On the Islamism Identity of Turkey's Justice and Development Party (JDP): A Systematic Review

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Abstract

This paper aims to study the Islamism identity of Turkey's Justice and Development Party (JDP). To date, the question regarding the JDP's identity has been widely debated. The JDP has frequently been labelled as an Islamist party due to its historical background, while other perspectives perceive the JDP as a non-Islamist party. Contradiction among scholars regarding the identity of the party has resulted in several debates in the existing literature. Therefore, this study attempts to review previous studies related to the discussion on the JDP's identity. Methodologically, Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) was adopted to review related studies by utilizing two journal databases, namely the Web of Science and Scopus, with support by other databases. The searching process retrieved 24 sources that can be analyzed systematically. As a result of the thematic analysis, three main themes have been developed that represent arguments on the JDP's identity, namely the JDP as an Islamist party, the JDP as a non-Islamist party, and the JDP as a party that undergoes a shift in identity. Finally, the present study offers some recommendations that can be considered for future studies.

Keywords: Identity; Islamism; Islamist; Justice and Development Party (JDP).

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Since 2002, Turkey has been governed by the Justice and Development Party (JDP) under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Historically, the JDP emerged from political unrest in the 1990s between Islamists and Turkish secular establishment. Political intervention in 1997 by the Turkish military forced the dissolution of government under the Welfare Party of the Islamist National Outlook Movement (NOM). This conflict created a clash among NOM members between traditionalists, who were loyal to the original discourse of the NOM, and reformists, who saw the need for a new approach. The reformists, led by Erdoğan, then left the movement and established the JDP in 2001. The JDP leaders did not consider the party as a religious entity, but as a party that upheld conservatism and democracy. Erdoğan declared that the JDP recognized the principle of Turkish secularism and the universal values of democracy (Erdogan, 2004).

Due to its foundational roots, the JDP has been denoted as an ideal Islamist party that successfully harmonizes Islam and democracy based on its impressive achievement in government. The Arab Spring that has erupted in the Arab countries made the notion regarding the "Turkish model" for getting more attention, where the JDP has been considered as an ideal reference for Islamist movements in the Arab world (Al-Azm, 2011; Martin, 2011). However, the notion regarding the JDP as an ideal model for Islamists is questionable. Although they have popularly been claimed as an Islamist party, some argued that the JDP should not be simplistically labelled as an Islamist party based solely on its historical roots. Up to now, the JDP's identity is still in debate as there is no substantive study to explain the issue. Divergence in perspectives among scholars related to the JDP's identity raises a question: *is the JDP an Islamist party?* Puzzling debates concerning the Islamism identity of the JDP urge for further research. Hence, the objective of this paper is to study the Islamism identity of the JDP. This paper seeks to systematically review the relevant studies by examining arguments and narratives on the identity of the JDP that have been presented by scholars.

This paper contributes to literature twofold. First, this study contributes in conducting a systematic review study that can be considered as a new approach in studying political party identity. To the authors' knowledge, no study has been done to scrutinize the trend of past studies related to the identity of the JDP. Previous studies mostly are narrative and in-depth analyses in nature that focus more on historical and developmental perspectives. Second, this paper attempts to provide an alternative insight regarding the identity of the JDP by looking into the existing studies. Currently, most studies tend to narrate the JDP's identity according to the framework of Islamism. This orientation of narrative is problematic as it is open for bias. The present study, on the other hand, tries to argue objectively on the party's identity without adhering to any prior theoretical framework.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The systematic review of this study was designed according to Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (see Figure 1). In retrieving past studies, the authors focused on two journal databases, namely the Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus based on two reasons: i) both are considered prominent journal databases that control their quality in indexing academic journals, and ii) both are rich databases that cover a high number of journals related to religion, social science, political science, and humanities. Besides WoS and Scopus, other databases; Taylor & Francis, Sage, and Google Scholar were also utilized.
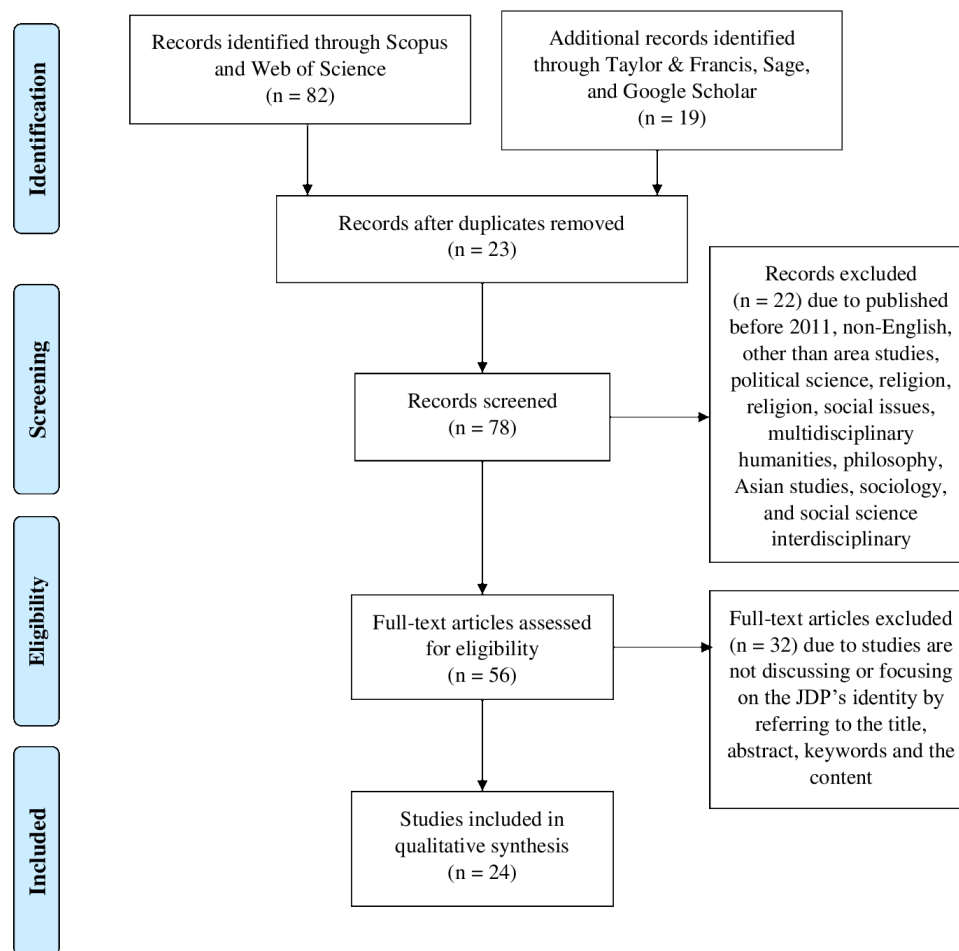
Figure 1. Flow diagram (modified from Moher et al., 2009)

