Economic Inequality and Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Towards a Psycho-Social Approach Linking Relative Deprivation and Social Identity Theories with Populist Vote

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the political success of right-wing populist parties in Europe in recent decades, incorporating an analysis related to the effects of inequalities on individuals. Drawing on the theoretical approaches of Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT), the core perspective of this thesis implies that economic inequality tends to increase the cleavages between different strata within European democracies, affecting socio-economically the lower and middle classes, while right-wing populist parties reinforce the salience of social comparisons and perception of relative deprivation through divisive populist communication. Drawing on data collected through the European Social Survey (ESS9) and across two contexts (Germany and France), this report attempts to confirm the efficacy of this theoretical framework through a series of statistical analyses, in order to examine the relationship between socio-demographic and economic characteristics on relative deprivation (H1) and to test the potential impacts of different psychological mechanisms on right-wing populist vote : personal relative deprivation (H2), feelings of social marginalisation (H3), degree of institutional distrust and perception of injustice related to the political system (H4), rejection of immigration and Europe (H5) and meritocratic and entitlement principles (H6). Additional mediation analyses are conducted in order to explore the influence of relative deprivation on right-wing populism voting, mediated by the psychological mechanisms (H3b, H4b, H5b, H6b). The results show that workers from the lowest classes in society, who are more likely to express a sense of relative deprivation, favour the election of a right-wing populist party in their respective countries. In general, the relationship between personal relative deprivation and voting for a right-wing populist party is mediated by social distrust, institutional distrust, unfairness of the political system and negative perceptions towards immigration and Europe. Despite the limited range of countries and the quality of the measures mobilised, this research attempts to incorporate a psycho-social approach to right-wing populism, linking socio-economic arguments with cultural perspectives offered through the established literature on right-wing populism and social psychology of inequality.

KEYWORDS: Economic Inequality, Globalization, Producerism, Relative Deprivation Theory, Right-Wing Populism, Social Identity Theory, Social Psychology

1.   INTRODUCTION

In recent years, concerns about economic inequality have gained significant recognition in the academic world and have been widely taken into account by politicians and the public at large (Piketty, 2013 ; European Investment Bank, 2018 ; Milanovic, 2019). While the phenomenon has persisted for decades, the latest reports proposed by the OECD and the European Investment Bank show that economic inequality has been growing sharply over the last two decades in Europe, especially after the 2008 post-crisis economic crisis, notably due to a progressively greater income recovery among individuals in the highest deciles of the income distribution (OECD, 2016 ; European Investment Bank, 2018). For example, the richest 1% in Europe perceived, between 1980 and 2017, an increase of more than 100% of their income, while individuals in the first seven deciles collected a relative growth of 20-40% (Blanchet & Al., 2019). As a result, the lower and middle social classes experienced a smaller enhancement of their economic situation compared to higher classes, resulting in a perception of a deeply unfair system, strengthened by the explosion in living costs, rendering their financial condition unstable and vulnerable (OECD, 2019). In addition to the reports produced by the European Investment Bank and the OECD, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) has studied the difference in the size of income classes, focusing mainly on the middle class, and showed that between the years 2009 and 2014, the proportion of the middle class (people with an income between 75% and 200% of the median income) generally decreased, resulting in a growth in the number of people in the lower class (people with an income below 75% compared to the median income) (Eurofound, 2017). The results therefore support the deterioration of social mobility in Europe due to a disparity of income (OECD, 2019) and wealth across European countries (Eurofound, 2021), resulting in a pattern of erosion of the lower social classes (Vaughan-Whitehead, 2016 ; Derndofer & Kranziger, 2018 ; Mavrozacharakis & Georgia, 2018 ; OECD, 2019 ; Kurer, 2020). This socio-economic demarcation has implications for social cohesion, as those most affected tend, when economic disparities and lack of social mobility are substantial, to expand their social and political mistrust, sense of unfairness, status anxiety, which can lead to social exclusion (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009 ; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2017 ; OECD, 2017).

Although the main reasons for the widening economic inequalities in European countries remain debated, some authors highlight the processes linked to the phenomena of globalization and more precisely on the emergence of new technologies, associated with the precarity and even the disappearance of particular forms of employment, the opening up of markets at the international level, the changes in national economic policies and immigration flows as essential drivers explaining the rise of economic inequality (Kriesi & Lachat, 2004 ; Piketty, 2013 ; Rodrik, 2018 ; Milanovic, 2019).

These mechanisms intensified not only the precarious position of workers, but also the socio-economic division between what the "losers of globalization" theory categorised as the "losers" and the "winners" of the mondialisation, i.e., individuals belonging to the lowest classes and those belonging to the highest classes (Betz, 1994 ; Kriesi & Lachat, 2004 ; Kriesi & Al., 2006 ; Kurer, 2020).

In line with the rise of economic inequality and the theory of the losers of globalisation, Europe has seen a tremendous upsurge in populism over the last two decades, especially right-wing populism. The sudden increase in membership of the Front National in France, which scored high in the 2017 presidential elections, the Lega and the 5 Star Movement in Italy, the emergence of Vox in Spain, and the entry of the right-wing populist party Alternative für Deutschland in Germany into the Bundestag in 2017, are all examples of the ascendance of right-wing populism in Europe. As some authors tend to suggest, the rise of populism in Europe is largely explained by a discontent and a feeling of injustice coming from groups "left behind", impacted by the consequences of globalization, questioning the impact of the processes through an economic and identity-based lens (Betz, 1994 ; Kriesi & Lachat, 2004 ; Spruyt & Al., 2016 ; Rodrik, 2018 ; Milanovic, 2019). Based on the theory of economic insecurity, this approach considers that individuals in precarious or unstable situations and who resent economic grievances would be more inclined to support right-wing populist parties with the aim of restoring authoritarian values in order to pursue an anti-globalization policy (Ingelhart & Norris, 2016). More recently taken up by Gidron and Hall, the two authors imply that the effects of economic inequality tend not only to reinforce the feeling of being economically deprived among the most impoverished individuals, but also to diminish the perception of one's social status throughout society, joining the arguments of the economic insecurity theory with the cultural backlash approach, suggesting that adherents of populism would vote for right-wing populist parties in order to reject multiculturalist values, which threaten the social and national identity of lower-class individuals (Ingelhart & Norris, 2016 ; Jetten & Al., 2017 ; Gidron & Hall, 2020). As a result, which form the basis of the arguments proposed in this thesis, economic inequality would not only affect adherence to right-wing populist parties due to an identity threat exacerbated by the socioeconomic stratification between the richest and poorest individuals (related to Social Identity Theory), but also because of the reinforcement of the perception of being mistreated and relatively deprived among members of the lower classes, as a consequence of the instability of their precarious economic situation, in comparison to the richest individuals (related to Relative Deprivation Theory) (Jetten & Al., 2017). Right-wing populist parties, which appropriate in their discourse the imperative of restoring the economic well-being of the most affected members of the labour force, while scapegoating those responsible for their situation, would raise steadily, especially because of their divisive communications linked towards an increasingly socio-economically separated society, generating a feeling of discontent among people who perceive themselves as being relatively deprived (Hameleers & Al., 2018).

Focusing on recent theoretical approaches related to the field of social psychology in the context of explaining populism around the world (Staerklé & Green, 2018 ; Jay & Al., 2019 ; Oxendine, 2019), we propose, therefore, to explore the relationship between perceptions of economic inequality and the derived psychological mechanism effects with the support for right-wing populist parties in Europe, in order to answer the following research questions: **How does economic inequality in European countries contribute to support for right-wing populist parties?** and **Which key psychological effects provided from the Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT) drive right-wing populist vote?**.

In order to explore the link between economic inequality and support for right-wing populist parties, we conducted quantitative analyses across two European contexts, Germany and France, using the European Social Survey Round 9, a cross-national and European survey which aims to measure the attitudes, behaviours and beliefs of individuals across different countries. Although some studies have demonstrated, with distinct approaches and findings, that the effect of economic inequality measured with objective indicators has an influence on the populist vote (Han, 2016 ; Burgoon & Al., 2019 ; Engler & Weistanner, 2020 ; Engler & Weistanner, 2021 ; Proetzer, 2021 ; Stoetzer & Al., 2021), we pursue the arguments of recent research that have been mobilised around the perceptions developed by individuals (Anduiza & Al., 2016 ; Steiner, 2020), because perceptions are better predictors of political and social behaviours than objective economic inequality levels (Hauser & Norton, 2017). The application of univariate, bivariate, multivariate and mediation analyses was implemented to examine the relationship between the different predictors used.

Regarding the structure of this work, the next chapter will focus on the theoretical and conceptual framework of this study, through a review of the literature and the latest papers conducted in the field of populism research. In the next chapter, a general description of the dataset and the methodological framework will be provided, followed by details on the measures used for the empirical analyses. The next part of the paper will highlight the results of the quantitative analyses carried out. Finally, the last section includes a general discussion of the findings obtained, before identifying limitations and ideas for future research.

2.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

After introducing the topic of the thesis, the different concepts and theories involved in this research will be developed within the theoretical framework. In the first part, a theoretical development in the field of social psychology will be brought in, to comprehend how individuals shape perceptions regarding their own identity and the evaluation of their socio-economic status in order to understand the influence of economic inequalities in terms of socio-political attitudes and behaviours. The Social Identity Theory (SIT) and the Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT) will be explained to emphasize the different psycho-social mechanisms associated with economic inequalities. In the second part, a review of the main definitions of populism and arguments from the literature detailing the adhesion to right-wing populist parties in the European political landscape will be mentioned. The theoretical framework linking populist supply and the effects of social identity and relative deprivation on populist demand will be expanded, by relying on the recent research focused on the relation between economic inequality, support of populism and populist narratives. Finally, the conceptual model and the hypotheses will be summarized inside the last section.

2.1.   Psycho-Social Framework of Inequality: Theoretical Approaches of Personal Relative Deprivation and Social Identity

The first part of the chapter introduces the effects of economic inequality through a social and psychological perspective. Following the literature from the field of social psychology on economic inequality, two main and overlapping theories can be identified as key drivers linking inequality to individuals' perceptions and behaviours.

Firstly, the increase in economic disparities affects individuals in relation to the perceptions associated with their group identity. Based on the Social Identity Theory (SIT), defined as a conceptual perspective implying that individuals tend to categorise themselves and identify favourably within a group in comparison to other out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), different research suggests that economic inequalities between groups produce pathways for the representation of their social environment (Han & Al., 2012), as people tend to categorize identity forms in order to simplify their world (Obradovic & Al., 2020), making economic disparities between groups as pertinent distinctive characteristics and salient social class boundaries (Jetten & Al., 2017). Group members not only identify inequalities in the way they perceive their social environment, but also tend to apply a principle of legitimacy in order to justify the outcomes acquired within the society (Jetten & Al., 2017 ; Kim & Al., 2018 ; Osborne & Al., 2019).

In relation to the theory of equity conceptualised by Homans (1961), individuals strive to perceive the contributions they make in relation to the rewards they receive (the principle of proportionality) and to compare their own achievements with other people in society (Serre & Al., 2003 ; Kellerhals & Languin, 2008). When the process of social comparison generates a sense of injustice, as a consequence of a dissonance between the rewards earned in relation to the efforts procured by one's own group and other out-groups, a general form of social erosion is provoked, tending to make individuals despise the over-retributed and to radicalise their position, threatened by society (Kellerhals & Languin, 2008 ; Jetten & Al., 2017 ; Oxendine, 2019). A strengthened sense of belonging to one's threatened group may lead to a desire to redress this illegitimate treatment, including, from a political perspective, motivation to undertake collective action to improve their socio-economic status (Abrams & Al., 2012 ; Oxendine, 2019 ; Jetten & Al., 2020). The social representations built on economic differences and based on social comparisons could turn into negative prejudices against outgroups (Osborne & Al., 2019), ethnocentric views (Aschauer, 2016) and national identification (Jay & Al., 2019), leading therefore to an intensification of inter-group barriers.

Secondly and directly associated with the Social Identity Theory, increasing income disparities between economic groups affect directly at a micro-level, as people tend to decrease the perception of being satisfied with their own financial situation and to strengthen the sense of relative personal deprivation, especially among the threatened lower- and middle-class (Hastings, 2019 ; Engler & Weistanner, 2021 ; Stoetzer & Al., 2021). Following the work of Runciman, the Theory of Relative Deprivation (RDT) is focalised on the premise that an individual considers himself as relatively deprived when the latter, in comparison with another individual or group, feels particularly disadvantaged, leading to frustration or resentment (Runciman, 1966 ; Power & Al, 2020). The concept differs from the sense of economic satisfaction, as the RDT is based on the process of social comparison between one's own person and a referent, allowing for the evaluation of one's own material resources and the degree of unfairness in relation to their own economic situation (Power & Al, 2020). As a result, the evaluation of being relatively deprived is reinforced when economic inequality increases because individuals tend to over-interpret economic differences and transform these income differences between social classes as characteristic's categories, raising them to the forefront (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009 ; Jetten & Al., 2017 ; Hauser & Norton, 2017 ; Gimpelson & Treisman, 2018 ; Jay & Al., 2019 ; Knell & Stix, 2020). Distinctions between economic classes across unequal contexts, by relying on the Relative Deprivation Theory, lead to the essentialisation of status competition and the assertion of status anxiety related to the labour market (Buttrick & Oishi, 2017), particularly due to the fear of a declining social and economic status (Jetten & Al., 2017 ; Kurer, 2020 ; Engler & Weistanner, 2021).

Negative perceptions of one's socio-economic status, in turn, influence the degree of social distrust, the feeling of being socially marginalised (Gidron & Hall, 2020) and distrust towards political and economic systems that have become unstable and which no longer defend the needs of these citizens (Oxendine, 2019 ; Goubin & Hooghe, 2020), mostly for people perceiving themselves as being relatively deprived (Jetten & Mols, 2015). Perceptions of being severely disadvantaged may lead to a political and social commitment in the form of protest to redress their life situation (Power & Al, 2020) and to the intensification of ethnic threat perceptions (Auger, 2009).

These arguments are consistent with the losers of globalisation theory, as the impact of globalisation has not affected individuals equally economically, forming a structural polarisation between those who have benefited from the process and emerged as "winners" of globalisation, and the "losers" of globalisation, who have seen their economic and social security weakened through the collapse of national boundaries (Kriesi & Lachat, 2004 ; Kriesi & al., 2006). In their work, Kriesi and Lachat see globalisation as a process of "denationalisation" that manifests itself through growing economic competition, implying that individuals and firms, once protected by national protection policies, have seen their socio-economic status weakened, via a heightened cultural competition, generated by an increase in migration flows through the labour market, and throughout political competition between nations and supranational actors, notably because of the creation of the European Union which has reduced the autonomy possessed by the states (Kriesi & Lachat, 2004). The creation of an economic and structural demarcation between the hypothetical losers, which can be suggested as low-skilled and lower-class national workers, and the winners of globalisation would make the former feeling relatively deprived compared to the workers who have benefited from globalisation and being opposed towards immigration, European integration and elites, identified as threats to the economic sovereignty (Bornschier, 2005 ; Kriesi & al., 2006).

In continuation with the discussions outlined above, we assume that:

<u>H1:</u> Increasing inequality tends to enhance the sense of relative personal deprivation among individuals with a low objective socio-economic status (education level and income level), compared to individuals with higher socio-economic status.

2.2.   Towards a Conceptualised Framework Linking Right-Wing Populism with

Psycho-Social Effects of Inequality

The second part of the theoretical framework develops the main dimensions regarding the definition of populism established inside the literature relative to populism and the recent research about the link between right-wing populism narrative with inequality, subjective socio-economic status decline, economic grievances and feelings of injustice, in order to conceptualise the link between the psycho-social framework, populism support and populist narratives.

2.2.1.   Definitions of Populism: Linking Receiver- and Sender Side

Although the definition of the concept of populism is widely debated in the literature, we propose to highlight the main characteristics of a populist ideology through the work of Mudde and Kaltwasser, before focusing on the communicative dimension, in order to clarify the articulation between populist demand and supply. Defined as "*a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous 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*" (Mudde, 2004 : p. 543), the ideological and minimal approach proposed by Mudde tends to emphasise a vertical group differentiation between a corrupt and superior elite on the one hand, and the people, deprived of their sovereignty on the other hand (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2007 ; Obradovic & Al., 2020). The proposed definition brings out two key features: a focus on the people and their needs and a demarcation between pure people and groups that are opposed to the sovereignty of the people, maintaining a form of opposition and exclusion between different groups, the essence itself of the Social Identity Approach (Hameleers, 2018 ; Krekó, 2021). In addition, as Hameleers (2018) points out, the peculiarity of right-wing populist parties in comparison to Mudde's ideology is throughout the process of vertical demarcation, between the people and the elites (economic and political), but also via a horizontal opposition, between the deprived workers and groups considered as "threatening parasite" (immigration or those who profit from the nation's economic system) (Bauer, 2011 ; Ivaldi & Al., 2019).

