Examining the Effects of Media-Related Confirmation Bias on Adults

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Confirmation bias is a subconscious bias in which people selectively search for, interpret, and remember information in a way that confirms their pre-existing beliefs. The purpose of my research was to determine if confirmation bias affected the way people interpret information from news sources. I asked 132 participants to read 5 excerpts from 4 news sources and rank them in 4 categories: to what extent they agreed with the material, how informative it was, how believable it was, and their overall impression. I discovered that participants who thought a news excerpt was written by a source that they watched or read ranked the material higher in all 4 categories than participants who did not believe this. Additionally, I discovered that participants who belonged to the political party an article's source leaned toward consistently ranked the material higher than participants who did not belong to that party. As a group, participants who thought the material was written by a source they watched or read agreed with the material more by 8.6% and thought it was 9.12% more informative, 9.96% more believable, and their overall impression was 11.76% higher. Participants who were affiliated with the source's political leanings agreed with the material 10.68% more and found it 8.68% more informative and 11.6% more believable, and their overall impression was 11.64% higher. These results have led me to preliminarily conclude that confirmation bias has an impact on the way people perceive information from news sources.

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