

# Pandemic-Driven Leadership Perceptions: Attribution Theory in the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election

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## Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted critical aspects of leadership and public trust amidst a health crisis of unprecedented scale in the United States, especially within a context of significant political polarization. This research paper explores the nuances of leadership effectiveness during the pandemic, focusing on the role of attribution theory in understanding public perceptions of leadership actions. The theory elucidates how the public interprets leaders' responses to the pandemic, influenced by factors such as political affiliations, societal norms, and racial considerations. The paper investigates the interplay between incumbent advantage theory and the rally 'round the flag effect, alongside the impact of President Trump's handling of the pandemic on public opinion. It delves into the complexities introduced by the pandemic's racial dimensions and its effects on minority communities, examining the broader implications for leadership responsiveness and public trust. Using a comprehensive analysis of demographic and psychographic variables, the study reveals a significant negative outlook on Trump's crisis management across various groups. The findings underscore a complex interplay of media influence, racial identity, health status, financial conditions, and political affiliations in shaping perceptions of leadership accountability. Through the lens of attribution theory, the paper offers a nuanced understanding of the psychological and political dynamics that affect public attitudes toward leadership and accountability during crises.

**Keywords:** attribution, rally 'round the flag, incumbent advantage, blame, leadership, COVID-19

## 1. Introduction

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, leadership in the United States has been a central topic of scholarly investigation. This unprecedented health crisis, characterized by its immense size and breadth and closely connected to racial and socioeconomic concerns, has shown the many difficulties and intricacies of leadership in times of crisis. The rapid spread of the pandemic coincided with a very divided political landscape in the United States, which provided a unique setting for assessing the efficacy of leadership in crisis management. Miller, Woods, and Kalmbach (2022) emphasize the imperative significance of leadership styles and the development of public confidence in successfully mitigating crises. Moreover, applying attribution theory, which investigates the reasons behind individuals' interpretations of behaviors and events, provides valuable insights into leadership dynamics during crises (Brown, 2018; Li et al., 2024). This theory helps understand how leaders' actions are perceived and interpreted and how these perceptions influence public response and trust (Bresnen, 1995). Effective management of a crisis like COVID-19 requires decisive action and the ability to communicate and connect with diverse populations, fostering trust and cooperation in challenging times.

This attribution theory illuminates the interpretation of leadership actions in the face of extraordinary circumstances. To be more precise, it assists in understanding the impact of various factors, including societal norms, political affiliations, and ethnic considerations, on the voter's perception of the responses of leaders to these events. The pandemic's adverse effects on public health, and economics were observed in the United States. The crisis not only presented a significant public health challenge but also exacerbated preexisting racial and socioeconomic disparities. Leadership was the subject of intense scrutiny during this period, as public and political analysts connected the successes and failures of the leaders in charge. The manner in

which various leaders responded to the pandemic, particularly at the federal level, became a central topic of discussion and analysis. This circumstance presented an ideal opportunity to implement attribution theory to comprehend the public's assessment of leadership efficacy.

The 2020 U.S. presidential election occurred amidst this backdrop, turning into a referendum on crisis management. Traditionally, the incumbent advantage theory suggests that sitting leaders have a favorable position due to their established role and visibility (Mayhew, 2008; Mayhew, 1974). However, the pandemic tested this advantage. Similarly, the 'rally around the flag' effect, which usually sees national crises boosting public support for government leaders (Mueller, 1970; Hetherington and Nelson, 2003), faced challenges too. These phenomena, typically aiding incumbents, did not unfold as expected for President Trump, as the election results showed.

President Trump's handling of the pandemic became a highly contentious issue (Roberts, 2022b; Kapucu and Moynihan, 2021; Faris et al., 2020). Public opinion was sharply divided, as seen in the study's dependent variable: whether people believed Trump ignored the early warning signs of the pandemic, leading to widespread illness and death, or whether they thought the pandemic's impact was unavoidable regardless of his actions.

These contrasting views highlight the role of attribution in shaping public opinion. People's judgments about the President's response were influenced by the actions taken and their political leanings, media consumption, and personal experiences related to the pandemic.

The interplay of the incumbent advantage theory and the rally to the flag effect during the pandemic offers a fascinating study area. In normal circumstances, these theories suggest a consolidation of public support for the President during a crisis. However, the complex nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, along with President Trump's controversial approach to managing it, disrupted these typical patterns (Clarke, Stewart, and Ho, 2021). The public's perception of his leadership was marred by criticism and controversy, leading to a lack of unified support that incumbents usually enjoy during national crises.

This leads to the core research questions of this study: How did Trump's approach to the COVID-19 pandemic influence public perceptions of his leadership, particularly in relation to the incumbent advantage theory and the rally 'round the flag effect? Moreover, how effectively does the attribution theory explain the differences in public opinions about Trump's handling of the COVID-19 crisis? These questions aim to investigate the intricate dynamics between leadership, public perception, and crisis management during a notably tumultuous time in modern American history.

Furthermore, the pandemic's racial dimensions, especially its disproportionate effects on minority communities, introduced additional complexity to the analysis of leadership. This situation highlighted the pandemic's intensification of racial inequalities and raised crucial questions about a leader's responsibility and responsiveness to varied demographic groups. Attribution theory plays a significant role in this context, as it helps analyze the perception of leaders' actions or inactions differently across racial lines, affecting public opinion and trust in their leadership (Gündemir et al., 2014).

The COVID-19 pandemic in the United States offers a rich case for exploring leadership through the lens of attribution theory, with particular emphasis on racial dimensions. It challenges conventional theories of incumbent advantage and rally 'round the flag effect, presenting an opportunity to understand how crises can alter public perception of leadership. The pandemic's intersection with the 2020 presidential election further amplifies the need to explore how leaders are judged in times of unprecedented crisis and how many factors, including political affiliations, media narratives, and personal experiences, influence these judgments.

## **2. Background**

The concept of "incumbent advantage" refers to the benefits enjoyed by current officeholders, often making it easier for them to secure re-election. This advantage stems from various factors, including greater name recognition, access to campaign finance, and the ability to leverage the power of their office. Political scientists like Gelman and King (1990) and Peskowitz (2019) have explored these advantages extensively, detailing how incumbents typically have a head start over challengers.

The "rally 'round the flag effect" is another significant phenomenon in political science, particularly relevant during crises. It describes how national emergencies or international conflicts can temporarily boost public support for a country's leaders. This effect, as examined by authors like Hetherington and Nelson (2003) and Baker and Oneal (2001) and explored in the Cuban Missile Crisis and Gulf War,

suggests that crises can unify public opinion and increase approval ratings for leaders. However, the duration and impact of this effect can vary significantly based on the nature of the crisis and the leader's response.

During the Trump administration, particularly amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the interplay of incumbent advantage, the rally 'round the flag effect, and populism became uniquely evident. Donald Trump's leadership style, marked by populism, was characterized by its direct appeal to the public and often divisive rhetoric. Authors like Roberts (2022a) and Saltykov (2022) highlight how Trump's populist approach interacted with these phenomena. While the incumbent advantage and rally 'round the flag effect might have been expected to work in Trump's favor during the pandemic, the administration's handling of the crisis and the divisive nature of Trump's populism presented challenges to these typically reliable political dynamics.