If the contribution of the minimal definition of populism allows to highlight this process of intergroups opposition, Hameleers underlines that the very existence of a plurality of forms of inclusion and exclusion proposed through populist communications must be taken into consideration, requiring a form of reconciliation between the demand-side and the supply-side (Hameleers, 2018 ; Mols & Jetten, 2020).

In line with the Social Identity Theory (SIT), we propose to broaden the definition of populism by integrating the communicative dimension of populism, by defining populist discourses as embedded in a discursive frame framework (Aslanidis, 2016). Frames, through populist communications, function as sources of social representations of the social environment and forms of diagnosis of social ills within society (Nisbet & Feldman, 2011 ; Aslanidis, 2016 ; Staerklé & Green, 2018). Recent research gives relevance to the persuasiveness of populist speeches, demonstrating, in relation to Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT), that individuals who perceive themselves as being relatively deprived are more likely to adopt the proposed framings and to reinforce the blame towards out-groups (Hameleers & Al., 2017 ; Bos & Al., 2020). The perceptions of blame would also be intensified when they are in line with socio-economic fluctuations mobilised by populist actors in order to enhance the impression of being disadvantaged compared to other groups (Bos & Al., 2020).

2.2.2. Review of the Main Arguments Towards Right-Wing Populist Vote and Main Frames inside Populist Communication

After introducing a global definition of populism, this section proposes to highlight the different forms of frames exhibited within right-wing populist communications in order to broaden their support across the population. For the purpose of inferring relevance of frames towards populist support, recent research from multidisciplinary domains of populism linked with the Social Identity (SIT) and Relative Deprivation Theories (RDT) will be presented.

First, and as underlined in the previous section, populist communications tend to socially differentiate groups in relation to an inclusive relatively deprived people, by attributing the guilt for the deterioration of their socio-economic situation to other excluded groups, held responsible for the collapse of the general economy. A recent study proposed by Goethals (2018) demonstrates, for example, that the politics proposed by Donald Trump in the United States has focused considerably on a process of comparison between economically deprived citizens, while constructing the contours of other groups, held as guilty of societal misdeeds. The arguments proposed by Goethals are in line with the studies carried out by Inglehart and Norris, who consider that the widening of economic gaps in recent years has benefited certain strata of society provoking experiences of economic insecurity within lower classes, particularly due to the process of automation and the growing migration flows within the labour market, making perceptions of differentiation between groups more prominent (Inglehart & Norris, 2016 ; Inglehart & Norris, 2017). As a result, individuals who perceive themselves as relatively deprived will reinforce their own social representations, by integrating the frames proposed through populist rhetoric (Hameleers & Al., 2017 ; Hameleers & Al., 2019 ; Noury & Roland, 2020), in particular because of the sense of unfairness related to their socio-economic situation (Rodrik, 2018).

Several studies confirm that relative deprivation favours individuals in supporting right-wing populist parties over other political parties (Marchlewska & Al., 2017 ; Gest & Al., 2018 ; Engler & Weisstanner, 2021) or to a reinforcement of populist attitudes (Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016), as a form of resentment towards established parties and social groups depicted as enemies of the nation (Salmela & von Scheve, 2017), with the purpose of re-establishing their threatened social identity (Marchlewska & Al., 2017) or restoring their subjective socio-economic status (Gidron & Hall, 2017).

Based on these works, we hypothesise that:

<u>H2:</u> Workers who feel a sense of relative personal deprivation, compared to those who consider their socio-economic status to be fair, are more likely to vote for a right-wing populist party.

Following the arguments proposed earlier, we have addressed that the perception of relative deprivation not only influences the identification with the disadvantaged group in relation to other groups, by making the differences between groups salient, but also increases the competitive status between individuals (Buttrick & Oishi, 2017 ; Sommet & Al., 2019). The differences in income earned would thus be transformed into economic insecurity among the poorest individuals, who would then tend to express greater anxiety about their social position within society and higher level of distrust towards individuals (Paskov & Al., 2013 ; Buttick & Oishi, 2017 ; Jay & Al., 2019 ; Gidron & Hall, 2020 ; Sachweh, 2020). In line with these arguments, Gidron and Hall have recently conceptualised a theoretical framework reconciling economic and cultural arguments to the explanation of the adherence towards right-wing populist parties, suggesting that depreciation of material circumstances and cultural changes within society (immigration, multiculturalist policies) affected mostly individuals from the lower social classes, who in response strengthen their degree of anxiety about their social status and aim, in congruence with populist discourses, to be more inclined to vote for right-wing populist parties (Gidron & Hall, 2017). In line with their theories, empirical studies were conducted to analyse the relationship between subjective social status and support for right-wing populist parties and demonstrated that the negative perception of own's social position is associated with the adherence to right-wing populist parties, notably through the perception of not being sufficiently respected and the perception of being socially marginalised (Gidron & Hall, 2017 ; Gidron & Hall, 2020 ; Sachweh, 2020), narratives that are mobilised in populist communications to foster a feeling of resentment towards the political system (Fukuyama, 2018). Building on the work of Gidron and Hall, Engler and Weisstanner (2020) submit similar results, by directly analysing the influence of economic inequality across different time periods, implying that the importance given to one's social position predicts membership of populist parties during times of higher economic inequality.

In line with the works presented, we suggest that:

H3: **Workers who express higher level of social distrust are more inclined to vote for a right-wing populist party.**

H3b: **The association of feeling relatively deprived among workers on the vote for a right-wing populist party is at least positively mediated by social distrust.**

As brought to the fore earlier, one of the key processes implemented throughout populist discourses is the development of a vertical opposition, more precisely via an anti-establishment populism frame (Hameleers, 2018). As mentioned in the definition proposed by Mudde, one of the main characteristics of populism is the need to restore the sovereignty of the people, through policies that are focalised on the will of the people (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2007). In this thesis, we assume that the negative perception of economic claims affects the degree of institutional trust and the perception of unfairness towards the political system. The basis of this hypothesis is provided by Altomonte and colleagues' work, who shows that the perception of being deprived relative to other individuals tends to lead to frustration and anger towards the ineffectiveness of the political parties in place, which are drawn as guilty of their economic situation but also of having failed to prevent the enrichment of economic elites (Altomonte & Al., 2019). The creation of a relatively deprived group identity, through populist communication, would influence individuals to identify with the threatened group and establish a protest vote towards mainstream political parties (Altomonte & Al., 2019). Empirical work shows, for example, that institutional belief is associated with partisanship or vote towards right-wing populist parties (Staerklé & Green, 2018 ; Burgoon & Al., 2019). Populist parties would therefore take advantage of political distrust among individuals to reinforce the culpability of established parties within populist communications (Li, 2018). Members of the populist right would not only distrust the efficiency of politicians, but also doubt the degree of justice provided by the political and economic system towards the people (Oxendine, 2019). Recently, Saxton's work has shown, through a quantitative and qualitative empirical study, that the perception of injustice in relation to income distribution is influenced by the belief in one's own government and by the satisfaction with the political system, especially when economic inequality is high and among individuals from the lowest social classes (Saxton, 2019). Therefore, support for right-wing populism would stem from a need for supporters to sanction mainstream parties for their policy inefficiencies (Hameleers & Al., 2019), favouring their vote for parties with an authoritarian perspective and with a strong inclusive rhetoric towards nationals, expressed by a charismatic leader who stands up for the people and who exposes the ineffectiveness of political elites (Bauer, 2014 ; Gidron & Hall, 2020 ; Gelfand & Lorente ; 2021).

In response to the arguments made, we hypothesise that:

H4: Workers who have higher level of political distrust and perception that the political system does not consider the needs of their citizen are more prone to vote for a right-wing populist party.

H4b: The association of feeling relatively deprived among workers on the vote for a right-wing populist party is at least positively mediated by political distrust and perception of an unfair political system.

Right-wing populist parties do not only incorporate vertical opposition in their discourse but also horizontal differentiation, taking different forms of framing (Hameleers, 2018). In relation to the Social Identity Theory (SIT) and the Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT), the relevance of populist communications would be based on a framing that mixes the superiority of an economically deprived people (inclusion of the people) and the blame of culprit outgroups (exclusion of other groups) (Hameleers, 2018). As Jay and other authors propose in their theoretical framework linking economic inequality to populism, increasing wealth disparities lead to a greater national identification among individuals in response to a lack of economic security (Ivaldi & Mazzoleni, 2019), and a need for self-esteem (Marchlewska & Al., 2018), meeting populist formulations that evidence the threats posed by out-groups (Jay & Al., 2019). Research conducted by De Zavala and Marchlewska shows that relatively deprived individuals are more likely to accentuate the belief in a "national collective narcissism", defined as a form of in-group superiority, in order to compensate for the sense of uncertainty of one's socio-economic status and as a response to the threatening forms reflected inside populist communications (de Zavala & Al., 2009 ; Marchlewska & Al., 2018). Consequently, perceptions of identity and economic threat caused by immigration, especially through cultural competition in the labour market (Kriesi & Lachat, 2004), could influence the degree of national identification (Oxendine, 2019), and negative attitudes towards immigration (Meuleman & Al., 2020), especially among deprived workers (Ivaldi & Mazzoleni, 2019).

Another form of economic and identity threat formulated within populist discourses would come from the European Union. Studies show that populist parties performed better in elections in European countries affected by the financial crisis of 2008-2011, relative to the economic shocks caused by the phenomenon of globalisation, in particular due to an increase in the number of adherents among individuals with a low level of education (Kuhn & Al., 2016 ; Guiso & Al., 2019).

In line with previous work, we therefore assume that personal relative deprivation might explain individuals' Eurosceptic perceptions in response to the phenomenon of globalisation, which is claimed to be not only an economic but also an identity-based threat against a strong national identity (Böttger & VanLoozen, 2012).

Accordingly, we assume that:

H5: **Workers who feel that their identity and their economic situation is threatened by the immigration and the European Union tend to support a right-wing populist party.**

H5b: **The association of feeling relatively deprived among workers on the vote for a right-wing populist party is at least positively mediated by negative perceptions towards immigration and towards the European Union.**

Finally, in line with the recent work conducted by Ivaldi and Mazzoleni, these two authors propose a new approach to explain economic populism, focusing on a framing related to the concept of producerism (Ivaldi & Mazzoleni, 2019). Building on the framework of a welfare state chauvinist populism, through a form of exclusionism towards economic elites and social groups that would benefit from the system, the producerist approach imply that the common people, considered as producers of the nation, are deprived of their economic wellbeing due to a loosening of political and economic institutions, which neglect the economic needs of the working-class in favour of alternative groups, especially through the process of resource redistribution (Hameleers & Al., 2018 ; Ivaldi & Mazzoleni, 2019). In producerist populist discourses, populist leaders would therefore praise the hard work provided by producers, while blaming threatening groups as profiteers of people's efforts (Ivaldi & Mazzoleni, 2019). Bukodi and Goldthorpe propose, based on the work of Sandell and Markovits, that the differentiation between producers and elites, within a producerist framework, is not only conducted according to an economic criterion but also according to the merit attribute (Markovits, 2019 ; Sandell, 2020 ; Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2021). According to their approach, workers would feel resentful of the meritocratic principles proposed by conventional political party elites, which focus mainly on educational values, while their perspective of social mobility has not improved and their socio-economic status has even weakened (Sandell, 2020 ; Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2021). The principle of meritocracy would contribute to perpetuate inequalities between individuals as elites continue to submit this ideology of merit, while consolidating their high socio-economic position through an expansion of skills in the field of work, whereas individuals with a low socio-economic status would not have the potential opportunities to overcome their social position (Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2021).

In response to this ideology of meritocracy, producers who have negative perception towards their subjective socioeconomic status would pursue a restoration of their sense of merit and the recognition of their own's position by underlining the principle of hard work as a relevant criterion, opposed to the principle of entitlement, related to the privileges obtained by people with higher social status due to their social position (Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2021). In line with the proposed arguments, a study conducted by Protzer tends to show that the degree of social mobility is a better explanatory factor of populism than the level of economic inequality, partly because a lower level of social mobility would induce a deep sense of unfairness and a lack of recognition of merit among individuals (Protzer, 2021). Therefore, we presume that:

H6: Workers who give more value to meritocratic principle (hard-working value) and less value to the entitlement principle as general organising principles of justice in society are more susceptible to vote for a right-wing populist party.

H6b: The association of feeling relatively deprived among workers on the vote for a right-wing populist party is at least positively mediated by value given to the meritocratic principle (hard-working value) and negatively mediated by entitlement principle.

2.3.   Conceptual Framework and Main Hypotheses

The last sub-section summarises the hypotheses formulated throughout the chapter and presents the conceptual model of the thesis. As outlined earlier in the paper, the main objective of this paper is to examine a multidisciplinary framework associated with the rise of economic inequalities, caused by the phenomenon of globalisation, which directly influences structural economic factors through the labour market, but also the degree of relative personal deprivation and the sense of identity threatened caused by economic disparities. Right-wing populist parties incorporate and reinforce, through their divisive populist communications, both socio-psychological processes in order to attract more members to their party.

Furthermore, **Figure 1**, below, presents the conceptual scheme and the different hypotheses, which will be tested through empirical analyses.

H1: Increasing inequality tends to enhance the sense of relative personal deprivation among individuals with a low objective socio-economic status (education level and income level), compared to individuals with higher socio-economic status.

H2: Workers who feel a sense of relative personal deprivation, compared to those who consider their socio-economic status to be fair, are more likely to vote for a right-wing populist party.

H3: Workers who express higher level of social distrust are more inclined to vote for a right-wing populist party.

H3b: The association of feeling relatively deprived among workers on the vote for a right-wing populist party is at least positively mediated by social distrust.

H4: Workers who have higher level of political distrust and perception that the political system does not consider the needs of their citizen are more prone to vote for a right-wing populist party.

H4b: The association of feeling relatively deprived among workers on the vote for a right-wing populist party is at least positively mediated by political distrust and perception of an unfair political system.

H5: Workers who feel that their identity and their economic situation is threatened by the immigration and the European Union tend to support a right-wing populist party.

H5b: The association of feeling relatively deprived among workers on the vote for a right-wing populist party is at least positively mediated by negative perceptions towards immigration and towards the European Union.

H6: Workers who give more value to meritocratic principle (hard-working value) and less value to the entitlement principle as general organising principles of justice in society are more susceptible to vote for a right-wing populist party.

H6b: The association of feeling relatively deprived among workers on the vote for a right-wing populist party is at least positively mediated by value given to the meritocratic principle (hard-working value) and negatively mediated by entitlement principle.