Then, main keywords for the research topic ("Islamism," "identity," and "JDP") were identified. Keywords were further added by searching for other words that were similar or related to these three keywords by referring to Thesaurus and previous studies. After obtaining the set of keywords, search strings on WoS and Scopus databases were developed (see Table 1). It is important to note here that the search strings were developed in September 2019. Therefore, the results were limited only up to that date. Later, manual searching was conducted on Taylor & Francis, Sage, and Google Scholar based on similar main keywords. In total, the first stage of the searching process managed to retrieve 101 studies.

Table 1. The search strings

Databases	Keywords used
Web of Science	TS=(("political Islam" OR "Islamism" OR "post-Islamism" OR "Islamic fundamentalism" OR "Islamic political movement" OR "Islamic movement" OR "Islamist* movement" OR "Islamic party" OR "Islamist* party" OR "muslimism") AND ("identit*" OR "status" OR "character*" OR "self-identit*") AND ("JDP" OR "Adalet ve Kalk*nma Partisi" OR "JDP" OR "Justice and Development Party" OR "Justice & Development Party"))
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (("political Islam" OR "Islamism" OR "post-Islamism" OR "Islamic fundamentalism" OR "Islamic political movement" OR "Islamic movement" OR "Islamist* movement" OR "Islamic party" OR "Islamist* party" OR "muslimism") AND ("identit*" OR "status" OR "character*" OR "self-identit*") AND ("JDP" OR "Adalet ve Kalk*nma Partisi" OR "JDP" OR "Justice and Development Party" OR "Justice & Development Party"))

Upon completion of the identification process, the retrieved studies were screened accordingly. The first stage of screening was removing duplicate sources. A total of 23 sources were removed, while 78 sources were screened based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. The years of publication were selected from 2011 up to 2019(see Figure 2), by considering that the trend of discussion on the JDP's identity, discourse, and approach among scholars was more intense started in 2011, which was the beginning of the third term of the JDP government. Then, the languages of the selected sources were English. Sources in other languages were excluded to prevent any difficulties in understanding them. Lastly, areas of study other than political science, religion, area studies, social issues, multidisciplinary humanities, philosophy, Asian studies, sociology, and social science interdisciplinary were set as exclusion criteria. A total of 56 sources passed the screening process after 45 sources were removed from the list.

The 56 sources that passed the screening process then were prepared for an eligibility process. Eligibility was carried out as the final screening process by conducting direct scrutiny on the sources to determine whether they were eligible to be reviewed. This process enabled the authors to look at each of the sources individually since the searching processes via Scopus and WoS were conducted automatically based on the developed search strings. In the eligibility process, the authors looked at the title, abstract, keywords, and the content itself. Sources that did not discuss the JDP's identity were not considered for the review process. As a result, a total of 32 sources were removed and left the remaining 24 sources.
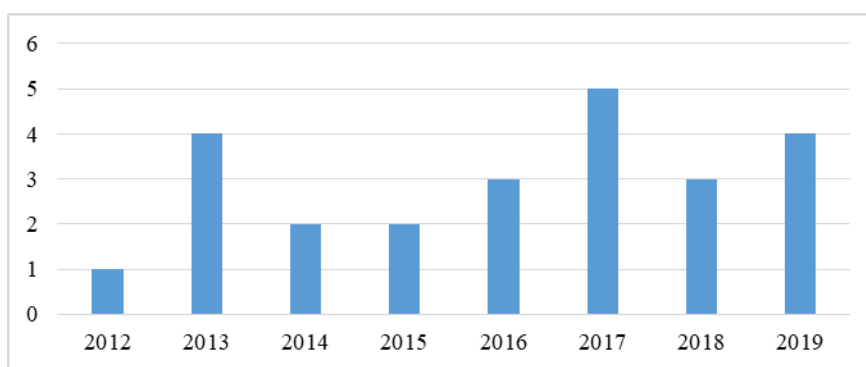

