

Cognitive Campaign Biases, Political Decisions and Consequences

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this review study was to examine the relationship between cognitive campaign biases, political decisions and consequences. Relevant information to complete the research was obtained through a desk top research technique was adopted whereby available secondary data relating to the concept of cognitive campaign biases, political decisions and consequences was analyzed. Important information from available secondary sources including published academic documents, reports as well as other available materials online or in libraries was critically analyzed. The review study determined that cognitive campaign biases have a substantial role in determining the political choices that individuals make. In addition, it was determined that cognitive campaign biases exist primarily in the concept of framing which is the social construction of political or social movements with a positive or negative representation. The review study recommends that cognitive campaign biases should be restricted as they tend to indoctrinate people mind causing them to vote in unwise manner and thereby bringing suffering to themselves and the society at large.

Keywords: Cognitive Campaign, Political Decisions, Cognitive Biases

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1. Introduction

Cognitive biases are considered as typical errors in terms of an individual thinking patterns that usually deviates from the rational thinking. As such, cognitive campaign biases can be termed as manipulation of information in order to make one political position or a leader appear more favourable than those they are competing against (Suedfeld & Tetlock, 2019). Such errors in thinking patterns are considered to be capable of influencing individuals' decision making. One of the most crucial areas where the concept of cognitive biases is widely applied is in the political field especially during campaign times. This is based on the fact that the practice of politics requires members of various core groups, such as citizens and candidates, to take unyielding positions with regard to the political parties they support (Zmigrod, 2020).

During the election campaigning's, politicians frequently employ a variety of strategies to garner voters' support (Westerwick et al., 2020). A few examples of these strategies are capitalizing on the popularity of the party and its leader, portraying themselves as guardians of religious identity, and forging coalitions with other political parties. Many people who enter politics do so out of a desire to make their respective countries and societies better places to live by guiding those societies in a particular path. However, this is usually not the case as politic is a holistic endeavor in most democracies since it involves not just political players but also citizens, each of whom plays an equally vital role in the process of electing politicians to positions of power. As a result, finding solutions to the problems facing society should be an objective shared by all (Suedfeld & Tetlock, 2019).

The concept of political cognition can be considered as a relatively new field that entails applying various concepts of cognitive psychology such as biases, heuristics, and information processing, to evaluate political phenomena like voter choice, party choice, policy formation, and ideological inclination (Humprecht et al., 2020). Therefore, it is fascinating to observe the ways in which these cognitive mechanisms play out in various political cultures, which are in turn dictated by the system of government in various countries and the structure of the social fabric within the community.

There are various forms of governments with the most common being democracies, monarchies, and autocracies. Democracies that include many parties and parliaments can be found in countries like United States, India and

South Africa. In these countries, considerable political conduct may be observed, including politicians from the incumbent government drafting key programs and politicians from the opposition engaging in in-depth discussion of these plans. As a result of such political systems, it is clear that politicians play a significant part in determining how society is shaped (Humprecht et al., 2020). There is the potential for unfavourable outcomes for democracy whenever there is a considerable disconnect between the decisions made by politicians and the requirements of the populace. Due to the fact that the cognitive dynamics of both those in positions of power and ordinary citizens have a direct impact on the formulation of public policy, it is essential to have a solid understanding of both groups.

In the age of social media, leaders are increasingly taking advantage of the various channels available to them in order to exert influence over people and convert them into followers (Kulshrestha et al., 2019). Leaders have the opportunity to influence public opinion when they continuously use pre-existing prejudices or stereotypes on their social media platforms. As a result, they amass a sizable following in both cyberspace and the real world. When it comes to elections, politicians and the media have a tendency to exploit cognitive biases as a tool to manipulate public opinion in their favour. As a consequence of this, individuals are likely to be swayed by political arguments based on cognitive biases notwithstanding the availability of counterargument. Researchers from Duke University came to the conclusion that people are inclined to maintain a political stance even when confronted with evidence that is either affirming or contradictory to their position (Papakyriakopoulos et al., 2020). As such, confirmation bias, coverage bias, and concision bias are the three most important types of cognitive biases that politicians and the media utilize most frequently.

