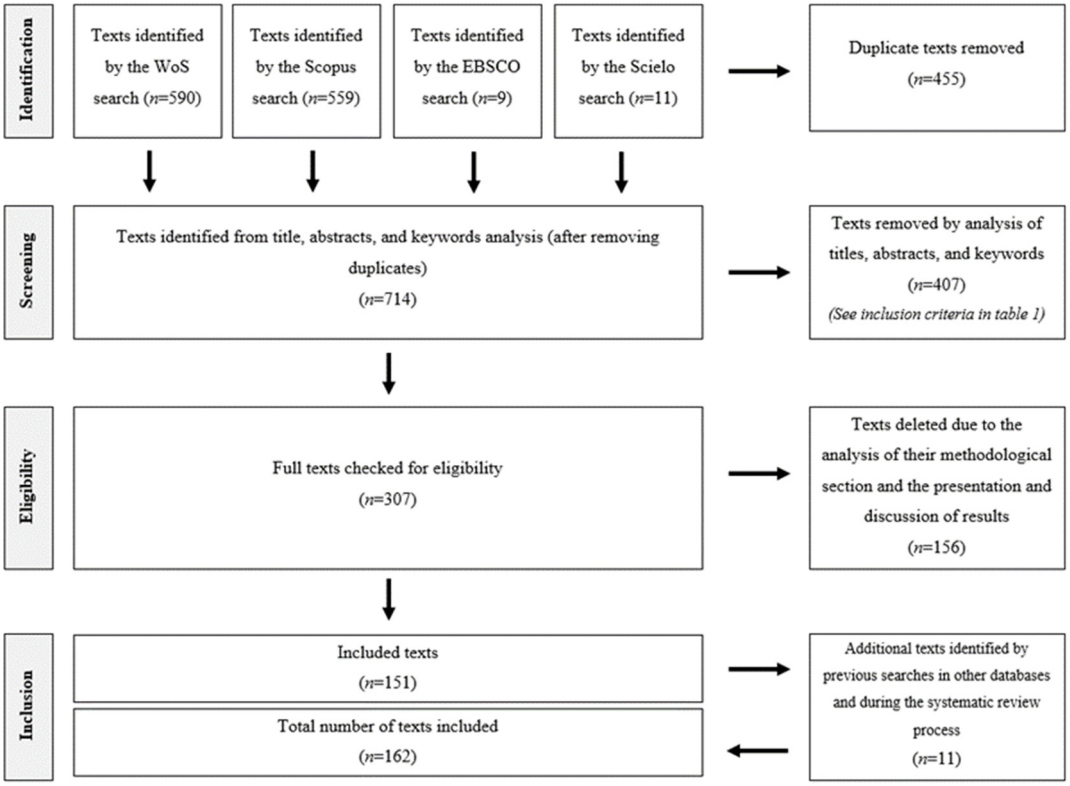

Figure 1. Process of analysis and selection of articles.

The unit of analysis of this SLR is the statistically significant results of the studies considered [44], which were subsequently analyzed qualitatively to respond to the stated objectives. In this article, we use the results of the SLR to reflect on possible educational responses to curb the spread of populist attitudes at the mass level. Thus, we will focus only on studies of citizens' populist attitudes.

3. Results: The Relationship between Populist Attitudes and Socioeconomic, Political, Emotional, and Media Dimensions

Of the 162 articles analyzed, 68 focus on populist attitudes. Our selection includes only four papers published between 2010 and the end of 2016. After that year, the number of publications increased, especially after 2019, reaching 6 in 2017, 4 in 2018, 9 in 2019, 18 in 2020, and 27 by November 2021.

Most of the studies (forty-five) analyze only the populist attitudes of European citizens. Other articles look at populist attitudes outside Europe: six studies are on Asian countries (e.g., [48,49]), five on the United States of America (USA) (e.g., [50,51]), two on Turkey [52,53], one on Canada [54], and one on Australia [55]. In addition, four studies simultaneously analyzed populist attitudes in European countries and the USA (e.g., [56,57]). Finally, four articles examine citizens' populist attitudes in different geographical contexts: Kaltwasser and Van Hauwaert [26] analyze European and Latin American countries; Erisen and colleagues [58] look simultaneously at the Italian and Turkish contexts; Hawkins and colleagues [59] focus on people from Greece and Chile; and Kefford and Ratcliff [60] analyze populist attitudes in the United Kingdom, USA, and Australia.