### 2.1 Incumbent Advantage

The concept of "incumbent advantage" refers to the electoral edge that current officeholders often enjoy over their challengers. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable in U.S. politics, where incumbents have historically had higher reelection rates than newcomers. The advantage stems from several factors, including enhanced name recognition, established networks, and greater access to campaign resources (Peskowitz, 2019; Ansolabehere et al., 2007). Research in political science has extensively studied this advantage, noting its significant impact on election outcomes (Figure 1).

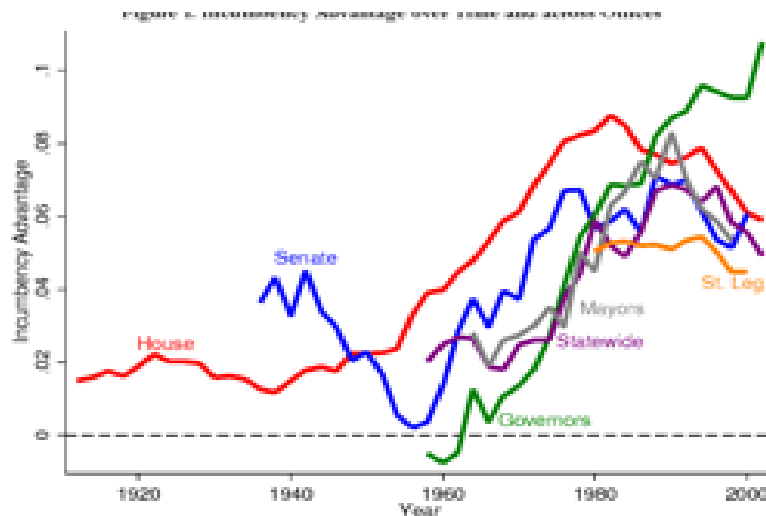


Figure 1. Incumbency advantage over time and across offices

Source: (Fowler, 2015)

Several studies and authors have delved into the dynamics of incumbent advantage. For instance, Druckman, Kifer, and Parkin (2020) highlights that the advantage is not just a matter of superior resources but also reflects a fundamental inequity in electoral competition. Incumbents benefit from established relationships with voters and greater familiarity with the political landscape, which often leads to increased voter trust and support. Additionally, incumbency can provide a platform for demonstrating leadership and policy successes, further bolstering an incumbent's appeal to voters.

Incumbent candidates also benefit from institutional support. They often have easier access to party resources, fundraising networks, and media coverage. Studies like those by Lucas, McGregor, and Tuxhorn (2022) investigate how these factors contribute to the incumbent advantage, especially in non-partisan elections. The findings support that incumbents enjoy a distinct edge due to these structural benefits.

However, the incumbent advantage is not absolute and can be influenced by various factors, such as the political climate, the incumbent's performance, and public opinion. For example, Carson, Sievert, and Williamson (2020) discusses how the nationalization of politics and shifting voter sentiments can affect the strength of the incumbent advantage, sometimes leading to unexpected electoral outcomes.

This brings us to the 2020 U.S. Presidential election, where incumbent President Donald Trump lost his reelection bid. Despite the typical advantages of incumbency, Trump's defeat exemplifies how certain conditions, such as public response to significant issues like the COVID-19 pandemic, can override the incumbent advantage. In Trump's case, his administration's handling of the pandemic and the resultant public opinion played a critical role in shaping the election's outcome, challenging the traditional power of incumbency in U.S. elections.

The 2020 presidential election, culminating in President Donald Trump's defeat, marked a significant shift in the U.S. political landscape. Traditionally, the concept of "incumbent advantage" has been central to understanding electoral dynamics in the U.S., suggesting that incumbents often have a higher likelihood of reelection than newcomers. Mayhew (2008) explored this phenomenon, highlighting that the loss of an incumbent party is more noticeable when the presidential candidate is not the sitting president.

Theories such as hostile rhetoric, explored in the work of Ross and Caldwell (2020), offer insights into various elements that contributed to the unsuccessful reelection bid of President Donald Trump. Among these, a key factor was how the public perceived Trump's management of the COVID-19 crisis. This aspect of his presidency became a focal point for voters, influencing their decision-making process in the 2020 election. Research conducted by scholars like Baccini, Brodeur, and Weymouth (2021) and Cukor et al. (2021) delves into this, assessing the extent to which Trump's approach to public health and his political communication around COVID-19 swayed voter attitudes and choices. These studies provide an understanding of the pandemic's role in shaping the electoral landscape, highlighting the critical impact of leadership on political fortunes during a public health emergency.

The pandemic's management, or perceived mismanagement, by the Trump administration, played a pivotal role in shaping public opinion. According to Parker and Stern (2022), the administration's response to the crisis was a critical factor in voter decision-making. The electorate's trust in federal health institutions and compliance with public health guidelines emerged as influential determinants in the electoral outcome.

Moreover, the question of whether Trump's actions were directly responsible for the COVID-19 deaths became a central theme in the election discourse. Research by Hahn (2021) delves into the population-attributable risk for COVID-19 deaths, suggesting a link between policy decisions and pandemic outcomes. This fueled debates about Trump's accountability for the pandemic's severity in the U.S.

In addition to the pandemic, other elements such as the economic impact of COVID-19, social unrest, and Trump's overall governance style also contributed to the election's outcome. Algara et al. (2022) and Mendoza Aviña and Sevi (2021) highlight that these factors, combined with the public health crisis, created a unique electoral environment where traditional incumbent advantages were overshadowed.

Ultimately, the 2020 U.S. presidential election outcome was a complex interplay of various factors, with Trump's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic being a significant contributor. The attribution of responsibility for the pandemic's toll and the public's response to health and policy cues played critical roles in shaping voter preferences and the eventual defeat of an incumbent president.

## *2.2 Rally 'round the Flag Effect*

The rally 'round the flag effect is a phenomenon that temporarily elevates presidential approval ratings and bridges partisan divides by rousing a nation's citizens to embrace its leaders during crises or conflicts (Chapman and Reiter, 2004). This phenomenon, which is based on the idea that external threats strengthen national unity, has been documented in the context of numerous crises, illustrating the capacity of governments to leverage temporary political support (Mueller, 1970).

The rally 'round the flag effect's origins is debated between two theories. The "Patriotism School" suggests that Americans revere the President as a symbol of national unity during turbulent times. In contrast, the "Opinion Leadership School" argues that the effect is amplified by the restrained criticism of the opposition, creating an illusion of government harmony (Baum, 2002; Barnett and Roselle, 2008). Historical examples, including Franklin D. Roosevelt's modest approval increase following Pearl Harbor and George W. Bush's precipitous surge following 9/11, illustrate the influence of pre-crisis approval levels on the potential for rally-induced gains. The rally effect's effectiveness is contingent upon various factors, such as the severity of the crisis, the media's depiction, and the pre-existing national unity. The multifaceted nature of the phenomenon is elucidated by the interplay between psychological motivations, societal behaviors, and political

circumstances, which illustrates how shared identity and patriotism can temporarily overshadow personal political divisions (Kuijpers, 2019). Media framing during crises has a substantial impact on the formation of public trust in political leadership. Research conducted by Knudsen, Nordø, and Iversen (2023), indicates that international crises have an impact that extends beyond presidential approval ratings, affecting broader trust in political systems. Feinstein (2020) emphasizes the transformation of American public sentiment during war and security crises, suggesting that leaders' emotive appeals to revitalize national pride through military initiatives drive these rallies. This method challenges conventional theories of opinion formation by integrating emotions with broader social and cultural contexts.