Confirmation bias involves favouring or seeking information that upholds someone's pre-existing beliefs (Ling, 2020). Politicians who have such views are typically unyielding in their political beliefs, regardless of whether or not there are competing theories or pieces of evidence. In a society in which a greater number of people are affected by bias, finding solutions to problems that impact those people becomes problematic. This is because the problems can only be resolved successfully via the collaborative efforts of all members of the community. The challenge of neutralizing political discourse that has already been developed is a difficult one to undertake. Therefore, citizens will continue to adhere to the political decisions they made in the beginning, regardless of how much information or counterargument is offered to them. In politics, confirmation bias frequently results in echo chambers, in which individuals surround themselves with people who share their viewpoints and with media sources that support their existing beliefs (Ling, 2020). This makes it more difficult to think critically and restricts the consideration of various points of view, which in turn makes it more difficult to design well-informed policy.

On the other hand, coverage bias arises when news outlets publish or broadcasts biased information on certain political leader (Papakyriakopoulos et al., 2020). For instance, the media may spread false information about a politician or perpetuate a well-established generalization about that person since the media does not support that politician. In such cases, media outlets alter the facts of a story in order to make the reporting they provide conform to their narrative. An excellent illustration of this may be found in the various ways in which the media covered Donald Trump's acts as president, such as the travel ban that was implemented in 2017. It was inconsistent in terms of tone and the facts that were highlighted, and each topic was discussed in a manner that was tailored to forward a certain political goal (Bryce, 2017). Reporting in such a way does nothing except spread bias, and citizens will not be able to choose their next leader on the basis of their own evaluations but rather on the basis of the story that the media has sold to them.

Concision bias is the last form of cognitive campaign biases that entails the use of information that is easy to get across the audience by eliminating information that is more important and detailed (Kulshrestha et al., 2019). An excellent illustration of this may be seen in the sound bites and news headlines, which are condensed versions of longer audio samples and written articles. Short clips and headlines are typically disseminated in isolation, and because they exclude crucial context, the public are extremely likely to be missing out on a great deal of information that is meaningful to them. Additionally, posts on social media that contain brief quotations are quite popular in the modern era. As a result, news reporters or opponents might merely quote a small portion of a lengthy speech and share it with their audience. The issue is that audience who are not privy to the complete speech will be unable to understand the context of the whole speech (Kulshrestha et al., 2019). It is one of the methods that is being used to spread propaganda in favour of certain parties. The many facets of the problems that our society faces will become immensely divisive if we do not provide all of the relevant facts and keep the context in mind. According to Jones and Sun's research from 2020, the ongoing partisan difference in countries like the United States can be attributed, in part, to the failure of news reports to provide adequate context. Based

on this, the current term paper sought to explore the relationship between cognitive campaign biases, political decisions and consequences.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cognitive Campaign Biases, Political Decisions and Consequences

The 2016 United States presidential elections that was conducted six months after the famous Brexit referendum that allowed the United Kingdom to exit the European Union is thought to have brought a comprehensive awareness to academicians and other commentators about the challenges posed by the issue misinformation as a result of cognitive political biases. While the problem of misinformation brought about by cognitive campaign biases is not very new, the words “misinformation” currently features in everyday speeches of politicians, journalists as well as normal citizens and even occupying the competitive word-of-the-year position for many dictionaries and journals (Levine & Duncan, 2022).

Obviously, cognitive biases can lead people to hold erroneous ideas about the world and participate in activity that can be harmful, not just to themselves but also to others. In a similar view, having incorrect ideas about political issues can be detrimental to the smooth operation of both society and democracies (Barfar, 2019). This is because, it is a well-known fact that when it comes to politics, obviously, reaching a consensus on whether each and every idea is true or incorrect is not always simple, and it may not even be feasible in some cases. According to John Stuart Mill, the functioning of democracy is dependent on the premise that any concept must be permitted in the “marketplace of ideas” Therefore, the functioning of democracy is dependent on this premise of marketplace of ideas. According to Levine and Duncan (2022), ideal people of democracies are in a position to properly rule their country since they have access to all of the relevant, sufficient, and accurate information concerning the political status quo.