Figure 2. Year of publication

The selected studies then were assessed and analyzed. First, all the 24 sources were compiled, followed by conducting content analyses on the studies. Content analysis was done to extract any statements or arguments that answered the main research question of the present study. Then, through thematic analysis, the themes were identified and constructed based on those statements and arguments related to the JDP's identity. Each of these main themes was further analyzed by scrutinizing any themes, concepts, or ideas that connected within the main themes to construct sub-themes.

3.0 FINDINGS: DEBATES ON THE JDP'S ISLAMISM IDENTITY

3.1 JDP as an Islamist Party

Based on previous studies, the authors managed to construct the first theme, namely the JDP as an Islamist party. For some scholars, the JDP's Islamism identity seems related to religiosity factor. According to Shukri & Hossain (2017), the religious image became a distinct characteristic that made the JDP different from the other parties. This image was reflected by Erdoğan and his colleagues who mostly originated from the previous Islamist NOM before they established the JDP. Hence, religious sentiment has influenced the JDP's image even though its leaders tried to portray the party with a non-religious and non-ideological image (Shukri & Hossain, 2017). Meanwhile, Gidengil & Karakoç (2016) argued that the religiosity of the JDP can

be seen based on religious voters and sympathizers that mainly vote for the party. Despite the absence of a noticeable Islamist party in the Turkish electoral competition, the previous trend has shown that religious voters mostly voted either religious-leaning or center-right parties. The emergence of JDP has attracted religious voters to the party due to its pro-religious image.

In terms of practicality, the JDP's Islamism has been associated with Islamization efforts. Here, Islamization can be described as a process of transforming the Turkish state and society towards a more Islamic-oriented manner. According to some scholars, the JDP's Islamization process occurred at three levels, namely at the societal level (Kaya, 2015 & 2019; Kutay, 2019), the state level (Kaya 2019), and the international level (Hintz, 2016; Özpek & Yaşar, 2018). At the societal level, the JDP's Islamization process can be seen through its attempts to lift the headscarf ban and to promote religious education by empowering the status of the clergy Imam-Hatip Schools (Kaya, 2015). Meanwhile, subtle Islamization has occurred at the state level where the party deliberately penetrates the state apparatus by positioning its cadres into governmental departments, judiciary, and bureaucracy (Kaya, 2019). The empowerment of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) also envisioned the JDP's attempt in Islamization (Kutay, 2019). At the international level, Özpek & Yaşar (2018) and Hintz (2016) stated that foreign policy became a stage for the JDP to emphasize on the Islamic identity of Turkey by strengthening relations with the regional Muslim countries. Due to the domination of Sunni in Turkey and the Muslim world, the JDP, with a vision to lead the Muslim community (*ummah* in Arabic), has been seen spreading the Sunni understanding of Islam, where the "Islamization of Turkish foreign policy" under the JDP has been carried out according to the frame of Sunni-Islamic identity (Hintz, 2016; Özpek & Yaşar, 2018).

Meanwhile, some scholars associated the JDP's Islamism identity with its Islamist historical background. For Shukri & Hossain (2017), although the JDP tried to distance itself from Islamism discourse, historical past and its founding members that rooted from Islamism tradition have influenced the party's identity. The interrelation between the JDP and its Islamism historical background has been argued as one of the factors where conservative and religious voters support the party (Gidengil & Karakoç, 2016). However, the JDP was found moderating its discourse more pragmatically due to its experience in facing constraints by secularists. This view was in line with Köseoğlu (2019) which argued that the JDP's moderation was a strategic mechanism by Islamists to respond to the need for a more ideological-free politics. Political intervention through a military coup in 1997 forced Islamists to moderate its discourse, which then gave birth to JDP. Yet, this demonstrates a continuity between the JDP and its Islamist predecessor, although the former attempted to deny its relationship with the latter. This indicates the JDP as an Islamist party that pursues a similar vision and agenda with the previous Islamists (Kaya, 2019).