The analysis of these manuscripts enabled us to understand that populist attitudes (i) are influenced by socioeconomic characteristics; (ii) have a nuanced relationship with politics; (iii) are driven by emotional dimensions; and (iv) are associated with diverse views about media and media consumption preferences. We present the results of the SLR through a segmented analysis to provide a better understanding of these different relationships.

3.1. The Influence of Socioeconomic Characteristics

Overall, the literature suggests that older people have higher levels of populist attitudes [26,54,61–63]. Only Roccato and colleagues [64] found that young Italian people are more prone to populist ideas.

Regarding gender, studies tend to show that men express higher levels of populist attitudes [26,49,54,61,65].

The research reveals a link between populist attitudes and a lower economic status: it is people with lower economic capital that have higher levels of populist attitudes [30,54,61–63,66–68].

Cumulatively, we can see the importance of educational capital in populist attitudes. In general, the studies point to the fact that people with lower levels of education are more likely to have populist attitudes [26,30,54,61–64,69,70].

Other studies suggest that adherence to populist ideas is also related to people's religiosity [53,68] and living in rural and semi-rural areas [26,68].

3.2. Its Nuanced Relationship with Political Dimensions

The literature shows that populist attitudes—the demand that politics should be people-centered, with an emphasis on political differences between 'the people' and 'the elite' [22,34]—are more common at both extremes of the left–right ideological continuum [26,63,71]. Indeed, citizens with populist attitudes tend to vote for left-wing or right-wing parties with populist rhetoric [21,24,28,53,59,60,63,66,72–75].

However, regarding political positions, research highlights the relationship between populism and political conservatism. In the Italian context, Miglietta and Loera [76] point to a positive association between populist attitudes and the values of tradition, conformity, and security. Support for populist ideas is also linked to an opposition to more equitable economic distributions [69,73] and anti-immigration and nationalist views [66,69,71,73,74,77,78].

At the same time, the literature has examined the role of other political dimensions in populist attitudes, which introduces a more nuanced understanding of populism. Studies show that people with populist attitudes are dissatisfied with the current functioning of democracy [26,49,54,63,64]. Nevertheless, this does not mean that these people are enemies of democracy per se: some research points out that populist citizens support the democratic political system [26,31], while other studies argue that people who adhere to populism are antidemocratic [79,80].

Moreover, the research shows that people with populist attitudes have diverse relationships with politics. The conclusions of studies on the relationship between a support of populist ideas and climate denialism are not unanimous. In the USA, Myrick and Comfort [51] conclude that adherence to populist ideas is a positive predictor of support for measures to tackle the climate change problem. In contrast, Huber and colleagues [50] indicate that citizens who support the populist candidate of the Alt-right (Donald Trump) are less concerned about climate change and less supportive of mitigation policies. Jylhä and Hellmer [81] find a weak positive correlation between the populist attitudes of Swedish citizens and climate change denial. When it comes to an interest in politics, the literature has also shown mixed results: some studies conclude that people with populist attitudes are politically engaged [26,54,61,63], while other studies show that the populist attitudes of individuals are negatively correlated to their interest in politics [30,62].

Populist citizens are both alienated from politics and critical of it. Studies suggest that people who are less knowledgeable about politics [69] and do not identify with any political party [26,63,82] are more likely to have populist attitudes. Spruyt and colleagues [30] show that perceptions of a weak responsiveness of the political system (low external political efficacy) are associated with a higher adherence to populism. Indeed, citizens with populist attitudes are dissatisfied and distrustful of institutional politics [30,58,70,83,84] and assess supranational institutions negatively [63,69,78].

The literature also points to the importance of feelings of relative deprivation within the adherence to populism. People who see themselves as belonging to a group that is mistreated because resources are poorly distributed in society tend to report higher levels of populist attitudes [30,69,73,85–87].

Interestingly, Anduiza and colleagues [88], analyzing data from nine European countries, find that people with populist attitudes are civically and politically engaged. Furthermore, research shows that populist citizens support people-centered forms of political engagement, such as referendums and deliberative forms of participation [31,89–91].

