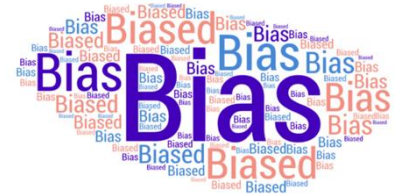




Managing Bias

Bias is a conscious or unconscious tendency, inclination, or prejudice towards or against something or someone. In various contexts, bias can manifest in different ways.

The “Pollyanna principle” explains that people are more likely to remember pleasant experiences more accurately and efficiently than unpleasant ones. According to research, at the unconscious level, the mind tends to focus on the optimistic, while at the conscious level, it tends to focus on the negative. (Matlin MW, Gawron VJ. Individual differences in Pollyannaism).



Bias can be healthy or unhealthy. For example, if I am outspoken about how great the football team I support is, that is expected and healthy. But, if I hold a grudge and treat people badly because their football team is a rival of the team I support, that is unhealthy. And watch out, as not all bias is employed consciously. So, unconscious bias is the one to watch for. We should ask ourselves what bias is secretly influencing our opinion of people or what they say.

There are many types of bias, including:

1. Cognitive Bias:

This refers to the systematic patterns of deviation from rationality in judgment or decision-making. Cognitive biases can affect our perceptions, judgments, and interpretations of information. Examples include confirmation bias, where individuals tend to favour information that confirms their pre-existing beliefs, and availability bias, where decisions are influenced by readily available information.



2. Statistical Bias:

In statistics, bias refers to the tendency of a statistic to systematically overestimate or underestimate the actual value of a parameter being estimated. This can occur due to flaws in the sampling process or measurement errors.

3. Media Bias:

This bias occurs when news outlets or other media sources selectively present information favouring a particular viewpoint or agenda. Media bias can arise due to editorial decisions, political affiliations, or commercial interests.

4. Social Bias:

Bias can also exist within social systems based on characteristics such as race, gender, sexuality, or socioeconomic status. Social biases can lead to discrimination and inequities in various aspects of life, including employment, education, and healthcare.

5. Halo Bias

The halo effect is typically where a person is seen as being held up as excellent at what they do due to previous performance or what the observer perceives as a constant trait. Hence, it is angelic, where the term Halo Effect comes from.





6. Horns Bias

In complete contrast to halo bias, this time, our horns bias is perhaps due to similar reasons but in a negative sense. A previous poor or bad experience triggers the observer's biased judgement this time.



7. Gender Bias

It is one of the most pervasive biases in society and can be regarded as unconscious and conscious. Gender bias is the tendency to prefer one gender over another. The gender pay gap and the difference in hiring rates are two of the most common instances of gender bias.

8. Affinity Bias

We've all encountered affinity bias before at some point. The affinity bias, also known as the similarity bias, is the tendency for people to connect with others who share similar backgrounds, experiences, and interests. Affinity bias in the workplace may not seem like an issue at first glance, but at more toxic levels, it may have serious implications for diversity in the workplace.

9. Attribution Bias

The attribution bias is another bias which is seen extensively both in and outside of the workplace. It is all about how we assess behaviour. When something good happens to us, we believe it is our doing. When something bad happens, we blame it on external factors.

When we assess the behaviour of others? It's the opposite. When they do something good, we think it's usually luck. When something bad happens, we assume it's their fault.

10. Anchoring Bias

The anchoring bias is like the halo and horn bias, as it tends to rely on positive or negative information. However, the anchoring relies too heavily on one trait or a piece of information.

11. Conformity Bias

Conformity bias is arguably the godfather of all cognitive bias. Dating back to the 1930s and the work of researcher Solomon Asch. Conformity bias is the tendency to behave similarly to other group members, even if it contradicts your opinion or judgment. It can often dissuade creativity, restrict opinions, and prevent people from challenging each other's ideas.

12. Confirmation Bias

Confirmation bias is one of the most studied unconscious biases. It is commonly referred to in psychology and other social sciences and is a feature in various workplace scenarios.



Confirmation bias is a type of cognitive bias that involves favouring or choosing information that fits in with one's pre-existing beliefs. It leads to selective observation and may mean you begin overlooking or rejecting information that doesn't fit your view.

Confirmation bias is commonly found in the hiring process, where a recruiter may have built an opinion of someone and subsequently seek out information to confirm their original view.



13. Contrast Bias

The contrast bias refers to when ranking things. Contrast bias is the tendency to promote or demote an item after comparing just one with another item in the group, as opposed to a ranking compared to the whole group. For example, when reviewing several candidates for a job, it is very easy to compare the candidate to the previous one in the pile, as opposed to all the CVs.

14. Name Bias

It's slightly odd, but name bias is exactly what it says on the tin. A preference for someone based on their name only positively reflects your decision-making and judgements due to your liking or disliking of their name.

Managing Bias

Addressing bias in others must be conducted with care and support, as often bias is unconscious and without ill intent. It is, in fact, usually related to their upbringing or other experiences that have formed those biases during their life.

Identifying bias in ourselves often requires becoming more self-aware, acknowledging it, and making deliberate efforts to mitigate its effects.

Bearing in mind that we are never truly self-aware, we may need the help of others to assist us in identifying our biases.



In fields like journalism, science, and **decision-making**, efforts must be made to minimise bias through fact-checking, **peer review**, and diversity initiatives. Ask your team or colleagues you know can speak their minds to advise you and check your bias in your communication and decision-making. By inviting others to health check us for bias, we demonstrate our wish to be fair and realise we may have a biased outlook on something.

A few outdated leaders and managers see this as showing weakness or indecisiveness, but we believe this shows your strength and integrity in your thinking, communications, and decisions. So please consider doing it.

As biased as this seems (oh, the irony 😏), our [Moccasin Approach](#)[®] can help identify bias as it ensures we consider things from other people's perspective first.

