

Perceiving Fact-Checks as Biased but Nevertheless Persuaded? Effects of Fact-Checking News Delivered by Partisan Media

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Background of Study

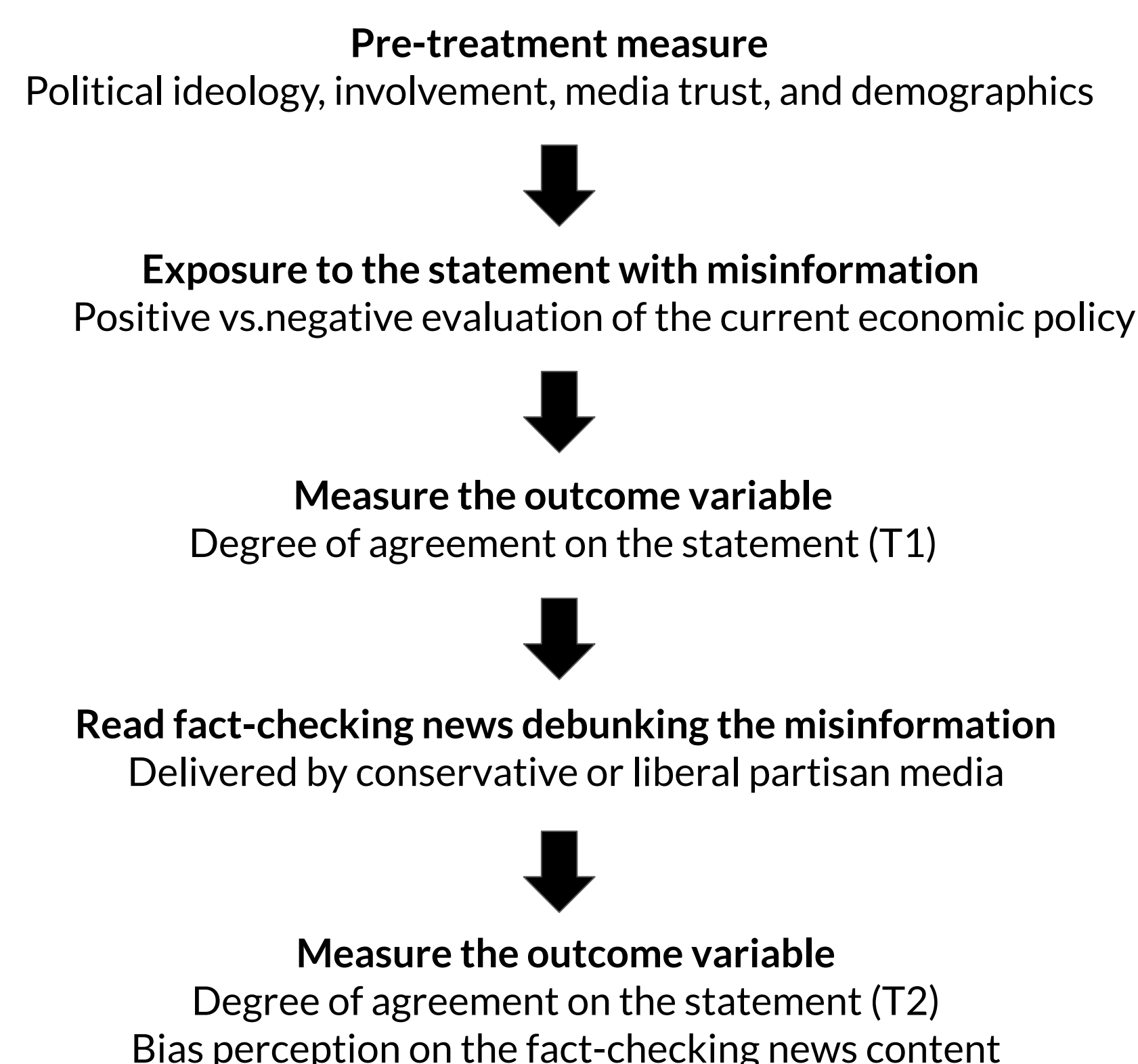
- A few prior works showed “backfire effect” of fact-checking news correcting political misinformation (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010). However, recently conducted thorough works confirmed “persuasive effect” of fact-checking news (Wood & Porter, 2019).
- These prior studies has been conducted in the context of correction by third-party news organizations (e.g., *factcheck.org*). Recently, however, fact-checking news tends to be produced by various organizations including partisan news media.
- To our best knowledge, there are few studies addressing the effect of fact-checking news delivered by partisan news media.
- Against this background, we bring a focus on the case of South Korea, where **legacy news organizations—including partisan media—are playing a leading role to produce the fact-checking news**.
- Even when people update their prior belief, there is “some leeway to align factual beliefs with realities and yet continue to justify partisan preferences (Gaines et al., 2007).”
- In this context, **we bring our focus on the bias perception** (Gunther et al. 2017).

