

# The Authoritarian Equation: Psychology & External Factors in Authoritarian Support

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## Background

While most research focuses on either psychological traits or outside factors, this study looks at how the **two interact**. Traits like a strong need for order or discomfort with change can make people more vulnerable to authoritarian rhetoric—but mainly when activated by external stressors like conflict.

This research can help explain **how public support for authoritarianism can grow**, even in **democratic societies**.

## Research Questions

Why do people turn to authoritarian leaders, especially during times of crisis?

How do psychological traits and outside factors work together to shape authoritarian support?

What makes some people more susceptible to authoritarian rhetoric?

## Methodology

- Conducted a survey via Google Forms
- Psychological theories (e.g. authoritarian personality framework)
- Political case studies (e.g. Hungary & the U.S)

Understanding **why** people support authoritarianism helps us **recognize early warning signs** and **protect democracy** before it erodes. This is especially important in today's political climate, with authoritarianism rising **globally**.

## Evidence / Findings

- **Psychological Vulnerability:** People who value order and conformity are more likely to support authoritarian leaders when they feel threatened.
- **Fear as a Political Tool:** Leaders often use fear (e.g. crime, social change) to activate authoritarian attitudes in people.
- **Not Just a Personality Trait:** Authoritarianism is not a fixed personality trait—it's triggered by external stressors like economic instability, crisis, etc.
- **Reaction to Crisis Messaging:** Some survey participants expressed more openness to authoritarian leadership when exposed to fear-based news or crisis scenarios.
- **Crisis Shifting Core Beliefs:** Some respondents also said they might accept limits on freedoms (like press or protest rights) during a national emergency, showing how stress can shift toward authoritarianism.

## Conclusion

Authoritarianism takes hold when **fear** meets **vulnerability**—and authoritarian leaders know how to use **both**. But, this is **NOT** inevitable. When people understand how **fear is used against them**, they can **resist**. If we want to **preserve democracy** in our societies, we first have to **recognize what's threatening it**.

## Read my Paper and Bibliography!

