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Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

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Journal

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 44(44)

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Publication Date

2022

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Peer reviewed

The moderation effect of Illusion of Explanatory Depth of Knowledge towards National and International Issues

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Abstract

According to Rozenblit & Keil (2002), attempting a mechanistic explanation of a concrete phenomenon results in reduced self-reported knowledge, suggesting that the latter is normally overestimated (Illusion of Explanatory Depth or IoED). Fernbach and Sloman (2013) demonstrated the effect in sociopolitical issues, finding that causal explanation results in short-term moderation of belief extremity. While the effect of explanation on knowledge self-estimation has been robustly replicated, debates about the impact on extremity continue. Here, we replicate both effects in an online sample of Iranians (N=100 and $p < .05$). Given IoED's reliance on mechanistic framing, we further hypothesized that the more concrete construal afforded national hot-button issues would produce a more robust effect compared to international ones. Our experiment indeed found stronger IoED effects on both knowledge estimation ($p < .005$) and belief extremity ($p < .003$) across national issues. We discuss how this moderation intervention can be helpful in extremism context.