Under the theme of the JDP as an Islamist party, most studies argued that the party made democracy as a political tool in hiding its intention towards a religious vision. The JDP has been argued to conceal its Islamist aspiration by appealing itself as a party that is loyal to democratic values (Kaya, 2015; Özpek & Yaşar, 2018; Sezal & Sezal, 2018; Yilmaz et al., 2017). According to Kaya (2015), the JDP has created its brand of democracy, i.e., conservative democracy, as a strategic tool to Islamize the Turkish state and society. Hence, supporting democracy was not because the party upheld democracy genuinely. Rather, it became a tool for the party to accomplish what had been understood by its members as a "religious command." While Shukri & Hossain (2017) further stated that the JDP utilized democracy as a strategic means to penetrate the center of the political and social life of Turkish society. Here, the party has voiced out democracy and liberal terms to win over the people's support and to convince the secular elite for the party's new discourse. Meanwhile, some studies argued that the JDP took advantage of democracy to shape its identity. The JDP exploited democratic values and supported Turkey's European Union (EU) membership to differentiate itself from other religious and conservative

parties while maintaining its interest in conservative values to distinguish itself from the rest conservative parties (Kirdiş, 2015). Then, the party redefined democracy to promote what Çinar (2018) argued as a "nativist democracy" that let the JDP to strengthen its anchor in the Turkish state and society. Exploiting democracy to hide its Islamist aspiration and to ensure its electoral support symbolized that the JDP still adhered to its old discourse (Sezal & Sezal, 2018). The JDP's partial commitment to democracy portrayed that the party did not undergo an ideological shift from its Islamism origin, but only experiencing a behavioral shift in a pragmatic way (Kaya, 2019).

Studies argued that for religious parties to free themselves from a religious identity, they have to go through ideological moderation process by abandoning religious discourse and adopting a moderate ideology and belief. For the case of JDP, however, some studies argued that the party did not demonstrate ideological moderation but has experienced a de-moderation process. For instance, Shukri & Hossain (2017) mentioned that initially, the JDP had abandoned Islamism and embraced a more liberal and pragmatic discourse. Then, the party shifted its discourse by reemphasizing on Islamist aspiration. Rather than undergoing ideological moderation, Bashirov & Lancaster (2018) and Kaya (2019) argued that the JDP has only experienced behavioral moderation. Contrary to ideological moderation, behavioral moderation means that the JDP only relaxes its political approach and language, while keeping its Islamism aspiration.

Fulfilling popular and conservative demand is another aspect that has been associated the JDP with the Islamism identity. Conservative demand refers to traditional, identity-based, and religious claims made by the large segment of the Turkish mass, i.e., conservative people. As a party that seeks vote, the JDP must gain popular support across multiple segments (Gidengil & Karakoç, 2016). The JDP has been illustrated as a party with a populist sentiment by trying to represent a periphery and marginalized segment, especially conservatives (Kutay, 2019). According to Kirdiş (2015), the JDP has portrayed itself as a party of center with conservative tendency and tried to represent oppressed people. Özpek & Yaşar (2018) also in line with Kirdiş (2015) in arguing that the JDP attempted to champion the conservative segment in a populist way.

While for some scholars, the JDP's Islamism identity seems related to civilizational reason. Hintz (2016) argued that the JDP's Islamist image was pictured based on the Ottoman sentiment. To revive the Islamism-Ottoman sentiment, the JDP tried to cultivate what had been denoted by Erdoğan as a "pious generation," while at the same time, popularizing the Sunni belief that rooted back from the Ottoman tradition. Under the JDP government, Turkey's international orientation has been shifted from siding to the West into the Muslim world (Hintz, 2016). According to Çinar (2018), the JDP's civilizational discourse can be considered as a reaction to the Arab Spring. Following the Arab Spring, the JDP felt that it must strongly emphasize its identity according to Islamic image, as the party tried to assume a leadership role in the neighboring Arab countries. Hence, the party stressed its Islamic identity according to civilizational means by clarifying its historical Ottoman roots.

3.2   JDP as a Non-Islamist Party

The second theme that the authors managed to construct from previous studies was the JDP as a non-Islamist party. A particular entity is considered Islamist due to its aim to establish an Islamic state with sharia law. In this case, some scholars argued that the JDP could not be considered as an Islamist party due to the absence of a vision to uphold sharia and Islamic state (Bokhari & Senzai, 2013). From the beginning, the JDP has never declared itself as a religious party to establish a state ruled by religious law (Kassem, 2013). For Kuru (2013), the JDP has never pursued any Islamic agenda, let alone to call for a constitutional reference according to sharia. Kassem (2013) in line with Kuru (2013) by arguing that the JDP emphasized only on practicality

like economics and political developments and the party was not interested in ideological matters, especially in establishing an Islamic state based on sharia. The politics without sharia has made the JDP a different entity from the rest of Islamist movements (Yaylaci, 2014).

At the same time, the JDP has been found supporting and defending the principle of secularism (Bokhari & Senzai, 2013). Erdoğan; the key founder of the JDP has promoted the principle of secularism by himself, indicating that the party is a strong supporter of secularism (Torelli, 2012). According to Kassem (2013), the party has been offering a model of secularism that can be reconciled with religion. Contrary to the Kemalists' assertive secularism, which is strict in its implementation, the one that promoted by the JDP is passive secularism; a more democratic, liberal, and accommodative version of secularism (Kuru, 2013). By promoting passive secularism, the party interpreted that the state should be neutral from all religions, faiths, and ideologies, and should not intervene in one's religious practice and belief (Yaylaci, 2014). The JDP's support on secularism has been viewed from two perspectives. Altınordu (2016) argued the JDP's support on secularism was driven by the party's incorporation strategy, i.e., strategy for the party to incorporate into the Turkish political system by adopting sacred symbols of the state, including the principle of secularism. Adhering to secularism enabled the JDP to remain operating in a secular state (Kuru, 2013). While Waldman and Caliskan (2017) saw that the party's attitude on secularism was due to its support on democratic principles, where passive secularism that had been promoted demonstrated its inclination towards democracy.