Political identity, which refers to people's prior beliefs about politics, political ideals and attitudes, is another key component in the dissemination, consumption, and potential influence of political misinformation on citizens (Barfar, 2019). Political identity is a crucial factor in the spread of political disinformation, hence, having potential impact citizens due to confirmation bias which literally entails seeking or interpreting of evidence in ways that are partial to existing beliefs or expectations. Psychologists have been aware of the existence of this phenomenon for quite some time. This bias has been demonstrated to work in a range of realms that are more or less scientific in nature, ranging from numerical mysticism to judicial reasoning, policy rationalization, ideology, and science. While few people are aware of or acknowledge to being susceptible to the confirmation bias, it has been proved to be quite influential in cognitive campaigns. Confirmation bias can clearly facilitate the influence of disinformation on people who already hold ideas that are consistent with misinformation to the extent that people are already misguided (Suedfeld & Tetlock, 2019).

Politics is a domain that is neither purely subjective nor purely objective. As such, deliberation and voting are required in democratic societies in order to reach political decisions. This is due to the fact that there is no simple answer to political problems that is universally recognized (Karahalios, 2019). Based on their political leanings, individuals have quite diverse opinions regarding the credibility of the same politicians, policies, and facts. As a result, individuals place differing levels of trust in various reports and sources of news. In addition, people have the potential to perceive political information and news based on the ideology or party identity that they adhere to. Motivated political reasoning is distinct from other types of reasoning because the conflicting judgements that are based on opposing partisanship or ideology are also directly tied to emotional responses.

According to Zollo et al. (2017), empirical studies regarding distribution and circulation of online information show some support for the existence of homogeneous echo chambers. This evidence seems to support the idea that, in the modern online environment, people consume information in closed-off, segregated environments that offer them information and misinformation that will continue to be consumed by mere compatibility with the recipient's ideology, thereby further distorting political misperceptions. In a news ecology in which people continuously, unintentionally receive or consciously seek consonant information that largely supports their views of the political status quo, the characteristic of information authenticity becomes a fairly inconsequential component of information consumption (McEwan et al., 2018). In such cases, people acquire information that largely confirms their views of the political status quo in one of two ways: either they receive it unwittingly or they seek it out intentionally. This apparent disregard for the truth, on the other hand, may have the potential to equalize factual statements with opinion statements (McEwan et al., 2018). This, in turn, may cause people to

not only be more likely to seek out or avoid information that is in line with what they believe, but also to judge the veracity of newly encountered information subjectively, in line with their prior political beliefs.

A number of studies have been undertaken by other scholars relating to the concept of cognitive campaign biases within the political environment across the globe. For instance, a study by Beri and Redy (2022) investigated the cognitive biases insights among Indian political representatives from both far right and far-left divisions. The primary method of data collection consisted of a semi-structured interview that was developed and used by the researchers. According to the findings, there were indications of cognitive biases among members of both ideological groups with regard to their political attitudes. This was observed during the 2019 General Elections in New Delhi India amongst participants who were affiliated with political parties situated in the nation's capital city. The findings indicated that members of political parties utilized various forms of cognitive campaign biases in order to win elections. As a result, it was concluded that cognitive campaign biases play a part in the political decision-making process among individuals who hold particular political affiliations.

On the other hand, Zmigrod (2020) examined the role that cognitive rigidity in advancing political ideologies. The findings indicate that a close relationship existed between cognitive rigidity and ideological extremism, partisanship, and dogmatism across a variety of political and non-political settings. In addition, the progress that has been made in measuring of ideological extremism and cognitive rigidity will make it easier for further clarification to be provided regarding how exactly the two hypotheses may be reconciled and why they have been traditionally placed in a competition that may not be accurate. This synthesis shows that a scientifically rigorous knowledge of the cognitive origins of ideological thought may be necessary for generating effective antidotes to intolerance and intergroup hostility.