It is intriguing that the rally 'round the flag effect, which has historically supported leaders worldwide, did not manifest for President Trump during the COVID-19 pandemic (Callaghan and Virtanen, 1993). This anomaly starkly contrasts other global leaders who experienced a surge in popularity during the crisis (Bol et al., 2021). The unexpected deviance from the anticipated unification and support surge necessitates a more thorough examination of the interplay between crisis management, leadership styles, and public perception in the distinctive American political landscape (Figure 2).

The populist rhetoric and divisive communication style employed by Trump may have eroded the typically recognized unifying impact of the rally 'round the flag effect in such circumstances. The departure from anticipated trends prompts a more in-depth examination of the interaction among crisis management, leadership styles, and public opinion in modern American politics, building upon the fundamental research conducted by Hetherington and Nelson (2003) and Baker and Oneal (2001) on republicanism.

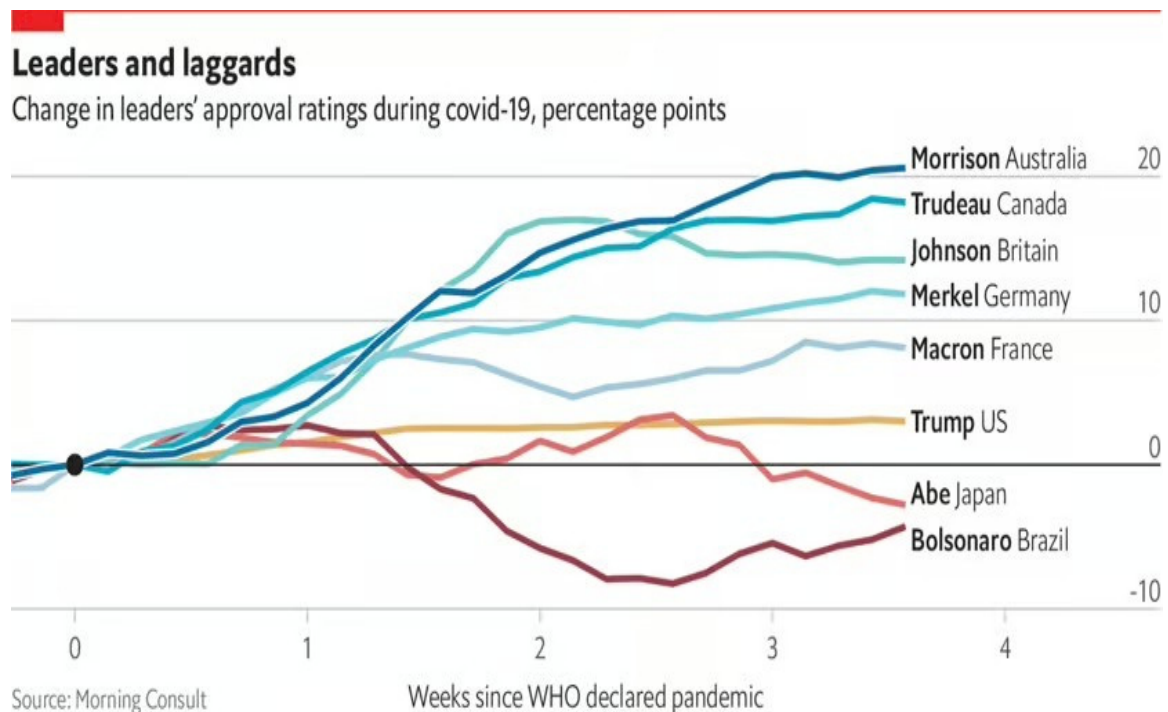


Figure 2. Change in leaders' approval ratings during COVID-19, percentage points

Source: The Economist, Apr 15th 2020. Retrieved from this link.

### 2.3 Populism and Negative Rhetoric

The strategic agendas and policy preferences of candidates significantly impact voter decisions. To secure electoral victories, party candidates craft discourses designed to resonate with a broad voter base. They employ political rhetoric to persuade a substantial segment of the electorate. This rhetoric involves priming and framing methods: priming introduces new information on current policy issues while framing positions this information to highlight the failures or shortcomings of the opposition's policy preferences.

Asen (2002) notes that political rhetoric often categorizes the electorate into two groups: the public, targeted for electoral support, and the counter-public, those excluded from the candidate's policy agenda. A notable form of political rhetoric is populist rhetoric, which is grounded in socioeconomic concerns and often focuses on issues of race, ethnicity, and immigration. Populist rhetoric characterizes existing institutions as corrupt and biased towards a minority at the majority's expense, suggesting that only a charismatic leader, in the Weberian sense, can rectify these injustices. Such rhetoric gains traction, particularly during significant external shocks or economic downturns (White, 2016). Populist leaders exploit societal challenges to advance their rhetoric through priming and framing, positioning themselves as radical representatives on the ideological spectrum. Berman (2021) observes that these leaders are seen as leapfrogging traditional ideological positions, necessitating extreme ideological policy stances to rally and solidify their base.

Populist rhetoric, by its nature, establishes and reinforces a perceived hierarchy between the favored public and the marginalized counter-public regarding access to public resources and services. It aims to restrict redistributive policies directed towards the counter-public, thereby widening the power-sharing gap between these groups (Habermas, Lennox, and Lennox, 1974).

Populist rhetoric often catalyzes various types of widespread engagement, either bolstering a candidate's support or sparking outrage among voters, leading to decreased support. President Trump's populist rhetoric effectively expanded and solidified his supporter base. A striking example of the impact of such rhetoric is the 2021 United States Capitol attack. Since his 2016 election, Trump has consistently positioned himself against what he terms the "establishment" or "deep state," arguing that the Democratic party establishment prioritizes the interests of powerful corporations over those of American citizens (Michaels, 2017). He presents himself as the sole representative of American citizens' interests, frequently targeting immigrants as the counter-public in his policy agenda. His portrayal of Muslims as terrorists significantly swayed public opinion regarding Muslim immigration. Collingwood, Lajevardi, and Oskooii (2018) noted that Trump's executive order on January 27th, 2017, aiming to ban Muslims from U.S. immigration, sparked public outrage and diminished his approval ratings.

This demonstrates how populist rhetoric can reinforce or alter voters' policy preferences (Bishin et al., 2016; Collingwood, Lajevardi, and Oskooii, 2018).

Beyond targeting Muslims, President Trump's populist rhetoric also focused on African and Latino immigrants. According to Gonzalez (2019), Trump's campaign portrayed Latino immigrants as inherently violent, posing a threat to American culture. This divisive and racially charged approach, as observed by Sanchez (2017), resulted in diminished support from Latino voters. Furthermore, Trump's controversial comments extended to African immigrants, notably labeling Haiti and African nations as "shithole countries" (Olubela, 2018; Williams, 2020; Villazor and Johnson, 2019). Such statements likely amplified racial mobilization and unity, leading to the formation of racial voting blocs (Sanchez, 2017; Zepeda-Millán and Wallace, 2013; Barreto, Nuno, and Sanchez, 2007), and fostering inter-racial collaboration (Jones-Correa, Wallace, and Zepeda-Millán, 2016; Collingwood, Lajevardi, and Oskooii, 2018). While these comments sparked widespread outrage, they simultaneously strengthened anti-immigration policy stances. These aspects significantly shaped public perception of President Trump, particularly his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. This public perception, deeply influenced by Trump's rhetoric, aligns with attribution theory, which explores how individuals assign causes to events and behaviors. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, this theory helps analyze the binary variable of whether Trump is seen as responsible for the deaths due to his management of the crisis. Studies focusing on attribution theory in political contexts, such as those by Hahn (2021) and Parker and Stern (2022), shed light on how populations attribute causality to leaders' actions during crises, influencing their overall judgment of leadership effectiveness.