Figure 1 : Hypothesized Conceptual Model linking Income Inequality to Right-Wing Populism Party Voting
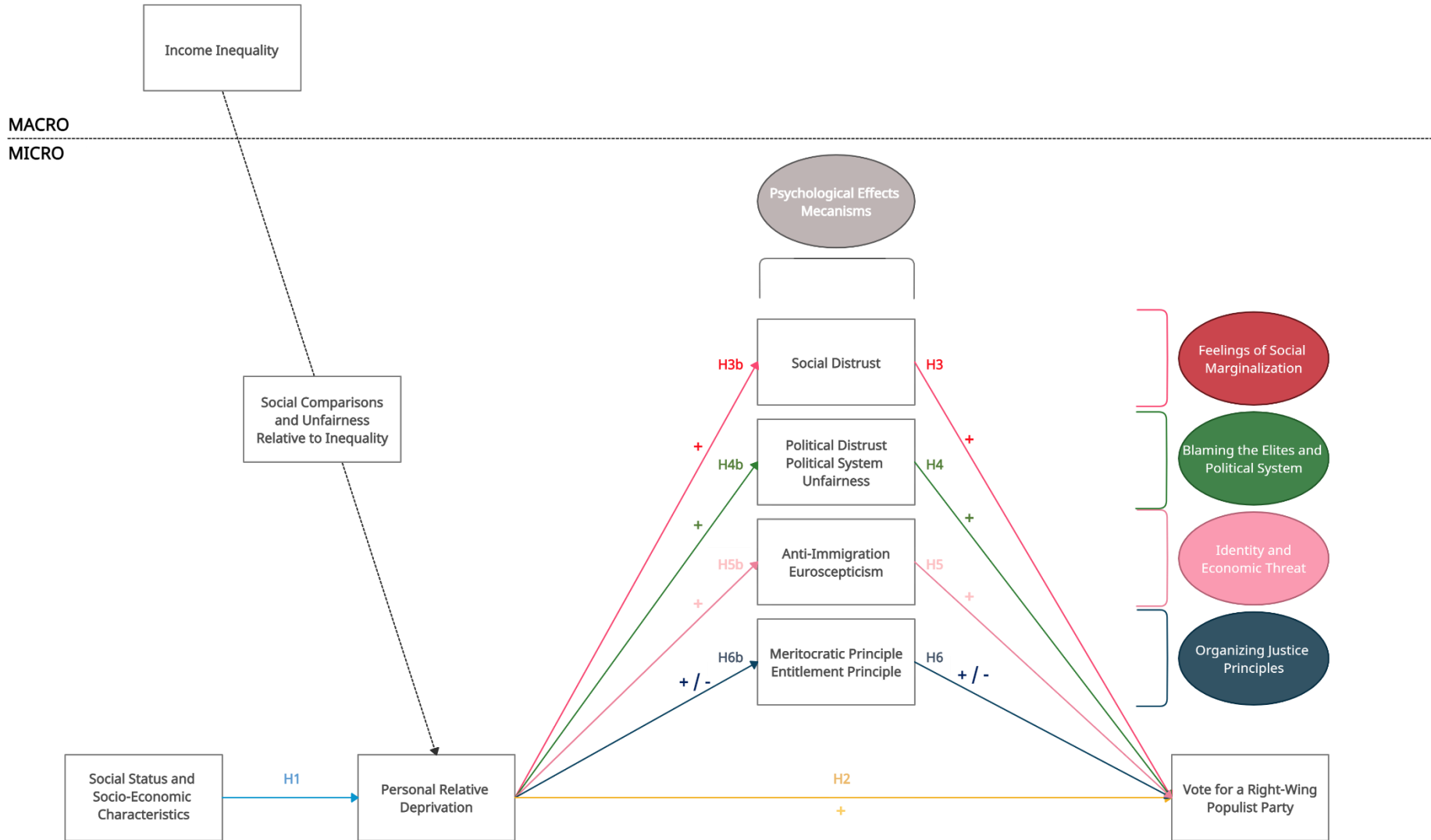
3.   METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter is dedicated to the methodological framework of this paper. First, the European Social Survey 2018 (ESS9) is presented and the choice of this data set for the purpose of the thesis will be argued. Also included in this section is the overview of the sub-samples utilized for the analyses, as well as the justification of the selected countries. Finally, the operationalization of the measures will be described.

3.1.   Data and Sample of the European Social Survey 2018 (Round 9)

As regards the data set mobilized through the quantitative analyses, the choice was made to use observations from the European Social Survey (ESS) 2018 (Round 9). The ESS is a cross-national and European survey that was created in 2001 and which aims to measure the attitudes, behaviours and beliefs of individuals across different societies. The survey is carried out every two years across more than thirty European countries, through face-to-face interviews or online questionnaires [1]. The decision to choose this survey for the analyses stems from the fact that the ESS focuses largely on the attitudes, perceptions and behaviours of different European populations, thus serving to understand and interpret social and political changes within Europe. This choice is also justified by the presence of a new module created especially for the Round 9 (ESS 2018), called "Justice and Fairness", which is designed to gather information related to the perceptions of individuals about economic inequalities and unfairness in their country.

The target population of the European Social Survey 2018 consists of all individuals aged 15 years or older living in a private household, regardless of nationality, citizenship and mother tongue (ESS 2018). The samples are therefore representative of a large majority of the European populations. In order to investigate the effect of income inequality on worker's perceptions and on their voting behaviour, samples mobilised have been reduced so that only respondents who had earned net income through employment (and not respondent who earned social benefits or pensions), as well as people who had not reached the respective retirement age in their countries (67 years old for Germany and 62 years old for France) were included. All observations who are under 20 years old were also excluded from the statistical analyses. The samples were reduced from n = 2358 to n = 1255 for the German case, and n = 2010 to n = 994 for the French subsample. More detailed information on the characteristics of the subsamples is available in the section 4.1 Descriptive Analyses of the thesis.

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[1] More information about the survey is available on the official website of the European Social Survey : https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/

3.1.1. Design of the ESS 2018 (Round 9)

The European Social Survey proposes three types of response weighting in its surveys. The design weight weights the estimates obtained by reducing the effect of selection bias. The post-stratification weight adjusts the design weight using auxiliary information related to gender, age, region and education level in order to have a redistribution of the sample closer to the population. And finally, population size weight evaluates the data of individuals when several countries are combined in an analysis.

Considering the framework of the study, focusing on a comparative analysis across countries in Europe, the logical assumption will be to only use the post-stratification weight. The application of the post-stratification weight allows, above all, to avoid the risks of sampling errors, in the case of dependency between the variables involved and the variables used in the post-stratification weight, and non-response bias, in the case of dependency between the responses given by individuals and the variables used in the post-stratification weight.

3.1.2. Selection of the Countries from the ESS 2018 (Round 9)

Regarding the selection of countries, the analysis will focus on Germany and France. The choice was made according to several criteria. First of all, from an empirical point of view, it was essential to choose countries that participated in the ESS 2018 (Round 9). In order to have appropriate results via the analyses, only countries with an adequate number of individuals who voted for a right-wing populist party were included.

Secondly, given that this study is based on the rise of populist parties in Europe, it was essential to consider countries with at least one political party that could be considered as a right-wing populist party and that the latter have experienced more or less important increases over the last decade, mainly in national suffrages (in this case, Alternative für Deutschland and Front National). In addition, the decision to focus on the cases of the AfD and the FN is situated through their relatively similar populist discourses, as both parties practice a rhetoric shaped on the economic vulnerability of workers and virtuous producers of the nation, threatened economically and culturally by immigration, elites and international actors (Ivaldi & Mazzoleni, 2019 ; Karawita, 2019 ; Reitz, 2019 ; Schmidtke, 2020).

Third, in order to make a comparative analysis between several countries with regard to the effects of economic perceptions on the vote for a populist party, it was necessary to consider countries who had observable changes about economic disparities in their respective contexts.

Therefore, the cases of France and Germany are relevant: although both countries can be considered as states of economic prosperity, with a relatively stable level of economic inequality by disposable income in recent years compared to other European countries, a significant growth in the level of economic inequality by market income (i.e. before taxes and transfers) can be pointed out (OECD, 2017), with a strong increase in wealth disparity between the poorest and richest households (Eurofound, 2021). One of the key arguments related to this increase in economic gaps between social classes and the impression of anxiety about one's socio-economic status is due to a lack of social mobility within countries (OECD, 2018; Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2021). Concerning the level of intergenerational mobility, Germany and France are two European countries that are deeply affected by a low level of social mobility, which can lead to a higher level of unfairness with regard to one's socio-economic condition and a higher degree of relative deprivation, especially due to negative perceptions regarding the opportunities provided by the respective political and economic system.

Consequently, the analysis will be constructed on the basis of economic and political characteristics depending on the choice of countries incorporated in the ESS 2018 Round 9.

3.2. Measures

This sub-chapter presents the different measures created and recoded that were used and performed in the empirical analyses.

3.2.1. Vote for a Right-Wing Populist Party

The variables **VoteRWPopDE** and **VoteRWPopFR**, related to the vote for a right-wing populist party, were created from the items **prtvede1** (Party voted for in the last election 1, Germany ; *"Which party did you vote for in the that election? (Germany 1)"*) and **prtvtdfr** (Party voted for in the last election, France (ballot 1) ; *"Which party did you vote for in the that election? (France)"*). Both dependant variables were recoded so that they become dichotomous: the value 1 corresponds to a vote for a right-wing populist party (Alternative for Deutschland for Germany and Front National for France), while the value 0 means that an individual voted for another political party in the last national election. Individuals who did not vote or who decided to vote blank were not taken into account in the empirical analyses.

3.2.2. Personal Relative Deprivation

The measure of **Personal Relative Deprivation** was constructed on the basis of **netifr** (Your net [pay/pensions/social benefits] is unfairly low, fair, or unfairly high ; *"Would you say your net pay/pensions/social benefits is unfairly low, fair or unfairly high?"*). Regarding the variable, we decided to assess the perception of relative deprivation according to people's net income, i.e. income after taxes, as we suggest that the perception of one's disposable income has a greater influence on one's own socio-economic status and, as a result, would be a better predictor of perceptions related to their own subjective status, to the fairness of the political and economic system and to the blame of other groups in society, given that taxes and social benefits vary between groups (Jasso, 2017). Concerning the scale of the ordinal variable, the latter ranges from -4 to 4: the value -4 corresponds to individuals who perceive that their own income is extremely unfair and too high ; the value 0 is assigned to those who declared that their own income is fair ; the value 4 takes into account those who expressed that their earned income was too low and mentioned that their net income was extremely unfair.

3.2.3. Feelings of Social Marginalization : Social Distrust

In order to measure the feelings of social marginalization among the respondents, one indicator, **Social Distrust**, which is related to the measure of general level of distrust among individuals, was introduced. We assume, following the research conducted by Gidron & Hall, that social distrust is an adequate proxy to explain the experience of being socially marginalized (Gidron & Hall, 2020). The index was constructed on the basis of three items : **ppltrst** (Most people cannot be trusted ; *"Would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? "*), **pplfair** (Most people try to take advantage of you ; *"Do you think that most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair?"*) and **pplhlp** (People mostly looking out for themselves ; *"Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves?"*). Each item was recoded and reversed, so that the higher the value, the more social distrust it represents. Preliminary principal components analyses were performed and show that all three items can be loaded into a single factor. The results of the reliability analyses revealed Cronbach's alphas of 0.717 (Germany) and 0.679 (France).

3.2.4. Blaming the Politics: Political Distrust and Political System Unfairness

With the objective of measuring perceptions related to the blame on the political elites and the political system, two indicators were evaluated: institutional distrust (**Political Distrust**), associated to the blame towards elites and politicians, and the perception of a political system as unfair (**Political System Unfairness**), related to the feeling of being unfairly underrepresented within the political landscape and that the policies implemented did not take into consideration the interests of the citizens.

The variable **Political Distrust** was formed with three items: **trstprl** (Trust in country's parliament ; *"On a scale from 0 (Do not trust an institution at all) to 10 (You have complete trust), how much do you personally trust your country's parliament ?"*), **trstplt** (Trust in politicians ; *"On a scale from 0 (Do not trust an institution at all) to 10 (You have complete trust), how much do you personally trust politicians?"*) and **trstprt** (Trust in political parties; *"On a scale from 0 (Do not trust an institution at all) to 10 (You have complete trust), how much do you personally trust political parties?"*). The three items were recoded and reversed so that higher values represent greater degrees of institutional distrust. Preliminary principal components analyses were conducted and showed that the three items can be loaded into a single factor. The results of the reliability analyses showed Cronbach's alphas of 0.903 (Germany) and 0.867 (France).

Concerning **Political System Unfairness**, the latter was developed on the basis of four measures: **gvinctz** (Government in country takes into account the interests of all citizens ; *"How much would you say that the government in your country takes into account the interests of all citizens? "*), **psppsgva** (Political system allows people to have a say in what government does ; *"How much would you say the political system in your country allows people like you to have a say in what the government does?"*), **poltran** (Decisions in country politics are transparent ; *"How much would you say that decisions in your country's politics are transparent, meaning that everyone can see how they were made?"*) and **frprtpl** (Political system in country ensures everyone fair chance to participate in politics ; *"How much would you say that the political system in your country ensures that everyone has a fair chance to participate in politics?"*). All items had their scales reversed, so that the highest values were linked to stronger perceptions of unfairness about the political system. PCA were run and revealed that the mobilized items can be included into a single dimension. Results of the reliability analyses showed Cronbach's alphas of 0.759 (Germany) et 0.776 (France).

3.2.5. Identity and Economic Threat: Anti-Immigration and Euroscepticism

Regarding the block of hypotheses associated with the economic and identity threat, two separate measures were constructed: the first index, **Anti-Immigration**, refers to the perception of belonging to a national identity through items related to intolerance towards immigration (economic and identity threatened by immigrants), while the second variable, **Euroscepticism**, is related to the intolerance towards the European Union (economic and identity threatened by Europe).

Three questions were used to create the variable **Anti-Immigration** : **imueclt** (Country's cultural life undermined or enriched by immigrants ; *"Would you say that your country's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?"*), **imwbcnt** (Immigrants make country worse or better place to live ; *"Is Germany/France made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?"*) and **imbgeco** (Immigration bad or good for country's economy ; *"Would you say it is generally bad or good for country's economy that people come to live here from other countries? "*). All scales were recoded backwards so that the upper values imply that respondents favour their national identity and are more intolerant regarding immigration. Preliminary principal components analyses were conducted and indicated that the three items used can be grouped into a single factor. Reliability analyses showed Cronbach's alphas of 0.865 (Germany) and 0.869 (France).

For the second index, **Euroscepticism**, we relied on two items : **euftf** (European Union: European unification go further or gone too far ; « *Now thinking about the European Union, some say European unification should go further and others say it has already gone too far. On a scale from 0 (Unification already gone too far) to 10 (Unification go further), what is your position? "*) and **trstep** (Trust in the European Parliament ; *"On a scale from 0 (Do not trust an institution at all) to 10 (You have complete trust), how much do you personally trust the European Parliament ?"*) in order to measure the degree of distrust and intolerance towards the European Union. The scales were recoded so that the upper values imply higher levels of distrust and intolerance towards Europe. Reliability analyses showed Cronbach's alphas of 0.620 (Germany) and 0.595 (France).

3.2.6. Organizing Justice Principles: Meritocracy and Entitlement Principles

The last set of hypotheses, associated with the perceptions regarding organizing principles of justice, includes two distinct variables.

The first measure, **Meritocratic Principle**, refers to the principle that a society is considered as just when the people who work the most are the ones who should earn more than others. The variable is based on the item **sofrwrk** (Society fair when hard-working people earn more than others ; "*How much do you agree or disagree the following statement : A society is fair when hard-working people earn more than others.*").

The second item, **Entitlement Principle**, which is linked to the principle that a society is fair when individuals with high social status can enjoy their privileges, was built through **sofrprv** (Society fair when people from families with high social status enjoy privileges ; "*How much do you agree or disagree the following statement : A society is fair when people from families with high social status enjoy privileges in their lives.*").

3.2.7. Socio-Demographic and Socio-Economic Variables

The last section is related to the different objective socio-demographic and socio-economic variables mobilized. These measures (**Age**, **Gender**, **Education Level and Income Class**) will allow to have a general description of the samples and will be used in the empirical framework in order to examine their effects regarding the degree of personal relative deprivation (Hypothesis 1).

The **Age** variable has been recoded from **agea**, removing all the values below 20 years and above 62 (for the French observations) or 67 (for the German respondents) years old, to narrow the sample to workers who have not exceeded the retirement age limit.

Gender, which is based on **gndr**, was modified so that the value 0 represents women and the value 1 includes men.

The variable **Education Level** was transformed on the basis of the item **eisced,** which was designed on the ISCED 1997 Classification (International Standard Classification of Education), in such a way that it encompasses the level of education through several categories, ranging from level 0 (Primary Education) to 5 (Second Tertiary Education).

Finally, **Income Class** was formed with the help of the item **hinctnta** (Household's total net income, all sources ; "*Tell me which letter describes your household's total income, after tax and compulsory deductions, from all sources?*"), which is an ordinal variable that was derived on the basis of the household's incomes earned by people in each distinct European country and which is separated into 10 categories, each representing an income class decile.