3.3. The Boosting Effect of Emotional Variables

The literature that was reviewed shows that emotional dimensions, especially negative emotions, drive populist attitudes.

First, anger appears to be one of the emotions most closely connected to the support of populist ideas. In Spain, Rico and colleagues [92] show that feelings of anger are consistently positively associated with populist attitudes, while no significant relationship emerges for expressions of fear. Similarly, Rhodes-Purdy and colleagues [77] conclude that populism appeals more to angry American citizens and that the role of fear is more difficult to prove empirically. The results of Gaffney and colleagues' [87] study also support the idea that anger—in this case, relative prototypical anger (people's perception that their own group's anger is representative of other American citizens' anger)—is associated with higher levels of populist attitudes.

Research also explores the role of other emotions in the adherence to populism. Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, Abadi and colleagues [93] found that, in addition to anger at government actions in four European countries, anxiety is also positively related to populist attitudes. Support for populist ideas is also associated with dissatisfaction with the current state of the country: (i) citizens who feel culturally and economically threatened by the arrival of immigrants tend to have a more populist orientation [64], while (ii) feelings of collective nostalgia (valuing traditional customs and values and the country's glorious past) have a significantly positive relationship with populist attitudes [53].

Some studies examine the impact of citizens' psychological characteristics on their populist attitudes. This research shows an ambivalent association: authoritarianism is positively associated with endorsing populist ideas, while a socially dominant orientation and system justification tendencies are negatively correlated [74,94]. Vasilopoulos and Jost [94] also examine the role of the Big Five personality traits and found (i) a significant positive relationship between populist attitudes and an openness to new experiences and conscientiousness and (ii) that neuroticism is negatively associated with the support of populist ideas.

Furthermore, populist attitudes seem linked to conspiracy beliefs [58,74]. Indeed, populist citizens tend to believe in conspiracy theories [95], namely about COVID-19 [83,93], and deny scientific evidence [81].

3.4. Its Relationship with Diverse Views about the Media and Media Consumption

The literature has explored the relationship between adherence to populism and different views about the media and media consumption. In this regard, studies show that populist citizens are the most distrustful and dissatisfied with traditional media, perceiving them as part of a detached elite that neglects the people's interests [96–98]. Schulz and colleagues [99] similarly point out that Western Europeans with more populist attitudes are most hostile to traditional media. Fawzi and Mothes [100] also conclude that populist attitudes are associated with more negative perceptions of traditional media's performance in Germany.

As a result of this "anti-media populism" [101], it would be expected that citizens who support populist ideas would opt for more personalized sources of information tailored to their interests, such as social media. Nevertheless, the research shows mixed results on the media diet of populists.

Some authors confirm the assumption of a natural alliance between populism and tabloids [96] and online news outlets [98]. Müller and Schulz [102] show that German citizens with populist attitudes are more likely to use alternative media as a source of information. Hameleers and colleagues [69] state that Dutch citizens who read more tabloids and fewer quality newspapers have significantly stronger exclusionary populist attitudes. In contrast, Stier and colleagues [103] reveal that American and European populist citizens still get their news primarily from traditional media, despite using various news sources.

Indeed, most studies indicate that people who support populist ideas are simultaneous consumers of new and traditional media. Cremonesi and colleagues [104] find that the consumption of political information, mainly from television, information websites, and social media, is significantly associated with populist attitudes. Schulz [56] shows that populist citizens get information about political issues from tabloid newspapers, commercial TV news, and Facebook. Schumann and colleagues [105] also conclude that populist attitudes are related to using television and social media to receive political news.

Another focus of the research is to examine the relationship between the support for populism and different social media dimensions.

The conclusions about the role of users' continued exposure to political views identical to their own—due to algorithmic personalization through 'filter bubbles' [106,107] and their permanence in echo chambers [108]—are ambiguous: some studies show that populist attitudes are negatively associated with the perceived homogeneity of political information exposure on Facebook [95], while Bos and colleagues [79] find that users with stronger populist attitudes are more intolerant of opposing views online.