Meanwhile, Western values have also become one of the reasons for previous scholars to denote the JDP as non-Islamist party. For some scholars, the JDP's interest in the Western values lies in the context of Turkey's aspiration for the EU membership (Altınordu, 2016; Ceran, 2019; Kassem, 2013). Turkey's EU membership requires the JDP to do political, institutional, and social reforms, while at the same time, adopting Western values like a liberal democracy. Besides EU membership, demand for the implementation of policies according to neoliberalism globally also urged the JDP to embrace Western values (Moudouros, 2014), notably a neoliberal economy (Ceran, 2019). A neoliberal economy based on a free-market idea had impacted Turkey's economic development, especially in the expansion of industrialization sector (Moudouros, 2014). Overall, commitments to embrace the Western values, whether in politics or economics, made some scholars denote the JDP as a pro-Western party.

Islamism tradition is an important point in explaining the Islamism identity of a particular entity. For the case of JDP, however, the party has been claimed to abandon Islamism tradition, made it no longer an Islamist party. According to Bokhari & Senzai (2013) and Altınordu (2016), the JDP has been considered leaving the Islamism tradition. Its leaders have distanced the party away from Islamism and have tried to embrace a more moderate approach and discourse (Şimşek, 2013). Fundamentally, the JDP abandoned Islamism tradition as the party assumed that its Islamist predecessor, NOM, had failed in delivering and translating their messages to the public. This failure became a lesson for the key founder of the JDP to not inherit the Islamism idea of NOM (Waldman & Caliskan, 2017). By abandoning Islamism, the JDP's leaders tried to portray themselves and the party as non-Islamist (Yenigun, 2017). Altınordu (2016) argued that the abandonment of Islamism tradition by the JDP could be understood as a part of the party's adaptation strategies into a political system. Not only did the JDP abandon the Islamism tradition, but they also recruited personnel beyond the Islamist circle to join the party (Altınordu, 2016). On the other perspective, the JDP's rejection of Islamism also indicates the party's ideological shift from religious into a non-religious entity (Ceran, 2019).

Although not getting much attention among scholars, a few argued that the JDP's identity could be associated with the center-right image. Compared to the Islamist NOM parties, center-right parties such as Justice Party, True Path Party, and Motherland Party have gained more support even among religious segments. By associating itself as a center-right conservative democratic

party (Yilmaz et al., 2017), this adaptation strategy can be understood as an approach for the JDP to penetrate the center-right segment. Similarly, Ceran (2019) also stressed that the reformists in NOM had repositioned themselves at the center-right segment and tried to replace the role of previous center-right parties that was claimed to have failed in forming a strong political force.

Some scholars viewed that the JDP was more suitable to be denoted as a non-religious party due to its tendency on post-Islamism discourse. Here, the JDP was perceived as a post-Islamist party as it ignored Islamism agenda and rhetoric in its administrative policies (Bokhari & Senzai, 2013; Torelli, 2012; Yaylaci, 2014; Yenigun, 2017). The JDP's stance of post-Islamism has made the party being situated between Islamists and hardline secularists. Kuru (2013) further designated that the JDP as a party that practices "Muslim politics," which is not compatible with what Islamists envision. Muslim politics of the JDP focused loosely on an ethical aspect such as fighting corruption, promoting justice, and advocating transparency compared to establishing Islamic state and sharia (Kuru, 2013). The JDP has also been said to embrace post-Islamism based on its rejection of religious label (Kuru, 2013; Yaylaci, 2014).

Conservative democracy has been cited by scholars in situating the JDP as non-Islamist. Waldman & Caliskan (2017) simplified the main points of conservative democracy as: 1-institutional reform, 2-politics of reconciliation, 3-political legitimacy is centered to people sovereignty, the constitution, and universal values, 4-a limited government, 5-rejecting government preference on people, 6-upholding pluralist democracy, 7-rejecting social engineering, and 8-harmonising between idealism and realism. For some scholars, conservative democracy portrays the JDP's political transformation from a religious leaning into liberal and secular tones (Kassem, 2013; Yaylaci, 2014). Conservative democracy has been considered as part of the JDP's strategy to distance itself from Islamism and to ensure its political relevance in gaining support and eliminating secularists' scepticism (Şimşek, 2013; Yenigun, 2017). In this case, conservative democracy was denoted as the JDP's incorporation strategy, political adaptation, and operational reformulation (Altınordu, 2016; Yilmaz et al., 2017; Yenigun, 2017). Şimşek (2013) also mentioned that the JDP needed to construct a positive image at the global level. Through conservative democracy, the party was able to rebrand itself as a new entity and to continue working on Turkey's EU membership. For Moudouros (2014), conservative democracy was the mechanism used by the JDP to transform the Turkish state in line with the principles of neoliberalism.

