

A Scoping Review of Populism Influence on Healthcare Policy and It's Impact on Public Health

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INTRODUCTION

Today, populism has become increasingly popular in many countries and can be a threat to democracy.¹ Although the definition of populism is not clear, it can be characterized by setting themselves as part of the will from the homogeneous society that positions them to fight against the so-called 'elite' groups and any other considered dangerous groups that can threaten people's rights and values.² A political policy approach that is based on a chauvinist ideology characterized by populism can be dangerous because it can influence the making of various policies, one of which is related to healthcare.³

Public health is based on scientific evidence but can also be influenced by the political system in government run by politicians who do not understand the importance of a scientific approach in public policy.⁴ Populism can be a threat to public health because public health policy is a multi-sectoral problem that interferes with sustainable development.^{5,6} The current development of populism can influence the political policy decision-making process at various levels of government.⁷ However, the impact of populism on healthcare policy has not been studied further. For seeking an explanation of this phenomenon, the aim of this study is to provide an overview and analysis of existing research on the effects of populism on various healthcare policies.

METHODS

The scoping review was conducted using the five-step framework by Arksey and O'Malley (2005).⁸ This scoping review is not to evaluate the quality of the available evidence, but to answer specific questions by assessing the various qualitative or quantitative studies available across multiple databases and mapping the gap from available studies on the impact of populism on public health.

First stage

- Identify research question
- 'How does populism affect healthcare policy and its impact on public health?'**

Second stage

- Literature search was conducted on the Google Scholar, Pubmed, and Scencedirect databases from Augustus-September 2021 with using a combination of the keywords "populism", "populist", "healthcare policy", and "public health".

Third stage

- The selection of studies with inclusion criteria is qualitative or quantitative studies published in full-text journal articles published in less than 10 years and written in English.
- These inclusion criteria are restricted to studies that analyze the influence of populism in government on health care policies.

Fourth stage

- All the included studies were extracted based on characteristics that included study author, year of publication, country, theme, and the relevant results. Data extraction was carried out independently during the study.

Fifth stage

- All data are compiled and reported in tables.
- Analysis of the data obtained was carried out using conventional qualitative analysis as the purpose of this study was to determine the effect of populism on public health.⁹

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After searching the literature, 500 studies were found that matched the keywords. After going through the exclusion process, 7 studies were obtained (Figure 1).

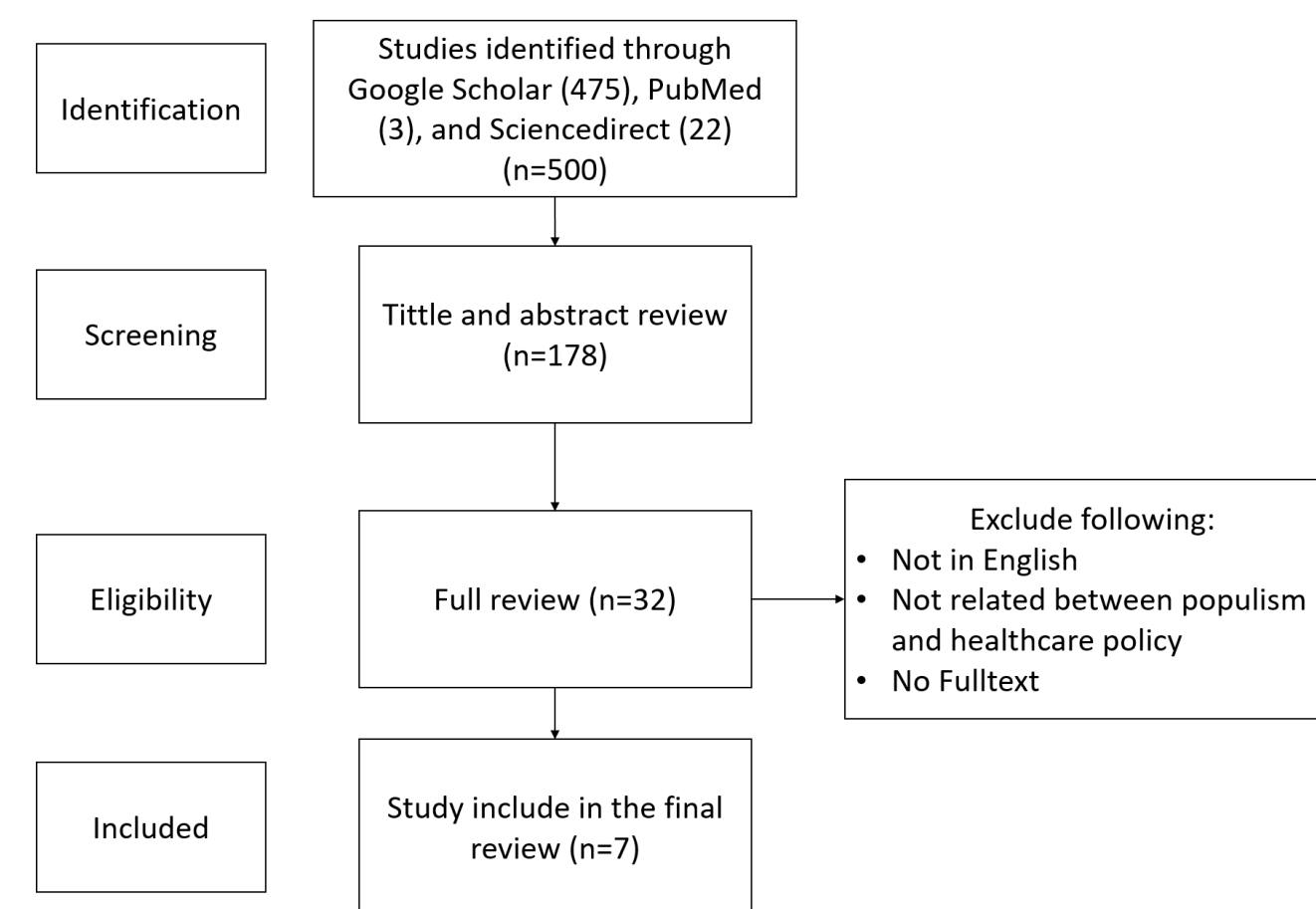


Figure 1. Flowchart of literature search.

Of the 7 included studies, 4 studies related to vaccination programs¹⁰⁻¹³, 3 studies related to healthcare governance reform^{12,14,15}, 1 study related to mental healthcare reform¹¹, and 1 study related to the influence of populism on the level of adherence to COVID-19 safeguard guidelines¹⁶. Three studies assessed findings in the main country of study and four studies assessed findings from several countries. The findings of this review explain that populist policies in the field of public health place healthcare workers and health organizations as the opposite party by influencing the level of public trust and nationalist sentiment to influence health regulation.

CONCLUSIONS

This review explains the impact of populism on healthcare policies related to public health. Populism towards public health service policies can be influenced by encouragement from the community and ignoring health expert advice, although this factor can also be influenced by how well populist politicians understand the existing health issues.

The limitation of this study is not identifying the characteristics of the political system of each country. In addition, the disadvantage of using conventional qualitative data analysis may not represent the entire data, but only in building concepts from existing phenomena.

Future studies by analyzing health outcomes data and from the perspective of the wider community and more affected communities can help understand how populism impacts public healthcare policies.

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