### 3. Theory

Within the field of psychology, attribution is the cognitive process through which individuals evaluate, and attribute causes to occurrences and behaviors in their surroundings. This procedure entails differentiating between internal causes, which derive from within the individual, and external causes, which arise from the surrounding environment or situational conditions. Fundamentally, it explores the reasons behind human behavior and how individuals justify both their own behaviors and those of others. For example, characterizing someone's achievement as a result of their own effort (internal attribution) rather than luck or good conditions (external attribution) illustrates this process. The notion is fundamental to social psychology

as it helps understand how individuals form their vision of the world and engage with it. Prominent scholars in this field of research include Heider (1958), Kelley and Michela (1971), and Weiner (1985), who examine the significance of attributions in assessing leaders, and Carton (2022), whose research highlights how individuals deduce the efficacy of leaders not just by witnessing their behaviors but also by considering the results of their activities. Furthermore, the study conducted by Bresnen (1995) on attributions in leadership and the investigation of Sergent and Stajkovic (2020) on leadership in crises, focusing on ethical and racial inclusion principles, are relevant to this topic. The authors Yao and Siegel (2021), Sharma et al. (2022), and Dunning, Travis, and Pownall (2020) have used attribution theory to examine risk perception and blame assignment in the context of the pandemic. Their work demonstrates the relevance of this theory in assessing current global issues. These experiments demonstrate how people's political identifications might influence their ascriptions about crisis management and government reactions, emphasizing the interaction between attribution theory and political psychology.

Furthermore, attribution theory connects with political psychology in comprehending public reactions to government measures during the epidemic. Zhang, Hu, and Park (2023) indicates that the political identities of individuals can substantially impact their attributions of the problem and their views towards the responses of the government. In addition, Moss et al. (2022) contends that the correlation between follower attitudes towards President Trump and opinions of the pandemic highlights the impact of attributional biases, which are influenced by implicit leadership theories and social learning, on public opinion and decision-making.

Internal attributions attribute the responsible factors for behavior to inherent qualities within the individual, such as personality, attitude, or effort. External attributions, in contrast, attribute the reason of behavior to external influences such as social pressure, probability, or environmental conditions. Clarifying this differentiation is essential for comprehending how individuals interpret and respond to their own behaviors and those of others. The attribution theory has been extensively applied, including its employment in analyzing the psychological phenomena of the COVID-19 epidemic. Research conducted by Sharma et al. (2022) employs attribution theory to investigate how individuals evaluate risk and attribute responsibility for the transmission of COVID-19, underscoring the theory's applicability in present-day issues. The present collection of research underscores the significance of attribution theory in contemporary global matters, namely in comprehending public opinion regarding governmental activities and crisis management. The impact of political identification on public views of government reactions to the epidemic highlights the convergence of attribution theory and political psychology, demonstrating that political prejudices can substantially influence individuals' attributions concerning crises.

The application of attribution theory, especially within the framework of a health crisis, provides significant perspectives on evaluating leaders as determined by their reactions to such experiences. This hypothesis posits that individuals ascribe reasons to events by relying on their observations and pre-existing ideas. The COVID-19 epidemic and President Trump elicited a profound division in public opinion. According to the research conducted by the University of North Carolina, some individuals ascribed the magnitude of the pandemic's consequences in the United States to Trump's purported mishandling and disregard for early indicators, while others perceived the situation to be outside his influence. (Note 1) The epidemic presented an exceptional opportunity to analyze the perception of leaders to their tendency to evade blame and engage in scapegoating. As an illustration, Porumbescu et al. (2023) suggest that the Trump administration's effort to assign responsibility by designating COVID-19 as the "Chinese virus" is a case where attribution theory may be used to examine political discourse and its influence on public opinion.

### *3.1 Internal Factors Hypotheses*

The internal factors hypothesis proposes a sophisticated framework for comprehending public opinions about President Trump's management of the COVID-19 epidemic. This hypothesis posits that personal views, health perceptions, financial evaluations, and political attachments significantly shape individual attributions regarding the epidemic and its management.

Primarily, the notion of President Trump disregarding early warnings and mishandling the response to the epidemic is expected to cause individuals to ascribe the transmission of the virus and the subsequent deaths to his leadership and decision-making skills. This ascription is intricately linked to internal elements in which personal evaluations of Trump have a crucial influence. Those who hold a favorable opinion of Trump are more likely to posit that the consequences of the epidemic were unavoidable and not directly caused by his

activities. This perspective is consistent with research suggesting that political allegiance can significantly impact how people perceive and react to government actions in times of crisis.

Furthermore, the self-assessment of physical health arises as a crucial internal determinant. Self-identified healthy individuals may downplay the perceived seriousness of the epidemic and, thus, the necessity for strict management strategies. This belief is likely to reduce the probability of ascribing the COVID-19 deaths to Trump's administration, considering a prejudice influenced by personal health views.

Moreover, personal financial assessments are paramount in influencing opinions about the management of the epidemic. Individuals with optimistic financial prospects may have increased expectations for the government's involvement in safeguarding the economy during health emergencies. Hence, they may be more prone to hold Trump responsible for the number of deaths caused by the epidemic, associating successful crisis management with economic stability.

The attributions of the COVID-19 death toll in America are greatly influenced by political predisposition, namely partisanship. As a general rule, Democrats are more inclined to ascribe the consequences of the pandemic to Trump's mismanagement than Republicans. The distinction above highlights the significant impact of political identity on how leadership competency and crisis management are perceived.

To summarize, the internal factors hypothesis offers a thorough rationale for the diverse ascriptions of President Trump's management of the COVID-19 epidemic. This statement underscores the impact of personal viewpoints, health perceptions, financial evaluations, and political associations on citizens' understanding of the gravity of the epidemic and the government's reaction. Within the context of evaluating leadership during unexpected crises, these internal aspects influence public opinion and demonstrate the intricate interaction between personal beliefs and political identities.

### *3.2 External Factors Hypotheses*

The external factors hypothesis, a component of attribution theory, offers a conceptual framework for comprehending public views of leadership during the COVID-19 epidemic. It highlights determinants that are beyond the control of individuals or leaders. This hypothesis posits that when individuals perceive the consequences of the pandemic as unavoidable, they tend to ascribe the crisis and its results to other elements, therefore relieving leadership of direct responsibility.

The effect of President Trump's executive orders serves as a prime example of such an external element. Individuals who interpreted these directives as having a detrimental impact on the management of the epidemic are more likely to ascribe the significant number of COVID-19 fatalities to inadequate leadership guidance. The aforementioned perception arises from the conviction that policy choices intensified the epidemic's effects. This perspective may be shaped by individual experiences or the observed results of these actions.

Another critical external factor influencing attributions about the management of the epidemic is the source of news information. Individuals' media consumption dramatically influences their perceptions, especially from ideologically different news outlets such as CNN and Fox News. The audience of Fox News, which typically portrayed Trump's comments in a more positive manner, is less inclined to hold him responsible for the repercussions of the epidemic in comparison to CNN viewers, who were exposed to more critical reporting of his administration's activities.