3.3 JDP as a Party that Undergoes a Shift in Identity

JDP as a party that undergoes a shift in identity is the third theme related to the discussion of the JDP's identity. A few studies portrayed that the JDP has increasingly turned away from the pro-Islamist stance. For instance, Altınordu (2016) argued that the JDP, which emerged from an Islamism circle, has moved away from Islamism sense by incorporate itself into the Turkish political system and adopted a more liberal and pragmatic attitude by the end of its second term in government (Altınordu, 2016). Waldman & Caliskan (2017) also stressed that the JDP has turned away from pro-Islamism through a political adaptation strategy by adhering to democratic and secular values. Meanwhile, Yenigun (2017) assumed that the JDP once turned away from pro-Islamism to post-Islamism, but then turned to what he denoted as a "Muslimism," i.e., a political project driven by a quest for Muslim domination. Contrary to Islamism and post-Islamism that motivated respectively by an establishment of Islamic state and political practicalities, Muslimism stresses more on power domination by Muslims, but not bound to any ideological vision like Islamism (Yenigun, 2017)

Oppositely, some scholars argued that the JDP has increasingly turned to pro-Islamism. In this case, the JDP has been argued to emphasize its Islamist agenda since its second term. Since 2007, in which the JDP has successfully increased its support, coupled with the triumph in taking the

President's post and the success in detaining its foes through a series of trials known as the Ergenekon trials, the JDP has seen increasingly emphasized on pro-Islamic conservatism in its government (Köseoğlu, 2019; Kutay, 2019; Shukri & Hossain, 2017). Köseoğlu (2019) further stated that the JDP has increasingly shown its Islamist aspiration after the 2010 constitutional referendum that enabled the party to take over judiciary and military. Yilmaz et al. (2017) also stressed that the 2010 constitutional amendment, followed by victory in the 2011 general election, has led the way for the JDP towards the direction of Islamism with Erdoğan's one-man authoritarian leadership.

Meanwhile, some scholars argued that the JDP's move to turn to pro-Islamism was related to international affairs. According to Kirdiş (2015), when the JDP took office in 2002, the party portrayed itself as a new party of center that tried to distance itself from its Islamist past. In doing so, the party took a pro-Western stance by struggling for the EU membership. Then, the party has increasingly shown its tendency towards a pro-Islamist stance by redefining Turkish foreign policy according to Turkish religious-historical values (Kirdiş, 2015). At the same time, the Arab Spring has been said to influence the JDP's identity shift to a pro-Islamist. As the party tried to bid a leadership role in its neighboring Arab countries, the JDP has illustrated its Islamist image by emphasizing on the Islamist agenda (Sezal & Sezal, 2018). Coincidental with its triumph in increasing electoral support in the 2011 election, the party's Islamism paradigm has replaced its secular tendency (Bashirov & Lancaster, 2018; Kutay, 2019; Shukri & Hossain, 2017)

4.0 DISCUSSION

By referring to arguments presented by previous studies, it could be summarized that scholars argued the identity of the JDP either as an Islamist party or a non-Islamist party. Under each perspective, the authors categorized them into two domains, namely ideational and practical.

Ideationally, the JDP has been associated with the Islamism identity due to its religiosity, Islamist historical background, and Islamic civilizational reason. A claim on the JDP's religiosity is weak as it only relies on the argument of the Islamism background of the JDP's leaders (Shukri & Hossain, 2017). A transition of an individual with a particular ideology to a new entity does not necessarily mean that the individual will continue to carry his or her old ideology and influencing the identity of the new entity. This also answers the argument that associate Islamism identity with the JDP based on its Islamism historical background (Gidengil & Karakoç, 2016; Kaya, 2019; Köseoğlu, 2019; Shukri & Hossain, 2017). Besides, the claim on the JDP's religiosity lies in support it gained from the pro-religious conservative voters (Gidengil & Karakoç, 2016). According to previous records, center-right parties have dominated ballot boxes since the 1950s with the supports of conservative voters along with democrats and liberal segments (Özbudun, 2014). Conservative voters did not support them because of their religious affiliation as the center-right parties did not portray themselves as religious entities, but due to the center-right discourse that better guarantee freedom of religion compared to hardline secularists. The support of conservative voters to the JDP can also be argued based on this perspective by considering the JDP's passive secularism that provides freedom of religion. At the same time, Hintz (2016) and Çinar (2018) illustrated that the civilizational factor had to do with the Islamic image of the JDP by trying to revive the Ottoman-Islamic sentiment. The Islamic image of the JDP according to the Ottoman-Islamic sentiment, however, was pragmatic and opportunistic as it was a reaction to the Arab Spring, where the party saw a chance for Turkey to assume leadership in the Arab countries.

