



Cognitive dissonance: its role in decision making

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ABSTRACT

Cognitive dissonance theory proposes that when people hold two psychologically inconsistent cognitions (ideas, beliefs), dissonance arises. People generally consider the experience of tension to be both undesirable and unsustainable, thus, people seek to reduce tension when it occurs. In general, people attempt to avoid situations that may result in cognitive dissonance. According to Festinger, when dissonance does occur, people attempt to reduce it in one of three ways: change one of the dissonant cognitions, add new cognitions that are consonant with what one already believes or decrease the perceived importance of the dissonant cognition. When making decisions humans commonly become victim of cognitive dissonance. Festinger (1957) found that cognitive dissonance can provide a serious hindrance to proper decision making, and reducing dissonance may significantly improve decision making skills.