3.3.   Analytical Strategy and Design

This research focuses on three distinct objectives: the first goal is to analyse the relation between socio-demographics and socio-economic characteristics on the degree of relative deprivation in the French and German contexts (**H1**). To do so, assumptions from the Hypothesis 1 will be verified by examining the veracity of their relations inside the correlation's matrix. In a second step, the effects of relative deprivation (**H2**), feelings of social marginalization (**H3**), perceptions towards political elites and the political system (**H4**), perceptions related to economic and identity threat caused by the European Union and the immigration (**H5**) and the principles of meritocracy and entitlement (**H6**) on the vote for a right-wing populist party will be tested. To test the validity of the different relationships, two hierarchical logistic regressions are run to examine the impacts of the variables mobilized on voting. Finally, the last objective of this study will consist of the investigation of the effects of relative deprivation on the different mediators involved. The main argument formulated is to highlight the perceptions related to relative deprivation, among workers, as a factor preceding social distrust (**H3b**), blaming political elites and unfairness of the political system (**H4b**), negatives perceptions towards the European Union and immigration (**H5b**) and the degree of fairness of the meritocratic and entitlement principles (**H6b**), in order to observe if the predictors mediate the relationship between personal relative deprivation and voting for a right-wing populist party. An analytical approach focused on mediation models is developed to emphasize an intertwinement between relative deprivation and the proposed psychological mechanisms.

4.   RESULTS

In this chapter, a detailed description of the results provided will be presented. The first sub-chapter will be based on the descriptive analyses of the different variables mobilized. In the second section, bivariate analyses will be introduced, in the form of Pearson's correlation matrices, in order to examine the relationships between the different predictors. The third segment will focus on logistic regressions, with the aim of testing the effects of predictor variables on voting for a right-wing populist party or for another political party. The last part of the chapter will present the findings of the mediation models, in order to determine if the relationships between the *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Last Election Party Voted* are mediated by the psychological mechanisms.

All the analyses produced in this work were made on the ESS Round 9 Dataset Version 3.1, published the 15th of June 2020, and through the statistical analysis SPSS 26.0. The mediation analyses were established through the PROCESS 3.5 SPSS extension (Hayes, 2019).

4.1.   Descriptive Analyses

Concerning the descriptive analyses, two tables (**Table 1** and **Table 2**) were produced, separating the samples of the countries used in this study : **Table 1** contains the frequencies of the socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics (*Age, Gender, Education Level* and *Income Class*) as well as the variable associated to voting behaviour (*Last Election Party Voted*), and **Table 2** provides descriptive statistics about perception of personal relative deprivation (*Personal Relative Deprivation*) and the seven mediator mobilised (*Social Distrust, Political Distrust, Political System Unfairness, Anti-Immigration, Euroscepticism, Meritocratic Principle* and *Entitlement Principle*).

In general, regarding **Table 1**, a normal distribution can be observed regarding the variable *Age* among respondents within the two countries, with an average age of $M = 43.7$ years ($SD = 12.2$) for the German sample and an average age of $M = 42.4$ years ($SD = 11.1$) for the French sample. Regarding *Gender*, the distribution between men and women is almost identical between both countries, with a percentage of 51.5% of men among the 1255 German respondents and a frequency of 50.5% for the men category across the 994 French interviewees. The distribution of the variable *Education Level* is similar between both samples, with a higher frequency in the category « Upper Secondary Education » (44.2% in Germany and 42.1% in France). However, there are higher proportions at both ends of the scale in the French Sample (7.9% for « Primary Education » and 20.5% for « Second Tertiary Education », compared to 1.5% for « Primary Education » and 13.6% for « Second Tertiary Education » in Germany). With respect to the measure associated with income deciles (*Income Class*), the variable is negatively asymmetric for both countries, even if we find more considerable proportions in the lowest deciles in France, compared to Germany.

Finally, it can be stress, through the variable *Last Election Party Voted*, that 13.8% of the French respondents who voted in the last national elections opted for the Front National (FN) party, while 7.1% of the German individuals in the ESS9 sample decided to vote for the right-wing political party AfD (Alternative für Deutschland).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Socio-Demographic and Economic Characteristics and Vote for a Right-Wing Populist Party

Baseline Characteristics	Germany (n = 1255)		France (n = 994)	
	n	%	*n*	%
Gender	**1255**	**100**	**994**	**100**
Women	608	48.5	493	49.5
Men	647	51.5	502	50.5
Education Level	**1250**	**99.6**	**994**	**100**
Primary Education	19	1.5	79	7.9
Secondary Education	94	7.5	69	6.9
Upper Secondary Education	553	44.2	418	42.1
Post-Secondary Education	297	23.7	163	16.4
First Tertiary Education	119	9.5	62	6.2
Second Tertiary Education	169	13.6	204	20.5
Income Class	**1143**	**91.1**	**902**	**90.7**
1st Decile	38	3.4	44	4.9
2nd Decile	62	5.4	129	14.3
3rd Decile	67	5.8	67	7.4
4th Decile	97	8.5	68	7.5
5th Decile	95	8.3	78	8.7
6th Decile	128	11.2	79	8.8
7th Decile	144	12.6	100	11.1
8th Decile	172	15.0	97	10.8
9th Decile	153	13.4	119	13.2
10th Decile	186	16.3	121	13.4
Last Election Party Voted	**839**	**66.9**	**428**	**43.0**
Voted for a RW-Populist Party	60	7.1	59	13.8
Voted for another party	779	92.9	369	86.2

Note: Regarding the variable **Age**, Participants were on average 43.7 years old (SD = 12.2 ; Min = 21 and Max = 67) for the German sample and on average 42.4 years old (SD = 11.1 ; Min = 21 and Max = 62) for the French sample.

Regarding the **Table 2**, the measure of *Personal Relative Deprivation* is negatively asymmetric for both samples and shows, in general, that German and French workers feel relatively deprived compared to other individuals in their country and perceive their net income as being too low ($M = 1.24$, $SD = \pm 1.48$ for the German sample and $M = 1.23$, $SD = \pm 1.44$ for the French sample). With respect to the frequencies of the variable, the value 0 (Fair Earning Amount) is the mode for both samples (respectively $n = 407$ (33.6%) and $n = 292$ (29.8%)).

Regarding the variable *Social Distrust,* it can be noted that individuals express neither trust nor distrust to other individuals in society, with higher results of social distrust in France compared to Germany ($M = 4.40$, $SD = \pm 1.63$ for the German sample and $M = 4.87$, $SD = \pm 1.52$ for the French sample).

In terms of institutional trust and perception of a political system fair to everyone, there is a general tendency towards institutional distrust and perception of political system as unfair, mostly in the French sample ($M = 6.55$, $SD = \pm 1.95$ for the variable *Political Distrust* and $M = 3.77$, $SD = \pm 0.73$ for *Political System Unfairness*), when compared with the German sample ($M = 5.70$, $SD = \pm 2.09$ and $M = 3.27$, $SD = \pm 0.67$, respectively).

Through the block of variables related to the Hypothesis 5, linked to the sense of economic and identity threat, two variables were evaluated: *Anti-Immigration* and *Euroscepticism*. It can be seen, through the results, that French respondents have slightly more negative perceptions towards immigration ($M = 4.54$, $SD = \pm 2.21$ versus $M = 4.20$, $SD = \pm 2.15$ for the German sample). In general, respondents across the dataset expressed slightly more positive than negatives attitudes towards immigration, as evidenced by the means below the neutral value. Similarly, French workers are much less likely to support the European Union than the German workers (respectively $M = 5.31$, $SD = \pm 2.11$ et $M = 4.65$, $SD = \pm 2.17$). While, on average, German respondents are more likely to express confidence in the European Union, French respondents are more sceptical about Europe.

Concerning the two last measures, which refer to the principles of organization in matters of justice, the results highlight more or less similar results between the two samples. If the *Meritocratic Principle* is essential for a majority of respondents ($M = 4.06$, $SD = \pm 0.72$ for the German sample and $M = 4.08$, $SD = \pm 0.87$ for the French sample), *Entitlement Principle* is perceived as unfair for a great part of the respondents, with a noticeable difference between both groups, since the Germans judged this organizational principle to be less unfair ($M = 2.23$, $SD = \pm 0.91$) than the French people ($M = 1.83$, $SD = \pm 0.90$).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Personal Relative Deprivation, Feelings of Social Marginalization, Blaming the Elites, Identity and Economic Threat, and Justice Principles Variables

Mediators Characteristics	N° Items	Response Scale	Germany (n =1255)				France (n=994)			
			n (%)	Cronbach's Alpha	M	SD	n (%)	Cronbach's Alpha	M	SD
Personal Relative Deprivation	1	[-4 - 4]	1211 (96.5%)	-	1.24	1.48	977 (98.3%)	-	1.23	1.44
Social Distrust	3	[0 - 10]	1255 (100%)	0.72	4.40	1.63	992 (99.8%)	0.68	4.87	1.52
Political Distrust	3	[0 - 10]	1252 (99.8%)	0.90[a]	5.70	2.09	985 (99.0%)	0.87[b]	6.55	1.95
Political System Unfairness	4	[1 - 5]	1253 (99.8%)	0.76	3.27	0.67	988 (99.4%)	0.78[c]	3.77	0.73
Anti-Immigration	3	[0 - 10]	1253 (99.8%)	0.87	4.20	2.15	993 (99.8%)	0.87	4.54	2.21
Euroscepticism	2	[0 - 10]	1249 (99.6%)	0.62	4.65	2.17	982 (98.7%)	0.60	5.31	2.11
Meritocratic Principle	1	[1 - 5]	1246 (99.3%)	-	4.06	0.72	982 (98.8%)	-	4.08	0.87
Entitlement Principle	1	[1 - 5]	1236 (98.5%)	-	2.23	0.91	984 (98.9%)	-	1.83	0.90

Note: a: Without the variable trstplt "Trust in politicians", the Cronbach's Alpha increases from 0.903 to 0.914.

b: Without the variable trstplt "Trust in politicians", the Cronbach's Alpha increases from 0.867 to 0.890.

c: Without the variable psppsgva "Political system allows people to have a say in what government does", the Cronbach's Alpha increases from 0.776 to 0.779.

4.2. Bivariate Analyses

Within this sub-chapter of Results will be introduced the Pearson's correlations matrix carried out in this research. The **Table 3**, presented below, will permit to obtain an overview of the relationships between the variables mobilised and to verify whether the assumption related to multicollinearity is respected. A general insight and discussion will be given regarding the verification of the validity of the first hypothesis (**H1**), related to the relationships between objectives characteristics and perception of personal relative deprivation.

4.2.1. Matrix of Correlations

Table 3 present the results of the Pearson's correlations matrix between the study variables proposed in this research, for both samples (correlations for the German sample are displayed in the grey boxes, while correlations for the French sample are shown in the white boxes).

In regard to *Age* and *Gender*, both variables have different effects between the samples: while the relationship between *Age* and *Personal Relative Deprivation*, as well as *Age* and *Last Election Party Voted*, are not significant in the case of the German sample, significant relationships can be highlighted in the French sample (respectively $r = .09$, $p < 0.01$ and $r = -.14$, $p < 0.01$), unlike the variable *Gender* which is significant across both relationships in the German respondents ($r = -.08$, $p < 0.01$ and $r = .10$, $p < 0.01$) and not in the French interviewees. Results shows that women workers in Germany express more feeling of relative deprivation than men, but men are more likely to vote for the AfD party than women. In the French sample, the correlations highlight that the older the workers are, the more likely they will vote for a party different than the Front National and will perceive their income as unfairly low compared to other people. More convincing results can be observed in the two other measures related to the block of socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics: *Education Level* ($r = -.18$, $p < 0.001$, for the German cases and $r = -.16$, $p < 0.001$, for the French cases), and *Income Class* ($r = -.18$, $p < 0.001$ and $r = -.16$, $p < 0.001$) are significantly associated with *Personal Relative Deprivation*. Similar association can be visualized with the relationship between *Last Election Party Voted* and *Education Level* ($r = -.15$, $p < 0.001$, regarding the vote for AfD and $r = -.20$, $p < 0.001$, regarding the vote for the FN party). Concerning the variable *Income Class*, the latter is significant only across the German sample ($r = -.11$, $p < 0.01$). These correlations provide evidence that between both sample, workers with a low level of education and belonging to the lowest income deciles are more likely to vote for a right-wing populist party and to perceive their net income as unfairly low when they compare their outcomes with other individuals.

Concerning the variable linked to feeling of social marginalization, *Social Distrust* is highly significant and positively correlated, in both countries, with *Personal Relative Deprivation* ($r = .16$, $p < 0.001$ and $r = .14$, $p < 0.001$) and with *Last Election Party Voted* ($r = .18$, $p < 0.001$ and $r = .16$, $p < 0.01$), showing that workers who evoked social distrust are more prone to vote for their country's right-wing populist party and to express a sense of unfairness regarding their own net income.

Political Distrust and *Political System Unfairness*, which are the two variables related to the rejection of political authorities and the perception of unfairness related to the political system, are strongly and positively associated with *Personal Relative Deprivation* (respectively $r = .16$, $p < 0.001$ and $r = .20$, $p < 0.001$ in Germany, and $r = .18$, $p < 0.001$ in $r = .23$, $p < 0.001$ in France) and with *Last Election Party Voted* ($r = .32$, $p < 0.001$ et $r = .27$, $p < 0.001$ for the AfD political party, and $r = .29$, $p < 0.001$ and $r = .20$, $p < 0.001$ for the Front National).

Two variables are included in the Hypothesis 5, linked to the feeling of economic and identity threat: the first measure, *Anti-Immigration*, is positively and significantly correlated across both samples, with *Personal Relative Deprivation* ($r = .15$, $p < 0.001$ among German workers, and $r = .11$, $p < 0.01$ among the French sample) and with *Last Election Party Voted* ($r = .41$, $p < 0.001$ and $r = .40$, $p < 0.001$) ; the second measure, *Euroscepticism*, is also positively correlated with *Personal Relative Deprivation* ($r = .16$, $p < 0.001$ and $r = .18$, $p < 0.001$) and *Last Election Party Voted* ($r = .40$, $p < 0.001$ and $r = .34$, $p < 0.001$). As suggested, the Pearson correlations indicated that workers who feel that their earned income is unfairly low are more likely to have negative perceptions toward immigration and toward Europe. These results also show that higher level of anti-immigration and euroscepticism is linked to the vote for the AfD and the FN political parties.

Meritocratic Principle and *Entitlement Principle,* the two variables associated with organizing justice principles, obtained varied results across Germany and France samples. While the associations between *Meritocratic Principle* and *Personal Relative Deprivation* are positive and significant in both countries ($r = .08$, $p < 0.01$ and $r = .10$, $p < 0.01$), the relationship between *Entitlement Principle and Personal Relative Deprivation* is only significant and negative in the French sample ($r = -.17$, $p < 0.001$). Regarding their interaction with *Last Election Party Voted*, *Meritocratic Principle* is only significantly associated in Germany ($r = .07$, $p < 0.05$), while *Entitlement Principle* is only significant in the French case ($r = .13$, $p < 0.01$). The results show, in general, that the principle of meritocracy is more considered as fair for the respondents who expressed personal relative deprivation, contrary to the principle of entitlement, which is considered as unfair for people who felt relatively deprived.

Finally, the correlation between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Last Election Party Voted* is only positive and significant for the German sample ($r = .08$, $p < 0.05$), while the correlation is nearly significant for the French sample ($r = .08$, $p = 0.114$). These analyses support that the more workers perceive their income as unfairly low, in Germany, the more inclined they are to vote for the Alternative für Deutschland populist party.