Main Questions of the Current Study

- Effect of Fact-Checking News**
 - Is fact-checking news debunking misinformation delivered by partisan news media still persuasive?
- Bias Perception on Fact-Checking News**
 - Do people perceive that the fact-checking news is biased favorably toward specific political ideology when delivered by partisan news media? (Depending on the content or source of the news?)
 - If so, does the intensity of bias perception increase as the partisanship of participant get manifest?

Data & Method

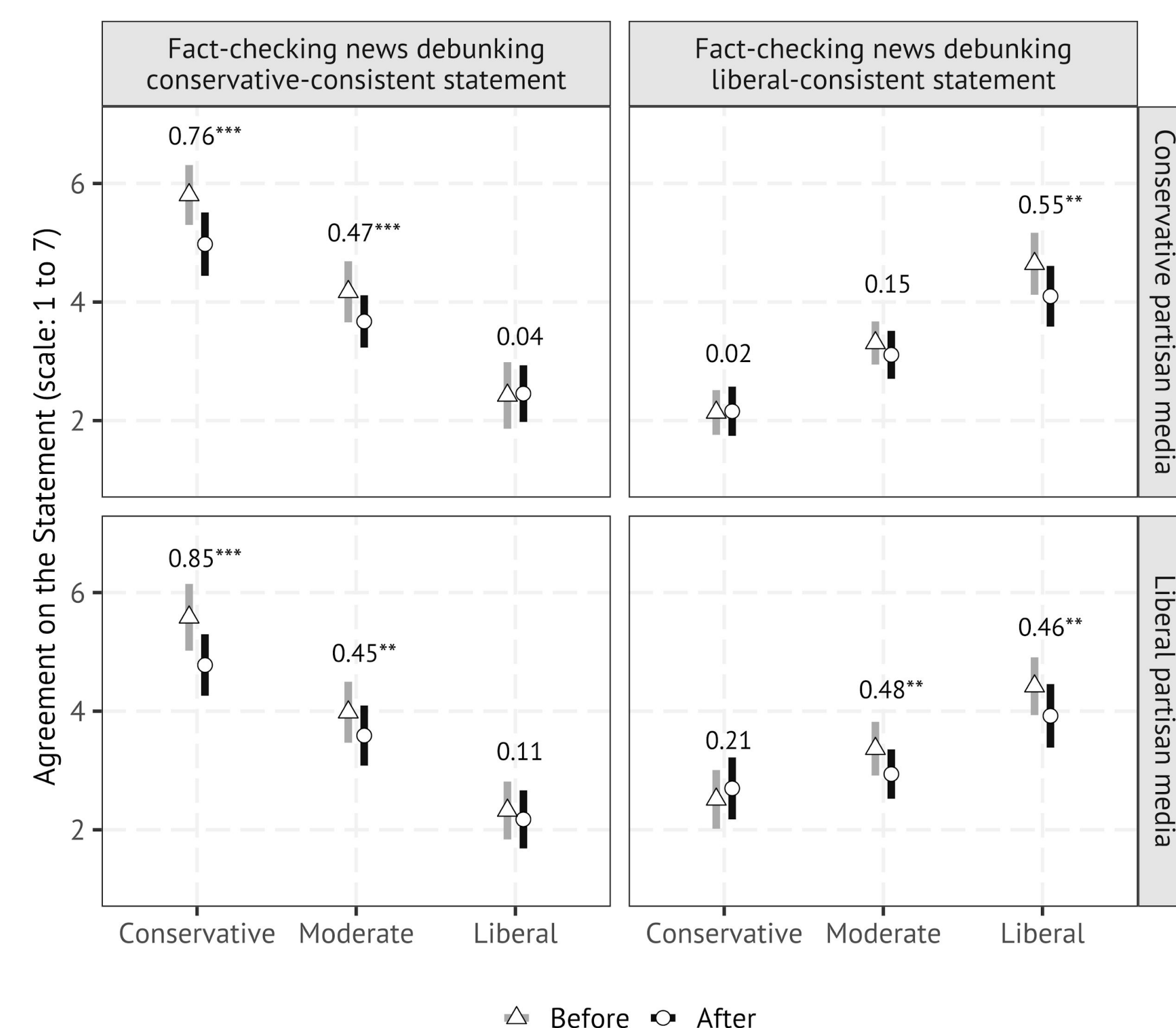
- Experimental Design**
 - 531 participants (recruited panel market research firm in South Korea)
 - 2 × 2 × 3 Design (valence of fact-checking news content vs. political slant of media vs. ideology of respondents)