Exposure to COVID-19 is an additional external element that influences public attributions. Individuals who have been personally impacted by COVID-19 or those who are aware of someone who has, are more inclined to ascribe the deaths caused by the epidemic to inadequate management. Such firsthand experience of the virus's consequences intensifies the sense of its seriousness and underscores the urgent need of competent leadership in handling the issue.

Overall, the external forces hypothesis emphasizes the significance of situational and informational circumstances in influencing how the public evaluates leadership in times of crisis. Whether by direct policy impact, mediated information, or personal encounters with the virus, these external elements collectively shape the public's assignment of responsibility for the consequences of the epidemic. The present hypothesis underscores the intricate process of public opinion development and the diverse characteristics of attributions within the framework of global crises.



## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Data Source and Sample Design

The Collaborative Multi-Racial Post-Election Survey (CMPS), led by UCLA, is essential for analyzing the intricate fabric of sociopolitical perspectives throughout the United States. Utilizing a substantial sample size of over 15,000 participants in the 2020 poll, the CMPS provides an exceptional level of data, encompassing a wide range of perspectives from different racial groups, such as Black folks, Latinos, and White individuals. This wide range of perspectives is crucial for thoroughly examining policy preferences and political attitudes, allowing researchers to investigate the subtle distinctions and points of convergence across various groups. The approach of the CMPS, which seeks to collect a wide range of viewpoints from different racial groups, establishes it as an essential tool for comprehending the complex sociopolitical dynamics in the United States.

The CMPS researchers' meticulous methods to ensure data representativeness underscore the survey's high reliability. By employing advanced techniques such as stratified sampling, the survey achieves an accurate representation of the United States' demographic diversity. Moreover, the use of weighting methods to counter sample biases, coupled with the careful design of the questionnaire, ensures the clarity and relevance of the collected responses. The CMPS's rigorous methodology significantly bolsters its validity, making it an indispensable resource for behavioral research. It also provides a solid foundation for exploring the political attitudes and relationships among different racial groups.

Amidst the current public health crises, notably the COVID-19 epidemic, the relevance of the CMPS data has become increasingly pronounced. The survey's comprehensive demographic coverage allows for a thorough analysis of health attitudes and behaviors. By examining the intersection of sociodemographic attributes, political beliefs, and health behaviors, researchers can gain valuable insights into the intricate link between political affiliations and public health responses.

Integrating this extensive dataset with attribution theory research, specifically with the perceptions of President Trump's management of the COVID-19 epidemic, presents a distinctive chance to investigate the influence of internal and external phenomena on public opinion. The diverse reactions to the epidemic, shaped by political ideology, media consumption, and individual encounters with the virus, demonstrate the intricate character of ascription in political settings. By analyzing these elements using the CMPS data, scholars can formulate sophisticated hypotheses regarding the influence of leadership, policy choices, and communication tactics in public health emergencies. This methodology enriches our comprehension of sociopolitical dynamics and strengthens our ability to tackle public health issues by implementing well-informed policy and communication initiatives.

### 4.2 Main Variables

The objective of this study is to critically assess the internal and external elements that contribute to the tendency of individuals to ascribe the significant number of COVID-19-related deaths in the United States to the management tactics adopted by President Trump. The core focus of this study is to use the CMPS data to examine public sentiment regarding Trump's management of the epidemic. This analysis presents two opposing viewpoints: one ascribes the significant number of infections and fatalities to Trump's purported carelessness, while the other implies that the impact of the pandemic is unavoidable, irrespective of Trump's actions.

Internal variables of significance include Trump's overall public opinion, self-assessed health, political affiliation, and judgments of personal financial situation. These dimensions are carefully evaluated using survey questions specifically crafted to measure the participants' level of support for Trump, their evaluation of their health using a Likert scale, their political affiliation, and their view of their financial condition. Public opinion towards Trump is assessed via a survey prompt that requests respondents to rank their view of the previous President on a scale from "very unfavorable" to "very favorable," with the response options structured in reverse from the usual order.

Within the survey, participants evaluate their health condition by responding to a question that prompts them to assign a rating on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "poor" to "excellent". Political orientations are ascertained by inquiring about participants' affiliation with political parties in the United States, with the available choices being Republican, Democrat, independent, or another party. The offered choices are allocated numerical values: 1 for Republican, 2 for Democrat, 3 for Independent, and 4 for other political parties. To simplify analysis, the responses are transformed into two binary variables: one representing

whether a respondent identifies as a Democrat (with a value of 1 representing Democrat and a value of 0 representing alternative) and another representing Republican identification (with a value of 1 representing Republican and a value of 0 representing alternative).

Furthermore, the analysis also examines external variables such as the influence of Trump's executive orders, patterns of media consumption, and individual or family exposure to COVID-19. These components are measured by asking questions about the impact of Trump's policies, the frequency of contact with news sources, and direct or indirect experiences with COVID-19. The objective is to comprehend how these elements affect individuals' ascriptions of responsibility for their consequences. The impact of Trump's executive acts is assessed by a question determining whether respondents were negatively affected by his executive orders. The response choices range from "Never" (coded as 1) to "Very often" (coded as 4). Media source preferences are established by gathering information on the frequency with which individuals consume news from sources such as Fox News and CNN, using a four-point scale ranging from "Almost never" to "Very often." The evaluation of COVID-19 exposure involves two questions: one inquiring whether the respondent or someone nearby has acquired the virus, with a binary coding system of "Yes, I have had coronavirus" (coded as 1) or "No, I did not have coronavirus" (coded as 0), and another inquiring about the presence of the virus in the respondent's household, also coded as "yes or no."

For multiple reasons, ensuring control for demographic and socioeconomic variables is of utmost importance in this study. First, it recognizes the tremendous diversity within the U.S. population, acknowledging that gender, age, color, work position, educational level, and household income can significantly impact individuals' experiences and views of the epidemic. Incorporating these factors, the study guarantees that fundamental demographic or socioeconomic inequalities do not complicate the examination of how individuals assign accountability for COVID-19 fatalities. The rigorous methodology employed in this study enables a more precise comprehension of the influence of the targeted internal and external factors on public opinion. Consequently, it offers a more accurate and nuanced knowledge of attributing blame in the context of the epidemic.

This technique is based on attribution theory, which aims to comprehend how individuals ascribe reasons to events and behaviors. Utilizing this theoretical framework, the study investigates the specific elements that may cause individuals to hold Trump responsible or exonerate him for the consequences of the epidemic. It also systematically analyses how demographic and socioeconomic conditions impact these attributions. An exhaustive examination is crucial for capturing the intricate interaction of individual convictions, external factors, and socio-demographic characteristics in molding public sentiment during a national emergency.

Ultimately, the rigorous management of demographic and socioeconomic factors enhances the study by guaranteeing that the results accurately represent a comprehensive and impartial opinion of how different sectors of the American populace see Trump's handling of the COVID-19 epidemic. Undertaking this level of study is crucial for politicians, academics, and the public to fully understand the complex nature of assigning blame in the presence of unparalleled national issues.

#### 4.3 Data Analysis

This study employs a combination of statistical methods to critically examine the attribution of COVID-19 fatalities in the United States to President Trump's administration. The approach integrates attribution theory with rigorous statistical analysis.