Table 3 : Pearson's Correlations Matrix for both German (grey) and French (white) samples, for all the predicted variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Age		.13	-.18 ***	.09 *	.04	.01	.03	.10 **	.09 **	.02	-.05 +	.09 **	-.14 **
2. Gender [a]	-.08 **		-.06 +	.10 **	.00	-.04	-.08 **	.01	.03	.04	-.02	.02	-.02
3. Education Level	.02	.03		.42 ***	-.29 ***	-.26 ***	-.32 ***	-.34 ***	-.29 ***	.01	-.09 **	-.16 ***	-.20 ***
4. Income Class	.13 ***	.03	.31 ***		-.21 ***	-.06 +	-.14 ***	-.12 **	-.12 ***	-.01	-.09 **	-.14 ***	-.04
5. Social Distrust	-.10 ***	.01	-.24 ***	-.17 ***		.37 ***	.32 ***	.33 ***	.29 ***	.10 **	.03	.14 ***	.16 **
6. Political Distrust	.04	-.03	-.21 ***	-.11 ***	.40 ***		.60 ***	.31 ***	.62 ***	.08 *	-.03	.18 ***	.29 ***
7. Political System Unfairness	.00	-.07 *	-.28 ***	-.16 ***	.33 ***	.61 ***		.35 ***	.50 ***	.09 **	-.09 **	.23 ***	.20 ***
8. Anti-Immigration	.01	-.02	-.28 ***	-.13 ***	.38 ***	.44 ***	.41 ***		.43 ***	.19 ***	.10 **	.11 **	.40 ***
9. Euroscepticism	.08 **	.03	-.23 ***	-.11 ***	.39 ***	.65 ***	.46 ***	.53 ***		.06 *	-.04	.18 ***	.34 ***
10. Meritocratic Principle	.08 **	.07 *	-.06 *	.04	.03	.06 *	.06 *	.12 ***	.13 ***		.01	.10 **	.00
11. Entitlement Principle	-.09 **	-.02	-.18 ***	-.06 *	.07 *	-.02	-.03	.11 ***	.07 *	.03		-.17 ***	.13 **
12. Relative Deprivation	.03	-.08 **	-.18 ***	-.18 ***	.16 ***	.16 ***	.20 ***	.15 ***	.16 ***	.08 **	.00		.08
13. Last Election Party Voted [b]	.01	.10 **	-.15 ***	-.11 **	.18 ***	.32 ***	.27 ***	.41 ***	.40 ***	.07 *	-.01	.08 *	

Note: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$.

a: For the variable Gender, the value 0 = Women and 1 = Men

b: For the variable Last Election Voted, the value 0 = Other party voted and 1 = Voted for AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) or FN (Front National)

4.3. Multivariate Logistic Regressions Analyses

Within this sub-chapter, the different effects of the predictors on the dependant dichotomous variable *Last Election Party Voted* are examined through logistic regression analyses, in order to test the assumptions formulated throughout the theoretical framework. To compare the influence and relevance of our different measures across the models, hierarchical logistic regressions were constructed, covering the Hypotheses 2 to 6 (**H2**, **H3**, **H4**, **H5**, **H6**). A total of 12 predictors were added inside the logistic models, through six stages. Prior to the analyses, the Pearson's correlations matrices (**Table 3**) allow us to reject the multicollinearity assumption, since none of the correlation coefficients exceed the threshold of $r = .70$. However, it should be noted that several variables are strongly associated together. This is particularly the case for the associations between *Political Distrust* and *Political System Unfairness* ($r = .61$, $p < 0.001$ and $r = .60$, $p < 0.001$), *Political Distrust* and *Euroscepticism* ($r = .65$, $p < 0.001$ and $r = .62$, $p < 0.001$), *Political System Unfairness* and *Euroscepticism* ($r = .46$, $p < 0.001$ and $r = .50$, $p < 0.001$) and *Anti-Immigration* with *Euroscepticism* ($r = .53$, $p < 0.001$ and $r = .43$, $p < 0.001$). These findings need to be taken into consideration for the multivariate logistic regressions, because they may influence the degree of significance between predictors with respect to the dependent variable, due to a high degree of collinearity among the measures.

The model associated with the German sample will be presented first (**Table 4**), followed by the hierarchical logistic regression for the French respondents (**Table 5**).

4.3.1. Hierarchical Logistic Regression Analysis for Voting for the AfD

Regarding the multivariate logistic regression predicting the vote for the right-wing populist party Alternative für Deutschland compared to the vote for another party (**Table 4**), the first stage of the analysis, related to the socio-demographic and economic characteristics, is statistically significant [$\chi2(4) = 20.96$, $p < 0.001$] and explains 7% of the variance (R^2 *Nagelkerke* $= 0.07$). Results show that the variable *Gender* and *Education Level* are significant, implying that men and people with lower level of education are more susceptible to vote for the AfD than for another party. In contrast, the effects of *Age*, and *Income Class* do not predict the vote for the AfD and are therefore not significantly related to *Last Election Party Voted*, in the Model 1.

The 2nd stage of the model (Model 2), which adds the variable *Personal Relative Deprivation*, is also significant [$\chi2(1) = 4.67$, $p = 0.031$] and permit to increase the variance explained from 7% to 8% (R^2 *Nagelkerke* $= 0.08$). Compared to Model 1, the measures *Gender* and *Education Level* remain significant.

Regarding the variable *Personal Relative Deprivation*, results highlight that German workers who perceive their earned income as too low and who view this situation as unfair are more willing to vote for the right-wing populist party than people expressing relative gratification or no form of relative deprivation.

Model 3 of the hierarchical logistic regression adds the measure of *Social Distrust*, in addition to the introduced variables in the Model 2. The evidence reveals that the model is significant [$\chi2(1) = 19.69$, $p < 0.001$], with an R^2 Change of 7% (R^2 *Nagelkerke* $= 0.15$). All the socio-demographic predictors incorporated in the Model 2 retained their significance level inside the Model 3. However, the measure of *Personal Relative Deprivation* is no longer significant when the variable *Social Distrust* is incorporated. Concerning the added measure, findings demonstrate a positive and significant effect on *Last Election Party Voted*, highlighting that a higher level of social distrust is associated with voting for the AfD party.

The next stage (Model 4), which joins the predictors *Political Distrust* and *Political System Unfairness* is also significant [$\chi2(2) = 53.24$, $p < 0.001$] and permits to demonstrate 31% of the variance explained (R^2 *Nagelkerke* $= 0.31$). The addition of the two new measures has considerably increased the R^2 (R^2 *Change* $= 0.16$) and has resulted in the *Education Level* and *Social Distrust* variables of no longer being significant. The influence of the measures related to institutional distrust (*Political Distrust*) and perception of a political system as unfair (*Political System Unfairness*) are both significantly positive in the model. These outcomes mean that in Germany, workers evoking higher level of distrust regarding political elites and stronger perception of being misrepresented by political system are more inclined to vote for the AfD, thus agreeing with the hypothesis (**H4**) of the conceptual framework.

Compared to the previous model, the 5th Model, which adds the variables *Anti-Immigration* and *Euroscepticism*, amplifies the explained variance of the dependant variable, with a change in R^2 equal to 0.15 (R^2 *Nagelkerke* $= 0.46$) and is statistically significant [$\chi2(2) = 51.52$, $p < 0.001$]. In opposition to the antecedent model, the effects of *Political Distrust* and *Political System Unfairness* were reduced, becoming no longer relevant. With regards to the variables *Anti-Immigration* and *Euroscepticism*, both relations are highly significant and positive with *Last Election Party Voted*, in line with our hypotheses described, implying that the feeling of economic and identity threat caused by immigration flows and by Europe are strong predictors who induce the vote for the Alternative für Deutschland.

In the final model (Model 6), the inclusion of the two organizational justice principles measures (*Meritocratic Principle* and *Entitlement Principle*) has been carried out. The incorporation of both variables didn't improve enough the explanatory power of the model (R^2 *Nagelkerke* $= 0.46$), resulting as a non-significant model [$\chi2(2) = 1.73$, $p = 0.422$]. If all the effects of the controlled variables remain stable, both *Meritocratic Principle* and *Entitlement Principle* did not affect the vote for a right-wing populist party in Germany, refuting the hypothesis suggesting that the nation's producers tend to support the AfD in order to restore the fruits of their labour, in contrast to privileged elites who take advantage of their socioeconomic situation and their higher status (Ivaldi & Mazzoleni, 2019).

Table 4 : Hierarchical Logistic Regression Analysis for Voting for the AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) Party in Germany (n = 826)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	B	*S.E.*	*B*	*S.E.*	*B*	*S.E.*	*B*	*S.E.*	*B*	*S.E.*	*B*	*S.E.*
Socio-Demographic												
Age	.00	.01	.00	.01	.00	.01	.00	.01	-.02	.02	-.02	.02
Men [a]	.81*	.31	.87**	.32	.89**	.32	.91**	.34	1.00*	.39	1.03**	.39
Education Level	-.46**	.15	-.40*	.16	-.35*	.16	-.15	.10	.20	.33	.09	.21
Socio-Economic												
Income Class	-.08	.06	-.05	.06	-.02	.06	-.04	-.08	.07	.12	-.07	.07
Relative Deprivation												
Relative Deprivation			.23*	.11	.17	.11	.04	.11	-.04	.12	-.06	.13
Social Marginalization												
Social Distrust					.41***	.09	.13	.10	-.10	.13	-.09	.13
Blaming the Elites												
Political Distrust							.55***	.11	.17	.15	.17	.15
Political System Unfairness							.58+	.33	.20	.37	.16	.38
Economic - Identity Threat												
Anti-Immigration									.51***	.11	.54***	.12
Euroscepticism									.45***	.13	.45***	.13
Justice Principles												
Meritocratic Principle											-.16	.28
Entitlement Principle											-.22	.19
F-Statistics Chi² for Bloc	**χ2(4) = 20.96 *****		**χ2(1) = 4.67 ***		**χ2(1) = 19.69 *****		**χ2(2) = 53.24 *****		**χ2(2) = 51.52 *****		**χ2(2) = 1.73**	
F-Statistics Chi² Model					**χ2(12) =151.81 *****							
R² Nagelkerke (R² Change)	**.07**		**.08 (.01)**		**.15 (.07)**		**.31 (.16)**		**.46 (.15)**		**.46 (.00)**	

Note: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$.

a: For **Gender**, Women is the category of reference.

4.3.2. Hierarchical Logistic Regression Analysis for Voting for the FN

The second hierarchical logistic regression focuses on the effects of our predictors on the vote for the right-wing populist Front National party in France, compared to the vote for a political party other than the FN (**Table 5**).

The 1st stage of the model (Model 1), which introduces socio-demographic and socio-economic measures, is statistically significant [$\chi2(4)$ = 33.96, $p < 0.001$] and captures a large percentage of the explained variance (R^2 *Nagelkerke* = 0.15). Among the embedded variables, the relationship between *Age* and *Last Election Party Voted* is negative and significant, indicating that younger people on the labour market are more likely to vote for the FN than older people. The association between *Education Level* and *Last Election Party Voted* is also negative and significant, demonstrating that people with lower level education are more inclined to support the FN party instead of another political party. Concerning the socio-economic measure, *Income Class* is partially associated with *Last Election Party Voted*, implying that individuals in the highest income deciles are more prone to vote for the right-wing populist party in France. With respect to *Gender*, no significant result has been observed in the model.

The following model (Model 2), in which *Personal Relative Deprivation* was added, reached the required significance level [$\chi2(1)$ = 4.27, $p = 0.039$], producing a change in R^2 of 2% (R^2 *Nagelkerke* = 0.17). All predictors with a significant coefficient in Model 1 maintained their significance level in the new model (*Age*, *Education Level* and *Income Class*). Concerning the *Personal Relative Deprivation* measure, its association with *Last Election Party Voted* is positive and significant, meaning that the more a worker expresses perception of relative deprivation, the more likely the latter will tend to turn out to support the FN.

When the *Social Distrust* variable is incorporated into the 3rd Model (Model 3), the predictive power of the general model increases slightly (R^2 *Nagelkerke* = 0.19). remaining statistically significant [$\chi2(1)$ = 4.94, $p = 0.034$]. The outcomes show that *Social Distrust* is positively associated with *Last Election Party Voted*, demonstrating that people with higher level of social distrust tend to send their vote for the Front National party. All of the variables previously added in the Model 2 who obtained a significant outcome continued to be significant in the Model 3 (*Age*, *Education Level*, *Income Class* and *Personal Relative Deprivation*).

The next stage (Model 4), which adds the predictors *Political Distrust* and *Political System Unfairness*, was found to be significant [$\chi2(2)$ = 16.50, $p < 0.001$], with an increase in the predictive power equivalent to 6% (R^2 *Nagelkerke* = 0.25). Only *Political Distrust* was significant among the two variables, with a positive relationship regarding *Last National Election Voted*. The association highlights that a higher degree of institutional distrust, among French workers, has an influence on voting for a right-wing populist party in France. The inclusion of these two additional predictors in the model resulted in the loss of significance of the variables *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Social Distrust*.

Table 5 : Hierarchical Logistic Regression Analysis for Voting for the FN (Front National) Party in France (n = 396)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	B	*S.E.*	*B*	*S.E.*	*B*	*S.E.*	*B*	*S.E.*	*B*	*S.E.*	*B*	*S.E.*
Socio-Demographic												
Age	-.06***	.02	-.07***	.02	-.07***	.02	-.07***	.02	-.09***	.02	-.09***	.02
Men [a]	.06	.31	.03	.31	.08	.32	.08	.33	.00	.38	-.05	.39
Education Level	-.64***	.13	-.61***	.13	-.56***	.14	-.47**	.14	-.18	.17	-.17	.17
Socio-Economic												
Income Class	.11+	.06	.12*	.06	.14**	.06	.11+	.06	.09	.07	.10	.07
Relative Deprivation												
Relative Deprivation			.22*	.11	.18+	.11	.08	.11	.10	.12	.16	.13
Social Marginalization												
Social Distrust					.26*	.12	.14	.13	-.01	.15	.01	.16
Blaming the Elites												
Political Distrust							.40**	.12	.17	.16	.13	.15
Political System Unfairness							.06	.33	-.48	.39	-.40	.40
Economic - Identity Threat												
Anti-Immigration									.44***	.09	.48***	.10
Euroscepticism									.37**	.12	.41**	.13
Justice Principles												
Meritocratic Principle											-.52*	.24
Entitlement Principle											.33	.22
F-Statistics Chi² for Bloc	χ2(4) = 33.96 ***		χ2(1) = 4.27 *		χ2(1) = 4.94 *		χ2(2) = 16.50 ***		χ2(2) = 43.06 ***		χ2(2) = 7.31 *	
F-Statistics Chi² Model					χ2(12) =110.05 ***							
R² Nagelkerke (R² Change)	.15		.17 (.02)		.19 (.02)		.25 (.06)		.41 (.16)		.44 (.03)	

Note: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$.

a: For **Gender**, Women is the category of reference.

The 5th stage of the logistic regression (Model 5), relating to the Hypothesis 5 (**H5**), devoted to anti-immigration attitudes and eurosceptic perceptions among French workers, increased the explanatory capacity of the model (R^2 *Nagelkerke* = 0.41, with a R^2 *Change* = 0.16). Statistically significant [$\chi2(2)$ = 43.06, $p < 0.001$], the relationship between *Anti-Immigration* and *Last Election Party Voted*, as well as the relationship between *Euroscepticism* and the dependant variable, are both significant and positive, suggesting that among French employees, those with negative perceptions towards immigration and Europe are more susceptible to vote for the Front National. Through the Model 5, it can be highlighted that the effects of *Education Level*, *Income Class* and *Political Distrust* are no longer significant.

Through the last model (Model 6), the inclusion of *Meritocratic Principle* and *Entitlement Principle* variables improved sufficiently the predictive accuracy of the model ([$\chi2(2) = 7.31$, $p = 0.026$] and R^2 *Nagelkerke* = 0.44). The results show that *Meritocratic Principle* is negatively associated with *Last Election Party Voted*, meaning that people perceiving that a society is fair when hard-working people are rewarded tend to vote for a political party different than the Front National populist party. Concerning the variable *Entitlement Principle*, no significant findings have been observed in the Model 6. These outcomes, similar to the German model (**Table 4**), are in contradiction with the Hypothesis 6 (**H6**), claiming that producers tend to support the FN with the objective to punish the economic elites and to recover their socio-economic status, by suggesting hard-working criterion as an essential justice principle towards income net earned.

4.4. Mediation Analyses

The last subchapter of the thesis integrates the established mediation analyses, with the aim of examining the presence of a mediational path between the ordinal independent variable, *Personal Relative Deprivation*, and the dichotomous dependent variable, *Last Election Party Voted*, through the seven proposed mediators, in order to test the validity of the formulated hypotheses (**H3b**, **H4b**, **H5b**, **H6b**). Before conducting the mediation models, all the predictors were standardized.

4.4.1. Relative Deprivation and Populist Vote through Social Distrust

For the German sample (see **Figure 2**), the first regression reveals a significant relationship between *Personal Relative Depri*vation and *Social Distrust* [$B = .18$, $SE = .03$, $p < 0.001$, *95% CI* = [.12 ; .24]], highlighting that workers who expressed higher level of personal relative deprivation are more inclined to have larger level of social distrust.

Within the second regression, which introduced *Personal Relative Depri*vation and *Social Distrust* as predictors for *Last Election Party Voted*, no significant direct effect was found between *Personal Relative Depri*vation and *Last Election Party Voted* [$B = .10$, $SE = .15$, $p = 0.513$, *95% CI* = [-.19 ; .38]], while a significant direct effect of *Social Distrust* on *Last Election Party Voted* was observed [$B = .63$, $SE = .14$, $p < 0.001$, *95% CI* = [.36 ; .90]], inferring that higher levels of social distrust is associated with voting for the AfD party.