Meanwhile, the JDP has been associated with Islamism identity in practical means because of its Islamization efforts, democracy that has been made as a tool to conceal its Islamist aspiration, experienced de-moderation or not undergo ideological moderation process, and the party's fulfilment on conservative demand. The JDP has been argued to carry out the Islamization

process at the societal, state, and international levels (Hintz, 2016; Kaya, 2015 & 2019; Kutay, 2019; Özpek & Yaşar, 2018). At the societal level, the Islamization efforts made by the JDP can be seen through its attempt to lift the headscarf ban and to empower the status of the religious Imam-Hatip Schools (Muhammad Khalis & Mohd Roslan, 2019). While at the international level, the JDP reoriented Turkish foreign policy by strengthening relations with the Muslim countries. Islamization at the state level, however, did not obviously take place, except the penetration of the JDP's cadres into various state institutions that has been denoted as a "subtle Islamization." Besides, the JDP has been claimed to exploit democracy as a political tool to conceal its Islamist agenda (Çinar, 2018; Kaya, 2015 & 2019; Kirdiş, 2015; Özpek & Yaşar, 2018; Sezal & Sezal, 2017; Shukri & Hossain, 2017; Yilmaz et al., 2017), which implicitly indicates that the party indeed continuing the previous Islamist discourse. Here, the authors saw that the adaptation of democracy by the JDP related to the party's strategy to capture votes by appealing to a universal approach and language i.e., democracy, and to give a signal to secularist bloc that the party has abandoned its Islamism discourse by adopting democracy (Wan Kamal & Muhammad Khalis, 2020). The adoption of democracy is not much related to its intention to conceal the Islamist agenda by considering that some religious-benefiting policies have been carried out by the party openly.

Other than that, the JDP has been argued for not experiencing ideological moderation process (Shukri & Hossain, 2017), where the party only experienced behavioral moderation (Bashirov & Lancaster, 2018; Kaya, 2019). In principle, the moderation process is debatable in determining the identity transition of a particular entity. In the case of JDP, if the party relaxes its approach and language, does it make the party necessarily experiences a moderation process? On the other hand, if the party uses religious rhetoric, where the rhetoric is used pragmatically, does it necessarily indicate the party emphasizes Islamic aspiration? Supposedly, for a moderation context, strategic interests will influence ideological transformation along with behavioral change. Hence, moderation per se cannot be seen as a single factor in determining a party's identity, since moderation as a process is not deterministic, but influenced by many aspects. Finally, on the fulfilment of conservative demand made by the JDP (Gidengil & Karakoç, 2016; Kirdiş, 2015; Kutay, 2019; Özpek & Yaşar, 2018), it should be seen as the party's populist strategy. It is admitted that conservatism, for Turkey's context, also stresses on a religious claim. However, the JDP's commitment to conservative demand is questionable as it is motivated by the aim of capturing votes from the conservative segment.

Oppositely, the perspective that perceives the JDP as a non-Islamist party rests ideationally on the party's secularity, abandoning Islamism tradition, embracing center-right discourse, post-Islamism, and conservative democracy. The JDP has been claimed to support and promote secularism (Bokhari & Senzai, 2013; Kassem, 2013; Torelli, 2012), specifically the passive version of secularism (Kuru, 2013; Yaylaci, 2014). The JDP's stance on secularism is arguable whether the party genuinely adopting secularism (Waldman & Caliskan, 2017), or secularism is just one of its political adaptation strategies (Altınordu, 2016). In this case, claiming the JDP as a secular party may be overstressed, but the fact that it possesses secular characteristics is undeniable. Passive secularism makes the JDP different from hardline secularists, but at the same time, distances the party away from Islamist circle (Wan Kamal & Muhammad Khalis, 2020). Besides, the JDP has been argued to leave Islamism tradition (Bokhari & Senzai, 2013; Ceran, 2019; Şimşek, 2013; Waldman & Caliskan, 2017; Yenigun, 2017), which shows that the party tries to portray itself as a new party that is distinct from its Islamist predecessor. The recruitment of members outside from Islamist circles, like what has been mentioned by Altınordu (2016), is expected to influence the party in the future, especially on its image, discourse, and approach. As the party puts a distance from Islamism, coupled with the participation of the newer generation with a non-Islamist paradigm, the authors predict that the JDP will be closer to become an entirely non-religious party with liberal and democrat ideas in future.

From the ideational point of view, the authors agree that the JDP is suitable to be denoted as a post-Islamist party as suggested by Torelli (2012), Bokhari & Senzai (2013), Kuru (2013), Yaylaci (2014), and Yenigun (2017). The absence of Islamist agenda and the rejection of any religious label, as denoted by Asef Bayat (1996) who responsible for introducing the concept of "post-Islamism," make the JDP meet post-Islamism criteria. If the JDP is argued to be a party that goes beyond Islamism discourse by adopting a post-Islamism idea, based on what framework does the JDP operate? Two ideas attempted to explain the JDP's post-Islamism framework. The lesser popular idea mentions that the JDP seems related to the center-right aspiration (Ceran, 2019; Yilmaz et al., 2017), while several other studies stress the JDP's idea on conservative democracy (Altınordu, 2016; Kassem, 2013; Moudouros, 2014; Şimşek, 2013; Waldman & Caliskan, 2017; Yaylaci, 2014; Yenigun, 2017; Yilmaz et al., 2017). Conservative democracy has been mentioned by the JDP's leading figures as the official ideology of the party. Besides serving as the party's strategy to re-image its identity, conservative democracy also serves as a platform to expand its support across multiple segments. By adopting conservative democracy, this means that the party attempts to synthesize conservative values such as morality, national identity, and historical pride with democratic values like a free-market economy, pluralism, the rule of law, and human rights (Sambur, 2009). In this sense, the JDP's conservative democracy can be said as a combination between soft-religious aspiration (through conservatism) and passive secularism plus center-right discourses (through democratic values).