Stanley et al. (2020) researchers from Duke University examined the idea as to whether people are likely to stand their positions when it comes to political and social matters in the light of cognitive politics. Participants were offered with four set of options in terms of the reasons favouring their chosen position (affirming reasons), reasons favouring the other, unchosen position (conflicting reasons), and all reasons for both positions (reasons for both sides). The findings indicated that survey participants are more likely to stick with their previous decisions rather than modify them no matter which reasons are reviewed, and that this resistance to belief in change is likely owing to a motivated and biased evaluation of the reasons to sustain their initial ideas (prior-belief bias). To be more specific, they gave affirming reasons a higher rating than they did conflicting reasons even after taking into account claimed prior knowledge of the topic, the originality of the reasons that were presented, and the approach that was reported to have been employed to make the initial decision. Participants who did not alter their viewpoints had a tendency, to become more confidence in the superiority of their positions.

The tenacity with which people hold onto their beliefs can be traced back to a few key ideas. The concept known as "resistance to belief-change" which is the assumption that individuals will remain steadfast in their initial points of view and are unwilling to alter them. It's possible that this is due to the cognitive prejudice known as the "confirmation bias." The problem with people is that they are more likely to believe the evidence that backs up their assertion and dismiss the data that challenges their position (Stanley et al., 2020).

3. Research Methodology

The key aim of the study was to examine the relationship between cognitive campaign, political decisions and resulting consequences. To achieve this, relevant information to complete the research was obtained through a desk top research technique was adopted whereby available secondary data relating to the concept of cognitive campaign biases, political decisions and consequences was analyzed. This involved analyzing important information from available secondary sources including published academic documents, reports as well as other available materials online or in libraries. The purpose of adopting the desk top research was to allow the authors to gain a broader perspective of the study topic and also supplement of the study. To achieve this, the authors identified key words and phrases relating to the study topic that were later used to search for the required relevant literature. All relevant journal articles were carefully analyzed and all the relevant ones were utilized for the purpose of completing the current study.

To obtain the most relevant literature suitable for the completion of the study, a number of top-list search databases were examined including Google Scholar, JSTRO, Emerald and Science Direct. Only peer reviewed articles published under these search databases was examined. To achieve this, various key words and phrases

relating to the study topic were used. In addition, Boolean Search Strategy was used as it made it possible for various key words to be combined with modifiers such as “AND”, “OR” and “NOT” in order to make it possible to retrieve the most relevant search results. Completion of the search resulted in a total of 550 peer reviewed journals being obtained which were used in the completion of the study as indicated in the table 3.1:

Table 3. 1: Search Strategy

Database	Scope	Number of items
Emerald	Study title, keyword and phrases	150
Google Scholar	Study title, keyword and phrases	241
ScienceDirect	Study title, keyword and phrases	45
JSTOR	Study title, keyword and phrases	114
TOTAL		550

The following inclusion and exclusion criteria was adopted in eliminating and identifying the journal articles to be included in this review:

Table 3. 2: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Included	Excluded
Peer reviewed journals touching on cognitive campaign, political decision and consequences	Non-peer reviewed and those not related to the concept of cognitive campaign, political decision and consequences
Journals with abstract	All journals lacking abstract
Journals published within the last 5-years between 2018 and 2023	Journal articles older than 5-years since their publication
Focus on emerging economies	Journal articles not in English language

4. Summary of Empirical Findings

Following an analysis of the relevant research, it has been determined that cognitive campaign biases have a substantial role in determining the political choices that individuals make. Even more significantly, it causes people to become more set in their beliefs and discourages them from selecting their political leaders with an open mind. Because of this, it is essential to have a good understanding of cognitive biases because they have an effect on the decisions and actions people make. People who are conscious of biases like confirmation bias and aversion to change are able to think independently and make political decisions based on rationale and not based on emotion. This is because they are aware of how biases like these influence their political decision-making process.

