

Political orientation and belief in climate change conspiracies: A path model of misinformation belief and exposition

Thursday, September 11, 2025 3:40 PM (10 minutes)

Even though recent reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change highlight how human-caused climate change has already caused widespread damage to societies worldwide, conspiracy theories questioning its existence, causes, and consequences continue to abound. These narratives range from claims that climate change is a hoax or the result of systematic scientific fraud to elaborate theories suggesting that governments manipulate the weather through geoengineering. Psychological research has increasingly explored how cognitive, ideological, and social factors contribute to the endorsement of such beliefs. In this study, we examined how individuals' political orientation and belief in climate change conspiracy theories influence their belief in fake news related to climate change. A total of 460 participants completed an online questionnaire assessing political beliefs, belief in climate change conspiracy theories, and exposure to and belief in fake news regarding climate change. Path analysis revealed that a more conservative political orientation predicted greater exposure to conspiracy narratives and higher belief in fake news by indirectly enhancing adherence to conspiracy beliefs. Exposure may reflect both personal interest and engagement in online environments where homophily processes amplify interactions with ideologically similar content, reinforcing the development of echo chambers. Our findings highlight the pivotal role of ideological orientation and conspiratorial beliefs in shaping individuals' vulnerability to climate change misinformation, emphasizing the need for interventions that enhance critical thinking, reduce conspiracy beliefs, and promote media literacy to foster informed public discourse.

If you're submitting a symposium talk, what's the symposium title?

If you're submitting a symposium, or a talk that is part of a symposium, is this a junior symposium?

No

Primary author: SANTIROCCHI, Alessandro (Sapienza University)

Co-authors: SPATARO, Pietro (Università Mercatorum (Roma)); ATZENI, Roberto (Sapienza University); SHUTTING, An (Sapienza University); PESOLA, Maria Chiara; ROSSI ARNAUD, Clelia (Dip. Psicologia - Sapienza Università di Roma); Prof. CESTARI, Vincenzo (Sapienza University)

Presenter: SANTIROCCHI, Alessandro (Sapienza University)

Session Classification: Social Cognition

Track Classification: Social cognition