



False Consensus Effect on College Students in Indonesia

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Abstract

False consensus effect is a self-as-standard phenomena that manifests as one of the expressions of egocentrism in individuals. The purpose of this study is to see if the false consensus effect occurs in students at Makassar State University's Faculty of Psychology. This study's population consisted of students from the UNM Faculty of Psychology, with a sample size of 46 individuals drawn using the cluster random sampling approach. The FCE questionnaire was used to collect data for this study, which employs descriptive methods. The acquired data was then statistically analyzed using descriptive analysis. The findings revealed that the false consensus effect (FCE) occurred in students at Makassar State University's Faculty of Psychology.

Keyword: College students, Description, False consensus effect.

Abstrak

False consensus effect merupakan fenomena self as standard dan menjadi salah satu manifestasi egosentrisme pada diri individu. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui apakah false consensus effect dapat terjadi pada mahasiswa Fakultas Psikologi Universitas Negeri Makassar. Populasi dari penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa fakultas Psikologi UNM, dengan jumlah sampel sebanyak 46 subjek, yang diambil dengan menggunakan teknik cluster random sampling. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif melalui pengumpulan data yang dilakukan dengan menggunakan kuesioner FCE. Data yang dikumpulkan kemudian dianalisis dengan menggunakan analisis statistik deskriptif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa false consensus effect (FCE) terjadi pada mahasiswa fakultas Psikologi Universitas Negeri Makassar.

Kata kunci: Deskripsi, False consensus effect, Mahasiswa.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of social interactions, individuals tend to form assumptions regarding the thoughts and beliefs of their counterparts. These assumptions are often grounded in an individual's personal perspectives, convictions, and attitudes. This phenomenon can lead to erroneous presumptions about individuals. The prevalence of the false consensus effect (FCE)

can be attributed to individuals' tendency to overestimate matters, particularly when they presume that their decisions will be endorsed by others, as noted by Cleveland (2012).

The phenomenon of false consensus was initially demonstrated by Ross, Green, and House in 1976. Subsequently, this phenomenon has been observed in various situations, both hypothetical and actual, involving choices. The phenomenon of false consensus has been observed to exert an influence on individuals' attitudes and convictions. This phenomenon has a significant impact on individuals' daily lives, encompassing a broad spectrum of choices, ranging from mundane decisions, such as selecting breakfast options, to deeply ingrained preferences that significantly shape human behavior, such as those related to religious and political beliefs. In contrary to the previously stated, errors committed in situations where personal preferences hold greater significance for individuals tend to result in limitations to effective communication and the establishment of interpersonal connections (Cleveland, 2012).

The phenomenon of assuming that others possess similar cognitive processes as oneself can significantly impact an individual's communication style when interacting with others. According to Borgsen and Weber (2008), Marks and Miller's motivational process approach proposes that individuals engage in false consensus as a means of mitigating anxiety surrounding forthcoming social interactions. When individuals perceive a shared perspective with their interaction partners, their social interaction anxiety tends to decrease. Conversely, the false consensus effect possesses the capacity to cause harm. This phenomenon may arise when an individual assumes that their choices will be congruent with those of others, yet in actuality, the other party does not espouse the same preferences. The failure of the false consensus effect may lead to a higher probability of encountering communication difficulties and more severe conflicts among individuals.

It is a commonly held belief among humans that their own perspectives are shared by others. However, research has identified various situational factors that can exacerbate this cognitive bias (Schulz, Wirth & Muller, 2020). The experimental study conducted by Steffel and Shafir (2011) examined the influence of choice difficulty on estimated consensus among a sample of 187 college students in Florida. The authors argued that the ability to accurately predict the decisions of others is a crucial aspect of the decision-making process for individuals. One method that people use to forecast the preferences of others is to weigh their own preferences. This technique is referred to as false consensus. The phenomenon of false consensus is frequently observed when individuals attempt to make predictions about the preferences of

others, such as when selecting gifts or suggesting dining establishments. Empirical research has demonstrated that individuals tend to exhibit a false consensus effect in such scenarios (Gershoff, Mukherjee & Mukhopadhyay, 2008).

The false consensus effect has been documented in multiple geographic locations, extending beyond the United States to encompass diverse cultural contexts, including Central Europe, Western Israel, the Netherlands, and Germany (Park, 2012). The false consensus effect is a phenomenon observed in individuals who seek validation and support from others to confirm the appropriateness of their beliefs and actions, particularly in the formation of value-laden opinions. Park (2012) suggests that while the false consensus effect is prevalent across different cultures, it is probable that its dimensions and applications may vary.

The False Consensus Effect (FCE), also referred to as "looking glass perception," applies to the observation that individuals who display specific behaviors or endorse particular viewpoints (performers) tend to perceive these behaviors and viewpoints as prevalent among all individuals (Galesic, Olsson & Rieskamp, 2013). The FCE phenomenon is widely regarded as an innate reaction to the emergence of the conviction that individuals share similar characteristics with one another. FCE is operationally defined as the disparity between an individual's assessment of the conduct of pertinent others and those who exhibit distinct behaviour patterns (Monin & Norton, 2003).