The impact of an exposure to populist messages on these digital platforms has also been studied. Hameleers and Schmuck [109] show that posts with populist messages have the potential to reinforce users' populist attitudes if they sympathize with and trust the sender. Otherwise, this content reduces citizens' agreement with populist ideas. Similarly, Müller and colleagues [62] suggest that a higher dose of exposure to online populist news coverage enhances prior agreement or disagreement with populism.

Moreover, Cremonesi and colleagues [104] conclude that receiving political information through political satire posts (such as memes) positively and significantly affects populist attitudes. Jeroense and colleagues [110] state that Dutch populist citizens are more likely to use social media actively, i.e., react to political content.

4. Discussion: Possible Educational Responses to the Spread of Populist Attitudes

Kaltwasser and Van Hauwaert [26] argue that research should not underestimate the expression of populism in the population. Moreover, as Mudde and Kaltwasser [7] (p. 20) warned, it is essential not to ignore the existing body of knowledge when studying populism. In line with Marcos-Marne and colleagues [35], we identify the dimensions most connected to populist attitudes. First, we recognize a gap in our work, in that the articles analyzed were collected at the end of 2021. As the global rise of populism shows no signs of abating, we must acknowledge that this timeline makes it impossible to analyze several more recent manuscripts. Throughout this discussion, however, we point out that recent studies corroborate our SLR's main findings. Therefore, we believe that our study is still up to date. Moreover, the fact that the literature analyzed uses different scales to measure populist attitudes and that sampling techniques are heterogeneous, means that a more careful interpretation of the results obtained in this systematic review is required. Finally, including the extensive literature on populism found in books and book chapters could make our sample more exhaustive. Recognizing these limitations, we argue that this work contributes to the field: It allows for a better understanding of the existing knowledge on populism at the level of individuals, contributing to expand the yet scarce systematizationof the research in this field. In addition, this SLR helps develop observation tools based on the literature. Specifically, it was essential to inform the construction of a survey that examines adherence to populism and its relationship with different relevant dimensions in

an understudied context, such as Portugal [111]. Finally, this work has made it possible to identify a series of conclusions capable of stimulating reflection on possible educational responses to the political, affective, and media mechanisms that seem to drive populism at the individual level, adding to the "(. . .) little work has been done in the intersectional fields of populism and education" [41] (p. 3).

First, at the socioeconomic level, recent research confirms that those with higher levels of populist attitudes tend to be older, male, more economically disadvantaged, and less educated [112–114].

Regarding politics, our SLR's findings underline the ambivalent way in which support for populism relates to democracy [13,34]. The literature reviewed and other studies reveal that populist attitudes are associated with worrying signs of disaffection [115], recession [116], and political fatigue [117] with the current functioning of the democratic system. Nevertheless, populist citizens are not necessarily uninterested or indifferent towards democratic politics. Rather, and as observed in the SLR, recent research shows that they are dissatisfied with and distrustful of institutional politics [118–120] and highlight the weak responsiveness of the political system [112,121]. Interestingly, these critiques also translate into political views about alternative paths: populist citizens support people-centered forms of political engagement, such as referendums and deliberative forms of participation [120,122].

Moreover, we note the diverse and nuanced ways in which studies point to the relationship between populist attitudes and political dimensions (political interest, democratic support, and climate denialism). These dimensions must be considered when studying the adherence to populism, under the risk of mislabeling populist citizens as alienated and anti-democratic, jeopardizing a comprehensive understanding of the political factors that most strongly drive populism. The SLR's results also revealed that populist attitudes are related to extreme ideological positions (either left-wing or right-wing) [26,63]. Recent studies have come to the same conclusion [114,123]. Thus, we agree with some authors [6,7,35] on the need for future research examining populist attitudes in relation to different ideologies to clarify some of these inconsistent results. These citizens' ideological positioning could be the analytical axis that could explain the differences in the variations and effects of political variables on populist attitudes. Guinjoan [124] effectively observed that right-wing populist citizens display more conservative and exclusionary attitudes, while left-wing populist citizens take progressive and inclusive positions.

