

Why do we keep fooling ourselves? Cognitive biases on the Northwest Missouri State University campus

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Introduction

Purpose

How do cognitive biases like the misinformation effect, cognitive dissonance, and confirmation bias influence Northwest Missouri State students?

Background

- Misinformation effect: Presenting information after an event can lead to the creation or modification of memories (Loftus, 1975).
- Cognitive Dissonance: Occurs when people have two or more contradictory beliefs and thoughts before doing something (Festinger, 1957).
- Confirmation bias: Inclination to look for information which supports one's beliefs, ideas, or knowledge (Wason, 1960).

Method

Participants

- 81 undergraduate psychology students enrolled at Northwest Missouri State University ($M_{age} = 20.8$ years)

Materials

- Two different versions of a questionnaire that asked their opinion on: Kobe Bryant helicopter's supposed crash video, driving and talking on the phone, cellphone use in class, study habits before a test, and fabricated data on university ratings and people's virtues.

Procedure

Part 1- Test misinformation effect.

- Students were asked if they had seen and believed in a video of Kobe Bryant's helicopter crash circulating on social media. The video has been debunked as fraudulent, but students were not told this.

Part 2 - Test cognitive dissonance

Students were asked whether they would act in three scenarios and why.

- There are relationship problems and your significant other calls while you are driving. Would you answer?
- Would you use your cellphone in class for non-academic purposes?
- Would you cram before a test?

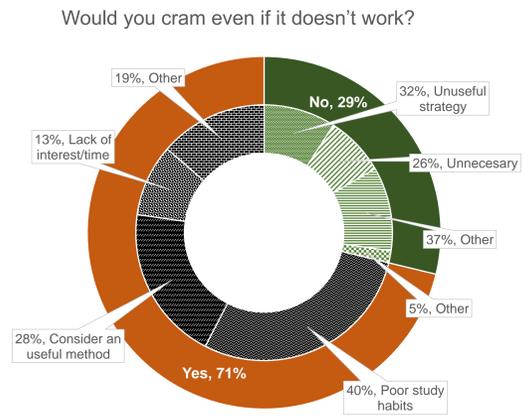
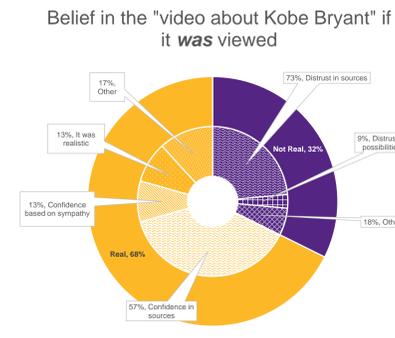
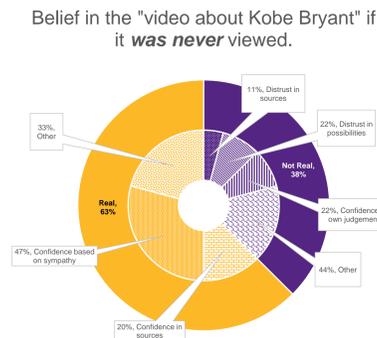
Subsequently, they were asked whether they acknowledged the negative effects of those behaviors.

Part 3 - Test confirmation bias

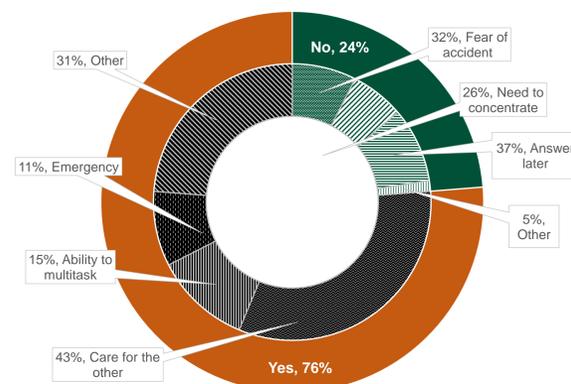
Students were asked to agree or disagree with two statements

- Missouri Western (MW) is ranked better than NWMSU.
- American Journal of Psychology reported that individuals who participate in research are brave and thoughtful.

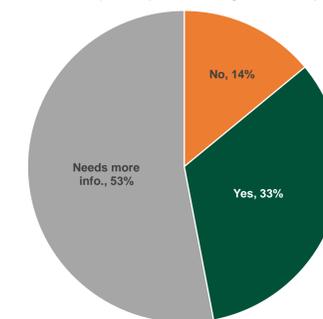
Results



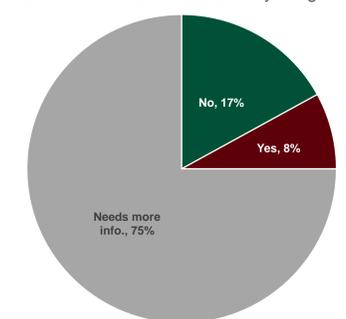
Would you answer your phone while driving, even though it is dangerous?



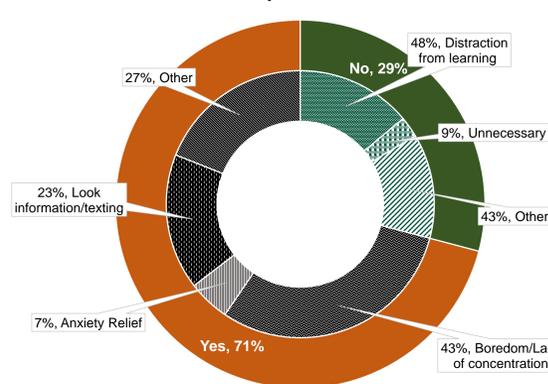
Research participants are good. Are you?



MSU is better than NWMSU. Do you agree?



Would you use your cellphone in class despite it undermines your concentration?



Discussion

- 1 in 3 students trust in social media as a reliable source of information & believed what is stated in it.
- More than 50% of students engage in unproductive & even detrimental behaviors, despite knowing the consequences of their actions.
- 1 in 4 students tend to view themselves based on external information. Also, a similar proportion supports their pre-existent beliefs regardless of contradictory information
- Northwest students' behavior and thoughts in school, on the road, and in cyberspace tends to depend on their a priori beliefs and assumptions.

References