To investigate whether there are significant differences in the level of responsibility attributed to Trump across different racial demographics, the study uses the independent two-sample t-test. This method is chosen to compare the means of two groups and determine if they are statistically different from each other. The t-test formula is given by:

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{s_1^2}{n_1} + \frac{s_2^2}{n_2}}}$$

where  $\bar{X}_1$  and  $\bar{X}_2$  are the sample means,  $s_1^2$  and  $s_2^2$  are the sample variances, and  $n_1$  and  $n_2$  are the sample sizes for the respective groups. This analysis is vital for understanding how racial identity influences the attribution of responsibility for the pandemic's management.

Logistic regression is used to predict the likelihood of attributing COVID-19 deaths to Trump's management strategies. This method is suitable for binary classification tasks and incorporates multiple independent variables while adjusting for demographic characteristics, political affiliations, and media impact. The logistic regression model is represented as:

$$\text{logit}(p) = \log\left(\frac{p}{1-p}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots + \beta_k X_k$$

where  $p$  is the probability of the outcome,  $\beta_0$  is the intercept term, and  $\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_k$  are the coefficients for the predictor variables  $X_1, X_2, \dots, X_k$ . This model helps in delineating the complex dynamics of attributing responsibility to Trump's actions.

To ensure the integrity of the logistic regression model, this study addresses potential multicollinearity by setting a correlation coefficient threshold (e.g., 0.5) and excluding highly correlated variables. Sample weights are incorporated to achieve a representative snapshot of the broader population, mitigating sampling biases. The Pearson correlation coefficient is used to quantify the linear relationship between variables:

$$r = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (X_i - \bar{X})(Y_i - \bar{Y})}{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n (X_i - \bar{X})^2 \sum_{i=1}^n (Y_i - \bar{Y})^2}}$$

This ensures that the model's coefficient estimates are accurate and reliable (Farrar and Glauber, 1967).

The combined use of t-tests and logistic regression provides a comprehensive insight into the multidimensional relationship between internal and external factors shaping perceptions of Trump's handling of the pandemic. This methodological approach aligns with contemporary political science and public health research practices, offering a solid analytical foundation for exploring attribution theory within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. By segregating data based on racial categories and incorporating a wide array of variables, this analysis uncovers intricate insights that a broader analysis might conceal, thereby enhancing our understanding of how different factors influence the attribution of responsibility (Edwardson and Gorely, 2010).

The correlation matrix for the independent variables in the model designed to assess blame attribution towards Trump for COVID-19 fatalities in the US indicates robust models. Notably, except for the correlations between Republicans and Opinion of Trump (Pearson's  $r > 0.5$ ), Democrats and Republicans (Pearson's  $r < -0.5$ ), and Household income and Level of Education (Pearson's  $r < -0.5$ ), the remaining correlations among model predictors are below 0.5 in absolute value (Figure 3). This suggests excluding only the variables of Republicans and Household income from the logistic regression model to ensure model validity.

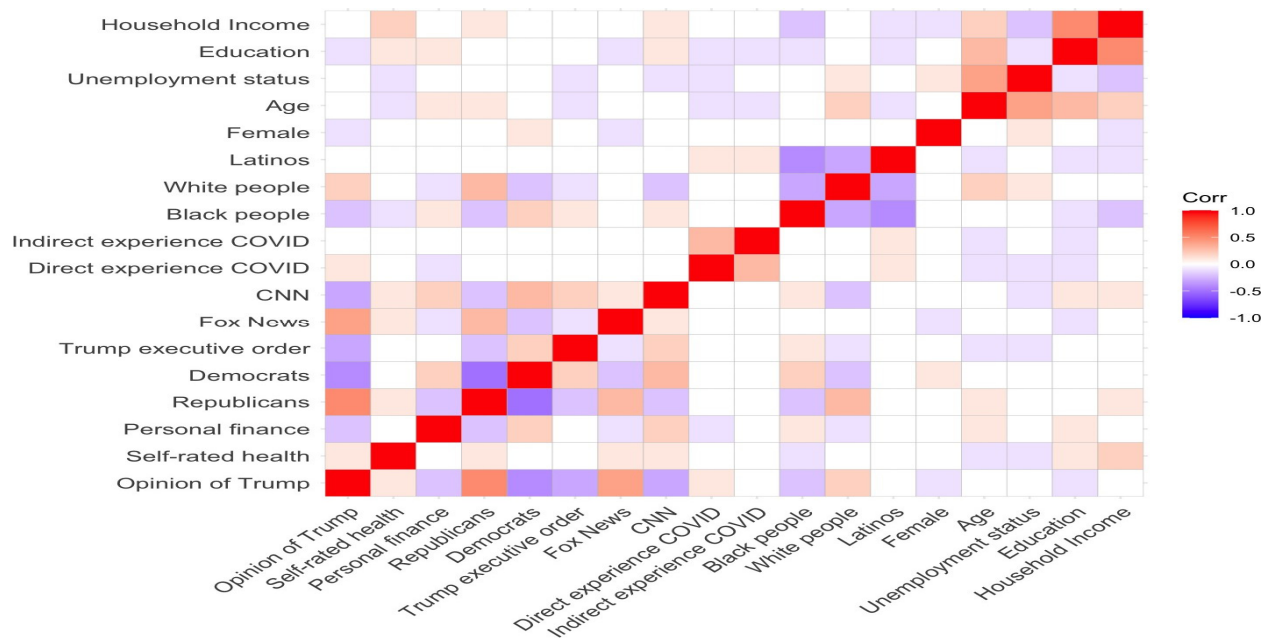


Figure 3. Correlations matrix

Source: Author’s analysis of the 2020 CMPS data.

**Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)**

The VIF is calculated to detect multicollinearity among predictor variables, which can inflate the variance of regression coefficients. The formula for VIF is:

$$VIF_i = \frac{1}{1 - R_i^2}$$

A high VIF (VIF > 5) indicates problematic multicollinearity, which can distort the analysis. By identifying and addressing multicollinearity, the model’s integrity is preserved, ensuring that variables used in the model do not compromise the analysis. Figure 4 suggests that there are no multicollinearity issues in the models.