The coefficient of the unstandardised indirect effect was confirmed to be significant when testing for 5000 bootstrapped samples, indicating that the relation between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Last Election Party Voted* is mediated by *Social Distrust* (**H3b**) [*IE* = .11, *SE* = .04, *95% CI* = [.05 ; .19]].

Figure 2 : Mediation Analysis between Relative Deprivation and Right-Wing Populist Vote through Social Distrust in Germany (n = 879)
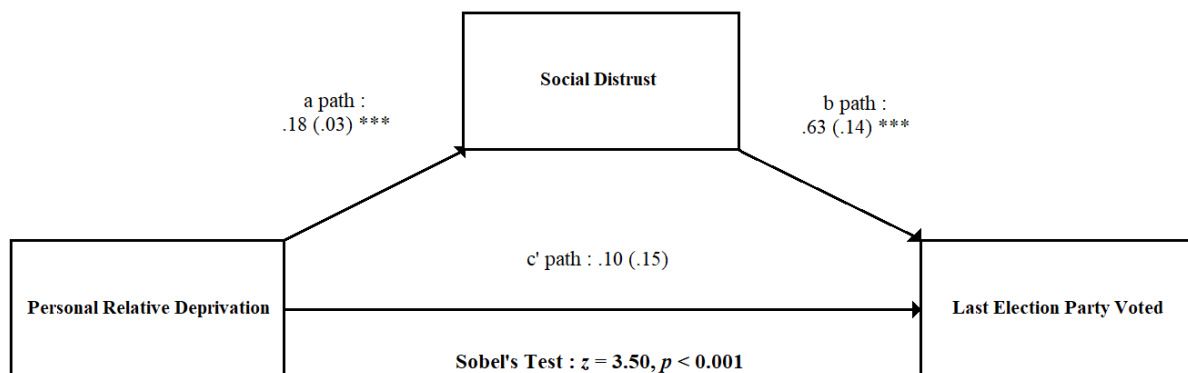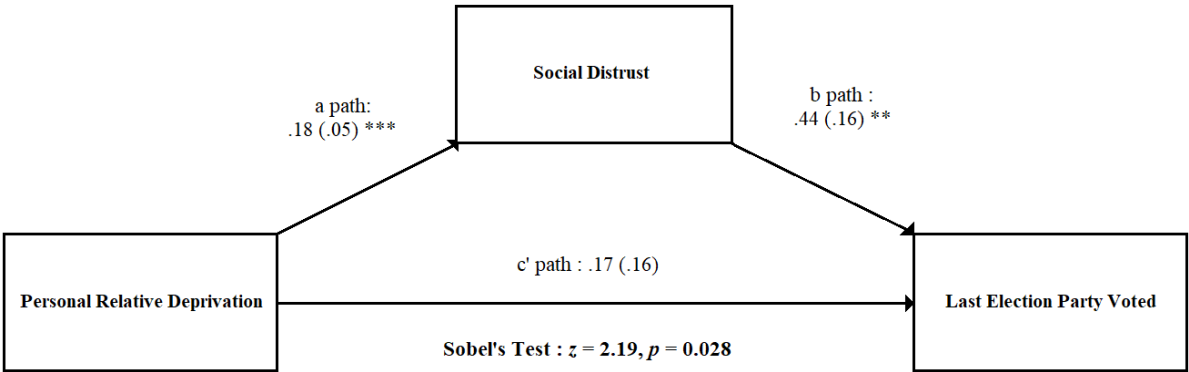

*Note: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$.*

Regarding the French sample (see **Figure 3**), the first regression model shown a significative association between *Personal Relative Depri*vation and *Social Distrust* [*B* = .18, *SE* = .05, *p* < 0.001, *95% CI* = [.09 ; .27]], indicating that people who experienced personal relative deprivation are more likely to have higher level of *Social Distrust*.

The second model, which introduced *Personal Relative Depri*vation and *Social Distrust* as predictors for *Last Election Party Voted*, the first variable was not significantly linked to the support for the FN party [*B* = .17, *SE* = .16, *p* = 0.284, *95% CI* = [-.14 ; .48]], showing that no direct effect was observed. Concerning *Social Distrust*, the mediator was significantly associated with *Last Election Party Voted* [*B* = .44, *SE* = .16, *p* = 0.007, *95% CI* = [.12 ; .76]], implying that higher level of social distrust is associated with voting for the FN party among workers.

The coefficient of the indirect effect was found to be significant for the ab path when computing 5000 bootstrapped samples suggesting that German workers who perceive their net income as unfairly low are more likely to vote for the Front National political party, because the feeling of being relatively deprived in comparison with others influences the levels of social distrust [*IE* = .08, *SE* = .04, *95% CI* = [.02 ; .17]]. Results support the hypothesis **H3b**, stating that the relationship between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and voting for the FN is fully mediated by the degree of *Social Distrust*.

Figure 3 : Mediation Analysis between Relative Deprivation and Right-Wing Populist Vote through Social Distrust in France (n = 417)
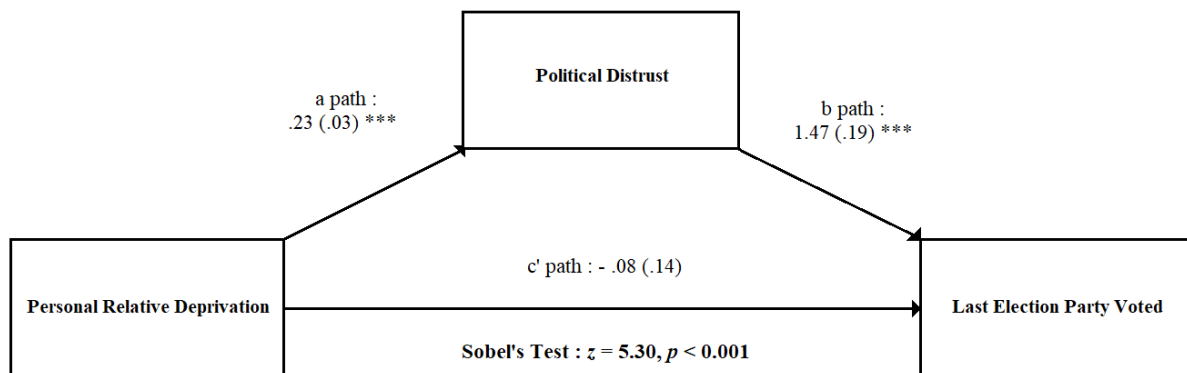

Note: *** *p* < 0.001, ** *p* < 0.01, * *p* < 0.05, + *p* < 0.1.

4.4.2. Relative Deprivation and Populist Vote through Political Distrust

The next mediation models incorporate the measure of *Political Distrust* as a variable mediating the relationship between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Last Election Party Voted* (**Figure 4** and **Figure 5**). Within the first model, concerning the German sample, the analyses point a significant effect between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Political Distrust* [$B = .23$, $SE = .03$, $p < 0.001$, *95% CI* = [.17 ; .29]], suggesting that workers who feel relatively deprived are more inclined to express institutional distrust. Regarding the second regression analyses, the direct effect of *Political Distrust* on *Last Election Party Voted* is significant [$B = 1.47$, $SE = .19$, $p < 0.001$, *95% CI* = [1.11 ; 1.83]], while no direct effect was shown to be significant between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Last Election Party Voted* ([$B = -.08$, $SE = .14$, $p = 0.580$, *95% CI* = [-.36 ; .20]].

Accordingly to the coefficient of the indirect effect, the latter was revealed as significant [*IE* = .34, *SE* = .07, *95% CI* = [.21 ; .49]], giving evidence that the relationship between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Last Election Party Voted* is fully mediated by *Political Distrust* (**H4b**). The bootstrap confidence intervals were derived from 5000 bootstrapped samples.

Figure 4 : Mediation Analysis between Relative Deprivation and Right-Wing Populist Vote through Political Distrust in Germany (n = 879)

a path :
.23 (.03) ***

Political Distrust

b path :
1.47 (.19) ***

Personal Relative Deprivation

c' path : - .08 (.14)

Last Election Party Voted

**Sobel's Test : *z* = 5.30, *p* < 0.001**

Note: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$.

In comparison with the mediation analysis across the German sample (**Figure 4**), results for the French model (**Figure 5**) are very similar, with also a significant effect of *Personal Relative Deprivation* on *Political Distrust* [$B = .22$, $SE = .05$, $p < 0.001$, *95% CI* = [.13 ; .31]].

Within the logistic regression, only the variable *Political Distrust* had a positive and significant direct effect on *Last Election Party Voted* [$B = .94$, $SE = .18$, $p < 0.001$, *95% CI* = [.58 ; 1.30]]. The relationship between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Last Election Party Voted*, controlled for *Political Distrust*, had no significant direct effect [$B = .08$, $SE = .16$, $p = 0.629$, *95% CI* = [-.23 ; .38]].

Based on 5000 bootstrapped samples, the outcomes provide support that the relationship between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Last Election Party Voted* is completely mediated by *Political Distrust* [$IE = .21$, $SE = .06$, *95% CI* = [.10 ; .34]] (**H4b**).

Figure 5 : Mediation Analysis between Relative Deprivation and Right-Wing Populist Vote through Political Distrust in France (n = 418)
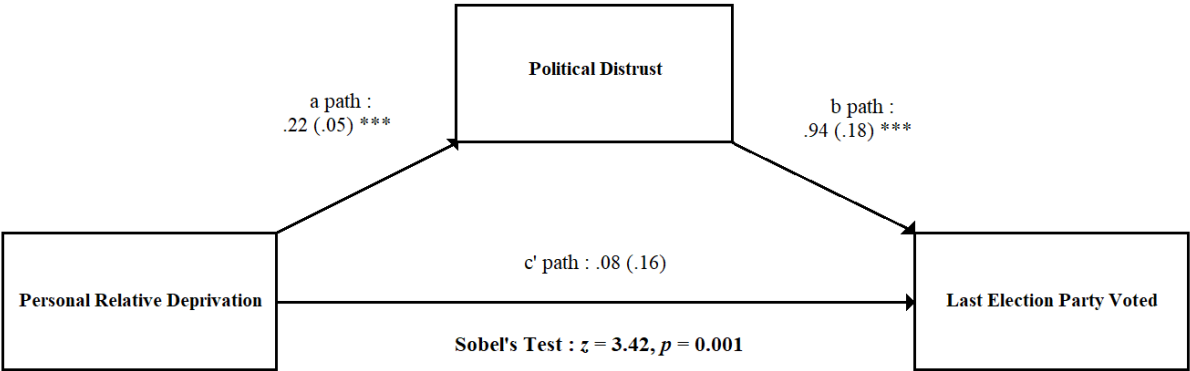
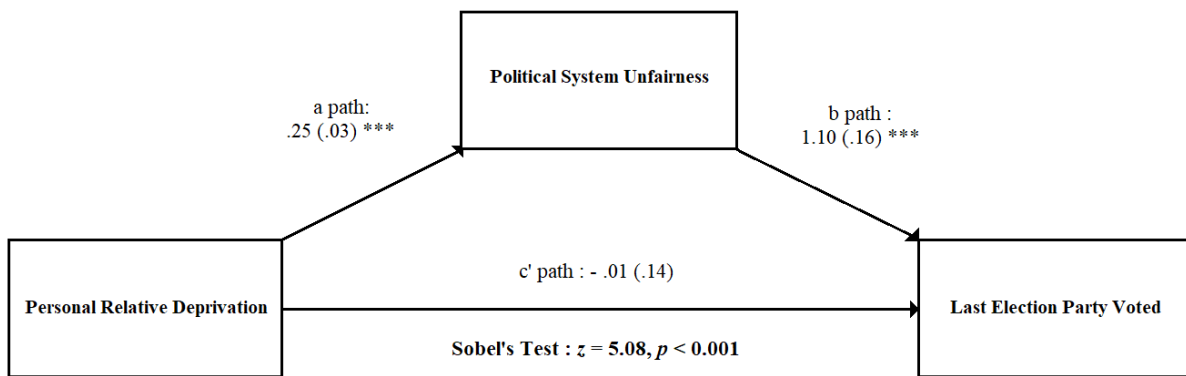*Note:* *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$.

4.4.3. Relative Deprivation and Populist Vote through Political System Unfairness

Figure 6 displays the mediation analysis performed on the German sample, with the *Political System Unfairness* index inserted as the mediating variable. Similarly to *Political Distrust*, significant direct effect of *Personal Relative Deprivation* on *Political System Unfairness* can be observed [*B* = .25, *SE* = .03, *p* < 0.001, *95% CI* = [.19 ; .31]].

Regarding the direct effects of the predictors on *Last Election Party Voted*, only the relationship involving the latter and *Political System Unfairness* reached level of significance [*B* = 1.10, *SE* = .16, *p* < 0.001, *95% CI* = [.78 ; 1.42]], in contrast to the influence of *Personal Relative Deprivation* on the dependant variable [*B* = -.01, *SE* = .14, *p* = 0.923, *95% CI* = [-.29 ; .26]].

In terms of indirect effect, the mediated path was significantly reported [*IE* = .27, *SE* = .06, *95% CI* = [.18 ; .39]]. These conclusions, derived from 5000 bootstrapped samples, enable the acceptance of the hypothesis **H4b**, implying that the relationship between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Last Election Party Voted* is mediated by *Political System Unfairness*.

Figure 6 : Mediation Analysis between Relative Deprivation and Right-Wing Populist Vote through Political System Unfairness in Germany (n = 879)
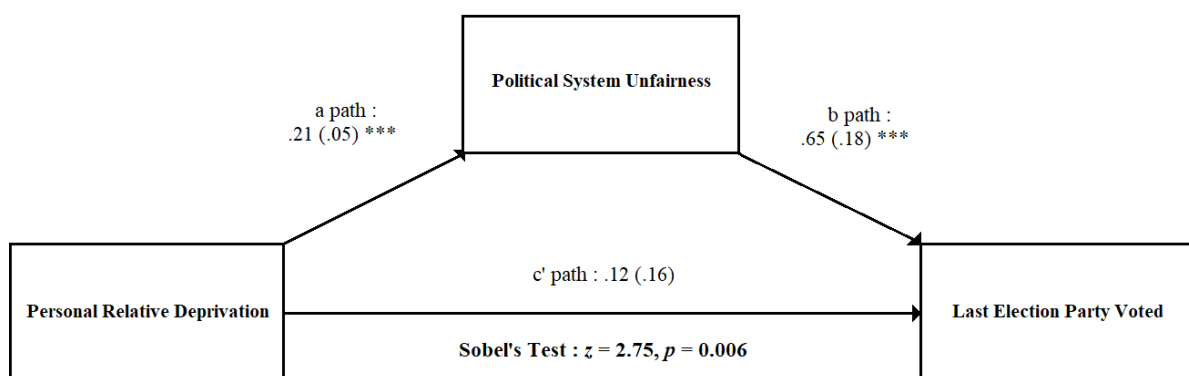

Note: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$.

The details of the French model (**Figure 7**) yielded significant results between the mediator *Political System Unfairness* and the independent variable *Personal Relative Deprivation* [$B = .21$, $SE = .05$, $p < 0.001$, *95% CI* = [.12 ; .30]].

Among the measures mobilised inside the logistic regression predicting the vote for the Front National party, only *Political System Unfairness* variable was significant, with a positive relationship on the populist vote [$B = .65$, $SE = .18$, $p < 0.001$, *95% CI* = [.29 ; 1.00]]. There was no significant direct effect between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Last Election Party Voted* [$B = .12$, $SE = .16$, $p = 0.440$, *95% CI* = [-.18 ; .42]].

As a result, the mediational path *Personal Relative Deprivation* → *Political System Unfairness* → *Last Election Party Voted* revealed a significant indirect effect [*IE* = .14, *SE* = .05, *95% CI* = [.06 ; .25]], when computed for each 5000 bootstrapped samples. The analyses conducted permit to ascertain that the relationship between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Last Election Party Voted* is mediated by the variable *Political System Unfairness* (**H4b**).