Results: Effect of Fact-Checking News

- In overall, persuasive effects were confirmed even when the fact-checking news was delivered by partisan media
- Experimental groups that does not show any attitude change imply measurement limitations (floor effects)

Figure 1. Effects of Fact-Checking News by Partisan Media



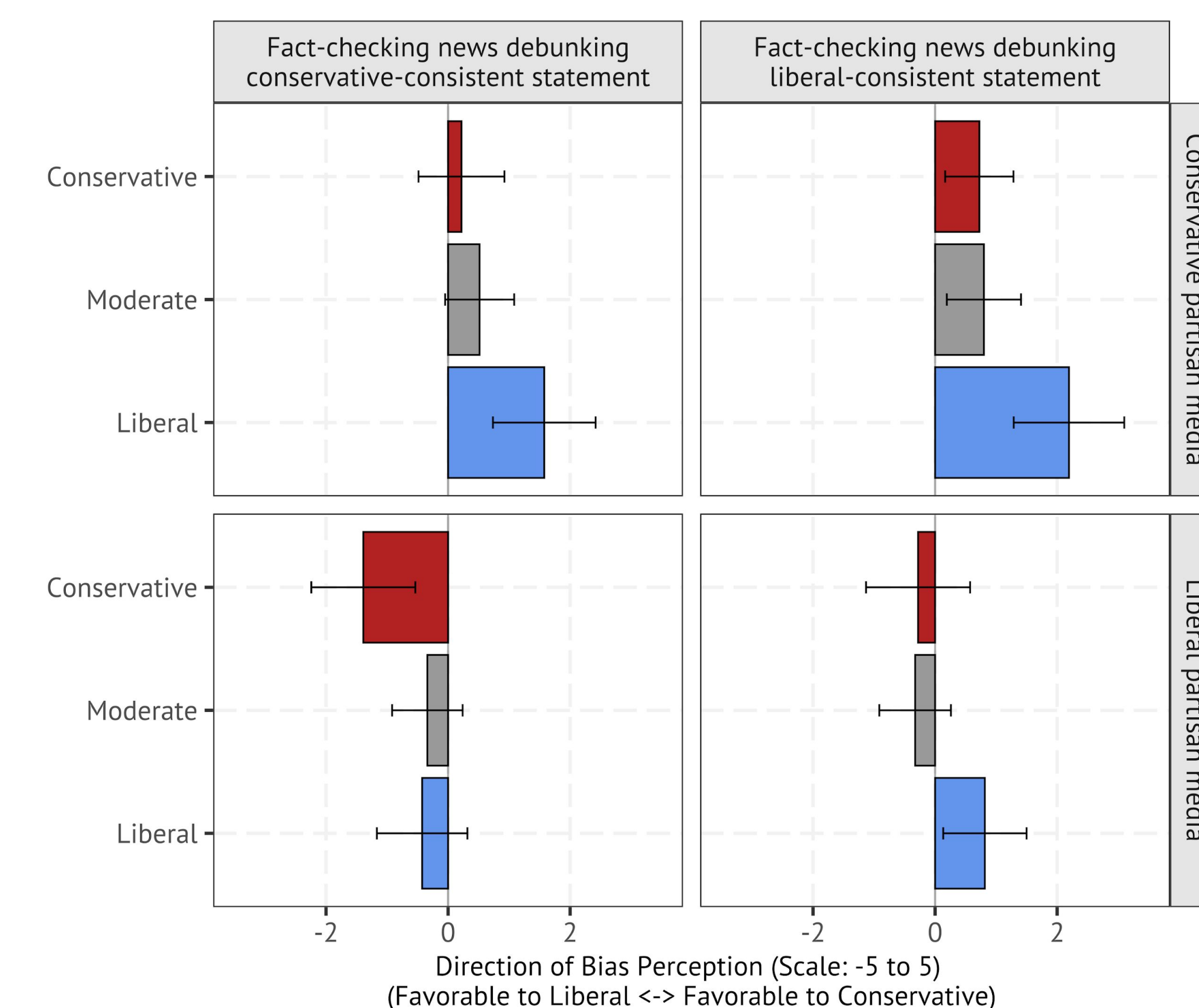
Note. Result of paired t-test (two-sided) comparing mean value of agreement on the statement of before and after exposure to the fact-checking news. The number and asterisk on the upper side of each pair indicates effect size (cohen's d) and statistical significance. Error bars mean 95% confidence interval. (** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$)