The ambivalent relationship between populism, politics, and democracy also poses challenges that require careful and critical educational attention [42,125,126]. As Sant [127] (p. 122) argues, it is necessary to reflect on how "education [can] provide an appropriate response to our current climate". It is worth pointing out that it would be erroneous and unrealistic to think that political and media education alone could neutralize the temptation to support populist ideas and movements. Indeed, education is not a panacea [128] that can cure all the ills of populism. However, it is particularly relevant to consider its possible role in mitigating the spread of populist attitudes.

Today, we are witnessing an educational system framed by neoliberal logic [129] on the values of individualism, competition, and metrics [130] that has eroded the relationship between education and democracy. Indeed, there is a devaluation on the part of formal educational contexts of their responsibility to contribute to political socialization [129] and to the promotion and protection of democratic systems [130–132]. The abandonment of formal education's axiological and political dimensions has obvious implications for the formation of democratic and informed citizens [133]. As research shows (both studies analyzed in this SLR and other recent studies), this can increase the support for populism: a lack of political knowledge [113,121] and disidentification with the government and parties [26,134] are positively associated with citizens' populist attitudes.

Thus, we propose that formal educational contexts should be places of political education and democratic learning. In line with some authors, we argue that possible strategies to counter the dangers of populism are forms of civic and political education that consolidate

democratic practices, principles, and values [13,135–138]. We also recommend that formal educational contexts be places for learning political knowledge (e.g., about the functioning of democratic institutions and political parties), where students can explore their political positions. As Giroux [40] notes, the scourge of political illiteracy undermines an educational culture capable of creating the informed and critical citizens that are needed in a robust democracy. Moreover, we emphasize the need for formal educational contexts to be spaces for a deep understanding of the social and political problems of the "here" and "now." Estellés and Castellví [41] affirm that schools and universities give little attention and space to discussing controversial social and political issues. By leaving these themes out in the cold, these educational contexts deny the opportunity to understand the complexity of certain issues through scrutiny, debate, and critical discussion [137,139]. Research has shown that discussing political issues increases students' interest in these topics [140]. Regarding populism, we agree with the authors who recognize the importance of presenting, deepening, and discussing this phenomenon in educational contexts to address the factors that trigger it [39,133,135]. Petrie and colleagues [38] also highlight that education can enrich democratic spaces by dialectically decoding populism and its motivations. Third, as Zembylas [141,142] argues, we stress that democracy must be constantly practiced and perceived in formal educational contexts to awaken an emotional attachment to democratic values. The literature has shown that a democratic climate in schools and universities—e.g., with opportunities for active participation and critical reflection—has a positive effect on political trust and perceptions of the responsiveness of institutions [143,144]. These are among the most important political predictors of the development of populist attitudes [59,145]. A recent study by Jungkunz and Weiss [146] also concludes that feelings of unfair teacher behavior are positively related to the youth's populist attitudes. This SLR's results show that populism can be seen as a potential threat to the democratic ideal since it has the potential to mobilize citizens with weak democratic capacities [30,79]. Thus, given that democratic experiences within formal education matter [147], we suggest developing political and democratic skills and literacy through democratic didactic processes in an egalitarian and pluralistic relational educational context.

This SLR's findings corroborate the conclusions of recent studies, revealing that negative emotions drive populist attitudes [148], namely anger [149], anxiety [150], or feelings of threat [151]. The role of positive emotions (e.g., hope and pride) in adhering to populism, and in resisting populist attitudes, is still understudied. Future research on populist attitudes should take this into account. Regarding the role of education in the affective mechanism of populism, some authors have warned of the need to consider how formal educational contexts can address the increasing omnipresence of emotions in supporting populist ideas [38,41]. Emotions are an important element in politics [152]. Because of this, educational systems must provide opportunities to discuss the affective dimension inherent in populism and its consequences for democratic systems [38,39]. Zembylas [142] suggests that a mere "negative critique" of populism's affective ideology cannot counter it. Instead, the author advocates for counter-politics based on an "affirmative critique" capable of setting alternative frames and agendas that support and promote alternative concepts and affective practices, such as equality, diversity and solidarity. In this sense, we argue that formal educational contexts cannot ignore the "political cultivation of emotions" [153] and thus, while fostering emotions that are fundamental to the survival of democracies—e.g., a love of pluralism and hope for a more egalitarian future—they must curb the negative emotions that fuel populism, such as fear and anger.