As it has been noted by Levine and Duncan (2022), cognitive biases occur in a political environment when individuals engage in behaviour that demonstrates either incapacity to grasp a politically opposing point of view or an unwillingness to do so. It is uncertain whether individuals at particular locations along the political spectrum are more biased than any other individuals, as it is possible that such bias in individuals has its roots in their features and methods of thinking. Cognitive campaign biases go beyond the mere presenting and comprehension of viewpoints favouring a specific political leader or party. Rather, cognitive campaign biases transcend into the readings and interactions between persons that are carried out on a daily basis. The presence of cognitive biases in political campaigns has a long-lasting influence, with documented consequences on the behaviour of voters and the political decisions that result from such behaviour. After gaining an understanding of cognitive campaign biases, the next step is for one to admit that these biases violate the political neutrality that is required of them.

Additionally, it has been pointed out that cognitive campaign biases exist primarily in the concept of framing. Framing is the social construction of political or social movements with a positive or negative representation. In the context of this discussion, cognitive campaign biases refer to political leaders and parties that convey facts to

highlight a problem and suggest remedies that support their own political perspective. The results of these political decisions are that it makes their personal situation appear to be more beneficial, and it makes their policies appear to be the expected course of action. The effect of framing is becoming an increasingly important factor in opinion polls that are geared to encourage particular organizations that are commissioned to survey respondents. If reliable, credible and sufficient information is provided, this bias can be significantly reduced. Framing further looks at the impact of slanting in political campaigning and its potential impact on the distribution of political power where political bias is present. It is essential to have an understanding that framing is an all-pervasive process that is utilized in analysis to identify links between components of reality and to communicate an interpretation of perspectives that might not be totally correct.

Based on this, it has been demonstrated that cognitive campaign biases have substantial consequences, both in a positive and bad way. On the positive side, it can assist a voter to remain confident and secure of their own political ideas and voting decisions. On the other hand, cognitive campaign biases have the potential to impede voters from viewing political issues in an impartial manner. As a result, these cognitive biases can influence voters' voting decisions and lead to incorrect political choices. For instance, when it's election time, individuals have a tendency to look for promotion contents that favours the virtues of the political candidates they support while also looking for information that can be likely to paint their political rivals in a negative way. They don't bother to look for objective facts, but they interpret information in a way that only supports their previous opinions and beliefs which makes them frequently ignore critical information.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the concept of cognitive campaign biases, political decisions and consequences, then it can be concluded that this is a very crucial area within the political field since such is likely to influence the manner in which potential voters choose their preferred political leaders which can be very consequential to the society. This is because, majority of those in politics do so out of a desire to make their respective countries and societies better places to live by guiding those societies in a particular path. However, this is usually not the case as politics is a holistic endeavor in most democracies since it involves not just political players but also citizens, each of whom plays an equally vital role in the process of electing politicians to positions of power. In this regard, most politicians who indoctrinate their followers end up doing negative of what they usually promise during their campaign trails a fact which has a negative consequence to their society.

In addition, it was concluded that the existence of cognitive campaign biases is mostly dependent on the form of political systems. For example, more cognitive campaign biases have been observed in democratic countries as people there are free to access as much information as possible making it possible for one political leader to possess significant amount of information to taunt their opponents in a bad way. On the other hand, less cognitive campaign biases are observed in authoritarian states where the media is highly controlled and only allowed to dispatch as much information as possible about their national leaders who in most cases are not opposed during the election times.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the analysis, it has been observed that cognitive campaign biases are an important political concept that many political players utilize extensively in their bid to win their supporter's trust. As such, it is recommended that such practices ought to be restricted as they tend to indoctrinate people's mind causing them to vote in unwise manner bringing suffering to themselves and the society at large. In addition, cognitive campaign biases especially coverage bias which arises when news outlets publish or broadcast biased information on certain political leader are known to make such political leaders gain sympathy followers which can be very consequential when they are incompetent but are voted to seats of power.

In addition, it was observed that there is a very limited empirical literature examining the concept of cognitive biases within the political field from both local and international perspectives. Despite this, a number of scholars especially from developed nations such as the United States and UK have advanced various empirical studies as this concept of political bias has been very prevalent in their economies during election times especially the 2016 presidential election in the US and Brexit referendum in the UK. Therefore, it is recommended that scholars and

academicians at local level should strive to undertake more empirical research regarding the concept of cognitive campaign biases and various political aspects.

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