- Does the partisanship of partisan news media (conservative vs. liberal) affect the effect of fact-checking news?
 - $(y_i^{post} - y_i^{pre}) = \alpha + \beta_1(LC_i) + \beta_2(LM_i) + \beta_3(LC \times LM_i) + X_i\gamma + u_i$
 - LC = Liberal-consistent content, LM = Liberal news media, X = Covariates matrix
 - There was no significant effect of partisanship of partisan media

Results: Bias Perception on Fact-checking News

- Bias perception by political slant of partisan media:**
 - The fact-checking news by conservative media was perceived significantly more favorable toward conservative, $t(268) = 6.42, p < .001, d = .39$,
 - while fact-checking news by liberal media was perceived more favorable toward liberal, $t(261) = -2.17, p = .03, d = .13$.
- Bias perception by the content of fact-checking news:**
 - The fact-checking news debunking liberal-consistent statement was perceived as biased favorably toward the conservative, $t(266) = 3.92, p < .001, d = .24$.
 - However, bias perception on fact-checking news debunking conservative-consistent statement was not significant, $t(263) = 0.13, p = .90$.
- Is bias perception on the fact-checking news is attributable to slant of partisan media? or attitude consistency with the content of the news?
 - $y_i^{bias} = \alpha + \beta_1(LC_i) + \beta_2(LM_i) + \beta_3(Lib_i) + \beta_4(Mod_i) + \beta_5(LC \times LM_i) + \beta_6(LC \times Lib_i) + \beta_7(LC \times Mod_i) + \beta_8(LM_i \times Lib_i) + \beta_9(LM_i \times Mod_i) + \beta_{10}(LC_i \times LM_i \times Lib_i) + \beta_{11}(LC_i \times LM_i \times Mod_i) + X_i\gamma + u_i$
 - Only slant of media showed consistently significant effect** ($\beta_2 = -1.99, SE = 0.57, p < .001$), while the effect of content was not manifest.

Figure 2. Perceived Bias toward Fact-Checking News



Note. Direction of perceived political bias depending on the political slant of partisan news media. Each bar means average bias perception of each experimental sub-group on the given fact-checking news article. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

- Does intensity of bias perception increases as ideological strength increases?
 - $y_i^{intensity} = \alpha + \beta_1(Weak_i) + \beta_2(Strong_i) + \beta_3(LC_i) + \beta_4(LM_i) + \beta_5(LC \times LM_i) + X_i\gamma + u_i$
 - Bonferroni-corrected post-hoc comparison revealed that the intensity of the bias perception of strong ideologue ($M = .46, SD = .35$) was significantly stronger than that of weak ideologue ($M = .33, SD = .32$) and moderate ($M = .31, SD = .32$).

Conclusion

- Confirmed persuasive effect even when the fact-checking was delivered by partisan media
 - This pattern was consistent regardless of the valence of news content or slant of partisan media
- But participants perceived that the fact-checking news was favorably biased toward specific political stance
 - The direction of bias perception was primarily determined by the slant of partisan media
 - While the effect of attitude consistency with fact-checking news was less manifest
 - Intensity of bias perception was more obvious as the ideological strength of people increases
- This “attitudinal persuasion with perceptual backfire” reveal one of the way partisan preferences remain, when reliable factual evidence was conveyed

References

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