According to Pronin, Puccio, and Ross (2002), the phenomenon of FCE can be regarded as a form of egocentrism. The phenomenon of FCE relates to the inclination of independent decision-makers to believe that their reactions align with those of their peers. Acquiring a fundamental comprehension of the fundamentals related to FCE is of major importance. Individuals may not necessarily perceive their actions or thoughts as representative of the prevailing attitudes or behaviors of the broader population. The term FCE refers to an individual's inclination to perceive certain reactions as prevalent and favorably associated with their own responses, as suggested by Gilovich (1990).

Marks and Miller (1987) identified five distinct assumptions that are utilised to account for the occurrence of FCE. For starters, people are selectively exposed to others who are similar to them, thus their estimates of the larger social environment are based on biased instances. Second, their preferred viewpoint is regarded as more essential than opposing viewpoints, leading them to believe that their choice will garner social acceptance. Third, some people may incorrectly assume that other people would adopt their worldview because they have had similar

experiences to their own. Fourth, the assumption that having the same mindset as others might be motivating, for example, to satisfy the urge to confirm one's personal beliefs and sustain self-esteem. In addition, the FCE serves as the sole indicator of an individual's perspective.

The phenomenon known as FCE, or pluralistic ignorance, is related to the inclination to utilize one's own self as a point of reference or standard when making decisions that involve others and there are factors that can affect FCE (Oliver, Bakker, Demerouti & de Jong, 2005). That factors are as follows. The recency effect refers to the human inclination to retain information that has been recently processed. Selective exposure is the tendency to seek out individuals who share similar opinions and preferences to validate one's own beliefs. Internal focus of attention is characterized by an excessive appreciation of a decision due to an individual's preoccupation with their own opinions and preferences. Situational attribution is the perspective that behavior is influenced by situational factors and the assumption that others will exhibit similar responses.

The phenomenon of framing effect is attributable to the utilization of a heuristic approach, specifically the anchoring and adjustment heuristic. When faced with a novel decision-making scenario, individuals frequently initiate the process by establishing a preliminary approximation referred to as an anchor or starting point. After establishing a particular standard, the individual proceeds to modify it in response to the diverse potentialities that may arise (Tabesh, Tabesh & Moghaddam, 2019). FCE is an outcome of the aforementioned dual processes, in which the individual utilizes their personal viewpoint as a point of reference. According to Dawes (Myers, 2012), the phenomenon of false consensus effect (FCE) may arise due to the tendency of individuals to project from limited instances, often involving themselves, or when individuals perceive themselves as part of a dominant group within a community, commonly known as the majority. Individuals who perceive themselves as belonging to the majority within a group are inclined to adopt the belief that the majority's perspective is accurate. An additional factor contributing to this phenomenon is the tendency for individuals to interact primarily with those who share similar attitudes and behaviors. Consequently, individuals may evaluate their surroundings based on the characteristics of their social circle.

The FCE can be considered a self-referential standard. FCE is concerned with an individual's ability to make predictions, regardless of the attitudes and behaviours of the population or group that is the object of the forecast. According to Higgins (2007), individuals tend to rely on predictions rather than subjective assessments when processing descriptive images, as the

former can offer the necessary information to the individual. Consequently, the outcomes of the FCE are often challenging to anticipate and possess greater potential for generalization in relation to groups.

METHOD

The present investigation employs a descriptive methodology to ascertain the nature of the false consensus effect among students enrolled in the Faculty of Psychology at Makassar State University. Cluster sampling was employed to select participants from the student population of the Faculty of Psychology at Makassar State University. The study was centered on a group of 46 students.

The employed methodology for gathering data was a survey technique. A single questionnaire is utilized. The researcher developed a questionnaire utilizing the theoretical framework of the false consensus effect as proposed by Ross, Greene, and House (1976). The survey comprises eight statements pertaining to decision-making processes that students may undertake when selecting courses. The participants responded in two distinct manners. The initial method involved the selection of either affirmative or negative responses by participants in relation to each statement, based on the options that best characterized their personal attributes. The second method involved requesting the participant to record the proportion of their college acquaintances who, in their estimation, selected the identical alternative as themselves.

The assessment of FCE was conducted utilizing the approach put forth by Sawusch (2014) and Bauman and Geher (2003). Respondents who provided responses that deviated from the majority of the factual group by overestimating the percentage of individuals who shared their answer were assigned a score of 2, specifically if they indicated FCE. Bauman and Geher (2003) assigned a score of 2 to participants who reported a percentage greater than the actual percentage of all respondents for each statement. A score of 1 was assigned to participants who reported FCE, wherein they provided a response that deviated from the majority of the factual group by providing an estimate of a lower proportion of individuals who selected the same answer as the participant, as opposed to those who did not. A respondent who provided an answer congruent with the majority group response yet displayed an estimated percentage exceeding that of the majority of the factual group, was assigned a score of -1. Respondents who provided an answer that aligned with the majority of the group, but estimated a lower percentage of individuals who also chose the same answer, were assigned a score of -2.