From a practical standpoint, the JDP was considered as non-Islamist due to the absence of intention to establish an Islamic state and embracing Western values. Without the aim to establish an Islamic state (Bokhari & Senzai, 2013; Kassem, 2013; Kuru, 2013; Yaylaci, 2014), the JDP lacks Islamists' grand vision, which indicates that the party is not driven by Islamism idea but rather by the post-Islamism tendency. Next, the claim that the JDP embraced Western values was driven by the party's interest to struggle for Turkey's EU membership (Altınordu, 2016; Ceran, 2019; Kassem, 2013) and to assimilate itself into the Western global order (Moudouros, 2014). For some scholars, the JDP's embracement of Western values is motivated more by pragmatic and opportunistic reasons compared to the EU membership factor (Öniş, 2015; Yeşilada, 2016). EU membership will benefit Turkey by enhancing domestic reforms and widening economic opportunities. Hence, it is not simply to say that the JDP as a non-Islamist party solely by its adoption of Western values since the party pragmatically embraced Western values for the state's interests. Lately, however, the JDP's efforts for Turkey's EU membership agenda seems weakening, which leads to the commitment on the EU to be questioned. For those who hold the view that the JDP is a pro-religious party, they argued that this scenario reflects the party's tendency to re-image itself away from Western-liberal identity and approaching pro-Islamism sentiment (Yeşilada, 2016). Contrary to this view, the authors argue that the JDP's tendency, either towards Islamism or otherwise, cannot be measured by its commitment to the Western values since it is not driven by ideological means, but motivated opportunistically by the party's interests and needs.

Previous studies also have stressed the JDP's identity shift, either the party turned away from pro-Islamism (Altınodu, 2016; Waldman & Caliskan, 2017; Yenigun, 2017) or turned to pro-Islamist (Bashirov & Lancaster, 2018; Kirdiş, 2015; Köseoğlu, 2019; Kutay, 2019; Sezal & Sezal, 2017; Shukri & Hossain, 2017; Yilmaz et al., 2017), which indirectly shows that the party did not stick to any discourse and identity. Regardless of the direction of identity shift, previous studies illustrated that the JDP shifted its identity easily depended on present situations. In this case, the JDP can be considered as a pragmatic and opportunist party in adapting to different needs and situations. The party is not driven by ideology but motivated more on practical and political interests. The JDP is a manifestation of political reality in Turkey that is not based on ideological discourse, but rather relies more on the practicality means.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study has led to some recommendations that can be considered for future studies. First, future studies should bring forth testable criteria to further study the JDP's identity. Based on the present systematic review, the authors found that previous studies were more narrative in nature without referring to a clear and reliable criterion. Political parties are a dynamic entity where they operate under the influence of many factors. Studying the identity of a particular party needs criteria to be considered. Hence, the authors suggest for future scholars to use criteria, both ideational and practical, in studying the JDP's identity. In this case, the party's discourse and administration for a specified period of time can be considered for those criteria.

Second, the authors would like to recommend future studies to pay attention to the idea of Islamism, especially for the Turkish context. Islamist movements are not globally monolithic. Rather, they are defined largely by the national context based on where they operate (Mohammed Ayoob, 2008). The authors found that previous studies, especially those associated Islamism with the JDP identity, lack a theoretical framework in arguing the party as Islamist. Therefore, the idea and concept of Islamism for the Turkish context should be focused by future scholars to fill this gap. Since Islamism is a context-specific phenomenon, it is vital to examine Turkish historical, social, and political factors that influence the discourse of Turkish Islamism.

From the methodological perspective, it is worth mentioning that improvement can be made specifically in the searching process for reviewed sources. It is undeniable that electronic searching based on selected keywords has been admitted as the best searching method in systematic review studies (Shaffril et al. 2018). However, there are some techniques that can complement the searching process. For example, citation tracking and reference searching can be considered as additional searching techniques for the electronic searching that relies solely on selected keywords. Searches based on citation and reference can enhance the searching process by tracking studies that are not able to be identified via the electronic searching method.

6.0 CONCLUSION

This systematic review has presented arguments from previous studies regarding the JDP's identity. Overall, previous studies have shown that the identity of the JDP has been debated. It can be summarized that viewpoints on the identity of the JDP rest on two main perspectives, either the party should be considered as an Islamist party, or the party should be seen as a non-Islamist party. As for the third perspective, namely the JDP as a party that undergoes a shift in identity, further elaborated these two perspectives by looking onto the JDP's dynamic orientation of identity shift. The authors suggest that the JDP should be denoted neither as an Islamist party nor a secular party, but as a party that is situated between the two categories. It is a pragmatic and non-ideological driven party that exploits both religious and non-religious languages to fulfil its needs and interests. The present study suggests three recommendations for future studies, i.e., the need for testable criteria to further study the JDP's identity, the consideration for constructing a theoretical framework based on the idea of Turkish Islamism, and suggestions for complementing electronic searching process based on selected keywords via citation tracking and reference searching.

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