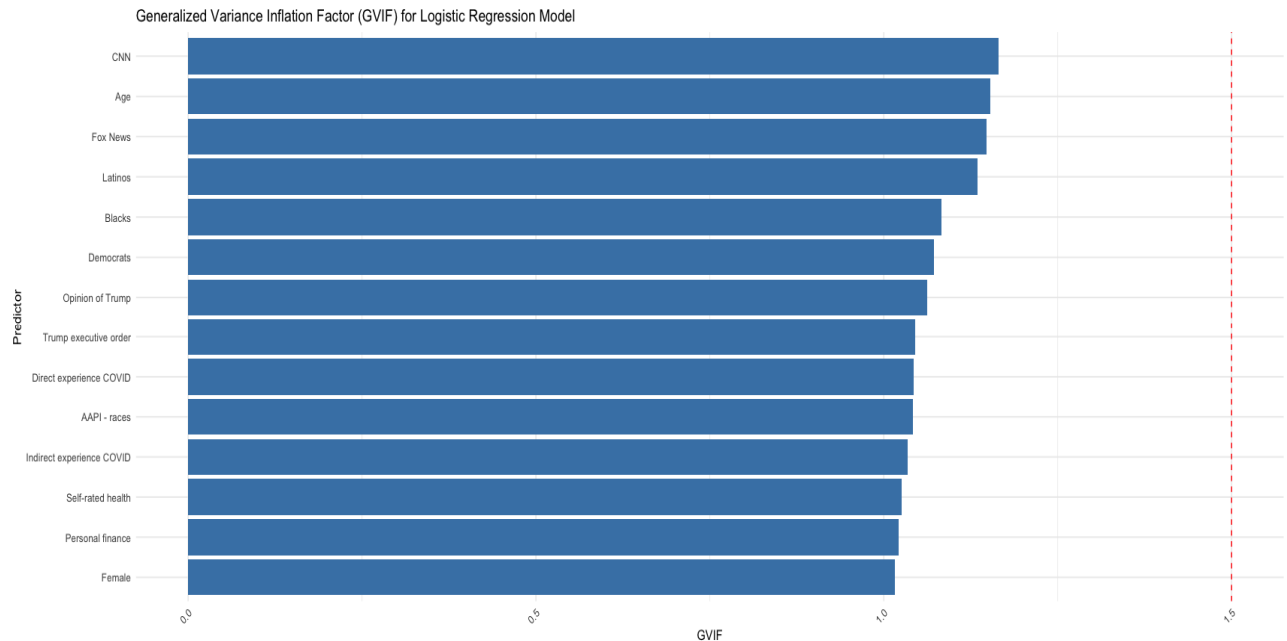


Figure 4. Variance inflation factors

Source: Author's analysis of the 2020 CMPS data.

## 5. Results

The present section presents a complete analysis of the public's assessment of President Trump's handling of the COVID-19 problem. The findings indicate a notably unfavorable outlook across several demographic and political groups. By employing t-test analysis for mean differences and logistic regression for binary outcomes, this study investigates the combined impact of racial demographics, health status, financial well-being, political affiliation, and media consumption on perceptions of Trump's pandemic management.

The investigation begins by conducting a comprehensive assessment of public opinion, revealing a significant mean difference of -2.13 (p-value = 0.001), which suggests a general agreement that attributes the severity of the pandemic to Trump's mishandling. These sentiments are most pronounced among White individuals (-2.62, p-value = 0.001), followed by Latinos (-1.83, p-value = 0.001) and Black individuals (-1.54, p-value = 0.001), indicating substantial dissatisfaction that differs in strength among different ethnic groups.

Upon closer examination of the influence of self-rated health, a subtle and complex relationship becomes apparent. Individuals with superior health exhibit relatively little deviation from attributing blame to Trump, as indicated by an overall mean difference of -0.15 (p-value = 0.001). The inclination is particularly pronounced among individuals of Black descent (-0.22, p-value = 0.001), indicating that perspectives on health, which are influenced by racial backgrounds, shape opinions on the accountability for pandemic response.

The inclusion of the financial perspective adds an additional level of scrutiny. Individuals with a more positive outlook on their financial situation in the last year show a mean difference of 0.41 (p-value = 0.001) in attributing the impact of the pandemic to Trump. The strongest sentiment is observed among White people (0.59, p-value = 0.001), indicating the influence of economic outlooks on the assignment of blame.

Political affiliation is a crucial factor, as non-Republicans are far more inclined to hold Trump responsible for COVID-19 deaths (-0.36, p-value = 0.001), especially among non-Republicans classified as White (-0.5, p-value = 0.001). The aforementioned pattern highlights the convergence of political affiliation and cultural background in influencing impressions of responsibility.

Additionally, the study examines the impact of Trump's executive orders, where those adversely affected demonstrate a robust conviction in Trump's mismanagement (0.62, p-value = 0.001), particularly among

White individuals (0.71, p-value = 0.001). This particular aspect emphasizes the concrete impacts of policy on the overall attitude of the population.

Table 1. Summary statistic: t-test IVs by attribution collaborative multiracial post-election survey (CMPS)

	Full (n=13471)		Black people (n=3643)		Latinos (n=3612)		White people (n=2656)	
	Diff in Mean	P-values	Diff in Mean	P-values	Diff in Mean	P-values	Diff in Mean	P-values
Opinion of Trump	-2.13	0.001	-1.54	0.001	-1.83	0.001	-2.62	0.001
Self-rated health	-0.15	0.001	-0.22	0.001	-0.17	0.001	-0.15	0.001
Personal finance	0.41	0.001	0.29	0.001	0.3	0.001	0.59	0.001
Republicans	-0.36	0.001	-0.12	0.001	-0.27	0.001	-0.5	0.001
Democrats	0.4	0.001	0.31	0.001	0.35	0.001	0.36	0.001
Trump executive order	0.62	0.001	0.38	0.001	0.56	0.001	0.71	0.001
CNN	0.71	0.001	0.44	0.001	0.53	0.001	0.88	0.001
Fox News	-0.68	0.001	-0.59	0.001	-0.57	0.001	-0.84	0.001
Direct experience COVID	-0.02	0.001	-0.02	0.2	0.002	0.8	-0.02	0.05
Indirect experience COVID	0.0	0.9	-0.0	0.9	0.01	0.3	-0.02	0.05
Female	0.06	0.001	0.2	0.001	0.07	0.001	0.00	0.9
Age	0.02	0.4	0.94	0.001	0.04	0.44	-0.21	0.001
Education	0.16	0.001	0.5	0.001	0.1	0.13	0.14	0.01
Unemployment	-0.02	0.01	0.04	0.08	-0.0	0.8	-0.04	0.05
Household Income	-0.07	0.3	0.62	0.001	-0.35	0.01	-0.17	0.2
White people	-0.2	0.001						
Black people	0.15	0.001						
Latinos	-0.00	0.7						

The influence of media consumption is clearly substantial, as evidenced by CNN viewers who are more likely to assign responsibility to Trump (0.71, p-value = 0.001), especially among White individuals (0.88, p-value = 0.001). Regular Fox News viewers, on the other hand, prefer to exonerate Trump (-0.68, p-value = 0.001), highlighting the significant and powerful influence of the media in shaping political views.

This thorough investigation explicates the multifaceted character of public sentiment towards Trump's handling of the pandemic, uncovering an intricate interaction among media impact, racial identity, health condition, financial circumstances, and political associations in shaping views of leadership responsibility during a world- wide health emergency.

Table 2. Logistic regression

	Full Model	Black people	Latinos	White people
<b>Intercept</b>	1.19*** (0.20)	1.34*** (0.34)	1.32*** (0.33)	1.56*** (0.45)
<b>Internal Factors</b>				
Opinion of Trump	-0.81*** (0.02)	-0.67*** (0.04)	-0.70*** (0.04)	-1.06*** (0.05)
Self-rated health	-0.07* (0.03)	-0.12* (0.06)	-0.10 (0.05)	-0.07 (0.07)
Personal finance	0.10** (0.03)	0.02 (0.05)	0.09 (0.05)	0.20** (0.07)
Democrats	0.60*** (0.07)	0.58*** (0.12)	0.53*** (0.11)	0.50** (0.18)
<b>External Factors</b>				
Trump executive order	0.32*** (0.03)	0.25*** (0.06)	0.29*** (0.05)	0.53*** (0.09)
Fox News	-0.40*** (0.03)	-0.33*** (0.05)	-0.35*** (0.05)	-0.45*** (0.07)
CNN	0.41*** (0.03)	0.31*** (0.05)	0.37*** (0.05)	0.66*** (0.08)
Direct experience COVID	-0.05 (0.11)	0.14 (0.21)	-0.01 (0.16)	0.34 (0.23)
Indirect experience COVID	0.19 (0.11)	0.38 (0.23)	0.24 (0.16)	-0.48* (0.23)
<b>Demographics</b>				
Female	0.46*** (0.08)	0.42*** (0.11)	0.18 (0.11)	-0.03 (0.14)
Age	0.22** (0.08)	0.22*** (0.04)	0.06 (0.04)	0.08 (0.05)
Unemployment status	-0.09 (0.07)	-0.14 (0.12)	-0.09 (0.11)	-0.11 (0.15)
Education	-0.02 (0.02)	0.03 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.13* (0.05)
Asian/Pacific/Native	0.19** (0.06)			
Black people	0.10*** (0.02)			
Latinos	0.46*** (0.08)			
Deviance	11391.07	2946.60	3545.03	1831.98
Dispersion	0.95	0.91	0.96	0.96
Num. obs.	14987	4005	4006	3001

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$

Table 2 presents the logistic regression study, which identifies numerous important variables that affect the attribution of COVID-19 deaths to President Trump's administration among various racial groups.