Figure 7 : Mediation Analysis between Relative Deprivation and Right-Wing Populist Vote through Political System Unfairness in France (n = 418)

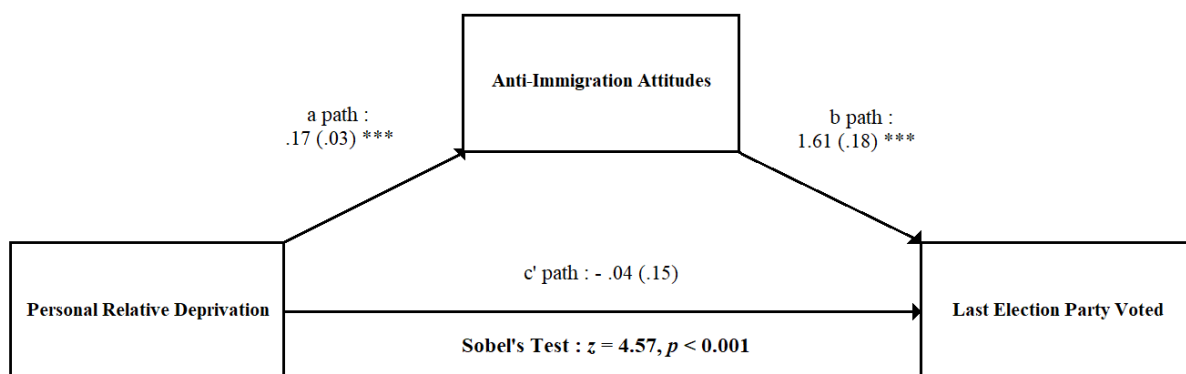Note: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$.

4.4.4. Relative Deprivation and Populist Vote through Anti-Immigration

In order to test the validity of hypothesis **H5b**, regression analyses were conducted to examine whether the variables *Anti-Immigration* and *Euroscepticism* mediate the relationship between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Last Election Party Voted*. **Figure 8** below presents the layout of the mediation model for the variable *Anti-Immigration*, within the German sample. The first regression highlights the significance of the direct effect carried by the *Personal Relative Deprivation* variable on *Anti-Immigration* [$B = .17$, $SE = .03$, $p < 0.001$, *95% CI* = [.11 ; .23]], demonstrating that higher level of PRD is associated with anti-immigration attitudes.

The results of the second regression show that only the variable *Anti-Immigration* has a positive and significant effect on voting for AfD [$B = 1.61$, $SE = .18$, $p < 0.001$, *95% CI* = [1.26 ; 1.96]], while no direct effect between the independent and dependent variable was identified [$B = -.04$, $SE = .15$, $p = 0.805$, *95% CI* = [-.33 ; .26]].

Regarding indirect effect, the mediational path revealed level of significance [*IE* = .28, *SE* = .07, *95% CI* = [.15 ; .43]] sufficiently high to assume that the relationship between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Last Election Party Voted* is mediated by the degree of anti-immigration perceptions among individuals (**H5b**). The results were generated on the basis of 5000 bootstrapped samples.

Figure 8 : Mediation Analysis between Relative Deprivation and Right-Wing Populist Vote through Anti-Immigration in Germany (n = 879)
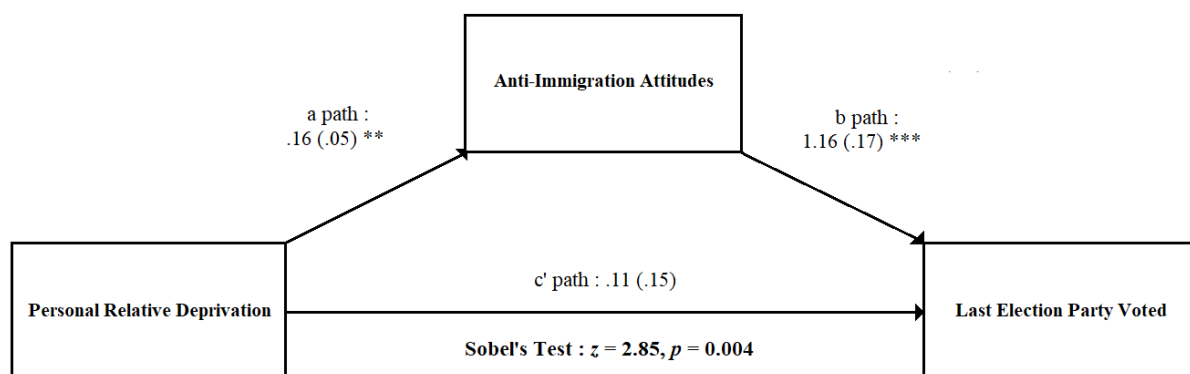

Note: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$.

Figure 9 emphasizes the analyses conducted within the French sample. Similar to the German model (**Figure 8**), the direct effect of *Personal Relative Deprivation* on *Anti-Immigration* was established as significant [*B* = .16, *SE* = .05, *p* = 0.002, *95% CI* = [.06 ; .26]].

For the direct effect between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Last Election Party Voted,* controlled by the *Anti-Immigration* variable, no significant effect was observed [*B* = .11, *SE* = .15, *p* = 0.464, *95% CI* = [-.19 ; .40]]. Finally, the relationship between *Anti-Immigration* and *Last Election Party Voted* was statistically significant and positive [*B* = 1.16, *SE* = .17, *p* < .001, *95% CI* = [.83 ; 1.49]].

The indirect effect result (*Personal Relative Deprivation* → *Anti-Immigration* → *Last Election Party Voted*) is significant for the mediated path [*IE* = .18, *SE* = .08, *95% CI* = [.04 ; .35]], highlighting that *Anti-Immigration* has a mediating effect on the relationship between the independent and the dependent variable (**H5b**). The model analyses were run on 5000 bootstrapped samples.

Figure 9 : Mediation Analysis between Relative Deprivation and Right-Wing Populist Vote through Anti-Immigration in France (n = 418)

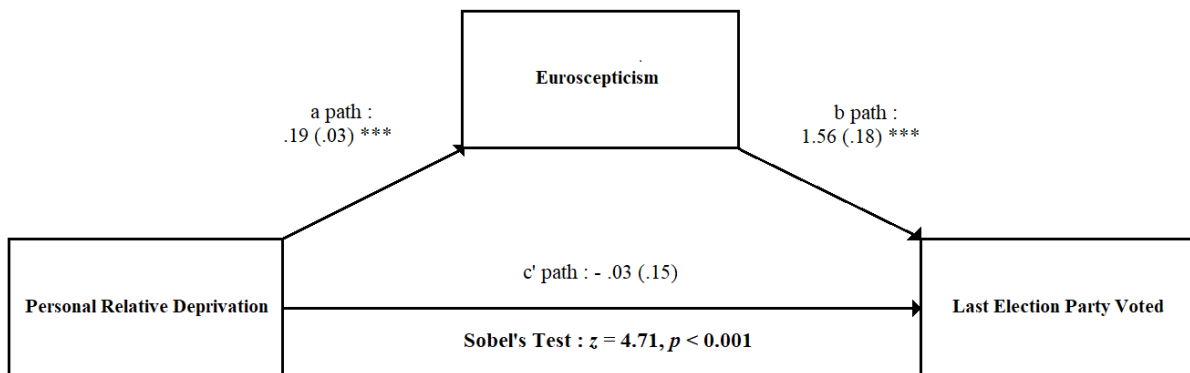*Note:* *** *p* < 0.001, ** *p* < 0.01, * *p* < 0.05, + *p* < 0.1.

4.4.5. Relative Deprivation and Populist Vote through Euroscepticism

The next models present the results of mediations with the *Euroscepticism* variable across both samples. **Figure 10**, which illustrates the analyses associated to the German observations, shows a significant direct effect of *Personal Relative Deprivation* with respect to the *Euroscepticism* measure [*B* = .19, *SE* = .03, *p* < 0.001, *95% CI* = [.12 ; .25]]. These results indicate that people with stronger feeling of relative deprivation are more prone to have eurosceptic perceptions.

The second regression indicated that the mediator variable had a positive and significant effect on *Last Election Party Voted* [*B* = 1.56, *SE* = .18, *p* < 0.001, *95% CI* = [1.21 ; 1.90]], while no significant direct effect was reported between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Last Election Party Voted* [*B* = -.03, *SE* = .15, *p* = 0.863, *95% CI* = [-.31 ; .26]].

Concerning the indirect effect, the mediated path was significant in the model [*IE* = .29, *SE* = .07, *95% CI* = [.17 ; .43]], indicating that the variable *Euroscepticism* had a mediating effect on the relationship between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Last Election Party Voted* (**H5b**). Analyses were conducted on 5000 bootstrapped samples.

Figure 10 : Mediation Analysis between Relative Deprivation and Right-Wing Populist Vote through Euroscepticism in Germany (n = 876)

Note: *** *p* < 0.001, ** *p* < 0.01, * *p* < 0.05, + *p* < 0.1.

The mediation analysis for the French respondents (**Figure 11**) displays similar results, as the *Personal Relative Deprivation* variable is significantly related to *Euroscepticism* [*B* = .24, *SE* = .05, *p* < 0.001, *95% CI* = [.14 ; .35]].

The relationship between the mediator variable *Euroscepticism* and the dependent variable *Last Election Party Voted* was significant [*B* = .97, *SE* = .16, *p* < 0.001, *95% CI* = [.64 ; 1.29]], while no direct effect between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Last Election Party Voted* turned out to be conclusive [*B* = .04, *SE* = .16, *p* = 0.779, *95% CI* = [-.26 ; .35]].

The findings tied to the indirect effect reveal that the *Personal Relative Deprivation → Euroscepticism → Last Election Party Voted* path is significant [*IE* = .24, *SE* = .07, *95% CI* = [.12 ; .38]]. Hypothesis **H5b** is nevertheless accepted, as the indirect effect exceeded the required significance level when tested with 5000 bootstrapped samples.

Figure 11 : Mediation Analysis between Relative Deprivation and Right-Wing Populist Vote through Euroscepticism in France (n = 418)
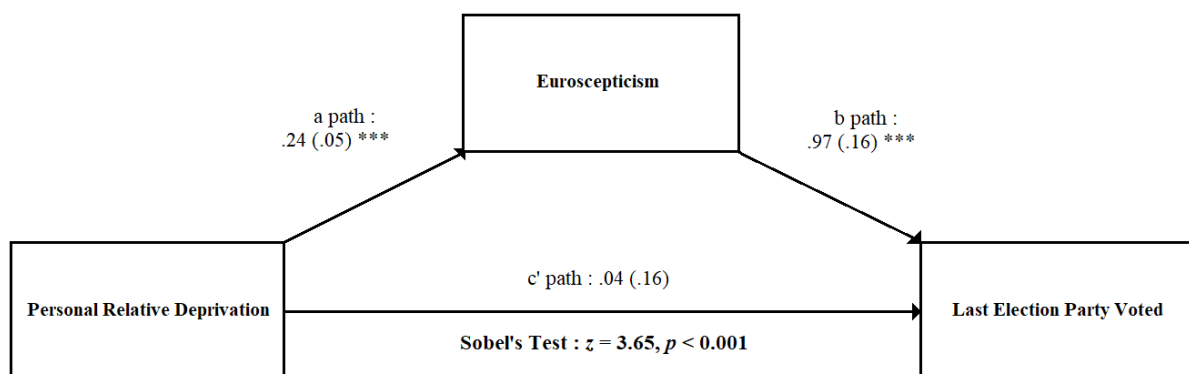

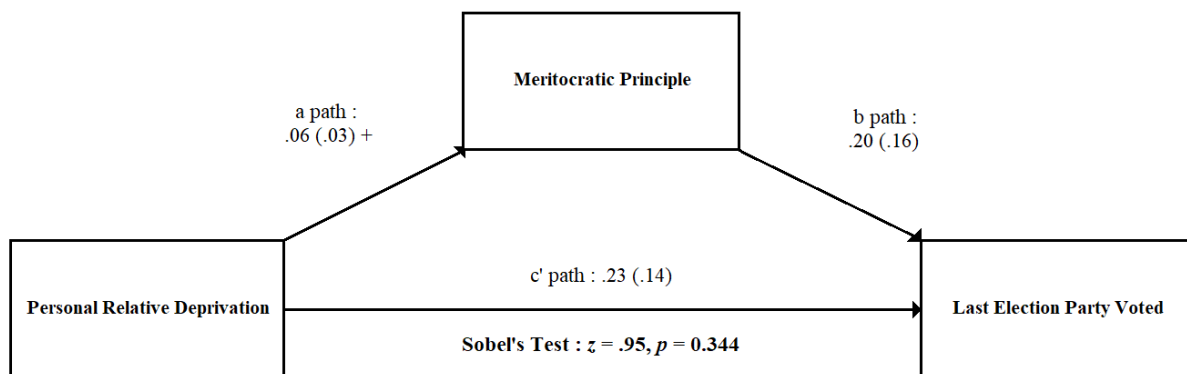Note: *** *p* < 0.001, ** *p* < 0.01, * *p* < 0.05, + *p* < 0.1.

4.4.6. Relative Deprivation and Populist Vote through Meritocratic Principle

In this sub-chapter, the results of the mediation analyses with *Meritocratic Principle* as the mediating variable are described. **Figure 12**, which presents the regression analyses conducted across the German sample, provides evidence that the relationship between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Meritocratic Principle* is not sufficiently significant [$B = .06$, *SE* $= .03$, $p = 0.087$, *95% CI* $= [-.01 ; .12]$].

The second model demonstrates that the direct effects between *Meritocratic Principle* and *Last Election Party Voted*, and between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Last Election Party Voted* are not significant (respectively [$B = .20$, *SE* $= .16$, $p = 0.189$, *95% CI* $= [-.10 ; .50]$] and [$B = .23$, *SE* $= .14$, $p = 0.116$, *95% CI* $= [-.06 ; .51]$]).

No indirect effect was, therefore, found to be significant [*IE* $= .01$, *SE* $= .01$, *95% CI* $= [-.01 ; .05]$], implying that no mediation effect could be identified in the *Personal Relative Deprivation* → *Meritocratic Principle* → *Last Election Party Voted* relationship (**H6b**). The results were derived from 5000 bootstrapped samples.

Figure 12 : Mediation Analysis between Relative Deprivation and Right-Wing Populist Vote through Meritocratic Principle in Germany (n = 877)
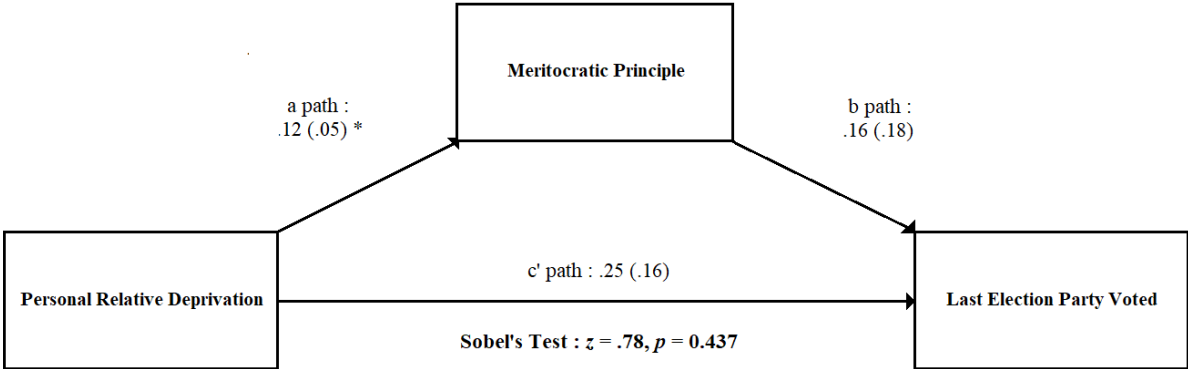

Note: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$.

Similar to the German model (**Figure 12**), analyses within the French sample (**Figure 13**) show that a significant direct effect between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Meritocratic Principle* was established [*B* = .12, *SE* = .05, *p* = 0.012, *95% CI* = [.03 ; .21]], showing that workers with higher level of personal relative deprivation are more susceptible to find the meritocratic principle (based on the necessity to reward hard-working people) as fair for the society.

Regarding the second model, between the predictors and the dependent variable *Last Election Party Voted*, no direct effects were produced as being sufficiently significant for both predictors (for *Personal Relative Deprivation*: [*B* = .25, *SE* = .16, *p* = 0.113, *95% CI* = [-.06 ; .56]], and for *Meritocratic Principle*: [*B* = .16, *SE* = .18, *p* = 0.379, *95% CI* = [-.19 ; .50]]).