Furthermore, we find that populist attitudes are associated with diverse media consumption in the studies analyzed in this SLR and in the more recent literature. Populist citizens tend to have anti-media attitudes [154]: those with broad populist beliefs are more distrustful and dissatisfied with traditional media [155]. Nonetheless, studies show that people with high levels of populist attitudes have a diversified media diet, using both new [156,157] and traditional [103] media to stay informed about political issues. Research has also explored the relationship between populist attitudes and different social media

dimensions, such as the role of echo chambers and the civic and political use of these digital platforms.

This natural alliance [158] between populism and social media carries risks that require educational attention [159]. The spread of disinformation [160], algorithmic personalization [161], and political manipulation and propaganda [162] are some of the prominent threats to those navigating social media. Given this dangerous scenario, it is essential to explore the role of educational contexts in developing skills that enable an enlightened use of digital platforms [163]. As Hoobs and colleagues [164] (p. 5) point out, new skills are needed to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and distribute messages in a digital, global, and democratic society.

The literature has identified several roles for media education in times of populism. First is the importance of promoting the learning of epistemological skills [159] for filtering, managing, and selecting the different information inputs available in the online sphere to judge their veracity and reliability [165,166]. As this SLR reveals (and more recent studies corroborate), support for populist ideas is associated with a belief in conspiracy theories [167,168] and denial of scientific evidence [119,169]. Thus, we agree with some authors [165,170] on the importance of developing media literacy to protect against disinformation and political propaganda and, simultaneously, as a resistance to (online) populist narratives that often contain these elements. Several studies suggest various tools and make recommendations for educators interested in implementing media education programs or interventions to improve students' critical thinking and information evaluation skills (see, for example, [171–174]).

This SLR's results show that exposure to populist messages online increases prior agreement or disagreement with populism [62,109]. In this regard, Ranieri [175] believes that media literacy can be a valuable tool to stop the spread of authoritarian populist discourses online. A book by Ranieri [176], which resulted from a European action research project, demonstrates the effectiveness of media literacy courses in enabling students to identify stereotypes and deconstruct hate speech and includes practical recommendations, such as the need for the better training and preparation of teachers in media education. Other authors defend the promotion of the deconstruction of the inherent logic of digital media that allows for the spread of anti-democratic, anti-political, and populist narratives [41,177].

Moreover, Hodgin [163] argues that media literacy is essential for skillful and thoughtful participation in online political life. Indeed, online environments are central to political life [178] and enable countless forms of political action [179]. The literature reviewed shows that populist citizens use social media for civic and political participation [110,180]. We propose that media education must enable the acquisition of "participatory skills" [181] in order to make full and democratic use of political opportunities [159]. Some studies suggest that populist citizens tend to be placed in a media bubble [182] that strengthens their previous points of view, making them more intolerant of opposing positions online [79]. Therefore, we consider it essential to promote a critical awareness of these processes [41,147] so that users can privilege online spaces for dialogue and dissent over simplistic and polarized digital niches [159]. As Oelkers [183] points out, social media—which is also linked to the youth's attraction to far-right populist groups and parties [184]—can foster a closed and often hostile worldview towards those who think differently. We argue that formal educational contexts have an incumbent responsibility to promote a culture of plurality of thought and to encourage a respect for and argumentation of divergent points of view.

In conclusion, the literature reviewed has shown that citizens' populist attitudes are driven by political (e.g., a distrust of democratic institutions, perceptions of a lack of responsiveness of the political system), affective (namely negative emotions, such as anger and anxiety), and media mechanisms (e.g., skepticism of traditional media, social media filter bubbles). With this in mind, we have reflected on and made some recommendations as to how education, mainly formal educational contexts, could be a response to mitigate people's adherence to populist appeals. We emphasize the need for more studies linking

populism with formal education, studies that consider both its contextual dimension—as a context for political education and democratic learning—and its procedural dimension, i.e., the development of pedagogical processes that lead to more complex and plural relationships with politics. Indeed, formal educational contexts must play an active and primary role in experiencing and deepening democracy [132,133] to avoid its possible precariousness [135] due to political phenomena such as populism.

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