Within the comprehensive model, significant predictors of attribution include internal variables such as opinion about Trump ( $\beta = -0.81$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), self-rated health ( $\beta = -0.07$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), personal finance ( $\beta = 0.10$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and Democratic membership ( $\beta = 0.60$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Significant impacts are also observed from external factors such as Trump's executive orders ( $\beta = 0.32$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), Fox News viewership ( $\beta = -0.40$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and CNN viewership ( $\beta = 0.41$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Crucially, the influence of these elements differs among different racial groups. Personal finance is a strong predictor for White individuals ( $\beta = 0.20$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) but without statistical significance for Black individuals or Latinos. Among White individuals, the impact of CNN viewing is considerably more pronounced ( $\beta = 0.66$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) than among Black individuals ( $\beta = 0.31$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and Latinos ( $\beta = 0.37$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Demographic variables, namely gender and age, substantially impacted the overall model and for specific racial groupings. Education level is statistically significant only for those of White ethnicity ( $\beta = -0.13$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

The analysis reveals that individuals who identify as Asian/Pacific/Native ( $\beta = 0.19, p < 0.01$ ), Black ( $\beta = 0.10, p < 0.001$ ), or Latino ( $\beta = 0.46, p < 0.001$ ) are more likely to attribute COVID-19 deaths to Trump's administration compared to those who identify as White.

The findings underscore the intricate interaction of internal, external, and demographic elements in influencing the public's view of the Trump administration's management of the COVID-19 epidemic, with significant differences across different racial groups.

## 6. Discussion

Within the attribution theory framework, examining public responses to President Trump's handling of the COVID-19 epidemic reveals an intricate interaction of elements that shape public sentiment. Attribution theory provides a vital understanding of the complex perceptions people assign to Trump's leadership or broader systemic and situational factors for the negative consequences of the epidemic. This comprehensive analysis demonstrates how factors such as racial identification, health status, socioeconomic position, political affiliation, and media consumption patterns all influence the determination of blame.

Pervasive discontent with the Trump administration's management of the epidemic is apparent among various racial groups, with White individuals expressing particularly strong unhappiness, followed by Latino and Black individuals. Beyond particular grievances, this dissatisfaction encompasses a broader criticism, significantly shaped by the poor portrayal of Trump's response in media and political opinion. Media exerts a substantial external influence on public perceptions, underscored by its role in shaping political and ethnic identities through narratives.

The diverse consequences of the epidemic on various communities complicate the process of attributing blame, as the health condition and financial prospects of individuals have a role in shaping their views on Trump's accountability. Healthier individuals throughout the epidemic are less likely to attribute blame to Trump. Simultaneously, individuals with favorable financial outlooks are more likely to hold Trump responsible, suggesting a complex connection between personal situations and the broader socioeconomic environment.

The allocation of responsibility is significantly influenced by political affiliation, as individuals who are not affiliated with the Republican Party are more inclined to ascribe the death toll of the epidemic to Trump. This highlights the polarized character of American politics, where partisan affiliation greatly influences views on the efficacy of leadership. Executive orders issued by Trump serve as a prime example of how government decisions directly influence public opinion, functioning as external elements that can either provoke criticism or garner support.

Media consumption is a significant external element that generates varying perceptions among frequent viewers of CNN and Fox News. The observed disparity in media consumption underscores the overwhelming influence of narrative framing in shaping political ideologies and identification of responsibility, reflecting wider patterns of political allegiance and media consumption patterns among various racial groups. The enormous disparity in perspectives derived from different media sources underscores the profound impact of media narratives in divisive public sentiment.

This thorough analysis demonstrates that assigning accountability for the consequences of the COVID-19 issue entails an intricate combination of individual experiences, social inequalities, political affiliations, and media discourses. Furthermore, it underscores the crucial requirement of a sophisticated comprehension of how these many elements interplay to shape public opinion towards political leaders during times of crisis. Drawing upon attribution theory, this review provides significant insights into the psychological and social dynamics that impact public perceptions towards leadership and responsibility in times of crisis. It emphasizes the vital need of taking into account a wide array of influential factors.

## 7. Conclusion

A comprehensive analysis of President Trump's management of the COVID-19 pandemic using attribution theory and public opinion provides a deep understanding of the intricacies of leadership in times of crisis. The pandemic, characterized by its unparalleled health, social, and economic consequences, has amplified the complexities of crisis management in the context of substantial political polarization and increased racial and socioeconomic inequalities in the United States. The research highlights a predominantly unfavorable public opinion of Trump's handling of the epidemic, which is shaped by several elements such as racial composition, health condition, financial prosperity, political alignment, and media consumption. The results demonstrate an explicit agreement among different demographic groups that attributes the seriousness of the



epidemic to the perceived mismanagement by the administration. This attitude is prevalent among individuals of White ethnicity, followed by those of Latino and Black ethnicity, suggesting a diverse yet pervasive dissatisfaction that goes across geographical boundaries.

The analysis also emphasizes the intricate influence of personal health and financial outlook on opinions, as older persons and those with a more favorable financial outlook throughout the epidemic exhibit varying degrees of ascription of responsibility. Political affiliation becomes a crucial factor, as non-Republicans are shown to be far more likely to hold Trump responsible for the consequences of the situation. Media consumption, including the contrasting views cultivated by consistent viewing of CNN versus Fox News, highlights the significant influence of narrative framing on political beliefs and ascriptions of accountability. The rise of media consumption polarization indicates wider patterns of political loyalty and media viewing patterns, underscoring the influence of media narratives in molding and dividing public sentiment.

An in-depth analysis based on attribution theory clarifies the complex and multifaceted character of public sentiment against Trump's handling of the epidemic. The analysis uncovers an intricate interaction among media impact, racial identity, health condition, financial circumstances, and political associations in shaping views of leadership responsibility during a worldwide health emergency. The results emphasize the need for a sophisticated comprehension of how different elements interact to shape public opinion toward political leaders during emergencies. This provides essential insights into the psychological and social dynamics that impact public evaluations of leadership and responsibility in times of crisis.

## 8. Future Research

Further investigation should undertake a more comprehensive comparative examination of leadership reactions to the COVID-19 epidemic in several countries to enhance our knowledge of leadership efficacy. Researchers can incorporate supplementary variables such as economic consequences and enduring ramifications of leadership choices to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the interaction among political, social, and financial elements. Moreover, it is recommended that future research strive for an equitable viewpoint by considering both the favorable and unfavorable aspects of leadership in times of crisis. This approach will augment the applicability and pragmatic significance of the results for future leaders and policymakers.

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## Note

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