As a result, no indirect effect in the *Personal Relative Deprivation* → *Meritocratic Principle* → *Last Election Party Voted* relationship is significant in the French model [*IE* = .02, *SE* = .03, *95% CI* = [-.03 ; .10]], rejecting the hypothesis (**H6b**). Results are derived from 5000 bootstrapped samples.

Figure 13 : Mediation Analysis between Relative Deprivation and Right-Wing Populist Vote through Meritocratic Principle in France (n = 417)

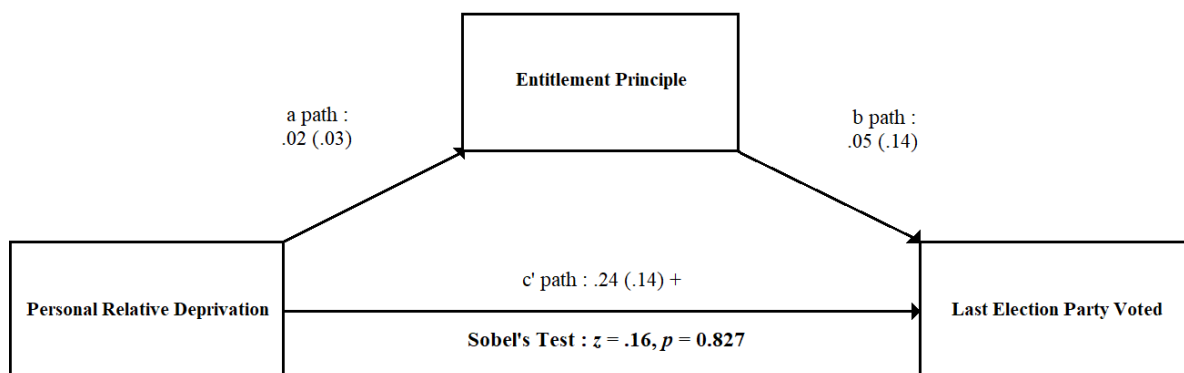*Note:* *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$.

4.4.7. Relative Deprivation and Populist Vote through Entitlement Principle

The remaining subsection outlines the mediation analyses conducted using the *Entitlement Principle* measure as a mediating variable. **Figure 14**, reporting the results of the regressions for the German sample model, shows no significant effect of the *Personal Relative Deprivation* variable on *Entitlement Principle* [$B = .02$, $SE = .03$, $p = 0.570$, *95% CI = [-.05 ; .09]*].

Relative to the logistic regression, neither the direct effect between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Last Election Party Voted* [$B = .24$, $SE = .14$, $p = 0.098$, *95% CI = [-.04 ; .52]*], nor the direct effect of *Entitlement Principle* and *Last Election Party Voted* [$B = .05$, $SE = .14$, $p = 0.734$, *95% CI = [-.23 ; .32]*] were significant.

When assessed using 5,000 bootstrapped samples, no indirect effect was reported as significant [*IE* = .00, *SE = .01*, *95% CI = [-.01 ; .02]*], indicating that *Entitlement Principle* variable does not mediate the relationship between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Last Election Party Voted* (**H6b**).

Figure 14 : Mediation Analysis between Relative Deprivation and Right-Wing Populist Vote through Entitlement Principle in Germany (n = 877)
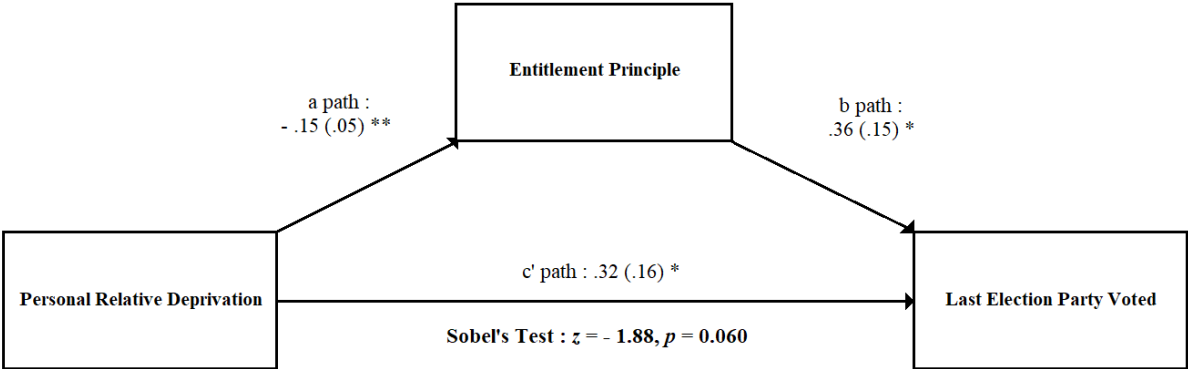

Note: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$.

For the French model (**Figure 15**), different results can be reported, as the direct effect between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Entitlement Principle* is significant [*B* = -.15, *SE* = .05, *p* = 0.001, *95% CI =* [-.24 ; -.06]], implying that workers with higher perceptions of PRD are less prone to consider the Entitlement Principle as a just organization principle of justice for the society.

The logistic regression results highlight the significant direct effects for both predictors on *Last Election Party Voted* (for *Personal Relative Deprivation*: [*B* = .32, *SE* = .16, *p* = 0.041, *95% CI* = [.01 ; .64]], and for *Entitlement Principle*: [*B* = .36, *SE* = .15, *p* = 0.017, *95% CI* = [.07 ; .66]]).

Consequently, a significant indirect effect was found for the partial mediated path [*IE* = -.06, *SE* = .03, *95% CI* = [-.13 ; -.01]], when controlled for 5000 bootstrapped samples. However, the results are in opposition with the Hypothesis **H6** and **H6b**: the mediation model shows that people who consider the *Entitlement Principle* as fair are more likely to vote for the FN party. The results will be discussed in the next part (Part 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION).

Figure 15 : Mediation Analysis between Relative Deprivation and Right-Wing Populist Vote through Entitlement Principle in France (n = 415)

Entitlement Principle

a path :
- .15 (.05) **

b path :
.36 (.15) *

Personal Relative Deprivation

c' path : .32 (.16) *

Last Election Party Voted

Sobel's Test : *z* = - 1.88, *p* = 0.060

Note: *** *p* < 0.001, ** *p* < 0.01, * *p* < 0.05, + *p* < 0.1.

5.   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The main implications of this research were based on the incorporation of a theoretical framework and the establishment of quantitative analyses linking economic inequality to the emergence of right-wing populist parties in Europe, through a psycho-social perspective of the right-wing populist vote. The approach developed on the basis of the theories of Social Identity (SIT) and Relative Deprivation (RDT) implied that income disparities reinforce the sense of economic insecurity of the lower and middle social classes and made vertical cleavages and horizontal conflicts salient. Accordingly, the sense of unfairness with respect to one's own net income, reflected in the perception of being relatively deprived compared to out-groups, influence workers most affected by economic inequalities with respect to their sense of social integration, their degree of distrust in politicians and towards the political system, their negative attitudes vis-à-vis immigration and the European Union, as well as perceptions related to meritocratic and entitlement principles. In line with these arguments, right-wing populist parties would, through their political offer, ensure that the needs of the most impacted workers are met, while assigning the blame for their socio-economic situation to external groups (in particular towards the political and economic elites, the immigrants and the people who claims social benefits).

Using data from the European Social Survey Round 9 and the German and French contexts, the results of this project tend to confirm, across both samples, that German and French workers with lower educational level and belonging to lower income classes are more likely to express financial difficulties and to perceive themselves as being relatively deprived, compared to other individuals in society (**H1**). Although some differences were exposed between both samples, the influence of the degree of relative deprivation is associated with the right-wing populist vote, indicating that respondents considering their economic condition as particularly unfair and perceiving their net income earned as being excessively low were more prone to vote for the AfD or the FN parties, in their respective countries (**H2**). However, the introduction of variables associated with psycho-social mechanisms within the logistic regressions reduced the explanatory power of socio-economic status perceptions, implying that the evaluation of their own economic condition, in comparison with other people, seems to be only a minor factor explaining voting behaviour.

With regard to the mechanisms of psychological effects, the variable proposed inside the hypothesis linked to feelings of social marginalization revealed strong outcomes: *Social Distrust* was positively correlated with *Last Election Party Voted* and showed significant results through both logistic regressions and through the two mediation models (**H3** and **H3b**), showing that people who have higher degree of personal relative deprivation have lower faith in people and that the level of reliability has an influence on right-wing populist party vote.

The analyses related to the blame of political elites and the political system (**H4**) showed contrasting results in the logistic regressions, as the *Political Distrust* variable had significant effects across both samples, while the *Political System Unfairness* measure did not show concrete results on the right-wing populist vote, although the latter was strongly correlated with *Last Election Party Voted*. However, mediation analyses converged the validity of the results, as both predictors have a mediating effect on the relationship between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Last Election Party Voted*, validating the **H4b** hypothesis, implying that workers feeling the most economically deprived tend to blame political institutions for their economic decline and to deplore the non-representation of their needs through the established parties, which favour policies advantageous to economic elites and non-productive workers (Ivaldi & Mazzoleni ; 2019). As mentioned, one of the main plausible reasons for the lack of significance of *Political System Unfairness* across the two logistic regressions is due to the degree of correlation between the latter and *Political Distrust*.

Regarding the block of hypothesis associated with the sense of economic and identity threat, the results produced show that anti-immigration attitudes and eurosceptic perceptions act as the most relevant predictors in explaining the right-wing populist vote (**H5**). As a result, the degree of economic and cultural threat and the rejection of Europe operate as the most relevant arguments across populist communications among workers and their deprived socio-economic situation. In addition, mediation analyses indicate that the variables *Anti-Immigration* and *Euroscepticism* mediate the relationship between *Personal Relative Deprivation* and *Last Election Party Voted*, confirming the hypothesis that relatively deprived workers are more likely to identify with their national identity and to perceive immigration and Europe as a threat, due to the competition for jobs brought by the inflow of immigrants and the consequences of globalisation on the labour market (**H5b**).

The final hypotheses (**H6 and H6b**) put forward in this paper considered that perceptions of organisational principles of justice influence the support for right-wing populist parties, depending on the degree of personal relative deprivation. The assumptions made, based on the approach proposed by Ivaldi and Bukodi, implied that producers of the nation perceiving an unfair deterioration in their economic situation, compared to other groups of individuals, would tend to value the *Meritocratic Principle* as the most salient organizational justice principle within society, while rejecting the *Entitlement Principle*, which assumes that the highest-ranking individuals would have the advantage to claim their own privileges (Ivaldi & Mazzoleni, 2019 ; Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2021). The *Meritocratic Principle* and *Entitlement Principle* variables should, according to the conceptual framework, be associated with the right-wing populist vote. However, the results obtained show that none of the predictors was sufficiently conclusive in relation to the way of voting (*Last Election Party Voted*) in the German context. Analyses of the French sample reveal, through the logistic regression and mediation models, that opposite effects are reported: individuals perceiving the *Entitlement Principle* as important in a society are more inclined to vote for the FN, while workers considering the *Meritocratic Principle* as necessary for the functioning of the society are more prone to vote for another political party.

Regarding the explanation of the hypothesis **H6b**, one proposed argument in order to interpret the results would come from system justification theories, which suggest that people with an unfair perception of their social position and feeling relatively deprived would tend to assign internal causal attributions to their own economic situation, accepting their standing in society (Jost & Al, 2004 ; McCoy & Al, 2013 ; Easterbrook, 2021) and delegitimizing non-meritocratic factors (Mijs, 2019). Consequently, people with different socio-economic status would be more predisposed to approve the non-meritrocratic or entitlement principles inside the society which tend, as a consequence, to reinforce socio-economic positions. Another plausible explanation would stem from the fact that individuals who are opposed to the entitlement principle would vote for another French political party, in support of more progressive left-wing policies, for example, while conservative will show greater support for right political parties (Easterbrook, 2021), in order to maintain their social standing.

Globally, among the eleven predictors mobilised in this research study (namely *Age*, *Gender*, *Education Level*, *Income Class*, *Social Distrust*, *Political Distrust*, *Political System Unfairness*, *Anti-Immigration*, *Euroscepticism*, *Meritocratic Principle* and *Entitlement Principle*), ten variables showed significant correlations with *Personal Relative Deprivation* in the French sample, compared to nine in the German sample. Concerning the dependent variable *Last Election Party Voted*, ten predictors are correlated with the right-wing populist in Germany while only eight measures have a significant influence on the French workers' vote. Although some variables did not have a concrete influence on the right-wing populist vote between the two samples, the final logistic regression models seem relevant, given the percentages of explained variances obtained in both analyses (R^2 *Nagelkerke* = 0.46 for German respondents and R^2 *Nagelkerke* = 0.44 for French participants). As outlined above, the variables *Anti-Immigration* and *Euroscepticism* were found to be the most influential predictors of the populist vote. The comparison of the analyses produced between the two contexts reveals very few differences, suggesting that the effects of psychological mechanisms can explain the right-wing populist vote in Germany and France.

However, several limitations and ideas for future research should be taken into consideration. First, it is necessary to underline that the sample sizes used were relatively small, especially for the French model, and that the dependent variable *Last Election Party Voted* included few individuals who voted for the AfD (60 out of 839 respondents) or the FN (59 out of 428). The effects of the sample sizes and frequencies of the dependent variable mitigates the quality of the analyses produced. According to Lucassen and Lubbers, there is also a theoretical problem with the usage of a variable related to the vote, since voting for a political party is a retrospective action, as opposed to attitudes and perceptions, which are present measures (Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012). A possible solution to this issue would have been to use partisanship identification as the dependent variable rather than voting behaviour, in order to obtain more observations and to correct this bias (Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012).

Secondly, although the contribution of a cross-sectional analysis makes it possible to examine right-wing populist voting in various contexts, the quality of the measures mobilised through the European Social Survey is not in accordance with the design of this research.

Indeed, the use of a cross-sectional dataset is not suitable for mediation models and for the purpose of inferring causal relationships (Hayes, 2019). An experimental method would be more suitable for this type of analysis and would allow for much more accurate measurements.

Third, this study has focused entirely on two relatively similar economic and political contexts, namely Germany and France. While the analyses identified likewise results between the two countries, other nations were more seriously affected by economic inequality and experienced a considerable increase in support for right-wing populist parties, notably in Italy, Spain and the UK. Further analysis across other contexts could reveal similar or different patterns between perceptions of relative deprivation, effects of psychological mechanisms and right-wing populist voting.

Fourthly, although the theoretical framework formulated suggests that increasing economic inequality and populist discourses enhance and strengthen intergroup cleavages, and consequently the sense of relative deprivation among lower- and middle-class individuals, no empirical analysis has been established in this thesis. Future research, based on longitudinal analyses, through which one or more economic macro-measures would be integrated, could allow the influence of economic inequalities to be assessed over a longer period. The introduction of mixed or experimental methods might also provide an insight on the relationship between economic inequality, relative deprivation and right-wing populism discourses.

Fifth, we proposed, based on the literature, that a higher sense of personal relative deprivation is associated with a decrease in individuals' subjective economic and social status and a higher degree of intergroup hostility and out-group blaming (Auger, 2009 ; Greitenmeyer & Sagioglou, 2016 ; Jay & Al., 2019 ; Osborne & Al., 2019). However, recent research highlights that economic instability also increases negative perceptions of immigration (Jetten & Al., 2015) and status anxiety among high-income individuals, either for fear of losing their economic status (Jetten & Al., 2017 ; Jay & Al., 2019), in order to preserve their status and increase their wealth (Wang & Al., 2020), or as a consequence of the increasing cultural competition in the labour market as a direct consequence of globalisation (Kriesi & Lachat, 2004). Future cross-sectional research could focus more specifically on the opposite of relative deprivation, namely the perception of relative gratification, which was partially omitted in this study.

Finally, an additional approach between relative deprivation and populism should be carried out by focusing on the perception of relative fraternal (or group) deprivation. Recent studies tend to emphasize that the feeling of belonging to a relatively deprived group is a more conclusive predictor in explaining right-wing populist voting and threat perceptions than egoistic relative deprivation (Marchlewska & Al., 2018 ; Urbanska & Guimond, 2018 ; Meuleman & Al., 2020).

Despite the limitations identified, this thesis presents initial conclusive results regarding the link between economic inequality and the explanation of populist support, through a theoretical and conceptual framework incorporating the Social Identity (SIT) and Relative Deprivation Theories (RDT), and the interaction between supply- and demand-side populism.

6. REFERENCES

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