The data analysis technique employed in this study involved the utilization of descriptive analysis through the SPSS software program. Descriptive analysis is an analytical approach that aims to provide an overview of the research problem based on data obtained from variables of the subject group under investigation. According to Azwar (2015), the presentation of results from descriptive analysis can be done through various methods such as percentages, cross-tabulation, graphs, and charts for categorical data, and group statistics for non-categorical data.

RESULT

Table 1. Respondents Description Based on Gender

Gender	N	Percentage
Male	7	15%
Female	39	85%
Total	46	100%

According to the table above, there were 46 respondents in this study, with 7 (15%) being male and 39 (85%) being female.

Table 2. Research Variable Description

Variable	Empiric			
	Min	Max	Mean	SD
False Consensus Effect	-8	8	-0.87	4.334

Table 3. Data Categorization

Variable	Score	Categorization	N	Percentage
False Consensus Effect	$3.464 \leq X$	High	13	28%
	$-5.204 \leq X < 3.464$	Medium	25	55%
	$X < -5.204$	Low	8	17%

The aforementioned table presents the outcomes of the classification of FCE variable data. In particular, the high category comprises 13 (28%) participants, the medium category encompasses 25 (55%) participants, and the low category includes 8 (17%) participants. The findings of this study suggest that the participants exhibit a moderate to high level of false consensus effect.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the descriptive analysis conducted on data related to the false consensus effect, obtained from a sample of 46 participants, indicate that a majority of the respondents experienced the phenomenon at a moderate level, which subsequently led to a high level of false consensus effect. The study's findings indicate that students at the Faculty of Psychology UNM experienced FCEs in relation to their course selection preferences. This aligns with the

findings of certain scholars who have conducted research since 1977, as reported by Ross and colleagues (Higgins & Kruglanski, 2007). The researchers discovered that FCE can be attributed to cognitive and motivational factors. Cognitive factors place emphasis on selective exposure and/or cognitive availability and access. This refers to the ease with which an individual can associate their behavior or information in their memory with commonly observed behaviors or actions of others.

The process of course selection for students enrolled in the Faculty of Psychology at UNM necessitates access to comprehensive information to facilitate informed decision-making regarding the courses they intend to pursue. The participants in this investigation were individuals who had engaged in academic pursuits for a duration exceeding one year. The manifestation of FCE among the research participants was attributed to their adequate knowledge regarding the upcoming instructors and coursework for the subsequent academic term. Furthermore, it should be noted that every subject belongs to the identical cohort. According to Mullen et al. (1985), there is evidence to suggest that the phenomenon of FCE is more pronounced when an individual displays behavior that is projected towards the ingroup. This finding is consistent with the assumption of similarity. The degree of similarity in the behavior of individuals within a group is positively correlated with the likelihood of the emergence of FCE. Individuals assess the frequency of views in the population, according to this latter interpretation, by depending on the ease with which instances of those who hold an attitude come to mind or the ease with which reasons for having the attitude come to mind (Gershoff, Mukherjee & Mukhopadhyay, 2008).

Fabriger and Krosnick (1995) argue that FCE arises from the uniqueness and significance of an individual's attitude. The centrality of an attitude in predicting the attitudes and behaviors of others tends to increase with the significance and distinctiveness of that attitude. The selection of courses for each subject in this study is dependent upon their attitudes towards various aspects associated with the courses offered during each semester. Predictions about their grades, the demeanor of their instructors, and the presence of friends in the classroom are all examples of this. The greater the subject's evaluation of various factors regarding to course selection, the greater the significance of the selected attitude. This factor can play a pivotal role in decision-making processes when individuals are tasked with anticipating the general attitudes of others. The results of the questionnaire indicate that a significant proportion of the participants (89.10% out of a total of 46 subjects) prioritize the friendliness of the lecturer when selecting their

courses and lecture classes, as evidenced by the second point of the survey. The study revealed that FCE manifested among the participants due to their perceptions of the lecturer, which influenced their expectations of other students' perceptions of the instructor and the courses that were being taught.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the descriptive analysis indicate that a majority of the participants reported experiencing FCE at a moderate level, which subsequently results in high levels of the same. The phenomenon of FCE, which applies to the selection of courses during the course of study at the Faculty of Psychology UNM, is commonly experienced by students.

The researcher has put forth a number of research recommendations for different parties involved, drawing from the existing body of research. The phenomenon of FCE is a type of cognitive bias that manifests in the rapid formation of judgments and is observed among students of the Psychology faculty at the Makassar State University. The concept of consensus can significantly impact students' course selection process, thus necessitating careful consideration before making any decisions. The anticipated outcome of this study is to provide insights into FCE among students. Such insights are expected to serve as a foundation for executing action research, which can be utilized as a point of reference for intervening in academic challenges experienced by students. The present study is classified as basic research, and as such, it is anticipated that future studies will advance its findings by establishing connections to additional variables.

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